Synthesis of Mid-Term Evaluations of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013

Final Report

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1. The structure of this report

This report relates to a synthesis of the mid-term evaluations (MTEs) of the 92 national, regional and network Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 (RDPs) funded under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The objectives of the exercise are stated in the Terms of Reference:

"The purpose of this synthesis is to summarize and analyse the MTEs with a focus on the results and impacts achieved so far by the 2007-2013 RDPs, and on the monitoring and evaluation framework. It will draw conclusions on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the different measures and programmes. It will seek to identify examples of good practice, to provide a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the 2007-2013 rural development framework, and to make recommendations for future policy design. In order to provide the greatest added-value in the current context of preparation of the policy framework for the post-2013 period, the evaluation will also seek to analyse the contribution of Rural Development measures to the new priorities under the Health Check and the Economic Recovery Package. In addition, the evaluation will consider the effectiveness of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), draw conclusions and make recommendations in relation to the current and subsequent programming periods."

In the following the output of this synthesis work will be presented. The analysis is structured along a set of horizontal evaluation questions referred to as evaluation topics. These topics are grouped into seven Themes of the synthesis:

- Theme 1: Implementation
- Theme 2: Impacts
  - Subtheme 2.1: Overall impact of the programmes
  - Subtheme 2.2: Impacts achieved in relation to new priorities
- Theme 3: Complementarity between RDPs and other support instruments
- Theme 4: Delivery systems
- Theme 5: Monitoring and evaluation
  - Subtheme 5.1: Preparation for the MTE
  - Subtheme 5.2: Methodology
  - Subtheme 5.3: Monitoring and evaluation process
  - Subtheme 5.4: Further development of the ongoing evaluation system
- Theme 6: Conclusions and recommendations of the MTE reports
- Theme 7: Networking

The analysis begins in chapter 2, where a short introduction to EU Rural Development Policy and its evaluation will be presented.

Chapter 0 will set the frame for this analytical work by presenting the methodologies applied and the tools used for gathering the information provided.

Chapters 4 to 10 present the synthesis of the detailed findings on each of the evaluation topics grouped by the seven themes, including the judgement and conclusions as provided in the individual MTE reports.

The study concludes in Chapter 11 – providing overall conclusions and recommendations derived from the synthesis in two parts: first grouped by theme and second as general conclusions.

2. A short introduction to the EU Rural Development Policy and its evaluation

The rural development policy framework for the period 2007-2013 is defined in Council Regulation 1698/2005 on support for Rural Development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Following Article 84 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005, RDPs shall be subject to a mid-term evaluation organised under the responsibility of Member States and carried out by independent evaluators in accordance with Article 86(6). MTE reports shall be transmitted to the Commission no later than 31 December 2010. In accordance with Council Regulation 1698/2005 Article 86(4) a summary of the MTE reports shall be undertaken by the Commission.

Following the provisions of Article 86(6) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005, the mid-term evaluations **"shall examine the degree of utilisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming of the EAFRD, its socio-economic impact and its impact on the Community priorities. They shall cover the goals of the programme and aim to draw lessons concerning Rural Development policy. They shall identify the factors which contributed to the success or failure of the programmes' implementation, including as regards sustainability, and identify best practice."** The MTE reports for each of the 92 national, regional and network RDPs have been finalised and transmitted to the Commission.

These MTEs are the subject of the present synthesis which is foreseen in the DG AGRI evaluation plan for the period 2011-2012.

2.1 A brief outline of Rural Development Policy

Rural development policy has had a long process of evolution since the establishment of the Community and can be traced back to the Treaty of Rome. It became a policy on its own right with the publication in 1988 of the European Commission's Communication "The Future of Rural Society" and the different evolutions that followed, which have progressively given rural development a growing importance in EU policies.

More recent milestones in the evolution of the Rural Development Policy were the reform steps of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2003 and 2004. These steps aimed – among others – at further strengthening rural development by transferring funds through modulation from the first pillar (market and income support) to the second pillar, were rural development (RD) had been incorporated in 2000. At the same time, the scope of the rural development policy was expanded in order to respond to growing public concern on food quality, environmental protection and animal welfare.

Rural development policy must take flexibly into account a broad range of issues affecting different types of rural areas. These include: evolving functions of rural areas to incorporate recreational and ecological priorities with farming and forestry, urban-rural relations that are crucial for well developed communing and service infrastructure, the rural economy and its importance to tourism, services and environment, emerging governance issues and questions of accountability, the cohesion with EU policies and the wider international context including ICTs

and market access, climate change and the opportunities rural areas have in protecting biodiversity, soil and water quality, water shortages and energy prices and their relationship with renewable energy production, demographic changes where some areas are losing inhabitants while other areas are experiencing growth and issues of access from varying degrees of rural isolation.

The wide variety of the issues affecting rural Europe points to the growing need for a focussed methodology for policy incorporation and programme implementation. The more strategic approach of the **new 2007-2013 RD policy** attempts to address these issues by allowing national development priorities to be determined at their most appropriate level, while reinforcing the over-arching European objectives as outlined in the EU Strategic Guidelines for rural development. The new RD policy incorporated in the 2007-2013 programming period, therefore, came with re-defined objectives, legal frameworks, and regulations.

On 5 July 2005 the European Commission issued a proposal of **EU strategic guidelines** for rural development, which were then adopted by the Council on 20 February 2006. The guidelines set out the strategic approach to be followed by Member States for the preparation of their Rural Development programmes for the period 2007 – 2013. The new regulation broadened the possibilities to use Rural Development funding to boost growth and create jobs in rural areas – in line with the Lisbon Strategy – and to improve sustainability, in line with the Göteborg sustainability goals. The 6 key EU strategic objectives were listed as follows:

- Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors.
- Improving the environment and countryside.
- Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification.
- Building Local Capacity for employment and diversification.
- Translating priorities into programmes.
- Complementarity between Community Instruments.

Further, Council Regulation 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 "On support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)" laid down the operational framework for transforming the new orientation into programmes and simplifying their implementation procedures.

The new policy had three major objectives:

- Increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector through support for restructuring.
- Enhancing the environment and countryside through support for land management.
- Strengthening the quality of life in rural areas and promoting diversification of economic activities through measures targeting the farm sector and other rural actors.

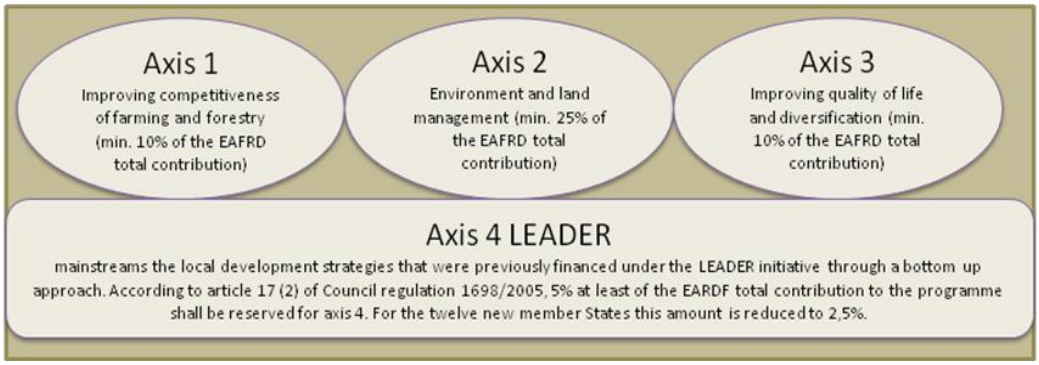
The new legal framework improved the implementation and governance of EU rural development programmes as follows:

- All existing measures were regrouped under a single funding and programming instrument, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

- The EU strategy for rural development served as the basis for the national strategies and programmes. This ensured better focus on EU priorities, and improved complementarity with other EU policies (e.g. cohesion and environment).
- Reinforced monitoring, evaluation and reporting ensured more transparency and accountability for the use of EU money.
- Less detailed rules and eligibility conditions left more freedom to the Member States on how they wish to implement their programmes.
- A strengthened bottom-up approach tuned better rural development programmes to local needs.
- The more strategic approach clarified the division of responsibilities between Member States and the Commission.

The **measures of the EAFRD regulation,** dealing with the second pillar of agricultural policy, were structured along four axes (Axis 1, 2, 3 and Axis 4 LEADER) as can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 1: Rural Development Axes



At the commencement of the 2007-2013 programming period there was a substantial change in the architecture of the EU cohesion policy. The new EAFRD was no longer an explicit part of the new cohesion policy with the three priorities: convergence, regional competitiveness and growth as well as European territorial cooperation. Only ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Funds are explicitly targeted at these priorities, whereas EAFRD is considered an instrument of the CAP (that is – of course – contributing to the Cohesion policy). Thus, coordination and complementarity that has been achieved at national level and the level of individual programmes, was re-designed. For coordination of the different activities of ESF, ERDF and Cohesion funds in the three priorities, **National Strategy Plans (NSPs)** were developed by the Member States.

The former programming period was very much organised around a system of measures in which the Member States were allowed to pick up their own "menu" of interventions, according to their own priorities. The new 2007-2013 programming period follows a more structured approach by axis, which should allow a better visibility of the orientations in terms of rural development by the Member States. It also allows for a more coherent approach as it must be **integrated within one global strategy,** via clearly expressed main objectives and operational objectives.

With these two objectives in mind, Member States were requested to draw up their NSPs for Rural Development. The National Strategy Plans were structured around the explanation of how the Member State intended to comply with EU strategic priorities and the balance it intended to establish between the four axes of the programme.

Most recently, shifts and allocations of funds have been realised in the **CAP Health Check** and the **Economic Recovery Package,** the former one being the result of a long-term discussion process on modernizing and simplifying the CAP so that the farmers can better respond to the market and new challenges. The latter can be seen as a reaction to the economic and financial crisis and should prepare the European economy for the economic rebound. Complementary priorities have been introduced in these important topics to addressing current and future EU needs.

These briefly presented changes to the RD policy above, the modulation from the first pillar to the second pillar and the adoption of the strategic objectives of the RDPs, address the changing context under which EU rural areas are operating.

2.2 The role of evaluation in 2007-2013

Council Regulation 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – EAFRD provides the legal framework for the preparation and implementation of Rural Development Programmes in the Member States for the period 2007 – 2013. Art. 80 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 stipulates a Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) which has been drawn up in cooperation between the Commission and the Member States. The CMEF is annexed to the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 (Annex VIII).

The new arrangements provide a single framework for monitoring and evaluation of all rural development interventions. It provides broad continuity as regards monitoring requirements and constitutes a significant simplification as regards assessment of results and impacts, while at the same time offering greater flexibility to Member States.[1]

Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is *a single framework for monitoring and evaluation of all rural development interventions. It provides broad continuity as regards monitoring requirements and constitutes a significant simplification as regards assessment of results and impacts, while at the same time offering greater flexibility to Member States. It is an approach to monitoring and evaluation for the period 2007-2013 is based on the arrangements in the last periods, but will be implemented in a more systematic manner and adapted to a number of new requirements in the RD regulation.*[2]

1 Cit. from Handbook on Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; DG Agriculture (2007).
2 Ibid.

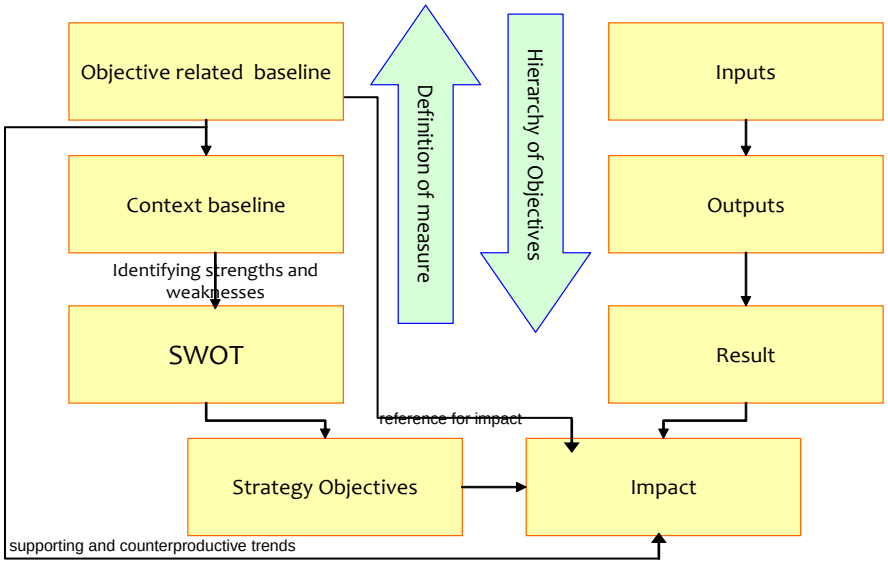
The CMEF responds to the following issues:

- *The explicit definition of objectives in the regulation, strategic guidelines and their necessary reflection in the programmes increases the necessity for a correspondingly clear and robust monitoring and evaluation system.*
- *The new rural development regulation foresees strategic monitoring of the Community and national strategies, linked to EU priorities, therefore requiring the definition of common indicators and their quantification.*[3]

With the CMEF the EC answers to the need to better define baseline indicators at the start of the programming period to assess the starting situation and form the basis for the development of the programme strategy.

The aggregation of outputs, results and impacts at the EU level should help to assess progress in achieving Community priorities.

The backbone of the CMEF is the intervention logic of RD programmes, linking inputs, outputs, in



performance of the RDPs: Output, Result and Impact indicators as well as Baseline indicators.

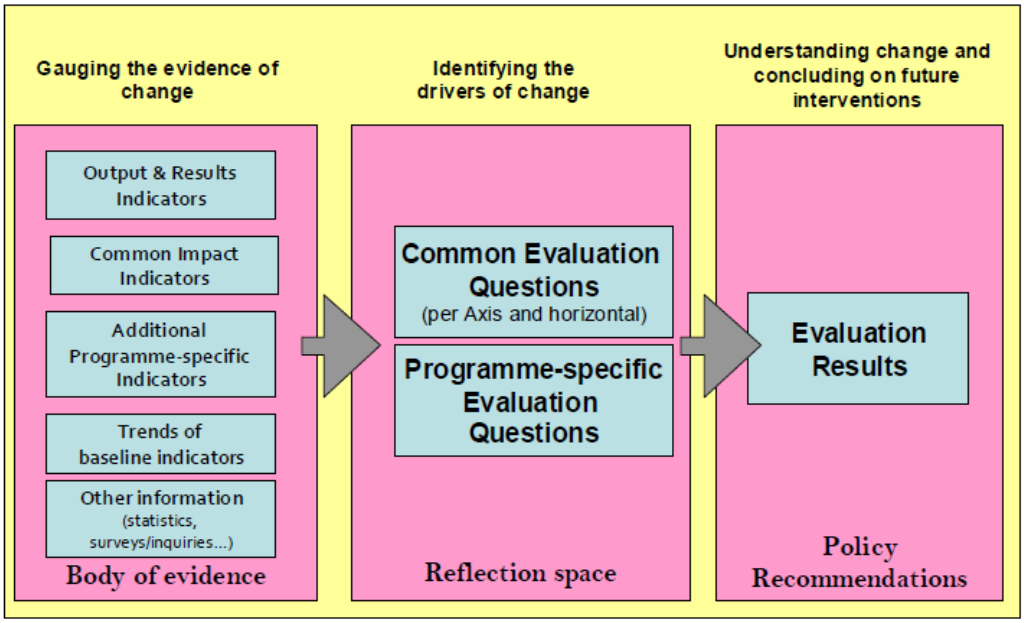
Since common indicators may not fully capture all effects of programme activity, in particular for national priorities and site-specific measures, it may be necessary to define additional indicators within the programmes. These additional programme specific indicators give Member States flexibility in creating a monitoring and evaluation system adapted to their needs.

[3] Cit. from Handbook on Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; DG Agriculture (2007).

The CMEF requires measuring programme effects at both the beneficiaries' (micro) and the sectoral and territorial (macro) level, in this very methodological sequence. Micro and macro level are linked by the intervention logic which provides a hypothetical trajectory from beneficiary over measure to objective and programme. In other words, the presumed chain of effects links the individual measures with the programme level.

In the judgement phase, the evaluator answers all evaluation questions and draws conclusions from the analysis regarding the judgement criteria defined in the structuring phase. The conclusions and recommendations relate to the effects of single measures as well as the programme as a whole. The conclusions and recommendations should be strictly based on evidence of the quantitative and qualitative assessment. The limitations of the validity of the findings and the resulting judgement should be critically reflected. Where appropriate other relevant information concerning impacts should be taken into account. In all cases, the answers to the evaluation questions must be accompanied by a critical discussion of the evidence of findings. Moreover, the evaluation needs to consider the context within which measures are applied. If a certain measure, or a part of the programme, has not delivered the expected results and impacts, an analysis of the reasons for this unexpected effect is necessary. In this way, the CMEF creates the potential do develop a holistic and nationally appropriate evaluation framework where programme success is evaluated at regular intervals.

Figure 3: CMEF intervention logic



Source: Helpdesk of the Evaluation Expert Network

The interpretation of measured indicators and of qualitative (subjective and objective) information eventually allows for judging the contribution of rural development measures to the change observed, and on the impact of the programme as a whole. These judgements, in turn, provide the basis for proposing modifications for the interventions, their respective budgetary endowment, or the policy approach as a whole.

3. Methodology

The methodology has been designed to achieve the main purpose of the study, the synthesis of the mid-term evaluations (MTEs) of the 88 national, regional Rural Development Programmes and 4 Network Programmes 2007-2013 funded under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

3.1 Information collection

Information sources

This synthesis work is primarily based on the analysis of MTE reports supplemented by the respective Annual Progress Reports (APR), information from Rural Development Programmes, National Strategy plans and additional data sources[4].

- **Mid-term evaluation reports** represent a formal part of drawing up each rural development programme. They are a vital milestone in the ongoing evaluation process as they show compiled information on the RD performance following the CMEF logic.
- The **Annual Progress Reports** have been an important information source, for the completion of the data-grids. Especially the indicator values of output and result indicators as well as baselines have rather been found in the APR than in the MTEs – especially in those cases, where the evaluator of the MTE is identical with the one of the ongoing evaluation.
- The **Rural Development programmes** prepared for the 2007-2013 period pursuant to Art. 15 (1) of Council Regulation (EC) 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, are officially submitted by the Member States to the European Commission after its adoption by the Government. The Rural development programmes are implementing a rural development strategy through a set of measures grouped together in accordance with the axes defined in Title IV of the Regulation. Member State had the possibility to submit either a **single programme** for its entire territory or a set of **regional programmes**. Member States with regional programmes further could submit a **national framework** containing common elements for these programmes.
- The updated **Rural Development programmes** as amended according to the Health Check and Economic Recovery Package as of end 2009.
- The synthetic indicators published by the **European Network for Rural Development** were another source of output and result indicator data. The published tables present aggregated figures on Member State level.
- The **National Strategy Plans for Rural Development**, established by Member States on the basis of the Community Strategic Guidelines, identifying national strategies and

[4] The data collection and analysis has been conducted in this priority order – MTE reports, Annual Progress Reports (APR), Rural Development Programmes (latest versions) National Strategy plans and additional data sources.

priorities to be pursued by rural development programmes (Article 11 of Council Regulation 1698/2005).

- **Additional Information Sources** have been used both for drafting background descriptions as well as for filling information gaps, which are detected during the execution of work. Such sources comprise:
  1. Literature, studies, regulations
  2. Qualitative and quantitative information provided by Programme Authorities in case of major gaps.

Additional information collection

Additional literature was used as essential basis for structuring, analysing and synthesizing the mid-term evaluation reports. Amongst others this contains **commission documents (regulations, guidelines, handbooks and information material) as well as different studies commissioned by DG Agriculture and other General Directorates, etc.** The following table provides an overview of the information sources required, grouped per task.

Table 1: Overview on most relevant information sources per task

		Information sources				
Phase	Task	Mid-Term-Report	RDP	APR	National Strategy Plans	Addi-tional Sources
Structuring	Task 1.1: Draft a short introduction	+	+++		++	++
	Task 1.2: Develop the methodology and tools needed for the synthesis	(+)		(+)		
	Task 1.3: Define the detailed structure of the final deliverable	(+)		(+)		
Observing	Task 2.1: Prepare a summary of the measures contained in the RDPs	+++		++		
	Task 2.2: Give an overview of the baseline situation	+++		+++	+	+++
	Task 2.3: Draft a summary description of the various methodological approaches	++	++			++
	Task 2.4: Produce a structured summary of the progress in RDP implementation	+++	++			
	Task 2.5: Give an overview of the aggregate impact achieved by the programmes	+++	++		++	
	Task 2.6 Draft an overview of the progress of the work					
Analysing	Task 3.1: Quantitative assessment of the Evaluation Questions	+++		+++		++
	Task 3.2: Quantitative assessment of the indicators	+++		+++		++
	Task 3.3 Prepare a comprehensive analysis and synthesis	+++	++	+++	+	++
Judging	Task 4.1: Draft conclusions and recommendations for each evaluation theme	+++	++		+	++
	Task 4.2: Draft an executive summary no longer than 15 000 characters	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)
	Task 4.3: Compile the Preliminary Final deliverable	+++	++		+	++
	Task 4.4: Revise the executive summary	(+)				
	Task 4.5: Draft a synthetic summary in English	(+)				
	Task 4.6: Draft a PowerPoint presentation in English	(+)				
	Task 4.7: Prepare a leaflet. of maximum 6 A4 pages					
	Task 4.8: : Compile the draft final deliverable	+++	++		+	++

+++ highly relevant information sources
++ very relevant information sources
\+ relevant information sources
(+) relevant information source (indirectly integrated)

3.2 Information processing

For the purpose of this work our approach included a combination of quantitative with qualitative tools as well as analytical approaches.

For the compilation of qualitative and quantitative information from each MTE report, the standardising of the information contained has been conducted with the assistance of tools developed for extracting the information (tool 1, 2 and 3) and for assessing the information and identifying information gaps (tool 1). Additional information sources have been collected if deemed necessary for filling the information gaps detected.

Table 2 shows an overview of the tools used to collect the necessary information from the MTEs.

Table 2: Overview of tools

Tool	Components
Tool 1: Assessment grid *Data sources: mid-term evaluation reports (and Annual Progress Reports where relevant); regional/national RD programmes (where appropriate; national strategy plans).*	a) Section for the full review of the MTE reports covering – information on evaluation themes 1-7 – list of proposed information gaps (to be filled) – list of limits and validity of judgement/evaluation topic b) Information on the sources used c) Guidelines for filling out
Tool 1.2: Evaluation questions grid *Data sources: mid-term reports (and of their updates, where applicable);* *Additional Data sources (where appropriate)*	a) Section for the full review of the Evaluation Questions covering Information on – availability – relevance – quality – completeness of the question within the MTE report c) Information on the sources used e) Guidelines for filling out
Tool 2: Indicator Assessment Grid *Data sources: mid-term reports (and Annual Progress Reports where relevant); regional/national RD programmes; European Network for Rural Development*	a) Sections for the full review of the output, result and impact indicators; targets established in relation to CMEF indicators b) Section for the full review of the baseline indicators c) Section for the full review of any programme specific indicators (output, result, impact, baseline) d) Guidelines for filling out
Tool 3.1: Data collection grid for Inventory of RD measures (breakdown by measure) *Data sources: mid-term reports (and Annual Progress Reports where relevant)*	a) Sections for all measures included in the RDPs b) Financial implementation of all measures including a split up by sources c) changes due to the Health Check and the Recovery Packages as reported within the period 2007-09 d) remarks as stated in the MTE
Tool 3.2: Data collection grid for inventory RD measures (financial overview) *Data sources: mid-term reports (and Annual Progress Reports where relevant)*	a) overview of the budgets and expenditures as reported in the MTEs and APRs b) split up of budgets and expenditures per programme and Axis by source and year

The analysis tools 1, 2 and 3 have been prepared and tested by the core team as basis for the work of the geographical experts. The expert feedback has lead to improvements of the tools.

3.2.1 Pre-test of tools for data gathering and processing

During the pre-test-phase the tools 1, 2 and 3 have been applied on three different RD programmes (Austria, Poland and one Italian region – Emilia Romagna). During this exercise the tools and guidelines have been tested primarily with respect to

- completeness
- availability of information
- usefulness for the purpose of work
- practicability

The MTE reports do not always follow the same sequence and the geographical experts needed to be provided with exact guidelines and examples of the kind and level of detail required. Based upon findings of these trials, revisions of the tools have been accomplished and the finalised tools have been handed out to the geographical experts for further processing.

3.2.2 Management of the observing phase

In order to create a common understanding of work and to ensure the comparability of the information gathered the following approach was developed:

- **Circular letter**: geographical experts were introduced to their tasks via regular circular letters, which summarize the tasks ahead, the next deadlines and give short background information concerning the tasks to be carried out.
- **Geographical Expert Meeting**: during a one-day meeting the geographical experts were introduced to the synthesis tasks. The draft analysis tools were presented to them and there was the opportunity to clarify any related questions, to suggest modifications to the tools, before they were effectively applied.
- **Ftp site** with information sources and examples of pre-filled grids: a password-protected ftp site was accessible for the geographical experts and served as a platform for information-exchange.
- A **manual** was developed to help the geographical experts do their work. It includes a brief description of the process, of the themes and notes for a better understanding.
- **FAQ catalogue**: Emerging questions during the elaboration of the synthesis were forwarded to the core team, which works as a clearing-house for unforeseen problems. Within the core-team a definite answer for the question was being searched for. If the provided questions and answers were potentially relevant also for other geographical experts, it was included into the question & answer catalogue, which was regularly updated and uploaded to the ftp site and/or sent out via e-mail to the geographical experts.
- **Quality-Check** of filled tools with feedback-loop for geographical experts: Once the geographical experts filled their tools, they had the possibility to comment in appropriate remark columns. During the quality check, the overall quality of the filled tools, as well as any particular remarks or problems encountered was checked. The

geographical experts received a feedback after this quality check and were asked to (1) improve the information where necessary (2) to correct where the quality check has detected mistakes (3) to verify, where the quality check had identified some doubts concerning the plausibility of findings. Only after such a double check the respective tools were then passed on to the further synthesis tasks.

3.2.3 Brief description of tools

The main tools for information collection and analysis and for filtering the information sources were the Assessment Grid (tool 1), the Indicator Grid (tool 2) and RDP Measure Assessment Grid (tool 3). These grids were developed in order to mine and analyse the information contained in the mid-term evaluation reports and any other additional information source needed to tackle the seven evaluation themes[5] and their respective topics[6].

From a technical point of view, the grids are constructed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which allows the main information to be further processed in a Microsoft Access database. The objective of these grids is to draw information from the mid-term evaluations and related data sources in a systematic manner, and to provide the basis for the synthesis.

One assessment grid was completed for each programme area with information deriving from mid-term reports (and the Annual Progress Reports where relevant) and regional/national RD programmes (where appropriate). Additional Data sources, data from the European Network for Rural Development and the National Strategy Plans was considered as well.

The grids differentiate between the findings, sources and gaps, which is the basis for the evidence based judgement in the later stages of the research work. Moreover the grids clearly separate the information as to be extracted from the documents analysed and the judgement/subjective assessment of the country expert dealing with the respective programme.

The grids help to extract information relating to the seven evaluation themes and respective topics. They are developed in three sections collecting different aspects and information from the MTEs and accompanying documents, which facilitate the processing of the information and the analysis work at the same time.

Tool 1: Assessment Grid

The assessment grid was the main information grid for the work of the geographical experts. It contains a methodological section as well as a thematic section for the full review of the 7 evaluation themes. The other two grids (indicator assessment grid and RDP measure assessment

[5] Implementation, impacts, complementarity between RDPs and other support instruments, delivery systems, monitoring and evaluation, conclusions and recommendations of the MTE reports, networking

[6] E.g.: The theme implementation has the following topics: An overview of progress made: financial absorption by Member State, by programme and by measure, outputs and results achieved (using the CMEF indicators), Problems/challenges identified at programme or measure level including reasons given for late/slow implementation, Measures dropped or modified, and the reasons given, An indication of whether Economic Recovery Package and Health Check priorities have been taken into account for eligibility and/or selection criteria.

grid) provide additional quantitative information in order to support the assessment of specific themes (in particular theme 1, 2 and 3 and 5).

Table 3: The assessment grid contains the following columns

Column	Content
[1]	THEME
[2]	SUBTHEME
[3]	TOPICS: These are the topics which should be covered in the synthesis and which follow from theme 1 to theme 7 the CMEF-guidelines concerning the MTE reports. Topics which refer to "EU level" are however to be understood in the national/regional context. The reference to EU level is mostly relevant for the synthesis of the 92 programmes.
[4]	SYNTHESIS QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED: Here the topics required for the synthesis are reformulated to questions addressing the geographical expert.
[5]	PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: Findings related to the evaluation topics (rows) as found in the different sources, should be described and summarized. "Own interpretations" or "judgements" should be avoided. Instead the "terminology" of the analysed documents should be followed as close as possible.
[6]	SOURCES: Indicates main sources, including page numbers. Midterm Evaluation Reports, APR, SEA Reports; RD-Programmes; National Strategy Plans; Additional sources (specified). The page number(s) where relevant information has been found shall be indicated
[7]	UNDERSTANDING/INTERPRETING: Critical remarks of the geographical experts of the quality of the answers found in the reports. Emphasizing expert's considerations concerning the findings, such as what has been considered particularly interesting, innovations and particularly interesting and promising developments.
[8]	PREDETERMINED CLASSES: If relevant a qualitative scaling of the findings is stated here.
[9]	DATA/INFORMATION GAPS: Identified data and information gaps plus suggestions for filling these gaps
[10]	NOTES/EXPLANATIONS: from the core team in order to facilitate the completion of the grid.

Tool 2: Indicator Assessment Grid

This tool had the aim to give an overview on all indicators stipulated within the CMEF (**baseline indicators, output, result and impact indicators** and on the programme-**specific indicators at all levels)** established in the regional/national RD programmes. It provides the basis for the analysis of theme 1, theme 2 and theme 5.

The overview of established CMEF indicators is presented at least at two levels: The Member State level and in the end aggregation of this data at the EU level. In Member States with regional RD programmes it is possible to also consider the regional level. In these cases the Member State level will be an aggregate of analysis of the regional programmes.

The tables concerning different types of indicators (i.e. common baseline indicators, programme specific baseline indicators, common impact indicators and programme specific impact indicators) are divided into different data-sheets within the Excel file.

Tool 3: RDP measure assessment grid

This tool helped to prepare an inventory of the rural development measures included in the regional/national RD programmes as well as their respective financial allocations (including national co-financing) as well as the budgetary changes due to the Health Check and Economic Recovery Package. The inventory represents the basis for addressing theme 1 and subtheme 2.2.

Synthesis Grids

In a next step, the filled-in grids describing the 92 RD programmes were merged into one document to allow an efficient handling of the bulk of information. The synthesis grid corresponds to the original grids. For example, the synthesis grid of the assessment grid was grouped according to the themes and subsequently to the topics. The tool has been designed as a support tool for the analysing and judging tasks of the core team.

The table below shows an example of how the synthesis grid is arranged.

Table 4: Example of Synthesis of Assessment Grid

1.2 Problems/challenges identified at programme or measure level including reasons given for late/slow implementation

Program-me No	Synthetic MTE Findings	Sources	Understanding/ Interpretation	Predetermined classes	Data/Infor-mation Gaps	Remarks
AT	In general measures in axis 1,2,3 started off well. Exceptions are: 213 (changed framework) and 224 (needs to be advertised), which has not yet been implemented. Implementation of Leader was delayed due to preparatory work, above all due to the process of selecting the LAGs – only a small share of allocated funds has been paid out. In particular cooperation projects have not yet been implemented on a large scale.	APR09, p. 71; MTE, p. 101-124	evaluators are rather reluctant to point to problems (unprecise), mostly they constrain themselves to describing the activities	No answer required	none	
BE/Flanders	# The financial progress in Axis 4 only 5% of budget is spent due to later start of the projects (local development strategies were only formulated in 2008) # Implementation of measures – Axis 1: 2 new measures (132 and 133) have not yet been started up: will be implemented in 2011. Half of budget …	Summary MTE p30-32		No answer required		

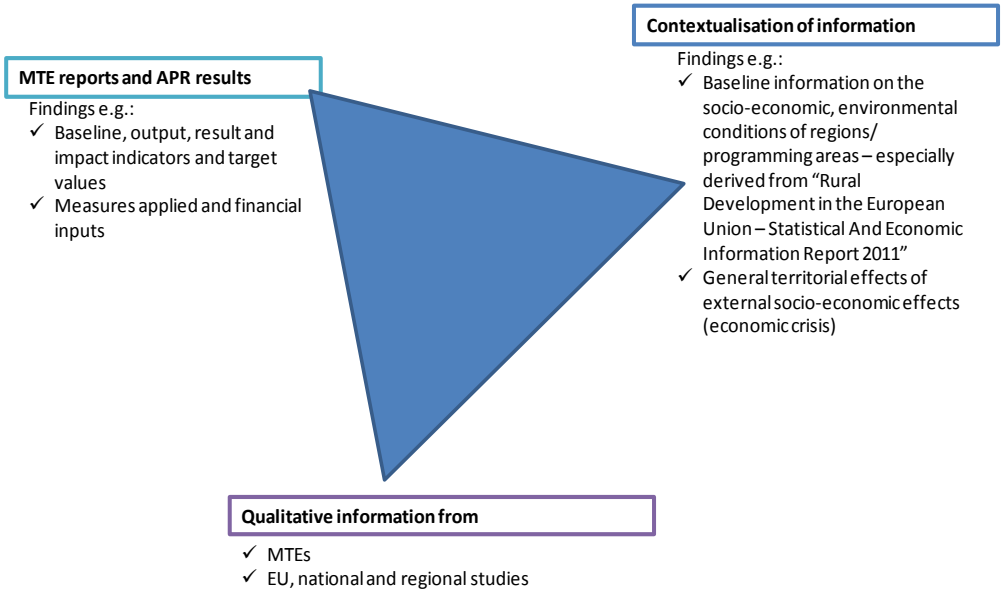
Source: Synthesis of MTE

3.2.4 Triangulation/Contextualization as additional approaches for supporting the aggregation of findings

From a first analysis of the MTE reports (see also European Evaluation Network for Rural development "Methodological Assessment of Mid-Term Evaluation Reports of 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes", March 2012) it became clear, that the information provided by the MTEs and accompanying documents (like the APRs) is prone to data gaps and limited information due to various reasons.

Therefore additional information was needed in order to triangulate what the MTE reports say and enrich the picture accordingly. The following graph provides an overview of this approach:

Figure 4: Triangulation of methods to overcome information shortage from MTEs



The main findings from the MTE reports and accompanying documents have been enriched by making use of the "contextualisation" of information and qualitative information collected from the MTEs themselves and additional regional, national and EU studies.

Triangulation is conducted through the thorough collection and analysis of the MTE reports together with their accompanying documents NSPs and APRs. Moreover these direct MTE results are enriched (in order to overcome any information gap to be found) by a contextualisation, which depicts the territorial context of the programming areas.

In particular, the evaluation team has relied on the approach of contextualisation to establish enough knowledge about the baseline situations and its development.

The best source for contextualisation on the basis of harmonised European data was the yearly collection of statistical data on rural development in DG Agriculture and Rural Development's report "Rural Development in the European Union – Statistical And Economic Information" (most recent issue 2011).

Data issues arising are:

- The available data provided in this document were checked if they meet the following requirements: The latest records should be 2008 or more recent to be able to make statements about the ongoing programming period.
- It is desirable to have a time series available from the beginning of the programming period to picture changes during the programming period.
- Data provided in the MTEs are either on national level or on regional level (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and United Kingdom). In order to triangulate information from the MTEs with additional data, data on the same level as provided in the MTES is preferred.

3.3 Quantitative analysis

Excursus on the use of programme related financial data within this synthesis

The main purpose of this synthesis work is the representation and aggregation of information provided in the MTE reports and its accompanying documents (e.g. the APRs) – thus in a first best approach the expenditures and budget data represented in these sources should have been aggregated in order to arrive at an EU wide picture of the expenditures accomplished and the budgets foreseen within the MTE period (2007-09).

However analysis showed that the information provided would not allow for a proper aggregation due to the fact that expenditure data has not been provided in a way which allows for an overall comparison of data in the MTE reports. Comparing all MTE, at least four to five different financial statuses were used to describe "RDP expenditure":

- Real expenditures by the end of 2009 (i.e. paid out to the beneficiaries).
- Expenditures allocated/granted by the end of 2009 (but not necessarily paid out to the beneficiaries).
- Short term expenditures allocated/granted by the end of 2009 (i.e. only those expenditures have been accounted for, which will be triggering payments within the coming month).
- Long term expenditures allocated/granted by the end of 2009 (i.e. expenditures, which are based upon long standing grant agreements – e.g. within LFA or Natura 2000 payments).
- A mix of these four variants.

These differences would not have been a problem as such, as long as a homogenous data set could have been produced by aligning expenditures to a common status. But unfortunately the MTEs did not provide a full account of which situation was represented in each case, so that an ex-post alignment of expenditure data was not possible.

Although APRs as secondary information source provide "declared expenditures" updated to 31/12 it has been decided – in agreement with the Steering Group – to rely on standardized financial reporting data directly and centrally provided by DG Agriculture and Rural Development for the analysis of this synthesis. This data represents now all payments affected by the end of 2009 and refer to the latest budget approved per programme.

3.3.1 Databases for quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis of expenditures and CMEF indictors is based on two main datasets:

- Centrally collected and revised information from the financial implementation reports: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation reports 2009. The smallest entity is the measure on programme level.

- Information on indicators gathered with tool 2 "Indicator Assessment Grid" as described in chapter 3.2.3. The data collection of Tool 2 is a compilation of data gathered by the geographical experts from different sources (MTE, APR or RDPs Reports). It was tested for validity and reliability, but is not as harmonised as the central financial dataset due to the different sources that had to be applied to gather a most complete dataset on the progress of the programmes. The smallest entity is the indicator on programme level.

Table 5: Overview on databases for quantitative analysis

	Financial information	Indicator information
Source	Financial implementation reports provided by DG Agri	MTE, APR, RDP Reports, gathered by geographical experts with Tool 2
Quality of information	centrally collected and revised dataset, reference date 31.12.2009 validity and reliability checked by data analysis and consultation of DG Agri (at MS level)	centrally collected dataset validity and reliability checked by data analysis and sampling reference dates no consistent
Scale	2400 datasets	7600 datasets on output indicators 1500 datasets on result indicators 650 datasets on impact indicators 9000 datasets on baseline indicators
Smallest entity	Expenditure by measure per programme	Indicator by programme

Source: Synthesis of mid-term evaluations of rural development programmes 2007-2013

Due to the amount of data, for the financial data, focused on EAFRD expenditures, overall consistency has been checked in cooperation with DG Agriculture and Rural Development (aggregated at MS level).

Data on CMEF indicators were checked by the project team in several steps:

- General check of obvious inserting errors, e.g. units used adjusted to the guideline, harmonization of thousand and decimal separators, obviously missing information e.g. on sources.
- Specific checks on validity and consistency after each step of aggregation and/or analysis. The focus laid on double checking of outliers with the reports and pointed out queries to geographical experts.

The constraints of analysis are given due to the heterogeneity of data and the fact that only datasets with consistent information where incorporated in the analysis. Whenever outliers are not included in the analysis, this is noted with the analysis of results.

3.3.2 Quantitative analysis of CMEF indicators

The quantitative analysis was performed for output, result and impact indicators of the CMEF separately. For each indicator the following elements are elaborated for each indicator in order to depict clearly the heterogeneity of the datasets and the constraints of analysis involved.

- The number of programmes that include the measure linked to the indicators in their budget plans

- The reporting on the indicators differentiates between
  - The number of programmes reporting on the indicator, i.e. indicate a target value or an achieved value or both quantitatively,
  - Thereof the number of programmes that report the indicator but planned no budget for the measure linked,
  - The number of programmes that planned budget for the measure linked to the indicator, but have not reported on the indicator yet.
- Availability of quantitative and/or qualitative information for targets, achievements and both values.
- Aggregation of quantitative values over programmes regarding targets values and achievements values (where possible).
- Achievements as compared to targets set for all programmes that report both, target **and** achievement values (as achievement in % of target values).
- Additional specific indicators reported.

In total 97% of the programmes reporting on indicators stated quantitative target values, 59% quantitative achievements and 57% stated both values. The physical progress of the programmes, expressed as achievement values in % of targets set, was calculated according to the principle of the least common denominator. Hence the share of targets achieved per indicator is based on those 57% of datasets, where targets and achievements are available.

The quantitative analysis of CMEF-indicator can be found in the following chapters:

- Topic 1.1 Overview of progress made
  Statements linking the progress of CMEF indicators with financial information (e.g. support levels per beneficiary) as well as aggregated programme implementation at MS level
- Theme 2: The analysis and synthesis of evaluation: Impacts
  Comprehensive analysis on impact indicators
- Topic 5.1.1: Availability of indicators and targets for an adequate description of the baseline situation allowing assessment of progress
- Topic 5.2.7 Assessment of indicators
  Quantitative information in output and result indicators

Achievements as compared to the targets set are expressed for those datasets, where both values are available. In order to provide a complete picture of the data available, the share of common indicators stating a target, an achievement and both values is presented before the aggregated achievements of the indicators are discussed, especially for common output and result indicators (see topic 5.2.7).

3.3.3 Analysis on financial execution and support levels

The analysis on financial execution is based on the information of the financial implementation reports 2009 of each MS (RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural

Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009). These data sources and their year of release determine that only financial information declared by 2009 could be used for analysing financial execution.

The main dataset includes 88 programmes and 4 network programmes. However the network programmes are only included in the results on financial absorption by MS in order to equally include expenditures for technical assistance in all MS. However network programmes are not discussed hereafter in the more in-depth analysis by programme, measure or CMEF indicators, due to the fact that network programmes report no indicators and thus are intangible in their direct performance.

The main dataset includes financial information on M511 technical assistance, M611 direct payments as well as for M143 provision of farm advisory and extension services in BG and RO and M144 holdings undergoing restructuring due to a reform of a CMO. These measures can roughly be characterised as transfer accounts and are thus included in the comprehensive analysis showing financial execution at MS level and programme level, but not discussed separately at measure level.

The method of calculation for chapter 4.1 – overview of progress made is summarized in the following table.

Table 6: Method of calculations

Financial absorption	Financial absorption is measured as total public expenditures as declared until the end of 2009 divided by total planned public expenditures for the whole period in %, by MS, programme and measure. Financial absorption is equally expressed for EAFRD expenditure.	
	Financial absorption by MS	Includes expenditures for all measures and all 88 programmes including 4 network programmes and transfer accounts (M143, M144, M511, M611; see above)
	Financial absorption by programme	Comprises 88 programmes, excludes network programmes, excludes transfer accounts (M143, M144, M511, M611; see above)
	Financial absorption by measure	as by programme
Total public and private expenditures	Comprises 88 programmes, excludes network programmes, excludes transfer accounts (M143, M144, M511, M611)	
Support levels by beneficiary and/or by hectare	For this analysis the dataset on financial implementation was linked with the dataset on CMEF output indicators. Beneficiaries are expressed as farmers, farm workers, farm holdings, forest holders, forest holdings, actors, participants, enterprises, cooperations and producer groups. Average support levels are calculated for those programmes reporting achievements **and** public expenditure declared.	
Aggregated targets for common output indicators	Aggregated targets per indicator for the period 2007 – 2013. Calculation includes all datasets reporting on targets. The term beneficiaries comprises farmers, farm workers, farm holdings, forest holders, forest holdings, actors, participants, enterprises, cooperations and producer groups.	
Rate of co-financing	Total EAFRD payments divided by total public expenditure declared by 2009. The co-financing rate is calculated by indicator and then aggregated by measure.	
Aggregated programme implementation on MS level	achievements of output indicators by 2009 in % of target set for 2007 – 2013 achievements of result indicators by 2009 in % of target set for 2007 – 2013 Calculation includes all datasets reporting on targets **and** achievements	

Synthesis of mid-term evaluations of rural development programmes 2007-2013.

4. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 1: Implementation

4.1 Topic 1.1: An overview of progress made: financial absorption by Member State, by programme and by measure, outputs and results achieved (using the CMEF indicators)

The progress of the programmes is discussed in terms of financial execution and targets as well as achievements of common output indicators. Problems and challenges identified at programme or measure level are discussed, as well as measures dropped or modified and the reasons given. Finally tentative indications are given whether economic recovery package and health check priorities have been taken into account for eligibility and/or selection criteria.

4.1.1 Findings

The following chapter informs about the implementation of the programmes, illustrated by the overall financial execution by MS, by programme and by measure. The amount of EAFRD co-financing of measures is shown additionally. Aggregated information per MS is provided for targets and achievements of common output and result indicators as well as support levels per beneficiary and/or hectare.

Financial absorption

The financial absorption informs about the financial execution of the programmes up to the end of 2009. It is measured as total public expenditure declared up to the end of 2009 divided by total planned public expenditure for the whole period 2007-2013.

Figure 5 shows the financial absorption of total public expenditure and EAFRD expenditure aggregated at MS-level. On average about 20% of the budget 2007-2013 has been declared until 2009.

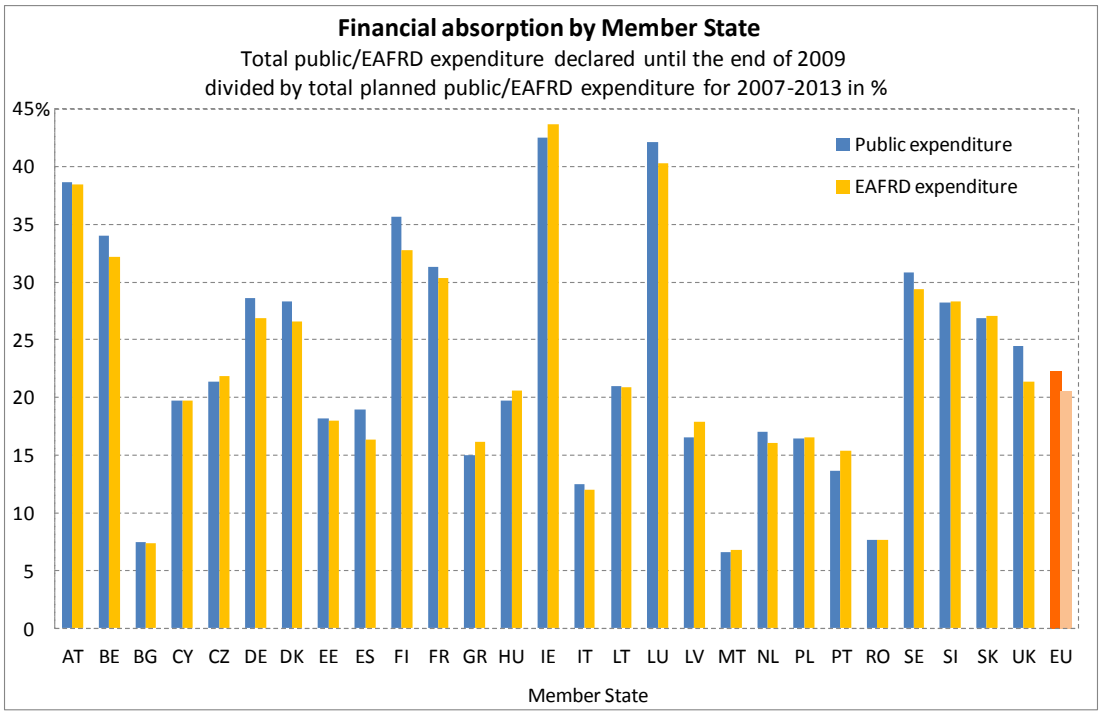
As anticipated the financial absorption of public expenditures by 2009 is almost identical to the financial absorption of EAFRD expenditures by 2009. In few cases the share for EAFRD expenditures declared exceeds the share for total public expenditures declared. The small deviations of these relative numbers never exceed 3% and can be explained by the fact, that not all measures aggregated by MS have the same rate of EAFRD co-financing. Thus the share of EAFRD execution can be slightly higher in case more payments occurred with high co-financing rates in this half of the period.

Financial execution varies widely by MS, from above 40% in Ireland and Luxembourg to under 10% in Bulgaria, Romania and Malta. These differences are due to several reasons. In Luxembourg for example, payments between 2007 and 2009 have been engaged by the previous programming period and are thus higher than in other MS[7]. On the other hand the

[7] APR (LU) 2009, p. 5 (Rapport d'exécution du programme de développement rural 2007-2013, année 2009)

new MS faced some difficulties in terms of execution. Thus Bulgaria assessed and contracted only a fraction of proposals compared to the initially programmed number[8]. In Romania the remote progress recorded at the time of the MTE has to be qualified given the late start of the programme (mid July 2008) and the fact that Romania was operating within the frame of such a programme for the first time, both facts explaining the problems with slow public procurement procedures[9].

Figure 5: Financial absorption by Member State: Public expenditure and EAFRD expenditure



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; dataset includes 92 programmes (88 programmes plus 4 network programmes)

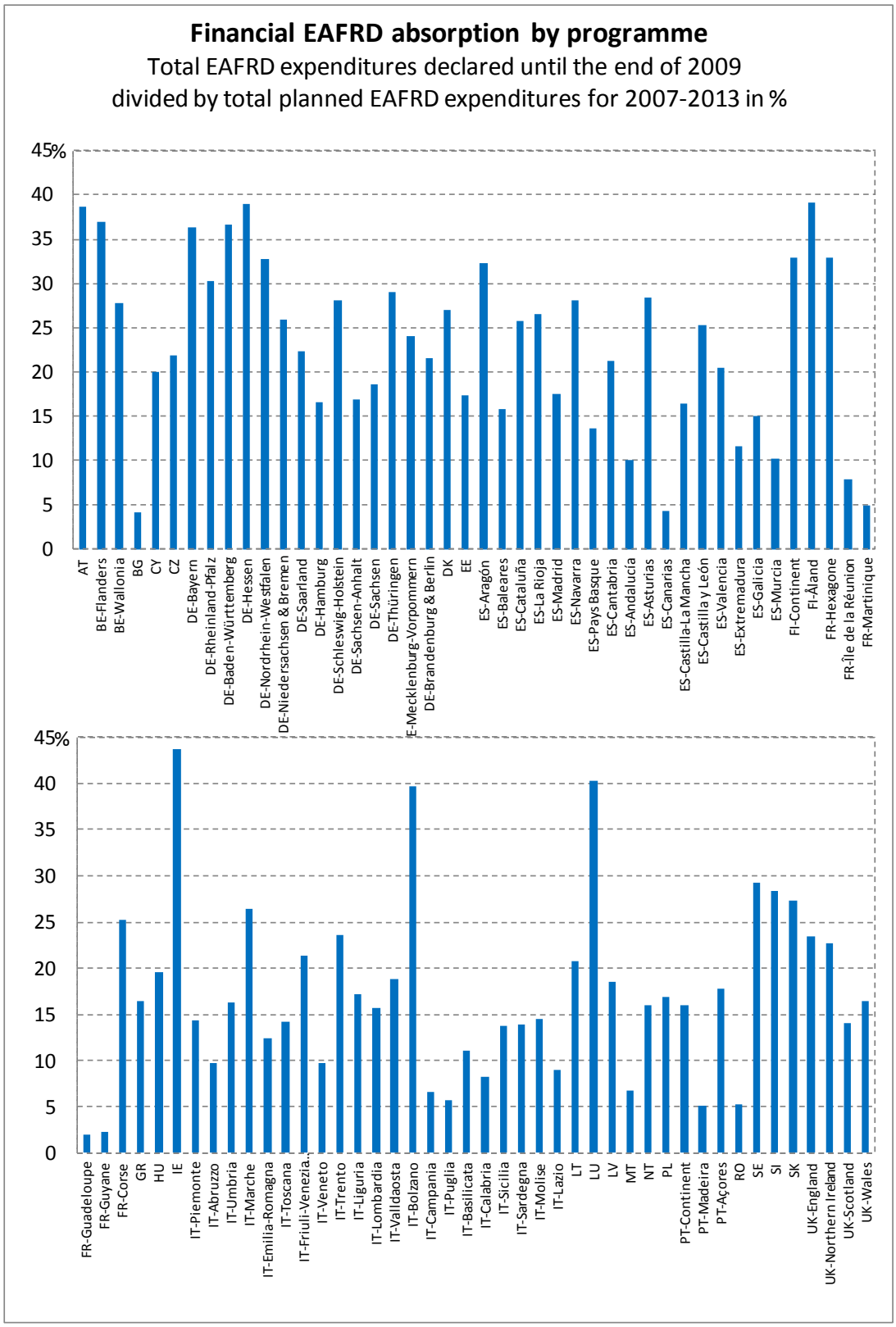
Programmes particularly advanced and programmes that lag behind

As Figure 6 illustrates, the range of financial execution varies greatly between the programmes. The figure shows the financial execution for EAFRD expenditures – which is almost equal to the execution of total public expenditures.

Programmes with the highest rates are again Luxembourg and Ireland with absorption rates of above 40%, but also IT-Bolzano, DE-Hessen and FI-Åland, at almost 40% of EAFRD planned expenditure. Others, like the outermost regions of the EU (FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Martinique, ES-Canarias and PT-Madeira) show lower absorption rates. The underlying reasons are explained in the following.

[8] MTE (BG), p. 345
[9] MTE (RO) Executive summary p. 12-20

Figure 6: Financial absorption of total EAFRD expenditures by programme



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009. 88 programmes (network programmes excluded)

Programmes that perform well in respect of planned budget spending are defined as all programmes that have already declared more than 35% of total public expenditure (Table 7). These programmes are regions in the old MS (EU-15) and include regions with annual payments of axis 2 measures, under contracts already agreed. Here it is generally easier to disburse these measures' funding early in the programme, than it is to disburse capital investments or project funds.

In general good progress is reported for measures continued from the previous period, or measures where the execution of payments is based on few administrative criteria and/or multi-annual contracts. Measures that apply to this phenomenon belong largely to axis 1 and axis 2.

Regarding the programmes this is true for BE-Flanders, but also in FI-Åland the good progress is due to the execution of axis 1 and 2, as well as other programmes with high emphasis on axis 2 like Austria and FI-Continent. (For the latter these positive effects even balanced out the long delay of the EU approval process and massive bureaucracy of other measures.)

Other cases for good progress point into the same direction: e.g. IT-Bolzano emphasises that the effectiveness of the programme is due to the success to reach extensive farms in the mountain areas, by correctly identifying their needs e.g. in terms of inward investment.

Table 7: Programmes particularly well-advanced

Rang	Intern	Financial absorption in %	
		Total public expenditures	EAFRD expenditures
1	IE	42,5	43,7
2	LU	42,2	40,3
3	IT-Bolzano	40,9	39,6
4	DE-Hessen	40,5	38,8
5	FI-Åland	40,5	38,9
6	BE-Flanders	39,9	36,5
7	AT	38,7	38,5
8	DE-Baden-Württemberg	37,1	36,6
9	DE-Bayern	36,2	36,2
10	FI-Continent	35,7	32,7
11	ES-Aragón	35,0	32,3

Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009

In contrast Table 8 lists those programmes that have not declared as much as 10% of their planned public budget. These programmes show difficulties in spending RDP funding due to administrative challenges and delayed start-up of network programmes in a number of countries.

Explanations given for the delay of implementation are difficulties due to insufficient monitoring systems e.g. inadequate technical assistance or problems with the implementation of monitoring tools (FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Martinique, FR-Île de la Réunion, IT-Campania) as well as slow administrative procedures in general (IT-Calabria, IT-Lazio).

As mentioned above, the new MS Bulgaria and Romania faced difficulties in the implementation of the programmes, as they are operating for the first time within the frame of such a programme. E.g. MTE of Romania claims the late start of the programme and long public procurement procedures.

Other programmes were hampered by the slow uptake of measures that were not included in the programmes of the previous period (e.g. IT-Puglia).

Some programmes were "handicapped" by the late approval of the RDP respectively late start of the programme (ES-Canarias, PT-Madeira, Malta) or the structural weaknesses of agricultural institutions (FR-Guyane) and also the need for further communication activities is named (IT-Veneto).

Additionally the crisis affected the programme implementation in terms of low capacities of pre-financing or co-financing (FR-Guyane, ES-Canarias, IT-Calabria). Seldom natural hazards slowed down the activities of the managing authority (like the earthquake in IT-Abruzzo).

Table 8: Programmes lagging behind

Rang	Intern	Financial absorption in %	
		Total public expenditures	EAFRD expenditures
88	FR-Guadeloupe	1,8	1,9
87	FR-Guyane	2,5	2,5
86	FR-Martinique	4,4	4,8
85	PT-Madeira	5,0	5,0
84	IT-Puglia	5,5	5,5
83	ES-Canarias	5,5	4,2
82	MT	6,6	6,8
81	IT-Campania	6,8	6,3
80	FR-Île de la Réunion	7,2	7,9
79	BG	7,5	7,4
78	RO	7,7	7,7
77	IT-Calabria	8,5	8,1
76	IT-Abruzzo	9,7	9,4

Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009

At measure level the variations are more clearly visible, as Figure 7 shows. Measures with spending at the highest rates include M211 natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas, M212 payments to farmers in other areas with handicaps which have declared 42% and 39% of planned budgets, respectively. Also M131 meeting standards based on Community legislation, M214 agri-environment payments, M113 early retirement and M141 semi-subsistence farming have execution rates above 25%.

These are all measures which involve annual payments to farmers that are either made available to all who claim them, through a very simple system, or that flow under multi-annual contracts which, once the contract is agreed, can be disbursed easily each year. Furthermore M211 and M212 are important measures from a budget point of view with a high level of awareness

among beneficiaries, as the compensatory allowances directly affect the incomes of farmers in areas with handicaps.

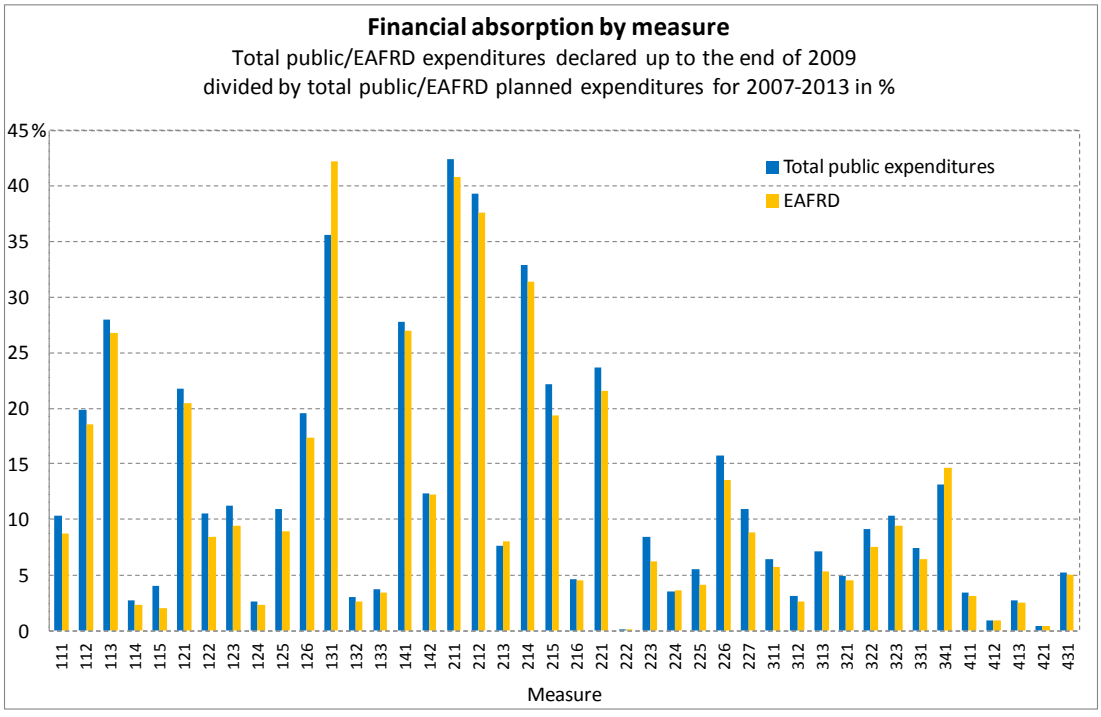
Very low financial execution rates are reported for the following measures: M222 first establishment of agro forestry systems on agricultural land, M114 use of advisory services, M115 setting up of management, relief and advisory services and M124 cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies as well as for the LEADER measures.

These are all measures which could be expected to take some time to establish, because they require prior co-ordination and/or careful planning among several actors. Thus these measures have not started yet in many programmes foreseeing them, e.g. M222 where no programme declared expenditures so far.

Only a small share of allocated funds for LEADER has been paid out so far. The implementation here is often delayed due to preparatory work, above all due to the process of selecting LAGs. However, as illustrated in topic 5.2.7. the target number of LAGs is already contracted and thus the emphasis will be on the execution of projects in the next half of the period.

For M131 meeting standard based on community legislation the financial absorption of EAFRD payments is noticeably 7% higher than for total planned expenditures. This aggregated value is associated with 4% higher EAFRD payments in Greece, Hungary and Latvia, corrected by other programmes with reverse proportions in other programmes. On the one hand the EAFRD co-financing rate of this three MS is 74-83% and thus higher than the average co-financing rate of below 60%, which leads to this small differences for this low budget measure (EUR 170 m total planned public expenditure).

Figure 7: Financial absorption of total public and EAFRD expenditures by measure



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009. 88 programmes included.

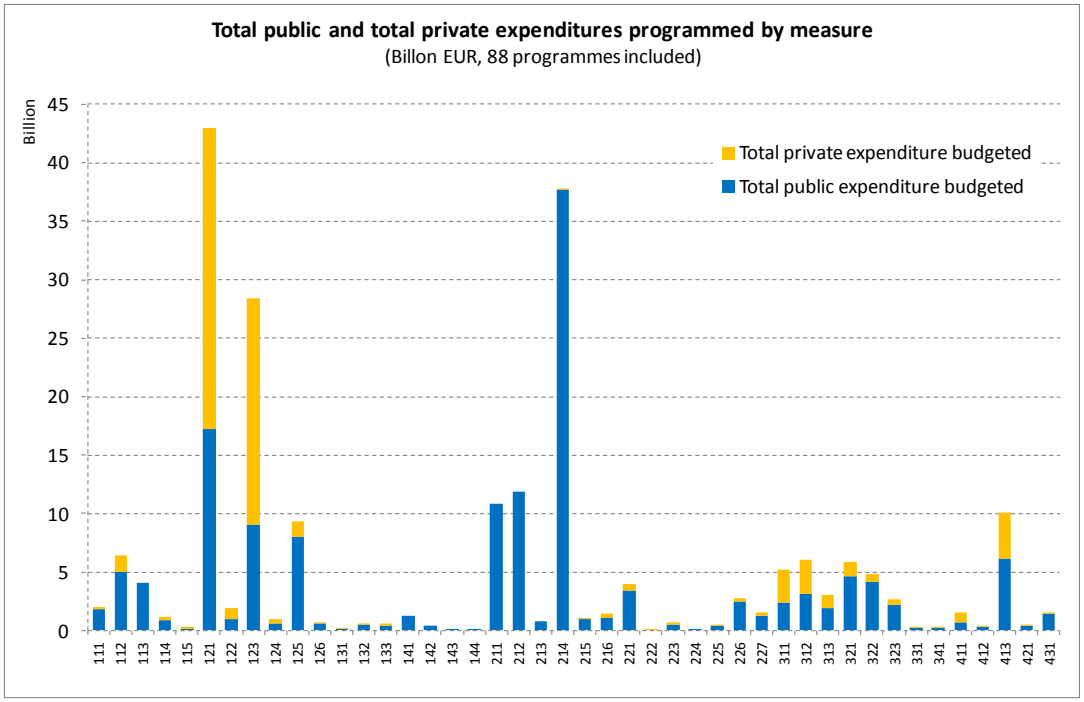
Total public and private expenditures programmed

The amount of total public and private expenditures programmed by measure differs significantly, largely reflecting the co-financing rates as anticipated in the Regulations. As shown in Figure 8, the ratio of public to private expending reflects the co-financing rates as set out in the Regulations.

Measures anticipated to bring the highest private gain to farm businesses are likely to involve higher rates of private spending, e.g. M121 modernisation of agricultural holdings and M123 adding value to agricultural and forestry products.

On the other hand total public expenditures are highest for M214 agri-environment payments, due to the fact that the logic of this measure anticipates full compensation for the execution of less intensive or more environmentally friendly practices.

Figure 8: Total public and private expenditures programmed by measure



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009. 88 programmes included.

Support levels per beneficiary and/or per hectare

The support levels per beneficiary and/or per hectare inform about the extent to which beneficiaries were supported by public expenditure by the end of 2009. They are shown as a share, calculated from the expenditure declared by the end of 2009 divided by the number of beneficiaries and/or hectares achieved/reported for the common output indicators in the same period.

The analysis of these numbers is difficult, because the data is composed of two different elements: the harmonised expenditure data from the financial implementation reports and the non-harmonised data collection on common output indicators of tool 2. The latter is collected

from the MTE, APR and RDP reports, which may refer to another period of time and the datasets are not always complete in terms of reporting on achieved indicators (only 52% of the indicators reported inform about targets and achievements).

Consequently the results of the analysis are differentiated depending on the data quality:

- Indicators, for which a significant number of beneficiaries and/or hectares is reported are included in the quantitative analyses and shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10. A critical number is defined as those indicators, where more than 45% of the programmes that should report achievements (i.e. that included the underlying measure in their budgets) and at least 20 programmes give this information.
- Indicators, for which a critical number of at least 12 programmes report achievements, are presented in the text including average achievements
- All other indicators show too little activity for reliable statements on support levels. The cannot be commented at the moment or produce inexplicable outliers that are not declared in the MTEs. These extreme values could only be analysed in a case study approach[10].

Measures not included in this overview are those of M125 "Infrastructure related to the development and adaption of agriculture and forestry", because they support "operations", but not beneficiaries. The denominator "operation" is difficult to interpret and cannot be aggregated over MS, as operations can either be small and cost extensive hydraulic-engineering projects (e.g. in Austria) or large investments like immense irrigation projects covering 90.000 ha (e.g. in PT-Continent). Equally excluded are datasets covering M322 village renewal. The size of a village supported may comprise 1.000 or 10.000 inhabitants, thus sound statements on support levels per village are not possible.

In the following paragraph average and maximum support levels per beneficiary are explained for the most important indicators belonging to the first two groups.

Axis 1

M111 vocational training and information actions is supported with on average EUR 2.000 per participant. Outliers occur for UK-England, as a considerable period between organisation and the event itself is reported. Hence the support levels are high with EUR 54.000 per participant, as some expenditure is already declared but no participation can be reported yet. M112 setting up of young farmers is supported with EUR 28.000 per beneficiary which is well below the maximum amount of support.

[10] These outliers concern the measures:
M113 in FR- Île de la Réunion
M221 first afforestation of agricultural land for the programmes ES-Castilla-La Mancha, PT- Açores, PT-Continent,
M227 Non-productive investments ES- La Rioja,
M122 Improvement of the economic value of forests FR-Hexagone,
M126 Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introducing appropriate prevention actions DE-Brandenburg & Berlin.

M113 early retirement supports the farmers with about EUR 70.000 on average, programmes supporting above average are ES-Cantabria, ES-Castilla-La Mancha, ES-Asturias, Ireland and PT-Açores.

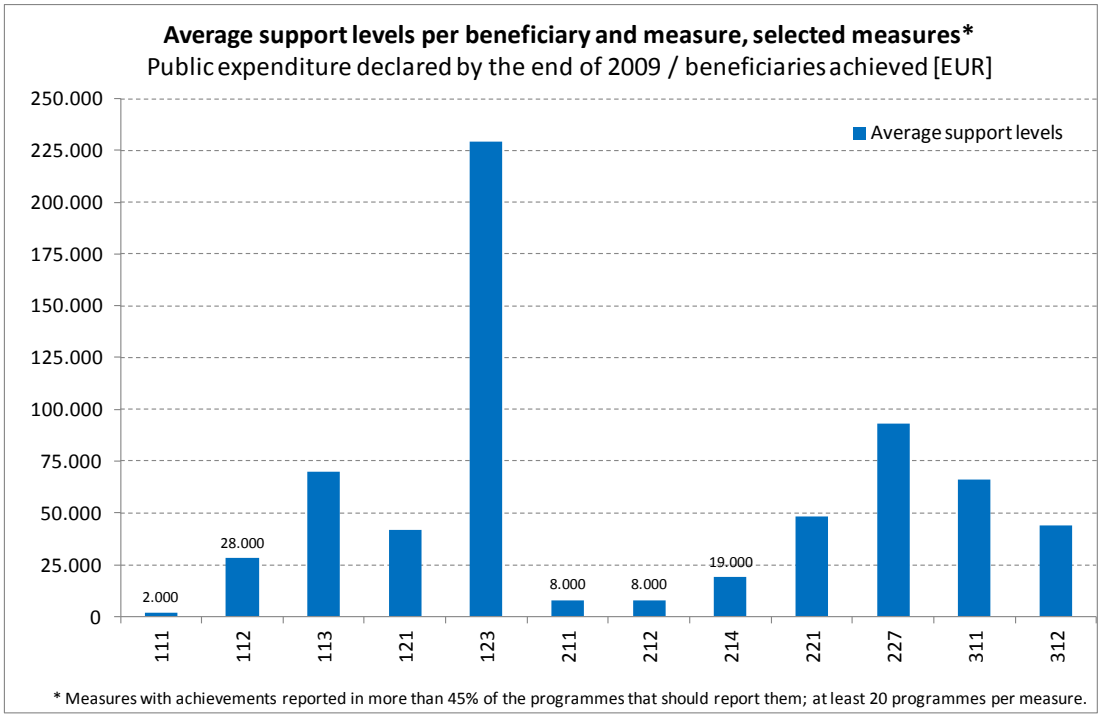
The support level of EUR 230.000/beneficiary for M123 adding value to agricultural and forestry products is due to the wide range of support levels, depending on the region supported and the investments made. It is thus difficult to interpret this number without case studies. E.g. ES-Castilla-La Mancha received EUR 1,7 m per enterprise and thus supported much more costly investments than the average.

Axis 2

M221 first afforestation of agricultural land is supported on average with EUR 50.000 per beneficiary or EUR 9.500 per hectare. These payments cover establishment costs, first years' maintenance costs and loss of income and thus vary depending on the area supported and other aspects as climate etc. It can thus be very costly in arid regions like ES-Castilla-la-Mancha or PT-Acores.

For M227 Non-productive investments the average support level is EUR 90.000 per beneficiary, here again several outliers are reported. This is not surprising as it depends highly on the kind of investments undertaken and can thus vary significantly, as the maximum example of EUR 7,3 m in ES-La Rioja shows.

Figure 9: Support levels by beneficiary and measure



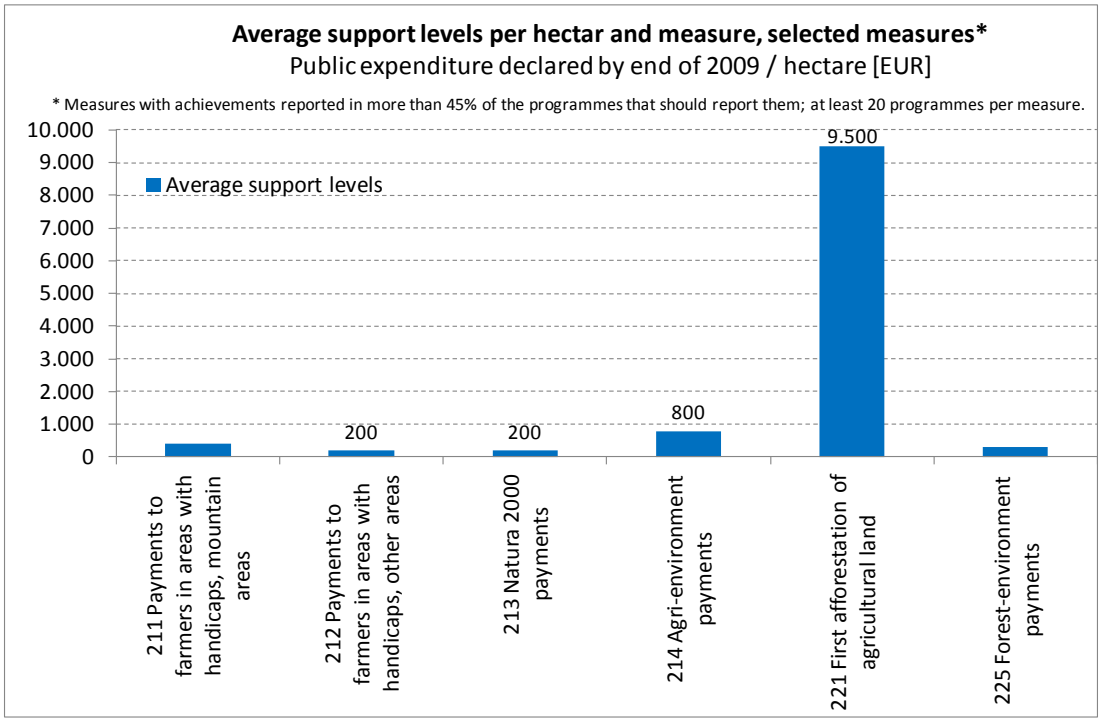
Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009. MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators.

Other indicators, for which a critical number of 12 programmes report achievements show the following average achievements.

- M132 Participation of farmers in food quality schemes EUR 5.000/beneficiary
- M213 Natura 2000 payments EUR 4.300/beneficiary
- M225 Forest-environment payments EUR 7.500/beneficiary
- M331 Training and information the fields covered by axis 3 EUR 27.900/beneficiary
- LEADER EUR 26.800/beneficiary. This is unexpectedly high and can be explained by the fact, that LEADER projects started slowly, thus the number of projects carried out as well as the number beneficiaries is low. The expenditure declared so far however cover not only the costs for the projects, but also administrative expenditure (e.g. for the selection of LAGs). With the progressing development of the LEADER projects, the number of beneficiaries will rise and thereby lower the administrative costs per beneficiary significantly. Lower support levels per beneficiary can be expected in the second half of the programme.

M222 first establishment of agroforestry systems on agricultural is not shown because the programmes foreseeing M222 have no public expenditure declared yet.

Figure 10: Support levels per hectare and measure



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009. MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators.

The following table lists the results for the measures shown in the figures above and states the maximum and minimum support levels underlying the averages illustrated in the figures. However the most outstanding and outliers have already been removed from this table.

The maximum values in this table show that depending on the investment made, absolute support levels per beneficiary can be high, but within the regulations. E.g. ES-Castilla-La Mancha spend EUR 1,7 m per beneficiary for M123 in ES-Castilla-La Mancha. This as well as EUR 900.000 per beneficiary in DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for M227 may be quite reasonable, but can only be interpreted with a case study approach.

Table 9: Support levels per beneficiaries per measure: Public expenditure declared divided by supported unit

M. Code	Measure	Unit	Average	Maximum	Maximum Programme	Minimum	Minimum Programme
111	Vocational training and information actions	participants	1.900	54.900	UK-England	1	Portugal – Continent
112	Setting up of young farmers	farmers	28.500	132.800	ES-Castilla-La Mancha	166	IT-Lazio
113	Early retirement	farmers, farm workers	70.300	298.600	Ireland	285	IT-Lazio
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	farm holdings	41.900	174.800	DE-Sachsen	947	UK-Northern Ireland
123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products	enterprises	229.000	1.747.000	ES-Castilla-La Mancha	1.165	Cyprus
124	Cooperation for development of new products, processes and technologies in the agriculture and food sector and in the forestry sector	cooperations	80.400	584.500	UK-Wales	7937	ES-Aragón
132	Participation of farmers in food quality schemes	farm holdings	5.000	39.900	UK-Scotland	4	ES-Cataluña
211	Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, mountain areas	farm holdings	8.400	89.600	Slovakia	396	ES-Baleares
		ha	400	2.600	FI-Continent	8	ES-Baleares
2121	Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas	farm holdings	7.500	52.700	Slovakia	7	ES-Pays Basque
		ha	200	1.200	IT-Calabria	0	ES-Pays Basque
213	Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD)	farm holdings	4.300	20.100	DE – Brandenburg & Berlin	77	Germany – Baden-Württemberg
214	Agri-environment payments	farm holdings	19.000	107.400	UK-Scotland	762	Romania
		ha	800	5.600	IT-Ligur ia	53	Bulgaria
221	First afforestation of agricultural land	beneficiaries	47.500	708.100	UK-Scotland	8	DE-Baden-Württemberg
		ha	9.200	51.700	ES-La Rioja	15	DE-Baden-Württemberg
225	Forest-environment payments	forest holdings	7.500	36.900	ES-Castilla y León	36	Denmark
227	Non-productive investments	forst holders	93.100	926.000	DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	25	Sweden
311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	beneficiaries	66.000	510.800	IT-Liguria	270	DE-Bayern
312	Business creation and development	mirco-enterpr.	43.700	527.400	UK-Scotland	297	Poland
331	Training and information for economic actors operating in the fields covered by Axis 3	actors	27.900	331.500	UK-England	25	BE-Flanders
41	Implementing local develop-ment strategies (3 axes)	beneficiaries	26.800	109.100	Luxembourg	36	UK-England

Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009. MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators.

Aggregated targets established in relation to CMEF output indicators

The following paragraph presents the targets set per output indicator aggregated over all MS and presented per measure. In order to visualize the results more clearly, three diagrams show the aggregated targets for the period 2007 – 2013 in terms of number of beneficiaries (Figure 11), total number of investment, comprising public and private investments (Figure 12) and the area supported (Figure 13) separately.

These numbers altogether show the aggregated targets, disregarding the underlying budgets and contextual factors (e.g. public benefits) and thus must not be interpreted in terms of efficiency. They simply reveal how many beneficiaries, investments and hectares have been targeted under each measure and can thus be used for the later interpretation of the progress per indicator.

The number of beneficiaries shown in Figure 10 represents different entities, e.g. the number of "beneficiaries, i.e. number of participants in training, number of farmers supported, number of enterprises supported, but also number of cooperation LAGs (M421) and can thus not be aggregated over all indicators.

The wide distribution and importance of axis 2 measures as M211, M212 payments to farmers in areas with handicaps (mountain and other areas) and M214 agri-enviroment payments is illustrated by the number of holdings supported within the whole programme period 2007 – 2013 which accounts for 1,5 to 1,7 million holdings supported. The largest support areas are targeted for M214 agri-environment payments and M211, M212 payments to farmers in areas with handicaps – which corresponds to the long-term objectives set regarding beneficiaries.

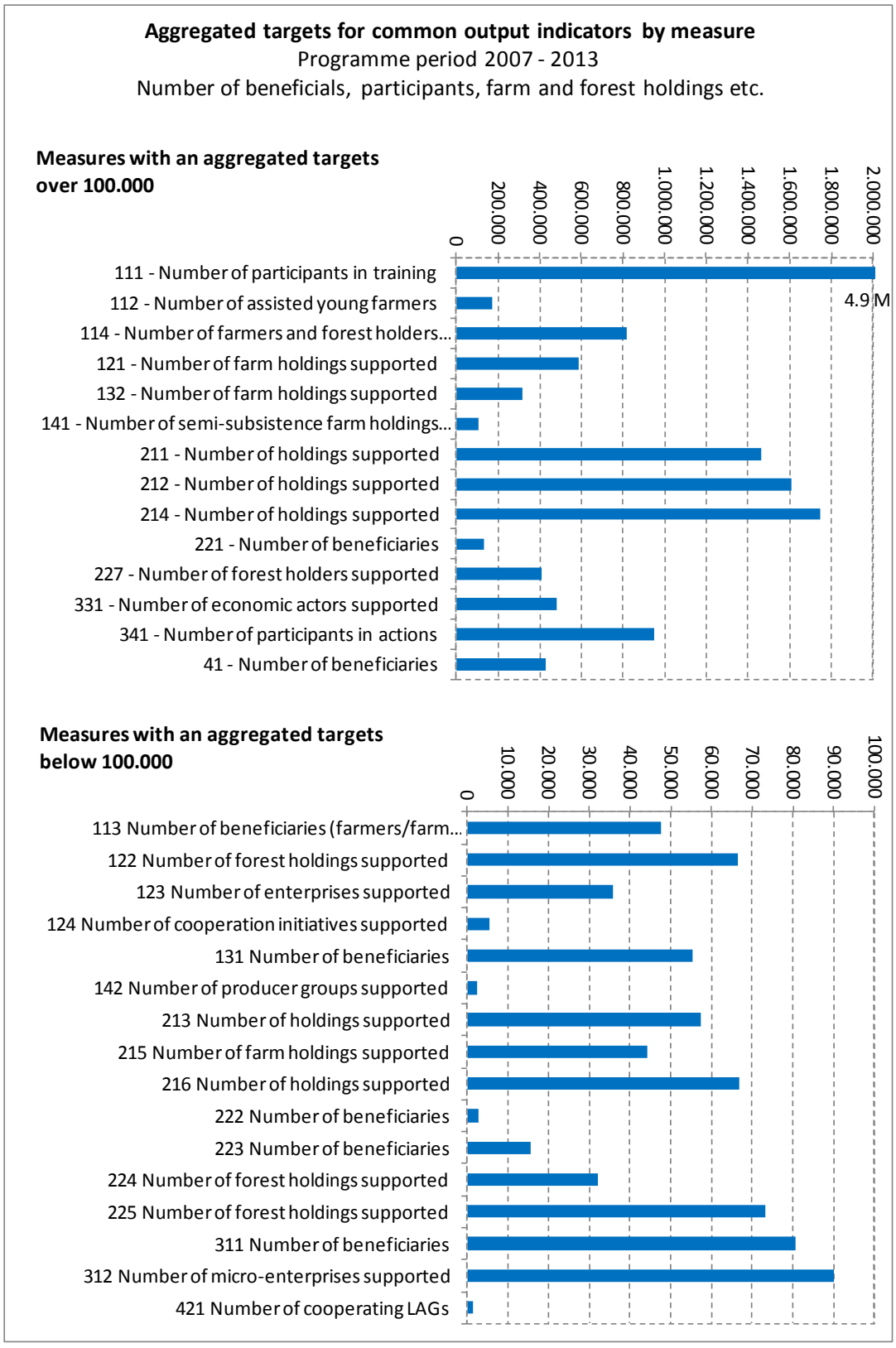
The targets for total volume of investment are the highest for M121 modernisation of agricultural holdings, followed by M123 adding value to agricultural and forestry products, M321 basic services for the economy and rural population and M227 non-productive investments.

The total investments of EUR 38 m for M121 modernisation of agricultural holdings have to be interpreted considering 600.000 farmers and forest holders targeted in total for the whole period, i.e. on average EUR 70.000 per beneficiary, which can be considered reasonable.

Accordingly the in total targeted investments of EUR 27 m for M123 adding value to agricultural and forestry products compared to 36.000 enterprises supported result in EUR 750.000 per enterprise. This measure has a high share of private investment (up to 85%) and thus reflects the costs for creating added value by supporting the implementation of new products and/or techniques.

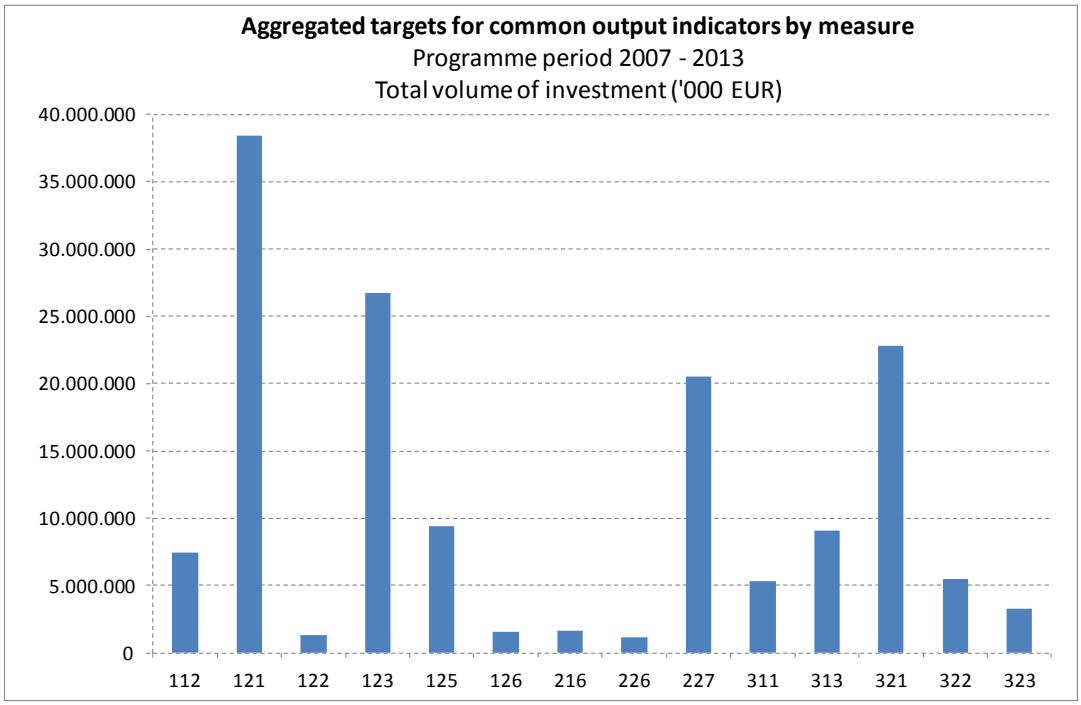
For M227 non-productive investments the aggregated target is set at about 400.000 forest holders and EUR 20 bn of total investment, i.e. on average EUR 50.000 per forest holder. However the actual support per beneficiary depends on the kind of investment undertaken and the improvement of the added value linked to it –which is pointed out clearly in the chapter before.

Figure 11: Aggregated targets for output indicators – total volume of investment (EUR '000)



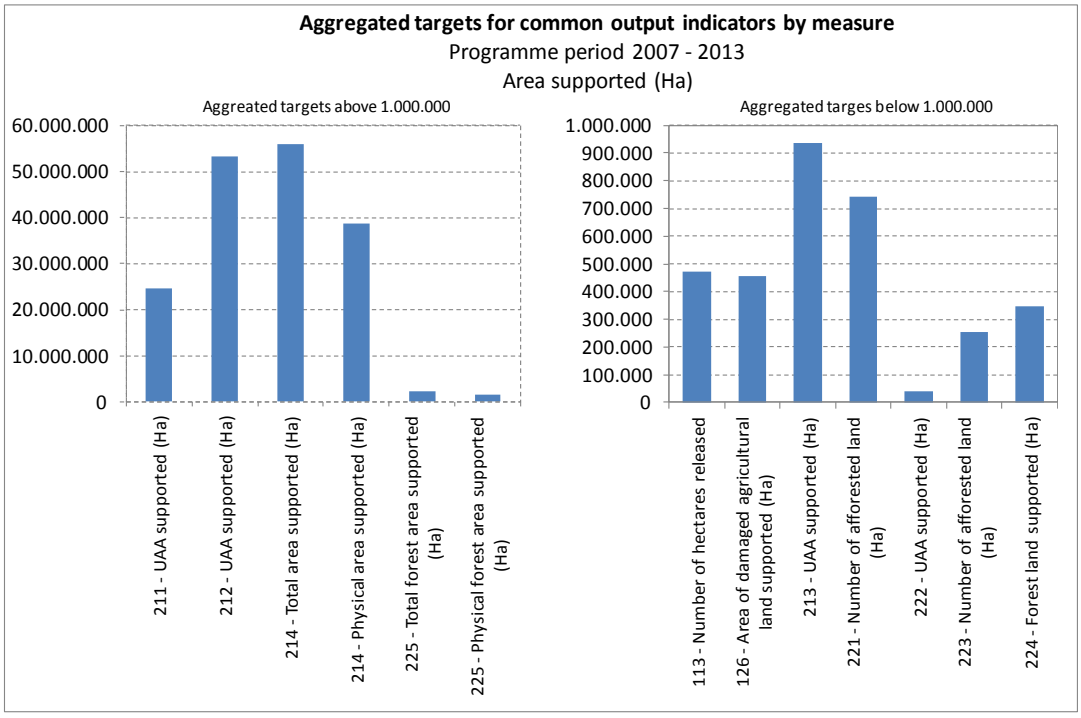
Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 12: Aggregated targets for output indicators – total volume of investment (EUR '000)



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 13: Aggregated targets for output indicators – area supported (ha)



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

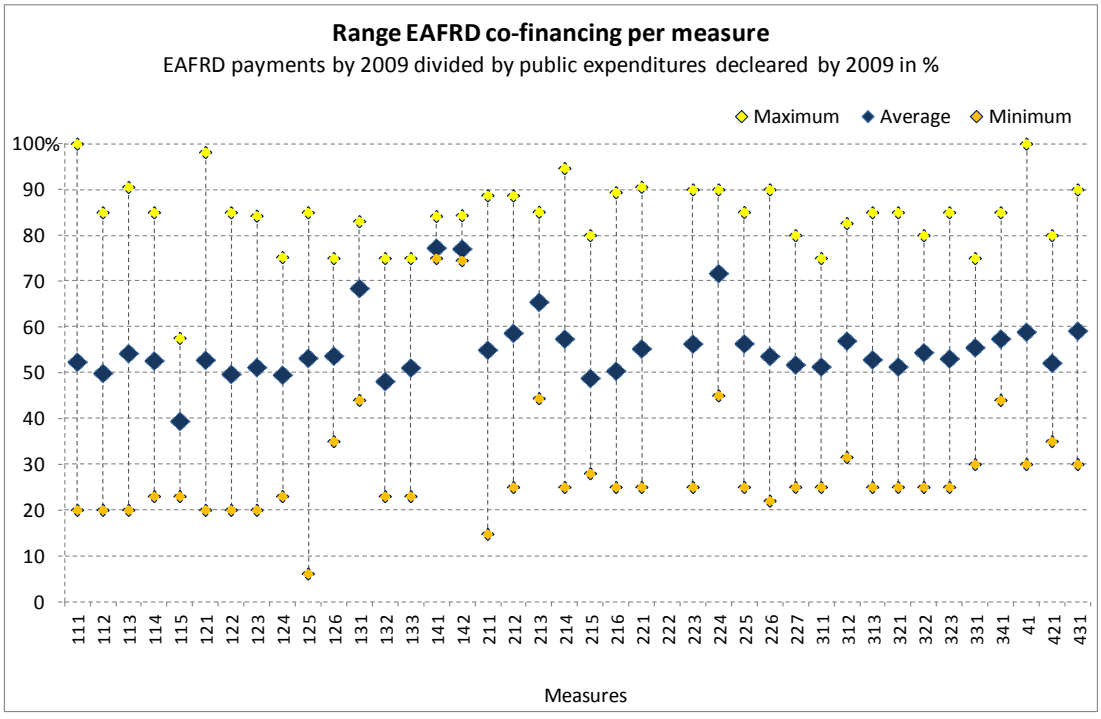
Range of co-financing

The range of co-financing is measured as total EAFRD payments declared up to 2009 divided by total public expenditure declared up to 2009.[11] The co-financing rate reflects the specifications in the regulations and is illustrated per measure in Figure 14. The maximum figures represent the highest rate of co-financing reported in the first half of the programme. The calculation was cleared from six outliers[12]. On average the EAFRD co-financing rate is 54,4% over all measures. For the majority of measures the co-financing rate ranges from 20% to 85%.

The range is from 6% (for M125 Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation with high levels of national support in IT-Lazio) to 100% (in UK-Northern Ireland for M111 and LEADER, where 100% of public expenditure has been provided by the EAFRD so far). High EAFRD co-financing rates are in general reported in the new MS and the outermost regions, as specified in the regulations. Other measures with high EAFRD contribution so far are M121 in UK-Northern Ireland or M214 and M221 in PT-Continent.

It has to be considered, that this numbers reflect the situation at the end of 2009 and it is likely that they will change during the next half of the programme.

Figure 14: Range of aid intensities per measure



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009

[11] Unfortunately information on private expenditures is not available exhaustively in the MTEs. Thus further specifications of the investments undertaken so far, e.g. the range of aid intensities, are not possible at this stage.

[12] These outliers are due to the re-budgeting process of 2009 and occurred in M211 for UK-England, M216 DE for Sweden and for ES-Baleares, M225 for DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, M227 for ES-Baleares and M323 for UK-England.

Programme implementation of output indicators at MS level

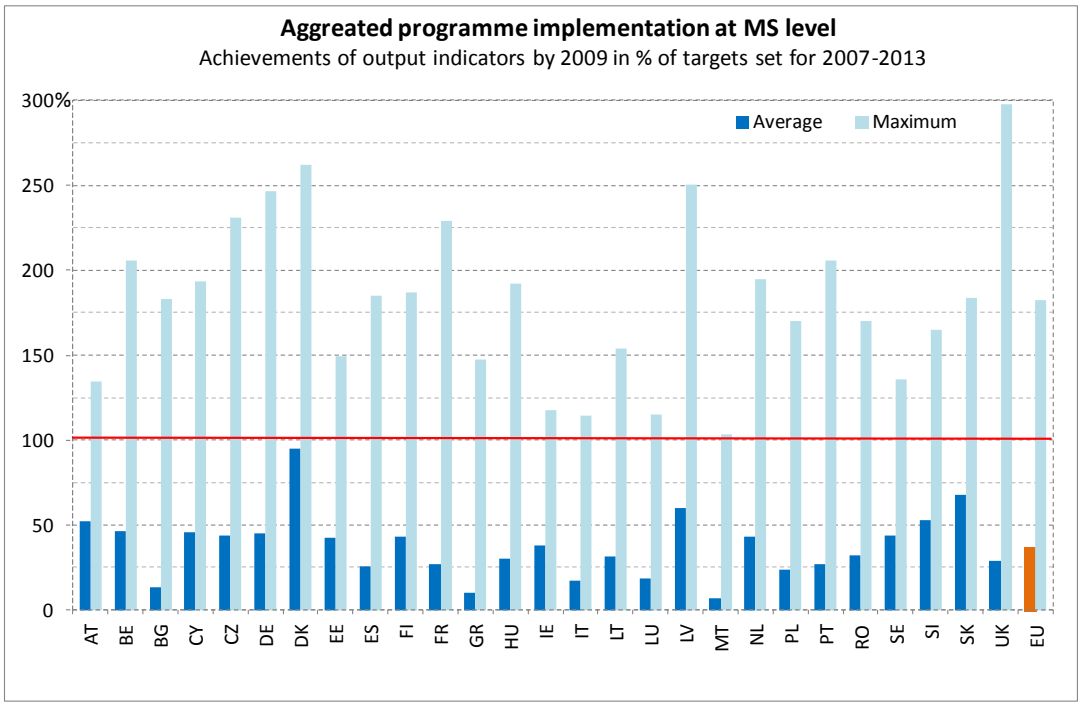
In the following section programme achievements, as measured by common output values, are presented as aggregated figures at MS level. They show the aggregated differences between achievements and target values, for all output indicators that reported on both.

To start off with, from a statistical point of view these number have to be interpreted cautiously at the midterm of the programme. The slow implementation of some measures (and thus low or missing achievements) is overlaid by those measures starting off well (e.g. axis 2 measures, see financial absorption in this chapter), i.e. under achievements are level by over achievement at the aggregated MS level.

There is no MS that has already reported achievements for all indicators initially budgeted, basically because it was not possible to implement all measures until the end of 2009. The minimum of "zero" is thus not explicitly shown in Figure 15.

On average over all MS and programmes, 38% of the output indicators have been achieved by 2009 (Figure 15). However the share of achievement by MS varies widely from 7% (Malta) to 95% (Denmark).

Figure 15: Output indicators – Aggregated programme implementation at MS level



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators, data cleared from outliers with achievements > 300% see Table 10

Apparently each MS reports singular achievements that are significantly higher than anticipated at this stage in programme implementation; although the outliers (above 300%) have already been eliminated in this figure. These outliers occur in the programmes of Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Poland, Slovakia and the Netherlands. They are mainly due to the setting of inappropriately low targets. Sometimes the measurement of the achievements might be unreliable as it used information inconsistent to the data of the planners of the targets, as

judged from other information mentioned in the documents (e.g. in Hungary). The outliers eliminated are listed in Table 10.

Table 10: Output indicators – outliers at MS level

MS	Measure	Output Indicator	Target	Achieve-ment	%
BE	331	Number of economic actors supported	3.470	70.332	2.027
HU	341	Number of skills acquisition, animation actions supported	4.500	83.750	1.861
HU	431	Number of actions supported	210	3.679	1.752
HU	341	Number of participants in actions	100.000	1.454.534	1.455
DE	214	Number of contracts	24.890	142.308	572
AT	341	Number of participants in actions	1.500	8.532	569
SE	341	Number of skills acquisition, animation actions supported	200	1.011	506
PL	113	Number of hectares released	26.600	131.016	493
SK	341	Number of skills acquisition, animation actions supported	140	645	461
NL	111	Number of participants in training	700	3.032	433
BE	411	Total population in LAG area	451.000	1.629.093	361
DE	225	Number of contracts	1.950	6.810	349

Source: Data collection on common output indicators

Figure 16 illustrates the number of indicators classified by implementation status, i.e. intensity of targets achieved and number of indicators, where no achievements are reported yet.

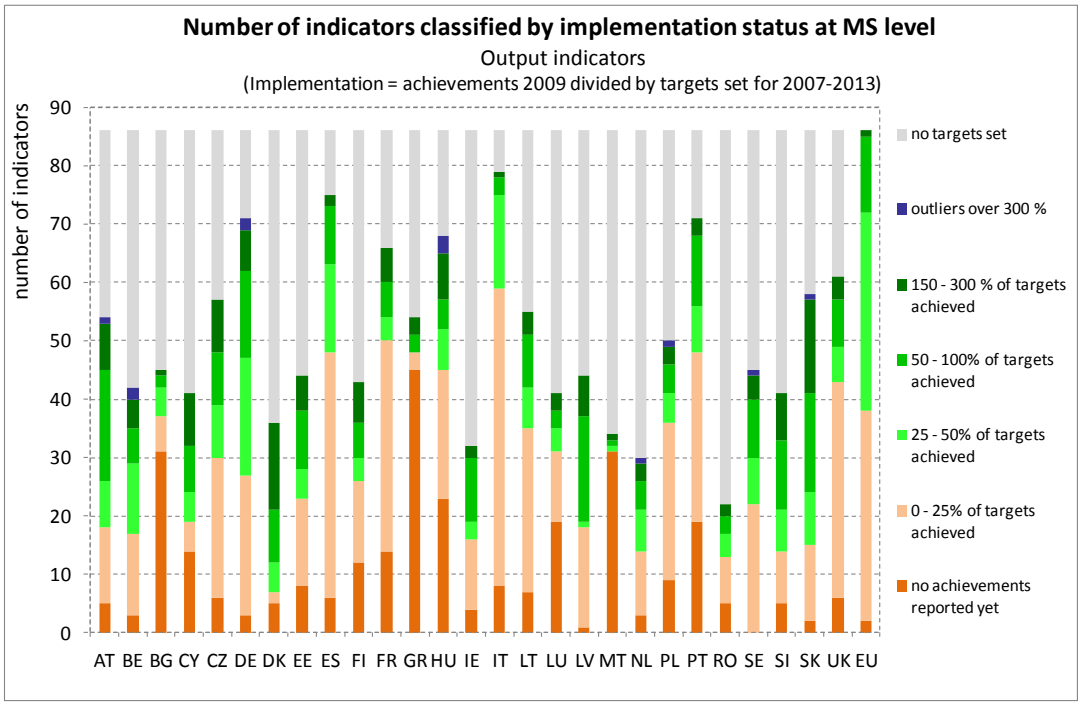
The picture is rather diverse. Some programmes are performing fast, other very slow, on average almost 40% of the indicators show a progress below 25%.

Fast performers, defined as those MS, where the majority of indicators with reported achievements reach more than 50% of the overall targets by the end of 2009 are Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia and Slovenia. These MS show good performances in all axes. All of them are small MS that execute one programme only – which can easily explain faster execution due to less administrative effort.

Slow performers, i.e. programmes where the majority of indicators with achievements available perform below 25% are Italy, Poland, Portugal and the UK. Most of these MS comprise several programmes. Here well and poor performance programmes neutralize each other or administrative difficulties are mentioned frequently (e.g. stated for Italy).

In Greece, for most indicators achievements are not available yet, same is true for Bulgaria, Malta, Hungary and Luxembourg. This is express in the very low average progress already expressed in Figure 15.

Figure 16: Output indicators – number of indicators classified by implementation status



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators,, data cleared from outliers with achievements > 300% see Table 10

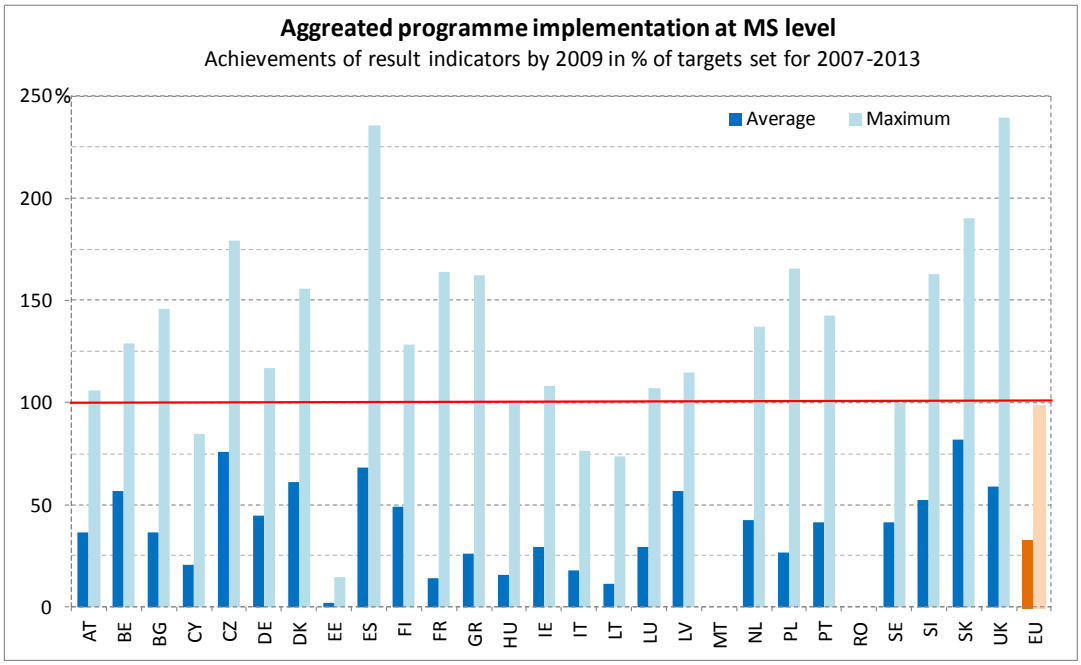
Programme implementation of result indicators at MS level

On average, 33% of the result indicator targets for the MS have been achieved by now (Figure 17). At MS level the achievement rate varies widely. For Malta and Romania no information on result indicator achievements is available. Other MS report average achievements of more than 50% of the targets, e.g. Slovakia (82%) or Czech Republic (76%).

In Figure 17 outliers above 300% achievement rate or with negative achievement rates are not included; they are listed in Table 11 instead. Negative achievements occur for "increase in GVA in supported holdings/enterprises (EUR '000)" in the Czech Republic and Lithuania, as well as for "increase in non-agricultural gross value added in supported business (EUR '000)" in the Czech Republic and Estonia. One explanation for this could be that in these countries the first tips of the economic crisis are already visible. It can be anticipated that other programmes were affected likewise in the following months and those mentioning it already are the first – or the first honest – to report on negative developments.

Significant achievements above target levels are mainly affiliated with the difficulty to set targets on result indicators and represent an underestimation of the achievements possible in most of the cases. Especially the area under successful land management (be it for water quality, mitigation climate change, or avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment), as well as the number of participants, seem to be difficult to predict beforehand as here outlying achievements have already been achieved.

Figure 17: Result indicators – Aggregated programme implementation at MS level



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators,, data cleared from outliers with achievements > 300% or negative achievement rates see Table 11.

Figure 18 shows the number of indicators classified by implementation status by MS and points out clearly the high number of indicators without achievements reported yet. Here the inequality in achievement rates is more evident. For Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Malta and Romania a lot of information on achievements is still missing, while other MS like Austria, Germany, Slovakia, Spain and Italy have given information on all or a majority of indicators.

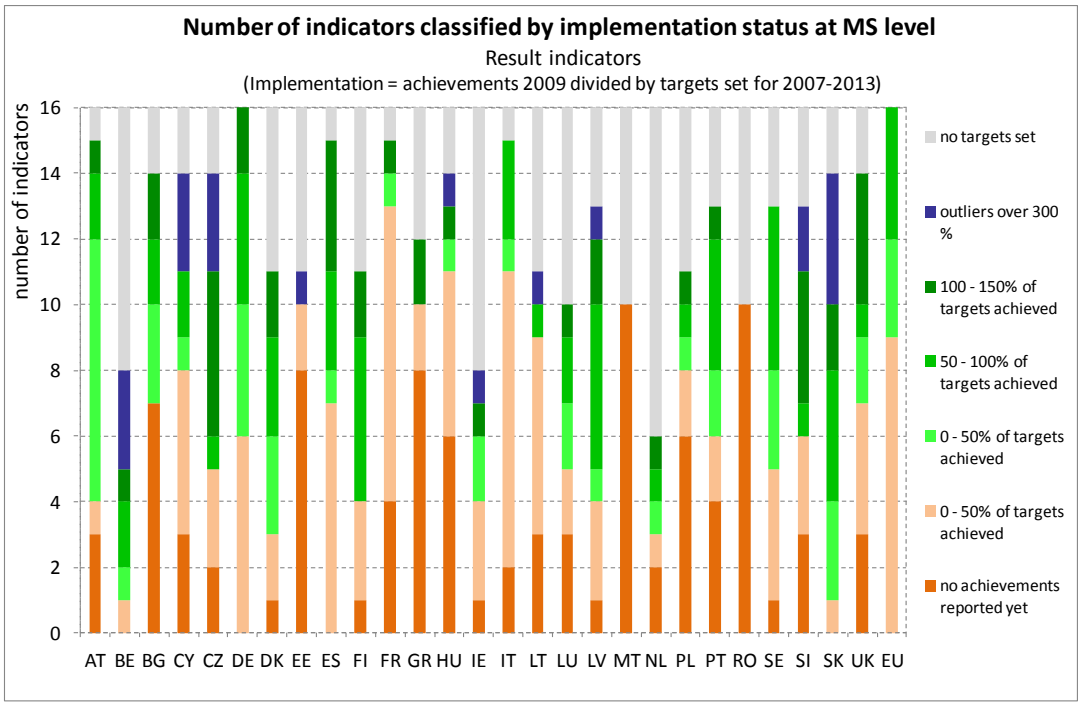
Table 11: Result indicators – outliers at MS level

MS	Ind.	Result Indicator	target	achievement	%
CY	62	Area under successful land management contributing to: (b) water quality	40	16.198	40.495
CY	63	Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	10	472	4.720
BE	121	Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity in the field of axis 3 (unique no of persons)	2.000	69.468	3.473
SK	101	Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services (unique number of persons)	297.000	3.778.173	1.272
BE	81	Gross number of jobs created	295	3.486	1.182
BE	91	Additional number of tourist visits	16.000	120.916	756
LV	21	Increase in GVA in supported holdings/enterprises (EUR '000)	3.900	28.250	724
IE	91	Additional number of tourist visits	20.000	112.169	561
HU	63	Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	68.000	352.249	518
CY	65	Area under successful land management contributing to: (e) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment	15.680	77.615	495
SK	111	Increase in internet penetration in rural areas (unique no of persons)	44.700	209.710	469
SK	63	Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	200.000	855.829	428

MS	Ind.	Result Indicator	target	achievement	%
CZ	65	Area under successful land management contributing to: (e) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment	31.000	109.000	352
SK	64	Area under successful land management contributing to: (d) soil quality	250.000	857.775	343
SI	71	Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business (EUR '000)	2	7	367
SI	63	Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	65.000	215.196	331
LT	21	Increase in GVA in supported holdings/enterprises (EUR '000)	85.661	-936	-1
EE	71	Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business (EUR '000)	5.273	-3.713	-70
CZ	71	Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business (EUR '000)	4.300	-35.877	-834
CZ	21	Increase in GVA in supported holdings/enterprises (EUR '000)	18.000	-265.793	-1.477

Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 18: Result indicators – number of indicators classified by implementation status



Source: Data collection on common output indicators. Data cleared from outliers with achievements > 300% see Table 11

4.1.2 Judgement

When looking at the findings the overall picture suggests that the programme implementation has been slow and that the output of RDPs has been lagging behind the targets. Nonetheless some measures seem to have performed better that others, which does not come as a surprise, as these are measures that concern regular annual payments with very few targeting criteria (e.g. axis 1 aids), or they concern payments based on multi-annual contracts which, once the

initial agreement is successfully negotiated, are paid regularly, e.g. M211 and M212 (LFA payments) as well as M213 (Natura 2000). Thus these measures are simply prolonged over the programming periods and start up smoothly in every RDP period as beneficiaries do not change and administrations have experience in their management.

Thus fast performers with the majority of indicators reaching more than 50% of the overall targets for 2007-2013 are Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia and Slovenia. These MS execute one (small) programme only and have an emphasis on regular payments in axis 2 or measures in axis 1 prolonged from the previous period. Nevertheless most of them also managed a good start for axis 3 measures, probably because of less administrative difficulties of small programmes.

On the other hand the slow implementation and uptake of the programmes is to be explained for the new MS Bulgaria and Romania, as their administrations have to adapt existing and to implement new processes according for the framework of the new programmes.

Further slow performers, i.e. programmes where the majority of indicators with achievements available perform below 25% are Italy, Poland, Portugal and the UK. Some of these MS comprise several programmes. In these cases, well and poor performance programmes may neutralize each other or administrative difficulties are mentioned frequently (e.g. stated for Italy).

In Greece, for most indicators achievements are not available yet, same is true for Malta, Hungary and Luxembourg. The performance of these MS is thus represented as weak within the analysis.

Additionally the external shock of the economic crisis, which started in 2009, seems to shine through the slow implementation. Notably some measures in Axis 1 which require private co-funding have been subject to restricted applications in some MS, as private capital has been increasingly hard to raise and private loans have been reduced by banks. This problem increased throughout 2010 and 2011, so the implication is that delays in spending on these measures will show up in the ex-post evaluations, as well.

Moreover delays are reported for the LEADER measures, e.g. because of the time consuming selection of LAGs.

The apparently and often counter-intuitive large variations in support levels offer some lessons for the interpretation of such results at the mid-term stage of a programme: The problem with ongoing and mid-term evaluations in relation to the reporting of progress of the programmes is the need for consistent and synchronised information: i.e. the physical performance of the programme should be matched to the expenditures actually triggering this performance. Temporal mismatch between these two sources of data leads to problems in correctly accounting the outputs, results and impacts of programmes in relation to the expenditures.

4.1.3 Conclusions

In terms of progress made the MTEs reported that generally RDPs showed a slow uptake and that by 2009, a majority of measures and programmes had achieved well below 30% of planned expenditure.

This general observation is put into perspective by some programmes with an especially high rate of spending (IE, LU, IT/Bolzano, GE/Hessen, FI/Aland), where payments based on multi-annual contracts and measures continued from the previous period are of high importance.

On the other hand those programmes lagging behind have been islands and/or outermost regions (FR/Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Martinique, PT-Madeira), where administrate and managerial capacity among both public administrations and beneficiaries might be expected to be lower than in EU average. Also the new MS Bulgaria and Romania, who had to adapt their administrative to the framework of the new programmes, where thus hampered in their progress.

Other programmes were hampered by the slow uptake of measures that were not included in the programmes of the previous period (e.g. IT-Puglia).

Additionally the first signs of the crisis affected the programme implementation in terms of low capacities of pre-financing or co-financing (FR-Guyane, ES-Canarias, IT-Calabria). Seldom natural hazards slowed down the activities of the managing authority (like the earthquake in IT-Abruzzo).

On the measure side there are also some exceptions from the general observation of slow uptake of the programmes: which does not come as a surprise, as these are measures, which were signed off in the previous period over time (i.e. they are prolonged over several programming periods – e.g. LFA payments).

In terms of programme achievements compared against fixed targets, the performance is generally sketchy: there is a rather large number of indicators (surprisingly more output- than result indicators) where no target has been set in the first place, so that no real performance level can be estimated. Moreover in quite a number of cases no performance has been reported yet. For those cases where targets were set and output/results reported the majority of programmes performed within the range to be expected – i.e. up to 50% of the total performance envisaged.

In the cases where extreme outliers of performance have been reported, these imply that the setting of targets has been especially difficult. Among the output indicators these were generally the ones concerning large numbers of potential beneficiaries (“economic actors”, “actions”, “participants”, etc.). In the case of the result indicators, these were the targets for areas under successful land management contributing to climate change or additional number of tourist visits.

4.2 Topic 1.2: Problems/challenges identified at programme or measure level including reasons given for late/slow implementation

4.2.1 Findings

As pointed out above – the uptake of the ongoing RDP period has been rather slow in many Member States. Only a very limited number of programmes demonstrate levels of implementation which were up to expectations at the mid-term stage. As for those programmes with the highest rate of implementation and absorption rates – as listed above – the following reasons for this performance may be stated.

Many (about a third of all RDPs) of these programmes apply measures, that have been applied throughout the previous programming period and are simply prolonged in the ongoing one, so that hardly any frictional losses through measure set-ups occur – this holds true for M113 early retirement, M211 Natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas and M212 Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas. This phenomenon may be seen in AT, FI, and DE/Bayern

Generally the following problems have been listed throughout a majority of MTEs[13]:

- The slowest uptake of measures has been in **Axis 4,** as the selection procedures of LAGs have been slow in many Member States (due to the new approach of integrating LEADER into the mainstream RDP). In many cases the delimitation of areas has caused problems (LAG areas have been adjusted to administrative borders – thus changing the number and areas of existing LAGs; LAG selection has been set up in a different way than in the previous programming period with the explicit aim of covering all rural areas with LAGs – thus new structures had to be set up) – these problems have been mentioned in many programmes – e.g. CZ, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, ES-Andalucia, ES-Canarias, ES-La Rioja, FR-Corse, UK-Northern Ireland
- Another reason for problems has been **administrative issues** – mostly connected to the delivery mechanisms of the programmes: in detail, the restructuring of administrative units has been mentioned in Germany/Bayern, Brandenburg & Berlin, Niedersachsen & Bremen, ES-Andalucia, Galicia, FR-Corse, Hungary, PT-Continent. In several cases the lack of manpower in the administration has been mentioned as a bottleneck for smooth implementation of the programmes – in particular, the new Member States as well as the small Outermost Regions have been confronted with this challenge. Another administrative problem has been flaws in designing the implementation mechanisms of single measures – mainly in connection with M214 agri-environment payments, but also M213 and M224 Natura 2000 payments. These problems have mainly been connected with overcomplicated procedures, unclear selection criteria and/or eligibility criteria. The last challenge to be identified in connection with administrative issues is the lack of proper demarcation/complementarity with other policies: in many cases, this has led to an underachievement of the RDP measures, as potential beneficiaries applied for

[13] These findings are all based upon the statements within the MTEs, which means that they themselves are judgements by the evaluators – therefore they are listed under this section "findings".

support from competing policies (mostly national/regional policies in place) – this phenomenon is noted in Belgium/Flanders, Belgium/Wallonia, and France/Corse

- Setting up **procedures and establishing a framework for managing the programmes** was often delayed: the handling of project applications and efficient conduct of the programme did not function well in the first half of the programming period. This has often been due to problems already listed above (administrative problems like lack of staff, or slow establishment of rules). In some cases the multitude of administrative actors involved in the management of the programmes has been explicitly listed as an obstacle – see e.g. Italy/Calabria. Another component of management procedures which has suffered implementation delays has been the monitoring system in several Member States: especially where Managing Authorities seek to establish an IT supported monitoring and data processing scheme. This has caused problems at the outset due to short implementation periods – the most prominent case is the implementation of the OSIRIS tool for monitoring the French programmes, which caused delays in programme implementation, but problems in particular were noted in Finland, Italy/Friuli Venetia Gulia, Romania and Poland. The establishment of appropriate environmental reference data (e.g. on biodiversity, water quality) seemed to have caused problems, which does not come as a surprise, as this information is generally only obtained through long-term environmental research for which, in many cases, the time series data is missing.
- In some cases the slower than anticipated spend observed is connected to the **circumstances of programme implementation**: in some MTEs the first dip of the economic crisis, which hit between 2008 and 2009, has been stated as a reason for this. Particularly in the New Member States, the southern EU-15 and Ireland, the impacts of the downturn have been significant. In some, a lack of private capital necessary for co-financing investments (e.g. under measure 121, Modernisation of agricultural holdings, 123 Adding value, 125 Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry) has caused a reduction in the number of beneficiaries. In other cases, a lack of public co-financing as a result of the economic crisis has also been a serious problem (e.g. in Ireland). Another reason given for the late uptake of many programmes has been a difficult or lengthy approval procedure of the RDP between the MS and the , by the Commission. It is not clear from the MTEs which of the negotiating partners caused the difficulties or delays, but the fact remains that for several programmes the approval procedure took relatively long (e.g. ES-Andalucia, Asturias, Baleares, Castilla-la-Mancha, Cataluna; Finland; Greece; UK-England). In one case (Sweden), the unfavourable exchange rate with the Euro was stated as an obstacle to smooth programme implementation.
- One more significant issue mentioned in several programmes, which hampered the implementation of the RDPs was a **lack of active promotion and/or information provision to potential beneficiaries.** A lack of transparency about selection and eligibility criteria, as well as very little advertising of measures, was mentioned in several MTEs as leading to low expenditure: Romania, Italy/Basilicata, Molise, France/Guadeloupe.

4.2.2 Conclusions

Smooth implementation of the RDP is reported in relatively few RDPs. In the majority of cases the MTEs report several reasons for slow uptake of the programmes, and cite difficulties in implementing the measures effectively. The most prominent reasons are administrative issues, including difficulties with the required procedures and in establishing a satisfactory framework for managing the programmes. More details of these and other implementation issues are examined under Theme 4 – delivery – in this report.

It is also relevant to note here that the programmes and measures for which the expenditure profiles are fastest tend to be those which involve relatively little discretion in the process of funding disbursement, at least once initial approval is given. For measures which require checks and/or further evidence before funds are released, the spending process appears slower than planned, suggesting that Managing authorities have over-estimated their ability to out-turn efficiently, for these kinds of measure.

4.3 Topic 1.3: Measures dropped or modified, and the reasons given

4.3.1 Findings

Due to the slow uptake of programmes within the short period covered by the MTE, the anticipated level of changes within single programmes should be limited. However, in reality the MTEs and their accompanying documents (Annual Progress Reports) detail quite substantial modifications to many programmes. Modifications were mainly in the following areas.

- **Shifts of budget between measures**: these mainly occurred in 2009 entailing the Economic Recovery Package and the Health Check. The Measures 121, Modernisation of agricultural holdings (especially for dairy farming) and 321, Basic services for the economy and rural population (especially broadband internet) benefited the most from these shifts. Nevertheless overall, measure 214 Agri-environment payments has been the most modified measure – partly due to budget shifts (mostly involving increases for organic farming) but also including all other types of modification identified below. More broadly, some programmes modified RDP budgets by increasing the co-financing share contributed by national/regional authorities.
- **Change in types of beneficiary or subject supported**: in some cases the modifications affected targeting of aid in these ways. Often, low absorption rates have led to a re-alignment addressing new groups of beneficiaries or enlarging their scope, in order to improve the speed of uptake of measures.
- **Change in eligibility criteria**: Some of the programmes learned lessons from problems encountered with strict eligibility criteria, by loosening them. Others changed the criteria in order to avoid overlap and competition with non-RDP measures.
- Generally, one can detect a pattern involving a **strengthening of investment related measures** (e.g. 121 Modernisation of agricultural holdings, 125 Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry) at the cost of measures supporting knowledge transfer and human capital (e.g. 111 Vocational training and

information actions, 114 Use of advisory services).. In addition, the budgets for **environmental measures** in Axis 2 have generally been strengthened.

- In terms of Axes, the main budget shift observed has been from Axis 3 to Axis 1, underlining the general trend towards agri-sector investment measures. This observation is not based on hard facts (budget shifts have not been reported systematically in the MTE reports) but on the sum of single obersvations in the MTE reports.
- A few budget shifts have been conducted because of external shocks like natural disasters – see e.g. strengthening of measure 126 Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters and introducing appropriate prevention actions in Portugal/Madeira.

The quantification of these shifts and changes in the budgets is impossible at an aggregate level, due to the very different reporting approaches in the MTEs and APRs – as pointed out in the Methodology section of this report.

Some programmes exhibit contrasting trends to those identified here, e.g. due to the economic crisis in Ireland, agri-environmental support and also investment measures were cut. The Baltic countries tried to overcome the problem of lack of private finance to co-fund investments by re-organising investment measures and introducing financial engineering measures side by side with investment support: e.g. loan funds, to enable access to private funds more easily.

Considering the reasons why these modifications occurred, the MTEs stated mainly the following:

- Lack of demand for specific measures and alignment of measures in order to increase programme efficiency (lower administrative costs for fewer measures – e.g. LU).
- Streamlining of programmes – i.e. eliminating overlaps between measures (e.g. Measure 214 Agri-environment payments and 215 Animal welfare payments).
- (anticipated) Health Check and Economic Recovery Package drivers for modifications

As for the measures dropped within the time span of the MTE, there is no clear pattern to be observed. The MTEs mentioned that 14 measures were dropped from one or more RDPs but no measure stands out as being more often dropped than others.

These 14 measures dropped (and programmes concerned) are:

- 112 Setting up of young farmers (LV)
- 114 Use of advisory services (ES-Asturias)
- 115 Setting up of management, relief and advisory services (ES-Asturias, IT-Liguria)
- 121 Modernisation of agricultural holdings (IE)
- 122 Improvement of the economic value of forests (LU)
- 125 Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry (LU)
- 131 Meeting standards based on Community legislation (ES-Andalucia)

- 133 Information and promotion activities (ES-Castilla y Leon)
- 212 Payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas (ES-Asturias)
- 223 First afforestation of non-agricultural land (IT-Liguria)
- 225 Forest-environment payments (LU)
- 227 Non-productive investments (LU)
- 331 Training and information (HU)
- 341 Skills acquisition, animation and implementation of local development strategies (DE-Saarland)

There is no clear pattern in terms of which measures are given up or in terms which type of programmes (in terms of geographical location, or territorial coverage) dropped which kind of measures. Except for Axis 4, measures from all Axes have been cancelled. The only general observations are as follows.

- Financially insignificant measures are dropped – thus simplifying the RDPs – especially those related to knowledge transfer and human capital (114 Use of advisory services, 115 Setting up of management, relief and advisory services, 341 Skills acquisition, animation and implementation of local development strategies, 331 Training and information), and Axis 2 (227 Non-productive investments).
- MTEs hardly state any reasons why measures have been dropped altogether, although two possible reasons are implied from a number of reports. These are: the low cost-effectiveness of measure implementation: those measures where the cost-effectiveness ratio for administering the measure became negative, have been given up – i.e. too few beneficiaries in relation to too costly an administrative process; and
- by dropping some measures, potential overlaps of these measures with other more successful measures have been removed – e.g. dropping measure 213 Natura 2000 payments and payments linked to Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) and strengthening measure 214 Agri-environment payments at the same time. Hungary in particular applied this strategy and streamlined measures in this way.

The majority of modifications were conducted in 2010 in the aftermath of the Health Check and Economic recovery Package and fighting the high tide of the economic crisis, of which in 2009 only first effects should have been visible. Thus the real effects of these modifications will only become visible in the ex-post evaluations.

4.3.2 Conclusions

In the majority of the programmes (about 70 of the 92 programmes analysed) modifications were made or measures have been dropped. In the remaining programmes it is also possible that changes may have occurred, but they were not reported in the MTEs or APRs.

Most of the changes observed have been budget shifts and changes to the beneficiaries and subjects supported or the eligibility criteria for measures. There appears to have been a tendency

for RDPs to have been modified in order to increase the rate of spending – so shifting funds into those measures already spending well, or dropping measures with low or no spend, as well as to make some changes to overcome unforeseen problems or issues arising due to changed economic or wider policy/legislative contexts, in these early years. Whilst shifting funds or loosening eligibility conditions in order to increase RDP spending may often be fully justified in the context of local needs and opportunities, it might also in some cases represent a move towards less targeted or less ambitious measures or delivery approaches, which might eventually suggest lower additionality from the RDPs. These are issues that will be re-examined in our analysis of theme 2: impacts.

4.4 Topic 1.4: An indication of whether Economic Recovery Package and Health Check priorities have been taken into account for eligibility and/or selection criteria

4.4.1 Findings

The CAP Health Check, agreed on by the EU agricultural ministers in November of 2008, was initiated in order to modernise the CAP, improve EU agriculture's ability to respond to market signals, and simplify and streamline CAP tools by making them more widely accessible. The "Preparing the Health Check (HC) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform" communication from the Commission identifies future European challenges as those of climate change, renewable energy, water management, and biodiversity. Within this, providing broadband access to underprovided communities, restructuring the dairy sector, capitalising on agriculture's position as a potential carbon sink, and improving water management and preventing biodiversity decline through research, innovation and protection, were identified as areas where additional funding should be focused.

Additionally, in 2008, the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP) was released by the Commission in order to realign the EU economy within a changing global and local context, and consistent with the Lisbon Strategy. The main measures of the EERP were focused on innovation, knowledge economies, low carbon economies, and the structural reforms seen as necessary to achieve these goals.

The funding priorities were

- Climate Change
- Renewable Energy
- Water Management
- Biodiversity
- restructuring the dairy sector; and
- innovation linked to any of the above priorities.

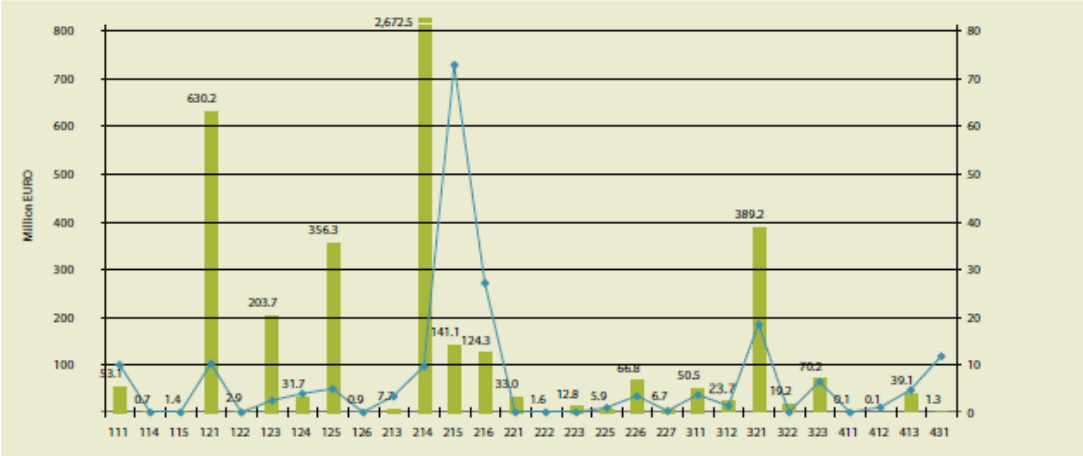
Analysing the MTEs and the accompanying documents, it is quite clear that almost all of the programmes began to prepare for modifications due to the Economic Recovery Package and the

Health Check during the period of monitoring (2007-2009), but that in almost all cases, the new priorities were envisaged to be implemented in 2010. However the MTEs give no clear indication of the ways in which individual measures have been modified, as a result (e.g. new eligibility criteria). MS/Regions took two attitudes in relation to HC and ERP: 1) adding new financing to existing measures, 2) introducing new measures.

The **agri-environment measures** (code 214) were planned to receive the highest proportion of new funding across all Member States, at 54% of the total additional budget. This was followed by the **modernisation of agricultural holdings** (code 121), **basic services for the economy and rural population** (code 321) and **infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry** (code 125). Figure 19 contains a more detailed description of additional funding per measure. These figures could not be derived from the MTEs or APRs of the MTE period, but they are ex-post observations by the Commission (*EC EN RD, "Fact Sheet: Overview of the CAP Health Check and the European Economic Recovery Plan Modification of the RDPs" EC (n.d.), http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/recovery-plan_en.pdf p 4).*

The adding of new measures/sub-measures was to be observed in some of the RDPs (e.g. DE/Sachsen Anhalt, ES/Aragon) – mostly in within Measure 214 Agri-environment payments and/or 121 Modernisation of agricultural holdings.

Figure 19: **Allocation of HC and EERP funding per measure (million EUR) and variation with respect to the previous budget allocation (%)**



Source: EC EN RD, "Fact Sheet: Overview of the CAP Health Check and the European Economic Recovery Plan Modification of the RDPs" EC (n.d.) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/healthcheck/recovery-plan_en.pdf p 4

For more details on the findings concerning the initial budgetary allocations and the changes due to the Health Check and the Recovery Package see Topic 2.2.3. below.

4.4.2 Judgement

The issue of the Health Check and the Recovery Package has been a relatively low concern in the MTEs – apparently MS and regions were only preparing for the implementation of these changes – thus as most MTE reports were written during 2009, these developments and budget shifts are not extensively analysed in the reports. What could be found however are the preparatory steps towards the changes triggered by the HC and the Recovery Package, which lead to either budget reallocations (only fully implemented in 2010) or new measures/sub-measures introduced by the end of 2009.

4.4.3 Conclusions

Generally a majority of MTEs note the preparation of changes in the RDPs due to the HC and the EERP, but the actual shifting of budgets and increase of funds for certain measures has not been reported. Nonetheless, from the findings it becomes clear that RDPs intended to take on board the new priorities but budget changes were actually affected in 2010.

5. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 2: Impacts

Subtheme 2.1: Overall impact of the programmes

5.1 Topic 2.1.1: Main impacts identified at programme and EU level (social, economic and environmental, with a section devoted to each of the seven impact indicators)

This chapter gives an overview of the aggregate impact achieved by the programmes, at MS and EU level on the basis of the impact indicators, where possible in relation to the targets set.

5.1.1 Findings on economic impacts

Economic productivity and growth (Net Value-Added, Gross Domestic Product)

Positive impacts upon NVA were noted for the majority of programmes (14 national and almost 50 regional).There is no obvious grouping geographically, among those 6 Member States and 20 regions which did not report a positive impact. For some of these, the MTE states clearly that the scale of RDP funding is too small to have a notable impact on the rural economy (e.g.UK/England; DE/Hamburg), while for others it is attributed more to a low or delayed level of implementation (e.g. CY, IT/Basilicata). A number of MTE state clearly that they have not computed an impact value because they judge it too early to do so (e.g. mainland FR, LU, NL).

An "aggregate value" of the impact, summed from the figures compiled from MTE indicator tables, is not a reliable indicator of impact at EU level, for several reasons. Quantified impact estimates for the RDP were calculated in only 32 MTEs (less than half of the total), in which the range of values for NVA in each RDP in PPS is extremely wide (from less than EUR 1 m to more than EUR 1,4 bn). The pattern of variation in these values is not easily related to either the context or the budgetary expenditures involved. It appears the reasons for widely varying individual impact figures between Programmes are linked to the variety of approaches used to make the calculations.

For 22 of the MTE that calculated an overall impact value for the RDP, this was done by summing individual NVA calculations for only those measures where a positive impact was anticipated. In some MTE, measure-level figures were adjusted to remove deadweight and/or displacement, using methods including modelling the counterfactual, beneficiary survey and/or paired sampling, whereas in others, neither of these adjustments was apparently made (one MTE – IT-Puglia – reported a negative GVA figure but this was because the economy was in recession over the period, so it includes a strong negative and the evaluators note the difficulty of detecting any RDP impact in these conditions). Indirect impacts of expenditure on growth were apparently included in the calculation for the 11 MTE (Austria, Slovenia, 7 German and 2 Spanish regions) that used input-output methods, meaning that these values are probably larger than they would have been if only direct impacts were measured. At least 6 MTE compiled their impact estimations from figures obtained in beneficiary surveys, which in some, but not all,

cases sought to adjust these figures for deadweight: these choices will also have affected the outcomes.

In 7 MTE the impacts on growth were reported separately by measure and per employee or per year, instead of calculating a single figure for the RDP. Several MTE (including those spending significant sums, e.g. France mainland; Romania) report significant *results* indicators (in GVA, for each relevant measure) but have not calculated the impact of these, as yet.

Wherever MTE do not consider the impact of *all* measures on growth, there is a risk that an *a priori*, selective, measure-based summative approach is misleading because it ignores possible unforeseen impacts of other measures and the synergies or competitive effects between those measures for which calculations are made. Wherever deadweight and displacement are not considered, calculations are likely to overstate the RDP impacts in cases where economies are growing over the period, and potentially under-estimate them when economies are in recession. When indirect impacts are ignored, estimates of impact may be significantly less than actual achievements. All these weaknesses apply to a large number of the MTE for which impacts upon economic growth were calculated.

Unfortunately, because there are very few MTE for which it is possible to directly compare the achieved impact with the target value for this indicator, it is also not possible to produce an aggregate indicator of performance against expectations, in quantified terms. However, for those 21 MTE which did provide both targets and quantified impact values, the range of performance against targets was between 0% and 2.000% of the target value: this presumably reflects a relatively low degree of accuracy in target-setting, for some RDPs.

Table 12: Summary table – MTEs' assessment of RDP impacts upon economic growth, 2007-2009

A positive impact is stated, in the MTE report	The main measures said to be causing this overall impact (where stated), and other notes of relevance
Austria	Mainly measure 121, also young farmers aid and axis 3
BE – Flanders	Mainly measure 121, also young farmers, diversification
Bulgaria	Measure 143, then 112 and 121 – other measures had negligible impact
Czech republic	Calculation based upon measure 121 (biggest impact) and measure 123 (smaller), reduced an otherwise negative trend in agri-sector growth, added a little to a positive trend in processing sector
Germany – all 14 regions	Mostly 121 and 123, when measures were mentioned – note that in some, calculations were affected by price changes over the period
Denmark	Not linked to specific measures
Estonia	121 and 123 are explained as "probably" the main causes
Spain – most regions (remainder listed in "no impact" category, below)	121, 123, 125 but the methods used are invalid for several regions (no counterfactual), some regions note axis 3 measure impacts too
France Corse, Guyana, Isle de la Reunion	Methods not clear/robust
Greece	Methods unclear
Hungary	Attributed mainly to measure 121
Ireland	Attributed to both Axis 1 and LEADER/Axis 3 measures
Italy: Marche	Qualitative judgement, based upon positive results indicators
Italy: Friuli Venezia gulia; Sardegna	Measures 112, 121, 122, 123 calculated: 121 significantly greater impact than the other ones
Italy: Emilia-Romagna	Calculated only for measure 112, direct impacts only
Italy – Lazio, Lombaria	No details given
Italy- Bolzano	Supporting evidence unclear – "units of work increase"?
Italy – Molise, Trento, Veneto small positive	No details given

A positive impact is stated, in the MTE report	The main measures said to be causing this overall impact (where stated), and other notes of relevance
Italy – Piemonte	Significant sum, method not explained fully
Latvia	Axes 1 and 3 stated as the main causes
Lithuania	Axis 1 only and especially measure 121, while axis 3 had no calculable effect
Malta	Qualitatively assessed for the whole RDP only, but mentions the importance of 121 modernisation, and income support effects from the RDP as a whole
Poland	Not linked to particular measures but Axis 1 in general, 121 mentioned as important
PT – Azores, rest of Portugal and Madeira	Method not additionality-focused – may ignore the counterfactual, Mainly axis 1 said to be the cause of positive results
Romania	Not linked to particular measures
Sweden	Very minor but positive impact calculated, mainly an income effect due to axis 2 payments
UK – Northern Ireland	Very minor positive impact claimed, method qualitative
UK – Scotland	Stated as "significant" based upon beneficiary survey, not linked to particular measures.
UK – Wales	Minor but positive impact calculated
No or negligible impact reported: BE -Wallonie; Cyprus; Spanish regions: Andalucia, Balearics, Catalunya, Galicia, Murcia, Basque country; Finland – both mainland and Aland; France: Guadeloupe, mainland, Martinique; Italy – Abruzzo, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Sicilia, Umbria, Basilicata (no measures implemented), Liguria, Toscana, Valdaosta; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Slovenia; Slovakia; UK – England	

Source: compiled by the core team expert from geographical expert evaluation grids

Employment creation

More MTE report a modest positive impact upon employment than no or negligible impact from the RDPs, although many impacts are not calculated or reported *net* of underlying trends and some say the impact is insufficient, compared to declines in employment overall, in this period. Some significant positive impacts are noted, both slowing net reductions in jobs and creating new jobs, in a few regions. Those MTE reporting no or negligible impacts include only 3 new MS; three MTE cases (one German region, one French overseas territory and Hungary) report large negative impacts on jobs, mainly from modernisation measures applied in Axis 1, but for Hungary at least, these (estimated at 5.000 jobs) are set against positive employment impacts of other measures so the net result is a more modest negative figure (1.800 jobs lost overall, as a result of the RDP).

For this impact, geographical experts noted whether the impacts reported represented a small, moderate or significant impact by reference to the RDPs' targets. It was not possible to make this judgement for all MTE (most often, because targets were not given), but we include it, where possible, in the summary table.

The aggregate (summed), quantified impact from those 39 MTE which gave a quantified impact (fewer than half the total), is around 57.000 jobs created. However, some of these impact data also include jobs retained (see below), and it is not always clear that the figures are net of the counterfactual, so the sum is rather unreliable.

Overall, there is evidence that programmes have funded projects which have created new jobs, sometimes in significant numbers, and that they have helped to sustain jobs in farming, in some

areas. However, when set against wider economic trends over the period, these are unlikely to make a significant difference to overall rural employment in the majority of Europe's regions.

Table 13: Summary table – MTE assessment of RDP impacts upon employment, 2007-9

Positive impact is claimed in the MTE (with figures, where given), and significance compared to the RDP target, if noted	Measures claimed to have caused these impacts, notes on methods used
Austria – 26.000 jobs (of which most are maintained, 700 created)	123 and 311 mentioned as the main causes but the figures include indirect and induced effects using Input -Output multipliers
Flanders – 3.400 jobs/year	121, 111, 112, 114, 311, 313, 41
Wallonie – 89 (created)	111, 112, 312, 313
Bulgaria – 7.250 both retained & created	No detail reported of how calculations were made
Cyprus – 812 created	Assessment general
Czech – 378 gross created, 290 net, from Axis 3 measures (only calculated for this axis)	In all these MTE reports, jobs created or maintained are reported as being the impacts mainly from measure 312, though other axis 3 and axis 1 measures may also be considered. DE- Thüringen reports retained jobs, only
All German regions – most assessed as a "moderate to significant impact" compared to expectations; Thüringen assessed as a small, positive impact	
Denmark	
Estonia assessed as a small positive impact	
Spain – Aragon, Canaries, Castilla y Leon, Extremadura, Valencia; Catalunya – assessed as small, positive, Galicia assessed as small positive impact (a net negative trend in employment is reduced by the RDP)	Calculated mainly for measures 311, 312
Spain – Murcia; Navarra; both assessed as small positive impact	Qualitative assessment only
Finland	no/different indicators are used for economic impacts
France – Martinique and Reunion both report small, positive (slightly reducing a net negative trend in employment over the period)	112 and 113, 121
Greece (assessed as a small impact)	Evaluator table not consistent
Italy – Bolzano claims positive impact, assessed as very low compared to what was expected	Could not confirm this quantitatively, in its beneficiary survey.
Italy – Friuli Venezia-GIulia, 264 FTE moderate impact assessed; Sardegna identical impact Lazio 1626 jobs, moderate impact Emilia-Romagna 289 jobs, moderate impact Molise 264 jobs, impact not judged against target Piemonte – 2250 jobs, moderate impact Veneto – 2246 jobs, moderate impact Trento – 6-7.000/year but only seasonal (30 days/yr) – moderate impact.	Axis 1 measures only were calculable, in the case of Emilia-Romagna only impacts from measure 112 were calculated; unclear if created/maintained.
Italy – Marche: positive, based on positive results (86 FTE)	Measures 121, 122, 123 and 331 identified.
Lithuania– small positive	
Luxembourg small positive (reducing a net negative trend in employment)	
Latvia – small positive	Method not apparently robust
Poland – significant positive impact claimed	Method not apparently robust
Azores – small positive impact in retaining jobs Romania – small positive impact in retaining jobs Slovakia – small positive impact (reduced net negative trend) England, NI, Wales – small positive impact retaining and creating jobs	Axis 3 impacts, mainly, for all these programmes, so numbers very low due to delayed start of spending

Positive impact is claimed in the MTE (with figures, where given), and significance compared to the RDP target, if noted	Measures claimed to have caused these impacts, notes on methods used
Scotland – 13.000 net creation/maintained	
No or negligible impact/too early to judge	
Germany – Hessen, Rheinland Pfalz (these note that measures 112 and 121 reduced employment significantly), Germany – Sachsen-Anhalt; Spain – Andalucia, Asturias, Balearics, Cantabria, Castilla-la-Mancha, La Rioja, Madrid, Basque; France – Guyane, Guadeloupe, Corsica, mainland France; Hungary negative impact from 121 and other investments in capital, bigger than positives from axis 3; Ireland; Italy – Abruzzo, Basilicata (no measures implemented), Calabria, Campania, Liguria, Lombaria, Puglia, Tuscany, Sicilia, Umbria, Valdaosta ; Malta; Netherlands; Sweden; Slovenia	

Source: compiled by the core team expert from geographical expert evaluation grids

Labour productivity

Overall, the RDP impacts in respect of this indicator appear less marked than for the other economic measures, with nearly half of all MTE (42) reporting either no/negligible impact, or saying that it is too soon to judge because there is insufficient data available. This undoubtedly reflects the nature of much investment aid, in which the earliest effects will be on turnover and employment and then productivity gains may only follow once the new business venture is established. Nevertheless, for those 23 MTE which calculate labour productivity impacts for their RDPs, the summed value is just over EUR 754.000/year.

Some clear tensions are apparent – some programmes are evaluated as having prioritised job creation at the expense of labour productivity, particularly in agricultural production. In several programmes, a negative trend in productivity is recorded for agriculture while positive impacts are recorded for both food processing and forestry. However, in quite a large proportion of programmes, labour productivity in farming or in the economy more widely declined from 2007 to 2009, but from the information given, this appears to be more a baseline trend than a result of any RDP impacts. Thus, although 10 MTE judge that the RDP has had a negative impact upon labour productivity, it is possible that for some of these, the causal link is not established and/or the counterfactual insufficiently considered.

In most of those MTE which calculated or made a qualitative assessment of impacts on labour productivity, the judgements are based upon the impacts of a small number of measures which have achieved sufficient expenditure to provide data for assessment (either directly, or via beneficiary surveys). These are measures 121, 123, 111, 131, 311 and 312.

Table 14: Summary table – RDP impacts upon labour productivity, 2007-9

A Positive impact is claimed in the MTE, with significance compared to targets, where possible (small, moderate, large)	Measures referred to in the calculations/assessment, other notes
BE -Wallonie assessed as very small positive impact	Qualitatively assessed only, considered measures 121, 111, 131
Bulgaria – large positive impact	Method not robust
Cyprus – moderate positive impact	This was a general estimate, only, no detailed calculations
Czech – slowed decline in farms, increased in food sector	Axis 1 measures mainly
Ireland – in the forestry and food sectors only	Measure 123 and various forestry measures in axis 2, the analysis for axis 1 farm-based investments does not show a positive impact.
Germany – Baden-Wurrtemburg, Sachsen , Thuringen all positive, Brandenburg/Berlin small positive Denmark Estonia	Overwhelmingly an impact attributed to measure 121

A Positive impact is claimed in the MTE, with significance compared to targets, where possible (small, moderate, large)	Measures referred to in the calculations/assessment, other notes
Spain – Aragon, Canaria, Castilla-y-leon, Galicia (beneficiary survey only), la Rioja Finland (all) France – isle de la reunion Lithuania	
Italy – Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Sardegna – large positive impact	Analysed at individual project level for relevant Axis 1 measures only, results were 5 times greater than RDP targets.
Italy Bolzano, Toscana	Qualitative judgement only
Italy – Lazio, 345, moderate impact	No measure details are given
Italy – Lombaria, faster employment growth than all Italy; Molise, modest 1182-4900 jobs, Trento modest 1.000 FTE	No causal link evidence is provided: a reduction in the baseline indicator value over the period does not necessarily mean it is an RDP impact.
Luxembourg measure level calculation only Portugal – all regions Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia	121, 111, 123 For Slovenia, the food processing sector only noted a positive impact from measure 123.
UK – England some measures, Northern Ireland some measures, Scotland,	123, 311, 312 mainly
Negligible/no impact, or too early to judge: Germany – Hessen, Schleswig-Holstein and Saxon-Anhalt (not reported), Hamburg, Bayern, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland Pfalz, Saarland; Spain – Balearics, Andalucia, Catalunya, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra (not measured), estimated negligible for Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla-la-Mancha, Basques; France – Corsica, Guadeloupe, Guyane and mainland not measured. Greece not calculated; Hungary too early to show; Italy – negligible as yet for Abruzzo; not reported for Basilicata (no measures implemented), Calabria, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Marche, Piemonte, Puglia, Sicilia, Umbria, Valdaosta; Veneto. Latvia not possible; Malta not possible; Netherlands not possible; Sweden – no effect shown; UK- England some measures (121, 111, 122, 125) not possible, Wales not possible. **Negative impacts calculated/judged**: Austria; Flanders; ES -Extremadura, Valencia, Galicia (regional statistics, not rural per se); FR -Martinique; Ireland negative for agriculture; Poland small negative (supported jobs so slowed productivity growth); Luxembourg; Slovenia – negative for agriculture.	

Source: compiled by the core team expert from geographical expert evaluation grids

For those MTE using modelling approaches which cover the whole programme, negative impacts are reported mainly in the primary sector. It is possible that what influences these data is the impact of Axis 2 measures 211-2 and 214, which may be having a positive income effect which keeps labour in extensive agriculture which might otherwise be lost. As noted earlier in this report, Axis 2 expenditure, and particularly on these measures, is the most significant element in RDP spending 2007-9 for the EU-15, and is also relatively significant in several of the new MS. Consideration of these types of impact suggest that in some cases, it may even be inappropriate to assume that RDP impacts upon labour productivity should be positive – in some cases, the opposite might be a good outcome.

5.1.2 Judgement on economic impacts

The MTE findings overall, of modest positive impacts upon growth and jobs, are in line with what would be anticipated, given the analysis in chapter 4 which suggests that implementation of the measures with the largest anticipated economic impacts – especially measures 121 and 123 – has been relatively well-advanced, compared to other measures. Wherever the capital investment measures have spent up to or above the half-way point on their budgets for the programme period, it seems reasonable to anticipate that this injection of capital into farms and food processing and, to a lesser extent, the wider rural economy (mainly through farm diversification, tourism, basic services and the cultural heritage), would give rise to improved

overall rural productivity/growth and some new jobs. At the same time, the significant proportion of RDP funds devoted and already disbursed to Axis 2 measures in both the EU-15 and in a few of the new MS could be anticipated to have fewer direct and positive effects upon these economic indicators. Secondary evidence presented in the MTE reports suggests that some axis 2 measures have positive economic impacts (216, on the wider economy – Mills et al, 2010); while others have mildly negative impacts on rural growth and productivity by retaining labour in extensive agriculture (214, Sweden MTE). This latter observation also explains apparent negative impacts of RDPs upon productivity in those cases where the programmes are dominated by measure 214 and 212/211 spending, and where comprehensive I-O methods have been used to assess impacts (e.g. Austria).

A significant note of caution must be added to this judgement, however. It is clear that the quality of the evaluations has varied significantly between RDPs and that for a significant minority of those which calculate quantified indicator values for GVA and jobs, these figures are not measured net of deadweight and displacement so they can be expected to over-state the scale of positive impacts. In addition, for most of the MTE, the calculation of impacts upon growth and jobs is not made for the whole programme (including all axes and measures); rather, it is assessed for the programme on the basis of calculated values for only those specific measures which are intended to have a positive economic impact and for which sufficient expenditure data, or beneficiary samples for survey, exist. Thus, if other measures in the programme are having a positive or negative impact upon growth or jobs, this has not been recorded or considered. This means that the calculated impacts are really just measure-impacts and cover largely measures in Axes 1 and 3, in most cases.

The utility and value of these three impact indicators is discussed in more detail in chapter 8.4 of this report. However, it is relevant to our consideration of impacts to note that whilst the concepts of economic growth, job creation and labour productivity are relatively well understood across the EU-27, there is clearly not a uniform appreciation of how to seek to measure these using RDP datasets and/or beneficiary survey findings, in ways which can encompass the whole programme and which adequately take account of deadweight, displacement and synergies or conflicts between measures. As a result, it is not possible to calculate aggregate quantified indicator values across RDPs, even for those MTE which provide values. Furthermore, it is questionable whether after only 3 years of implementation it is really possible to measure these impacts with any degree of robustness, given that projects which receive capital funds will normally take at least 2 years from the point of approval, to realise the full impacts of their actions.

It is therefore understandable that some of the MTE exercises, which nonetheless provide detailed evaluative insights, have not made these calculations, arguing that at this stage in the programme only a qualitative and indicative assessment, sometimes supplemented by case studies, is valid.

5.1.3 Findings on environmental impacts

Biodiversity – farmland birds index (FBI), reversing decline

This CMEF indicator demonstrates particularly low usability in the context of the MTE for several reasons which are discussed in more detail in chapter 8.4. These include lack of data, lack of evidence/good knowledge of causal linkages between measures and impacts, inappropriateness for those RDPs which prioritise environmental enhancements which may not particularly affect birds, at least in the medium-term; and lack of sufficient implementation time to be able to detect any impacts upon bird populations.

So, in a majority of MTE, this indicator is not used. Where the MTE nonetheless makes a claim of a (likely) positive impact on biodiversity (this is the case for 40 RDPs, almost half the total), the supporting evidence is most commonly output or results data for certain measures, combined with expert expectations, secondary experimental data, case-study assessments, or simply stakeholder expectations and/or judgements about the likely impacts arising from these outputs or results.

In the vast majority of RDPs, the evidence on environmental impacts is axis 2-specific, or related only to one or two axis 2 measures (214 is by far the most commonly-assessed one). Few MTE make a comprehensive assessment across all axes, and almost nothing is said about possible positive or negative impacts of axis 1, 3 or 4 upon biodiversity.

Table 15: Summary table – biodiversity impacts of RDPs: Farmland Bird Index (FBI) 2007-9

A positive RDP impact is claimed on biodiversity, in the MTE	Measures assessed, notes on methods and judgement validity
Flanders – expected positive impact for meadow and field birds Germany – FBI Bavaria shows a less negative trend than Germany as a whole, and other indicators are low but positive	Secondary data correlations – FBI trend compared to RDP output trends (axis 2 measures only), Flanders will have direct measurement on sites, for expost evaluation: too early, now. Bavaria: this is not necessarily an RDP impact – this is a measure-specific assessment, for the other indicators used
Germany – Brandenburg positive; Hamburg and Hessen positive; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Low positive, Niedersachsen & Bremen, Nordrhein-Westfalen positive	Brandenburg uses habitat and bird-level monitoring Hamburg & Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Niedersachsen make only qualitative assessments, Nordrhein-Westfalen gives very general assessment; Saarland is based upon case studies only, all assess at measure level only (considering Axis 2 measures, mainly)
Sachsen-Anhalt	Expert predictions only based upon axis 2 outputs
Schleswig-Holstein	Qualitative only
Thüringen	Expert predictions only based upon axis 2 outputs
Estonia	214 considered, local positive impacts recorded at site level
Spain – Aragon	Methodology unclear
Spain – Asturias, Cantabria, La Rioja, Castilla-la-Mancha	Reduced negative FBI trend in the region, compared to baseline trends for Spain, but causal link is lacking
Balearics	214 Case studies, qualitative, indicate positive impacts
Spain – Canarias, Murcia, Valencia Castilla y Leon: all low, positive	Qualitative judgement, partly axis 2 output-based, for all
Navarra	Shannon index of diversity used
France – Martinique	Qualitative assessment of 214, only
Hungary	Own indices developed, predict impacts based on 214 results
Ireland – positive FBI trend noted for the period	No causal link, contradictory measure-level results (214 assessed as too early to show positive impact)
Italy – Liguria significant positive FBI trend for the period;	Qualitative argument considers links between FBI and RDP axis 2 measures based upon expert judgement
Italy – Abruzzo strong positive FBI trend Lazio – moderate positive trend	No causal link identified

A positive RDP impact is claimed on biodiversity, in the MTE	Measures assessed, notes on methods and judgement validity
Molise – minor impact 17.28	
Italy – Emilia-Romagna	Based upon axis 2 forestry output indicators only
Italy – Piemonte	Output-based estimations only
Italy – Trento – moderate impact assessed	No supporting data, apparently.
Italy – Marche	Qualitative assessment based upon expectations concerning 214 and 111, especially
Lithuania – low positive	Expectation based on axis 2 measure outputs
Poland – positive FBI trend noted	No causal link between FBI and RDP
Portugal – mainland – positive FBI trend	Possible causal links to RDP discussed qualitatively, based upon axis 2 outputs
Portugal – Madeira – low positive	Qualitative statement only
Slovakia – positive FBI trend	Qualitative, positive judgement also made, but no causal linkages discussed between RDP and FBI trend
UK – England	Qualitative axis 2 assessment, based upon expert prediction using results indicators (some secondary sources contradict)
UK – Northern Ireland	Qualitative, only 214 impacts, based upon expert prediction
UK – Scotland	Qualitative judgement only
UK – Wales	FBI trend positive but no clear causal link, measures 214 and 111 assessed qualitatively, expert judgement
Negligible/no impact (too early to judge), or negative impact: Austria – negative FBI trend but this is not related to RDP impact; BE- Wallonie – no assessment; Bulgaria – RDP insufficient to counteract a negative biodiversity trend; Cyprus – no implementation; Czech republic – not reported; Germany – Baden-Württemberg, Rheinland-Pfalz not possible to assess; Sachsen low impact, habitat-specific assessments; Denmark not measured; Spain – Andalucia too early, Catalunya, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid, Basques not measured; Finland – Åland, mainland, indicators not measured but the MTE's alternative arguments present a positive case; France – Corsica, Guadeloupe, Guyana, mainland, Reunion (not measured/reported); Greece not measured; Italy –; Toscana says the method is too expensive to use; Basilicata no measures implemented, Bolzano and Lombaria irrelevant facts given, only; Valdaosta, Calabria, Campania, Puglia, Sicilia, Umbria and Veneto not reported; Friuli Venezia gulia and Sardegna note negative FBI trend but no causal link; Luxembourg "the indicator is not relevant or useful", impacts "likely insufficient"; Latvia no change seen; Malta not measured/expect little impact; Netherlands not yet possible; Portugal Azores negligible; Romania – negligible; Sweden not measured; Slovenia notes FBI decline, but this is not contextualised; UK- Northern Ireland – the LFA measure's impact is judged insufficient to reverse decline in these areas (although the MTE does not draw out the relevance of that judgement for this specific impact)	

Source: compiled by the core team expert from geographical expert evaluation grids

Where the FBI indicator value is calculated, any causal link to the RDP is frequently lacking. Nevertheless, for those 20 MTE which do calculate a change in the FBI over the reporting period, an aggregation of the reported trends can be made by reference to the stated direction of change, up or down from 100%, taking the 2007 value as 100%. On this basis alone, making some assumptions about how the figures are presented (as the descriptions supporting them are not consistent), and making no allowance for scale differences (large or small MS/regions), the aggregate "index" of change would appear to be +3%, i.e. suggesting a small but positive result for biodiversity, over the period. However, it is not possible to be sure in all cases whether what is reported is just the basic, actual trend in index value, or whether for some MTE it is already net of some "control-measure" trend (representing a counterfactual: what would have happened without the RDP), so it is not possible to be sure that there is indeed a positive RDP impact, overall, on biodiversity, in these cases. Most likely, the MTE are measuring a modest positive change in baseline trends resulting from multiple factors, in which the additionality of the RDP is impossible to judge quantitatively.

More detail on good practice in seeking to assess biodiversity impacts is discussed in section 8.5.

Biodiversity – High Nature Value farming and forestry

A small majority of MTE (48) do not report anything against this indicator, because of its late development at EU level (published by the EENRD in 2009[14]), which means that they either lack the ability to measure it at RDP level still, or they have only measured a baseline value, so far.

For those 24 MTE that report a quantified value for this indicator, the predominant method used (by 21) is simply to quote the territorial extent of entry of land judged to qualify as HNV into some kind of Axis 2 scheme which is anticipated to offer protection to its HNV status. This is therefore an output-based indicator, not an impact indicator. Almost no MTE consider the counterfactual (what the condition of the HNV areas would be in the absence of RDP support) and most do not attempt to assess whether, once land is being supported under measure 211, 212 or 214, that this ensures protection of its HNV qualities. There are some sources of secondary research (from UK, Czech republic, Spain)[15] suggesting that in specific cases, HNV land which received aid under these measures continued to decline in condition.

For some reason, the evaluators in Luxembourg and, by implication from the MTE text, also the managing authority, consider the HNV indicator to be "subjective" and therefore not valid for use, in its case.

In overview, therefore, we have no real impact indicator for HNV land, as yet and therefore cannot report RDP impacts upon it. All that is possible to say is that some HNV territory has been taken into schemes under measures 211-2 and 214, which may help to protect it.

Table 16: Summary RDP impacts – High Nature Value farming and forestry, 2007-9

Positive RDP impact is claimed in the MTE	Measures assessed, notes on methods used
Flanders	Qualitative judgement only
Bulgaria	Based upon output indicators for axis 2 measures
Czech republic	Based on axis 2 output only – counterfactual not considered
Germany – Brandenburg and Niedersachsen – Bremen	Based on axis II output only
Germany – Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein, Thüringen	Qualitative only
Saarland	Case studies
Spain – Aragon	Method dubious, only results indicators used
Asturias, Cantabria, Cast-la-Mancha, La Rioja	Based on positive trend in axis 2 output, only
Canarias, Galicia	Qualitative only
France – Guyane, Martinique	Qualitative/based on output trends, for forestry measures
France – La reunion	Mixed methods and own indicators used to assess impacts
Hungary	Based on output trends only, for axis 2 measures
Italy – Valdaosta; Liguria, Molise, Veneto significant to moderate, positive	No explanation of data is given (suspect it uses output values for measures 211-2, 214)
Italy – Emilia-Romagna, Bolzano, Lazio, Piemonte	Anticipated prevention of land abandonment/soil conservation, based on output data for relevant measures
Lithuania – low positive	Axis 2 outputs and qualitative/partial assessment, only
Latvia	Axis 2 outputs only

[14] EENRD (2009): Thematic working paper on High Nature Value farming and forestry; IEEP; Brussels

[15] Annette asked for references here – I cannot get them so quickly but will do so for the final report.

Positive RDP impact is claimed in the MTE	Measures assessed, notes on methods used
Flanders	Qualitative judgement only
Bulgaria	Based upon output indicators for axis 2 measures
Czech republic	Based on axis 2 output only – counterfactual not considered
Germany – Brandenburg and Niedersachsen – Bremen	Based on axis II output only
Germany – Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein, Thüringen	Qualitative only
Saarland	Case studies
Spain – Aragon	Method dubious, only results indicators used
Asturias, Cantabria, Cast-la-Mancha, La Rioja	Based on positive trend in axis 2 output, only
Canarias, Galicia	Qualitative only
France – Guyane, Martinique	Qualitative/based on output trends, for forestry measures
France – La reunion	Mixed methods and own indicators used to assess impacts
Hungary	Based on output trends only, for axis 2 measures
Italy – Valdaosta; Liguria, Molise, Veneto significant to moderate, positive	No explanation of data is given (suspect it uses output values for measures 211-2, 214)
Malta very low positive	Limited information on impacts is given
Poland	Axis 2 outputs only
Portugal – Madeira	Assessment only for forestry measures, qualitative
UK –Scotland	Qualitative assessment only
No or negligible impact, too soon, not measured	
Austria – too soon, method not finalised; BE -Wallonie – too soon, method not finalised; Cyprus – no impact; Germany-Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, no causal links with RDP yet possible; Hessen, Rheinland-Pfalz covered in previous section; Nordrhein-Westfalen and Sachsen, baseline only measured so far; Sachsen-Anhalt not measured; Denmark not possible to measure; Estonia indicator still under development; Spain – Andalucia, Navarra too early, Castilla-y-Leon, Balearics, Catalunya, Extremadura, Basques, Madrid, Murcia, Valencia not measured; Finland Åland and mainland not measured; France – Corsica, Guadeloupe, mainland, not measured; Greece not measured; Ireland no change, but counterfactual not considered; Italy – Basilicata no measures implemented; Abruzzo, Calabria, Campania, Lombaria, Marche, Puglia, Toscana, Trento, Sicilia, Umbria, Val D'aosta not reported; Friuli Venezia gulia, Sardegna no impact, yet (measured using alternative indicators: N2k area with management plans in place); Luxembourg says indicator not suitable/consistent; Netherlands too early; Portugal – Azores not measured; Portugal mainland – comprehensive but qualitative assessment, suggests negligible impact; Romania insignificant impact; Sweden not measured due to lack of counterfactual; Slovenia criticises indicator; Slovakia text not relevant to RDP; UK – England, Wales not yet defined, Northern Ireland – no evidence (see previous comment for FBI biodiversity indicator, which is relevant).	

Source: compiled by the core team expert from geographical expert evaluation grids

Water Quality – gross nutrient balance

This impact is only assessed for just over half of the total number of programmes (49), and in many cases the assessment is largely qualitative (14), a few times based just upon expert opinion, and for others (7) based upon expectations concerning the impacts presumed to arise from particular measure 214 outputs (e.g. the area of land on which farmers are adopting practices under measure 214 which are designed to/are known to improve water quality). A few MTE – Austria, 3 German regions and Estonia, Hungary, Poland, UK -Wales – provide more thorough, mixed-method analysis of likely water impacts, combining local indicators and predictions from hydrological/water cycle modelling with expert judgement, even some using mapping (comparing territorial measure 214 commitments to the incidence and known quality of water courses), to gain an overall usually qualitative, but well-informed, evaluation of impacts. In these cases, N and P reductions in water may be calculated from known application of 214 management requirements to land, coupled to hydrological modelling to predict impacts upon water courses.

In most of these cases, the comment is made that gross nutrient balance is not particularly helpful as an indicator of likely Pillar 2 impacts – it has more value simply as a measure for agriculture as a sector, as it is mainly influenced by livestock numbers which are not generally a central focus of RDP support. As a result, positive trends in gross nutrient balance in rural areas of the EU are mostly likely a result of market and Pillar1-induced changes in herd/flock sizes, over the period, which will hardly be affected by Pillar 2 (RDP) measures, except in respect of those measure 214 contracts which explicitly seek to reduce stocking densities on grazed land areas.

No impact is reported for 40 MTE, including both old and new MS, of which at least 8 stated it was not measured, often because it was deemed too early.

In overview, many axis 2 measures and some in axis 1 (training 111 and investments in equipment or infrastructure for input efficiency – 121, 125, mainly) are ***expected*** to have benefits, but it is generally too early to show anything concrete. There should be some robust results at ex-post evaluation, for those programmes which have taken this impact seriously. It is not at all possible to aggregate the quantitative data given in MTE, due to its non-comparability.

There are very few programmes which assess this impact at the level of the whole RDP – overwhelmingly, the calculations and evaluation focus upon only those measures with an intended beneficial impact upon water quality (mainly measure 214 but also some 121). Thus, if there are other measures with incidental positive or negative water quality impacts, these will not be captured.

Table 17: Summary of RDP impacts – water quality, 2007-9

Positive impact is claimed in the MTE	Measures considered/assessed, notes on methods used
Austria	Detailed analysis of several specific indicators leading to a qualitative assessment, though CMEF impact measure is said to be "not good" due to other significant intervening factors
Belgium – Flanders	Calculated surplus reductions due to agri-environmental "regulations", but these are declining yearly due to changed conditions – unclear whether this is an RDP impact or not
Belgium – Wallonie	214 output plus expectations, qualitative assessment only
Cyprus – low positive	Qualitative assessment only
Czech republic	Estimation based upon 214 output and prediction, quantified
Germany – Baden-Wurrtemburg, Brandenburg and Berlin, Hessen,	Qualitative but detailed, based upon selected measure outputs and prediction; for B-W only, considers all RDP measures.
Germany – Rheinland-Pfalz	Modest calculated improvement
Germany – Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Schleswig-Holstein	Qualitative assessment only, indicative
Germany – Niedersachsen & Bremen, Nordrhein-Westfalen Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen	Based upon measure outputs, plus expert judgements
Saarland	Case studies only
Denmark	A single figure is given
Estonia	Very detailed early assessment using mixed methods, general findings reported
Spain – Aragon, Canarias	Brief qualitative assessment only, expert judgement
Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla la Mancha, Extremadura and la Rioja both v low, Navarra Balearics	Quantified change noted, 214 outputs especially, Case study and expert opinions only
France – Guyana, la Reunion	Measure outputs plus estimation, only
Martinique	Qualitative assessment only
Hungary modest impact	Mixed methods used, qualitative judgement

Positive impact is claimed in the MTE	Measures considered/assessed, notes on methods used
Ireland	Method not clear
Italy – Abruzzo	Assumption, based upon expert opinion – no up-to-date data available to calculate the CMEF indicator
Italy – Emilia-Romagna	Output values for measures predicted to have a positive impact
Italy – Liguria – significant impact	Calculated reduced N and P values
Italy – Lazio – moderate impact	Methods unclear
Italy – Trento – significant impact	Methods unclear
Poland – weak positive impact	Mixed methods used for N and P changes
Lithuania	Anecdotal evidence, only
Malta	Qualitative judgement– not well-founded
Luxembourg; Portugal mainland – *a priori* positive impacts claimed	Expected, but nothing proven yet
Portugal Madeira – low positive	Qualitative, a priori reasoning only
UK England – positive	Results indicators and opinion, would prefer that CMEF had adopted WFD indicators as these are more relevant to RDP
UK Northern Ireland low positive	Anecdotal evidence only
UK Scotland positive	Qualitative, but thorough
UK Wales some positive signs	Indicators given, but high deadweight reported
Too soon/not measured/no impact: Not measured – Bulgaria; Germany – Bayern; Spain – Andalusia, Castilla y Leon, Catalunya, Galicia, Madrid, Murcia, Basques, Valencia; Finland AÅland and mainland; France – Corsica, Guadeloupe, mainland; Greece; Italy- Basilicata (no measures implemented), Bolzano, Calabria, Campania, Fruili Venezia gulia, Marche, Puglia, Sardegna, Sicilia, Umbria, Valdaosta; Veneto, Lombaria (says major focus for 121), Molise not measured; Italy – Piemonte, measures nitrate reduction, very low to insignificant impact. Toscana says main water pressures are not agricultural. Latvia – no impact; Netherlands – no impact; Poland – 214 only, not significant impact; Portugal Azores – not possible; Romania – not possible; Sweden – not yet possible; Slovenia – not yet possible, interviews suggest no impact; Slovakia – not measured.	

Climate change

This impact has been assessed as positive for 42 MTE (just under half of all programmes), and at least partially calculated for 28 programmes, but using different units and/or different approaches to the assessment. Two approaches dominate, nonetheless:

- renewable energy investment contributions for projects funded by the RDP are calculated in Kilo-Tonnes of Oil Equivalent or Fuel Equivalent saved; or
- savings in CO_2 from 214, 221 and other axis 2 measures are calculated, assuming certain 214 measures reduce soil or peat erosion directly or indirectly, and 221 increases carbon sequestration through afforestation.

Only 2 programme MTE (Czech republic, Germany – Mecklenburg Vorpommern) – try to assess both these values and present them together.

43 MTE do not measure this indicator at all, of which 8 MTE say it is too soon to measure this indicator, yet. Several MTE note that the programme was not designed with climate change goals in mind, so either they are not able to measure impact, or the RDP is not expected to deliver much impact – 3 MTE say the impact is negligible.

Table 18: Summary of MTE assessed impacts – climate change mitigation: renewable energy generation, 2007-9

Positive impact claimed in the MTE, with value where possible	Measures assessed, notes on methods used
Austria – 1,9 m tonnes/yr	Calculated CO_2 savings from investments, especially in bioenergy
Flanders – 541.000 tonnes/yr	Same as Austria
Wallonie – 230.000 tonnes/yr	Calculated saving from axis 2 measure 214 output
Bulgaria – grasslands protected as carbon stores	Qualitative assessment only
Cyprus – 10,63 m kg FE saved	General assessment only, sources unclear
Czech – 182,15 Gg CO_2 from axis 2, 29,8 from Axis 3. Germany – Bayern 12 t FE/yr, Brandenburg-Berlin 56kt/yr as a result of axis 2 measure 214 output Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 14,8 kt FE axis 3 impact, from axis 2 mitigation 90/5kt/yr CO_2	Axis 2 is mitigation, axis 3 new biogas stations
Germany – Niedersachsen 206kt/yr CO_2	Measure 214 and forestry (221)
Germany – Nordrhein-Westfalen 36kt/yr	Measure 214
Germany – Saarland	Case studies
Germany – Sachsen – low positive	Qualitative assessment only
Germany – Schleswig-Holstein – 86,2 kt/yr	Not specified
Germany – Thüringen 67,2 kt/yr	Not specified
Spain – Aragon, Canarias	Statement only – no evidence in support
Spain – Asturias – 120kt ep	Axis 2 measures only
Spain – Balearics	Stakeholder opinion only
Spain – Cantabria 20kt ep	Axis 2 measures only
Spain – Castilla-la-Mancha 11 kt Extremadura 17 kt	Measure-level assessment (which measures is not clear)
Spain – La Rioja 6,78 kt above target	Axis 2 measures
France La Reunion 18% increase, Martinique positive	Renewable energy growth, Martinique is qualitative only
Hungary 200 kt/yr	Afforestation (221) impact only
Ireland 209kt FE	Renewable energy, also a small livestock number fall (non RDP – not included in the calculation)
Italy – Emilia-Romagna	Gives area of land in likely mitigation measures under 214 and 221
Italy – Lazio 2 KTOE, Liguria 16% of 3,61KTOE, Piemonte 9,9 KTOE, all moderate impact	Renewable energy generation
Italy – Lombaria – 91.603 kt CO_2 emissions cut, Molise 217,7 stated	Source not given
Italy – Trento – saves 529.523 tonnes – significant impact	
Lithuania 820 FE units	"Without RDP input"
Luxembourg expect some positive	Qualitative only
Latvia	Measure 226, modest
Poland	M312 Proportion of projects estimated to contribute: 3%
Portugal mainland 700 ton/yr	AEM mitigation contribution
Slovakia falling fertiliser use	Statement only, no calculation
UK – England 3000 kt/yr	AEM mitigation contribution, also forest and renewables ones, not measured yet
UK – Scotland	Reasoned qualitative assessment
No or negligible impact, too soon, or not measured: Germany – Baden-Wurrtemburg too soon, Hamburg low/too soon, Hessen negligible, Rheinland-Pfalz too small to measure, Sachsen-Anhalt no report; Denmark not possible; Estonia – not possible; Spain – Andalusia too early, Castilla-y-Leon too early, Catalunya not measured, Galicia negligible impact, declining renewables here; Madrid not measured – prefer to measure afforestation, Murcia too early, Navarra, Basques, Valencia not measured; Finland Åland not relevant, Finland mainland not measured; France – Corsica, Guadeloupe, Guyane, mainland not measured; Greece not measured; Italy – Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Friuli-Venezia gulia, Marche, Puglia, Sardegna, Toscana, Valdaosta Veneto, Umbria, Sicilia, all not measured; Malta – not relevant; Netherlands too early; Portugal – Azores, Madeira not measured; Romania not measured; Sweden not measured; Slovenia not measured; UK – Northern Ireland not measured; UK – Wales not measured, qualitative discussion of possible impacts only	

Source: compiled by the core team expert from geographical expert evaluation grids

In overview, therefore, we can say that the contribution of the RDPs to climate change mitigation is likely to be modest overall, but that it will occur from either or both of the funding of renewable energy projects and the entry of land into agri-environment, afforestation and Natura 2000 agreements in which the required management will increase the carbon storage or sequestration on this land.

5.1.4 Judgement on environmental impacts

The impacts of RDPs on the environmental goals of addressing biodiversity decline, improving water quality and mitigating climate change cannot be assessed with certainty, due to issues with the indicator set, but there is evidence that RDPs can be used to good effect, for these purposes. It is apparent that there has been a significant increase in the area of land under agri-environmental management in a number of MS and this should help to ensure positive programme outcomes for the environment, insofar as the management obligations are tailored carefully to the environmental strengths and opportunities of each territorial context. Nevertheless, the relatively low usability of the CMEF indicators in this context is of concern and it would appear that a different approach may be needed for the next programme period. The MTE provide some interesting examples and a good opportunity for reflection, in respect of how it would be possible to devise more meaningful and feasible indicators for these goals. In particular, some alternative indicators of water quality, based upon those cited in the Water Framework Directive, could prove useful.

5.1.5 Conclusions

In overview, most of the programmes have apparently achieved only modest, positive impacts in respect of economic indicators for growth and job creation/safeguarding, notwithstanding the difficult economic conditions experienced in many parts of the EU, over the period 2007-9. This reflects the fact that the majority of RDPs spent a significant proportion of planned funding on measures in Axis 1 (notably 112, 121 and 123), during this period (though a small number of MTE attribute jobs also to Axis 3 expenditure). However, almost one-third of MTE reports judged it not possible to assess these impacts at this stage, while a smaller number judged economic impacts as negligible (usually these spent relatively small sums on Axis 1).

In respect of labour productivity, findings are even more mixed. While baseline trends were negative in many cases over this period, for agriculture, a number of MTE note negative RDP impacts on productivity in agriculture. It is noted by two evaluators that this reflects a conscious choice by Managing Authorities, to prioritise job creation/retention in the sector over improved labour productivity, due to the recession. By contrast, a small number of MTE report positive impacts upon labour productivity in agriculture, and 3 also report that the RDP reduced employment in agriculture over the period, through measures 121 and 112. The impact of measure 123 appears mostly positive for labour productivity in food processing.

It is not possible to make judgements about the mid-term impacts of the RDPs upon environmental resources, biodiversity and climate change. This is both because the causal links between programme expenditure and changes in indicator values are not established or

demonstrable, and because in many cases, indicators cannot be measured accurately due to lack of data. In overview, MTEs tend to report output indicators for the axis 2 measures as a proxy for the anticipated positive impacts of the programmes on biodiversity and water. Almost no MTE seek to identify environmental impacts for non-Axis 2 measures. Climate impacts appear modest, but more come from axis 2 extensification than from axis 1 and 3 renewables.

It is also difficult to say anything firm about the impact of the RDPs on social indicators or quality of life. This is partly because for a large number of MTE, axis 3 and 4 expenditure lagged significantly behind the other two axes, so that by the end of 2009, very little of this money was spent. It is also partly because there is no CMEF indicator for quality of life, there are few data sources which offer appropriate proxy indicators, and many evaluations have not made significant attempts to capture this. Nevertheless, some aspects of quality of life are captured in the analysis of other possible impacts, below.

5.2 Topic 2.1.2: Other possible impacts and/or unintended effects identified in the MTE reports

5.2.1 Findings

The overwhelming emphasis in MTE reports upon covering the CMEF impact indicators means that there is generally less information provided about other impacts of the RDPs over this period. Nevertheless, many MTE make a general qualitative assessment of broader or different kinds of impact, either in their responses to the horizontal evaluation questions or in their discussions of axis 3 and 4 performance, in particular. Because of the wide variety of formats and locations within MTE reports for this information, it was not possible to make a comprehensive analysis on this point. Instead, a selection of MTEs were examined in more detail, and the results are given in the table.

Table 19: Other RDP impacts 2007-9 – Summary of those scanned (note: not all MTE were analysed, on this point)

RDP	Impact mentioned in the Mid Term Evaluation	Measured?
Flanders	Water saving, reduced soil loss, enhanced cultural landscapes, better rural facilities, and a more integrated approach. The RDP contributes to a more integrated approach to RD, and improved M&E.	Yes for water No – qualitative statements for all others
Bulgaria	There has been soil improvement. There is no synergy and no integration between RDP measures	Yes
Czech republic	Capacity-building, esp. for LEADER, also visual amenity gains, have been found. New value-added products were developed and holding viability increased, for beneficiaries. There was more innovation in the food chain than in production itself., and more in non-farm sectors. AEM contribute to the cultural character of the countryside. The RDP did not promote a more integrated approach, but the opposite.	Qualitative evaluation
Germany – Bayern	Quality of life – stemming rural decline	Insufficient to reverse negative trends
Germany – Hessen	Quality of life	Anticipated – too early
Thüringen	Soil quality improvement	Yes

RDP	Impact mentioned in the Mid Term Evaluation	Measured?
Denmark	Reduced pesticides use	No
Spain – Aragon	Local food production, local population, water management have all benefited from the RDP	Not yet
Spain – Madrid, Navarra	Soil quality improvement, reduced water usage (Nav only)	Results measure for axis 2 uptake contributing
Spain – Basque	Farm incomes have been protected	Qualitative only
Finland mainland	Social capital was enhanced, landscapes improved, social exclusion targeted. The Finnish RDP has a significant effect upon farm incomes, but the level of compensation is insufficient to cover natural handicaps. LFA keeps people on the land.	Qualitative, positive except for social exclusion – no impact can be measured
France – Corsica	Agricultural economy – positive, Pillar 1 support criticised	Qualitative only
France – Guadeloupe	Reducing inequalities	Qualitative statement only
France – Guyane	Enhanced rural services	Yes, positive
Italy – Abruzzo	Increased regional product tourism	Qualitative assessments
Lithuania	Rural incomes, product quality, innovation, farm structures and viability	Yes, variously, positive
Luxembourg	Farm incomes, territorial disparities, the RDP shows no sign of integration.	Qualitative only
Slovenia	Farm sizes, nutrient loading of soils	Not yet
Malta	The programme does not support integrated solutions.	
Poland	The RDP has improved waste management for rural households, raising Quality of Life, and it is known to stimulate social capital.	
UK – England	Improved agricultural product quality/range, soil quality, rural capacity building, entrepreneurship and social cohesion, but lack of integrated approach to the RDP	Qualitative only
UK – Scotland	Improved farmer attitudes to animal welfare and environment	Qualitative

5.2.2 Judgement

In the main, MTE have concentrated their evaluations upon the CMEF topics and indicators, and for this reason, they provide relatively little information about other significant impacts beyond these. However, from the examples gathered together here, some MTE have noted additional quality of life impacts in respect of improved rural services, social capital, tourism and cultural heritage, while a few note soil benefits and environmental awareness-raising from axis 1 and 2 measures. A few MTE (5) particularly note issues about a lack of integration in RDP design and delivery, such that different parts of the programme do entirely separate things, which could potentially reduce cost-effectiveness as a result of missed opportunities for synergy. However, the opposite comment is made for one RDP – BE- Flanders, A number of MTE, including both EU-15 and new MS, report that the programmes had a marked positive effect upon farm incomes, which is of course the principal purpose of the other Pillar of the CAP. For any countries and regions which devote significant resources to measures 211, 212 and "broad and shallow" measure 214 schemes (e.g. Finland), this is a not unexpected finding.

Qualitative benefits to social capital, trust and reduced social inequalities have been cited as RDP benefits in several reports, usually on the basis of findings from stakeholder and beneficiary interviews, workshops and/or focus groups. Also apparently based upon qualitative evidence, improved rural services including waste and water management have been noted in a few cases,

and tourism benefits as well. More open and progressive attitudes among farmers is also cited in a couple of cases. The range of other benefits reported here, from a selection of 23 MTEs, suggests that RDPs are having some important social impacts beyond those covered by the CMEF indicator set. These kinds of impact may be even more pronounced, and therefore worthy of more thorough analysis and collation, at the ex-post evaluation stage.

5.2.3 Conclusions

These other benefits, particularly those of a social character, appear to be valued elements in successful and sustainable rural development (which is conceptualised as seeking economic, environmental and social goals). Going forward, it would be valuable for the CMEF to place new emphasis upon capturing a range of social benefits through the evaluation exercises, even where no quantifiable indicators present themselves. Qualitative data collection and analytical approaches, including interviews, surveys and focus groups, are likely to be effective in capturing these; although indicator-based approaches using demographic trends or rural service-related data might also be possible.

5.3 Topic 2.1.3: Relationship between impacts and expenditure

5.3.1 Findings

For the 11 RDP where impacts were calculated using input-output models (Austria, 7 German and 2 Spanish regions), the relationship between impacts and expenditure is considered. Elsewhere, specific assessments of efficiencies – i.e. how impacts achieved relate to the scale of measure costs – are made in 25 MTE reports but these are largely made at the level of individual axes and/or measures, with some recommendations for improving this efficiency.

Only a minority of MTE evaluate overall programme efficiency or "value for money" – i.e. asking whether the resources spent in RDPs are delivering good value in respect of the scale of emerging or anticipated impacts, overall .

Where the issue of efficiency in respect of impacts related to spend is covered, the methods of assessment used are largely qualitative and based upon interviews/case studies, although the specific quantification of delivery costs and/or "costs per job" can be found in a very few MTE reports, usually for axis 1 and some axis 3 measures. A few German and Spanish regions, most UK regions, Belgium and the Czech republic appear to have made some progress in considering and analysing these concepts, also the MTEs for Romania and Bulgaria discuss them.

5.3.2 Judgement

For a full evaluation of any funding programme, a robust consideration of the administrative cost element in scheme design and delivery seems valuable. In the future, the MTE should perhaps give more consideration to strengthening requirements to at least include a brief

section on the costs of the delivery of the programme, relative to its benefits. In this way, sufficient evidence could then be amassed, to enable the relationship between impacts and expenditure to be analysed more thoroughly.

5.4 Topic 2.1.4: Potential conflicts between different impacts

5.4.1 Findings

Although the level of reported conflicts is generally low in MTE, the most commonly-noted conflict is between measures to create rural employment and those to improve labour productivity or modernise agriculture, which lead to job reductions (cited in 6 MTE reports). Two reports note potential conflicts between environmental and economic goals – tourism and nature protection, and axis 2 and axis 1 more broadly. One report notes the need to co-ordinate goals more sequentially (build capacity first, then stimulate development) and another notes lack of synergies deriving from entirely separate design and delivery of different axes.

However, it must be noted that as the reports currently approach the evaluation, the vast majority tend to think in terms of seeking to measure impacts ONLY from those measures in the RDP which are explicitly considered relevant to each type of goal. This approach will tend to ignore and/or undervalue the potential positive and negative impacts of other elements of the RDP, on the same range of objectives, and this in turn will serve to minimise awareness of potential conflicts.

5.4.2 Judgement

The apparent conflict between economic growth as measured by productivity, and job retention in rural areas, is likely to continue to be a difficult issue affecting many RDP, going forwards.

It would have been possible to make more robust the requirements of which issues to cover in the M&E exercise, in particular by placing more emphasis upon process evaluation elements, in order to bring out topics like this, in more depth.

5.4.3 Conclusions

There is little to say concerning conflicts in the current RDPs, based upon evidence in these reports.

Future monitoring and evaluation exercises for RDPs could usefully require a greater formality of process evaluation, with a requirement to speak to a range of officials, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in order to ascertain more about this topic.

5.5 Topic 2.1.5: Main categories of stakeholders, who are (positively or negatively) affected by the programmes, with particular reference to gender equality

5.5.1 Findings

The information used to answer this question varies significantly between MTE reports. In some, there are clear measures of the percentage distribution of spending among different beneficiary groups – this enables one to see whether the programme mainly benefits farmers and/or local authorities, in particular (some MTE note concentration upon these two groups).

In Brandenburg-Berlin – more than a third of business start-ups (axis 3) were by women.

Flanders – Rural areas have done better than urban ones, but no RDP effect is explicit. On the other hand, rural areas see an increase in people with no opportunities.

Bulgaria – the RDP increases territorial imbalances in development. It helps those who are already best-placed to succeed and fails to help those who need it most. Resources are becoming more concentrated in fewer hands. There is no information on gender balance.

Czech – the MTE judges the RDP has had no discernable impact upon social cohesion. One measure appears to have a negative impact upon gender balance. There is clear evidence of serial grant adoption among beneficiary groups, suggesting a negative distributional impact, overall, of the RDP.

In Ireland, the RDP has had a modest positive impact upon gender equality.

Luxembourg's MTE reports no noticeable effects upon gender balance.

In Sweden, Pillar 2 payments have favoured low income municipalities. A convergence of incomes seems to have occurred during the programme period but this does not necessarily imply that the convergence is causally linked to the programme. The applicants for support from Axis 1 and 3 are almost all men, although an increased proportion of women is now applying and receiving support (e.g. for the business start-up support), in the ongoing programming period, compared to the former.

The Wales RDP reduced income disparities between farms, due to Axis 2 measure deadweight. There is no evidence to suggest that the RDP does not provide equal gender opportunities in terms of the direct receipt of support, although there is some evidence that, at least in terms of employment creation/protection, males benefit more than females. However, the pattern is complex and no conclusion of systematic bias can be drawn

Very few MTEs report in more detail on gender balance, or other beneficiary characteristics. One notable exception is Northern Ireland (UK), which has its own laws to ensure balance and representativeness in respect of gender, age, sexual orientation, racial group, religion and political opinion: all of these are analysed and reported on positively (i.e. it judges that the RDP has been fair to all these groups). There are mainly brief, qualitative discussions of gender and aims to reduce socio-economic disparities between territories in around 15 MTEs. In most of

these, the MTE seeks briefly to ascertain whether there is any evidence of a negative bias in respect of certain groups or territories, and concludes not, on the basis of relatively little in-depth analysis.

In a small number of MTE but especially new MS, there is some reported evidence that support has been concentrated upon more prosperous, male, established, agricultural beneficiaries (the implication is that targeting is weak, so funds flow to where they are least needed/most readily applied for...) – Poland is a notable example. This problem has been raised as a serious concern, by other authors (Erjavec, 2012[16]). The Box below gives some examples of relevant information from the reports.

5.5.2 Judgement

It seems likely that, given the structure of the agricultural sector in many MS, the majority of RDP beneficiaries will be men. This need not be a particular concern, as long as any sources of unfair bias are detected and eliminated wherever possible. More important is probably to seek to ensure that axis 3 and 4, which could be anticipated to attract more female applicants (on the basis of past evidence), are more fully implemented than has been the case for the first half of this programme period.

What is of more concern, in this brief analysis, is the potential risk that significant funding in the new Member States in particular, may be failing to achieve its aims as a result of insufficient targeting towards beneficiaries who can most benefit from the available funding. This is to say that some MTE judge that aid is more often awarded to those who can afford to develop their enterprises without public aid, than to those who cannot. It has been claimed elsewhere (TWG4 working group meetings) that in some Member States, the RDP is actually increasing income disparities in rural areas rather than closing them, as a direct result of this phenomenon, and this same point has been identified by a few evaluators, in MTE

As discussed in ENRD's TWG4, the causes of insufficient targeting of investment aids may include low capacity to target effectively within implementing bodies due to a shortage of adequately trained staff, it may indicate barriers to accessing aid among the most "needy" (such as problems raising private match-funding), as well as institutional unwillingness to award aid to beneficiaries who might appear to represent a greater risk, in respect of efficient spending, monitoring and reporting, than larger and/or more successful businesses.

5.5.3 Conclusions

These findings suggest that in future, more emphasis should be placed upon careful and appropriate targeting of measures, especially investment and other axis 1 aids, in order to maximise their value for money and to avoid the risk that they stimulate undesirable social consequences, as discussed here.

[16] Erjavec, E. (2012) CAP reform: Why no green revolution in new Member States? Website contribution 21 April 2012, http://capreform.eu.

Subtheme 2.2: Impacts achieved in relation to new priorities

5.6 Topic 2.2.1: Identification of the contributions of rural development measures implemented during the 2007-2013 programming period to issues established as "new challenges" for the "Health Check" and Economic Recovery Package

The MTE do not report impacts on new priorities because of the timing – in all MTE the only "impact" of Health Check changes is to RDP budgets and planning – i.e. *ex-ante*, not impacts of the RDP itself. It would not be possible to re-evaluate the material reported under the 7 CMEF impacts in respect only of the new priorities, as it is not sufficiently disaggregated. For this reason, we do not give separate answers to all of the numbered sub-topics in this section, as there is little to say for them.

5.7 Topic 2.2.2: Identification of some outcomes/impacts/best practices which could indicate the utility/potential of certain activities or instruments in supporting these challenges

5.7.1 Findings

There is a difficulty in seeking to identify any best practice from the mid-term evaluation exercise, as MTE reports rarely focus on what has gone particularly well with programmes, particularly if it concerns qualitative aspects going beyond the CMEF evaluation requirements. In particular, only a small number of MTEs even mention examples that could be relevant to addressing the new challenges as identified in the Health Check process. These few examples are listed here.

- Organic farming (BE- Wallonie, DE – Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), where the measure has proven popular and is identified as contributing to biodiversity and climate change goals.
- Support for facilities using biomass from agriculture and forestry sources for energy (DE -Sachsen) is noted as a successful output of RDP spending which will contribute to climate change mitigation targets.
- Energy efficiency improvements are highlighted as a result of investment in glasshouses (ES- Murcia).
- Financial engineering was used to encourage a greater use of RDP investment funding for specific types of innovation in sustainable/added value investments, and the beneficiary groups seeking to undertake these kinds of investment had problems to find match-funding (Lithuania). These innovative measures were identified as potentially important for meeting the new challenges.

- Enhanced broadband access was stated as a programme impact which was relevant to reducing the need to travel to work, with knock-on benefits to climate change (mainland Portugal)
- Case studies of exemplar projects were given in 4 MTEs, which successfully integrated business and environmental objectives, contributing to either biodiversity, water or climate goals (Denmark, 3 Spanish regions).

The MTE verified the LEADER process of Brandenburg as a best practice example of subsidiarity, participation in development and democratic societal capacity building. A particular feature of Brandenburg's LAG is the significant high degree of societal self organisation and networking. It is envisaged to build-up a formalised regional organisational structure in terms of an association. Furthermore, the action groups have developed a certain team spirit to jointly draw-up common rural developing strategies and are jointly forwarding policy postulations to the political decision making level. This is being seen as a clear indication of rural governance capacity building. A considerable impact on local capacity building is being provided by the Brandenburg Leader Network Office. The annual seminar programme has significantly contributed to the success of the local capacity building process and the network office serves effectively as a forum for discussion and exchange of experience. In addition, the regular discussion workshops guaranteed an effective cooperation between the action groups and the managing authority. This cooperation has induced a dynamic evolution of the integrated rural development policy in Brandenburg.

5.7.2 Conclusions

There are indications that RDPs can make valued contributions to addressing the new Challenges, both from the small selection of MTEs presented here and from wider literature (e.g. Dwyer et al, 2012). However, it is not possible to draw any firm lessons as to the extent of these contributions, from the MTE exercise itself.

5.8 Topic 2.2.3: Comparative analysis of the initial budgetary allocations of RDPs/NSPs, the post-Health Check budgetary allocations and current implementation levels

5.8.1 Findings

In the MTEs and accompanying documents of almost all programmes references are made to envisaged budget modifications due to the Economic Recovery Package and the Health Check.

In most cases, the visible budget shifts do not indicate, whether the source of the additional funds originate from the Economic Recovery Package and/or the Health Check[17]. In some cases

[17] The MTEs are often quite vague in regard to the additional funding. Hence, other contributing programme specific reasons cannot be ruled out.

Euro amounts are stated, in others an intended increase or decrease is mentioned in a more general manner.

55 programmes mention additional funding. Within these programmes most amendments (one third each) are stated in regard to axis one and axis two. Axis three is mentioned in 20% of the programmes as addressee, axis four by 12% and axis five by 5%. Conversely, only 10 programmes indicate a decrease of funds in the course of the Health Check and/or the Economic Recovery Package. These decreases concern mainly axis one and three (a third each), to a lesser extent axis four (20%) and two (16%).

5.8.2 Judgement

Although mentioned, the majority of the reports have not paid detailed attention to the issue of budgetary changes due to the Health Check and the Economic Recovery Package. These rather recent developments did not allow a thorough analysis by the evaluators. Therefore, information gathered from the MTEs is not verifiable and a comparative analysis with current implementation levels unfeasible.

5.8.3 Conclusions

The analysis of the MTEs and accompanying documents provides evidence that suggests that additional funding is in line with the funding priorities. A comprehensive analysis of this topic is only possible if the implementation is more advanced a more precise database is available.

6. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 3: Complementarity between RDPs and other support instruments

The concept of complementarity means object and territorial complementing or reinforcing of the projects (actions) directed towards achieving the common goal. Two necessary preconditions for acknowledging these programmes as complementary are:

1. lack of contradictions between the actions assumed in them;
2. that there shall be no copying (duplicate funding) of the same actions in different support instruments and programmes.

6.1 Topic 3.1: Assessment of the complementarities and synergies, and also the potential for overlap, of rural development operations with those implemented through other instruments, in particular the EU Structural Funds, the European Fisheries Fund, CAP Pillar 1 and State Aid

6.1.1 Findings

The actions of the Rural Development Programmes exhibit many common characteristics with actions financed by the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Fisheries Fund, the ERDF and other instruments in both its scope and objectives. Oftentimes, this overlap creates so-called areas of common intervention. This can lead to the financing of several projects that are thematically identical, which in consequences reduces the effectiveness of the programmes in place. In order to prevent this, actions should follow the rule of complementarity between RDPs and other support instruments.

MTE analyses regarding complementarity exhibit a variety of methods on the national and regional level. The methods of implementing the role of complementarity and synergy in the actions of RDPs can be divided into several groups, and in most countries or regions are put into place simultaneously:

1. Use of demarcation criteria (defined in National Strategic Frameworks). These criteria "allocate" a project to a given Operational Programme and prevent overlap with programmes from another support instrument, but at the same time allow programmes to complement each other. Taking the objectives and tasks of RDPs into account in regional planning and strategic documents serves the same purpose.
2. Appointing coordination committees or special work groups for the period of implementation of projects. These groups would observe the rule of complementarity (for instance, through common sessions between the Managing Authorities of Structural Funds and the Steering Committee of an RDP and vice versa).
3. Appointing, on both the regional and national level, monitoring committees for structural funds that take into account the rule of complementarity. These establish

their own measures of complementarity (no real-life examples). The activity of regional committees also aims to guarantee institutional complementarity.

4. Drafting documents that establish the criteria and standards for avoiding the replication of actions between the RDP and other instruments. These documents are drafted by both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and can assume the form of a written guide.

5. Agreements between the economic sectors in regional offices with regard to following the rule of complementarity of actions and synergy.

Table 20: Major findings related to complementarities between RDPs and other support instruments – the examples from MTEs

Region/country	Synthetic MTE Findings
AT	The complementarity and coherence between Leader and other EU funds are guaranteed, however depending on the experience and know-how of the leader-managers. No reference to other RDP axes.
BE-Flanders	Complementarity between CAP pillar 2 (specially axis 2 and 3) and EU Structural funds through representation of MA of Structural Funds in Steering Committee of RDP and vice versa, during design and implementation of the programmes,
CY	During the programme design phase emphasis was put on the avoidance of overlapping between Funds and not the maximisation of synergies. In Cyprus an overall deficit in the coordination of policies for the development of rural areas is recorded. The establishment of demarcation criteria between Funds and the procedures for information between the Managing Authorities of EU Structural Funds OPs and the Fisheries OP were not accompanied by the establishment of a coordination process of planning and focus of interventions in selected areas.
CZ	Immediate complementarity and synergy between RDP and other tools of the cohesion policy (ESF, ERDF, CF, EFF) may be founded predominantly within priority AXIS III. Besides, indirect synergy and contextual connections may be, however, identified to see the action of these programmes (ie synergy with OP Enterprise and Innovation, PO Environment, ROP). it is very difficult to analyse complementarity and synergy with AXIS IV: some indirect connections may be also found in this case, but exclusively at the level of particular LAGs.
DE-Brandenburg und Berlin	There is a Monitoring committee in Brandenburg who deliberates upon the EU Structural Funds and the EARDF in common. The meetings of the Monitoring committee are very factual and can be characterised by a high expert knowledge and a cooperative teamwork. There is an analysis between the complementaries and synergies of different measures in relation to the axes (HQ 14) but this is just within in RDP not in relation to other EU funds.
FI-Continental	The RDP and the programmes for the structural funds has coordinated the preparing of the programmes and the have common meetings every year and cooperation is discussed by the theme. This geives a basis for at least object complementarity. On regional level is important for coordination; there is a administrative ongoing coordination in an board for cooperation. (Maakunnan yhteistyöryhmä)
FR-Corse	As overlap are possible on some areas, guidelines have been provided to instructing services in order to ensure that the adequate fund is mobilised depending on the type of eligible expense, the type of beneficiary, the theme of the nature of funded action. For instance: action as regards protection of forests and natural areas can be funded by RDP for immaterial actions or ERDF for material investments. The two funds are complementary and a technical group ensure the limits of each fund. As regards complementarities between EAFRD and ESF, both can finance training but of different types. Again, guidelines exist and programming pre-committees check the eligibility of actions within RDP. The pluri-funds monitoring committee also ensure the respect of the limitation of the funds and can propose evolutions.
GR	There are no references on the complementarities and synergies of RDP and EU Structural Funds, the European Fisheries Fund, CAP Pillar 1 and State Aid. There are only simply indicated the policy areas covered by the ERDF, ESF, EFF and actions (meetings) of the relevant departments to coordinate the issuance of notices and especially state aid operations.
NL	There is an analysis for complementarity and synergy of RDP, the European Fisheries Fund, State aid, CAP pillar 1 and for the EU Structural fund. The main findings the different type of funds are complementary and synergy. There is some potential for overlap, but the goal is to prevent overlap.
PL	Rural Development Programmes are internally complementary and coherent. Complementarity refers the priority axis and actions. The major recommendations are connected with reduction of the number of actions and concentration on the most important priorities, with the special attention to improvement of competitiveness in agricultural sector. As a accurate and synergistic was the division

Region/country	Synthetic MTE Findings
	of the funds between regions. RDP was externally coherent with other EU policies, as well as state and Community documents. The country programmes realize the tasks on the country or interregional level, the regional programmes – on regional or local level, what favour actions complementarities. The Programme is complementary with other instruments concern rural development, due to conceptualization of detailed demarcation line to the common actions. Good examples of complementarities could be identified between action 321 concern water-sewage infrastructures and Operational Programme (Infrastructure and Environment).
RO	MTE contains a listing of complementarities between different funds and programmes; the analysis relates to the clear separation of interventions for both spatial and object interventions by programmes' provisions and mentions the institutional complementarity at the programmes' coordination level only; no findings are used
SK	Complementarities and synergies are assessed in the MTE only very roughly. More detailed analysis is contained in the RDP where the process of setting up of demarcation lines among RDP and operational programmes financed by EU Structural Funds is outlined and demarcation lines described in detail (at the level of axis).
UK-England	There is a brief, qualitative analysis of complementarities and synergies with ERDF and ESF funds, in the answers to the horizontal evaluation questions. This concludes, on the basis of describing briefly how the planning processes involved collaboration and how the regional delivery agencies were the same, for structural funds and for EAFRD Axis 1 and 3, that the different funds acted in a complementary way. More detailed description of positive inter-relations is given in 2 of the 3 regional case studies for delivery. The regional case studies indicate that written Regional Implementation Plans have emphasised this point, and "regional implementation groups" including representatives from the PMCs of ERDF programmes, provided collective oversight of RDP delivery within the region, and complementarity between the different programmes' targeting strategies was carefully pursued (one example is given for a convergence area where ERDF decided to fund a broadband access project, so the RDP decided to fund broadband only for areas outside the convergence area). In some regions, it is reported that links are not so strong but the perception among officials is that gaps are more likely than duplications, as a result of lack of good linkages.

Generally, the level of complementarity between RDPs and other support instruments is highly differentiated. For example significant level of complementarity was evaluated by the expert in Poland as whole and in some regions in Germany and Spain. In the opposite Austrian and Hungarian MTE reported very low to insignificant level of complementarities.

6.1.2 Judgement

All MTE analyses regarding complementarity pertain to quality and are usually the result of the expert knowledge of the report's authors or individuals who were involved in social research for the project (interviews, in-depth interviews, expert panels, surveys). As a whole, these analyses exhibit a variety of methods on the national and regional level in terms of including the rule of complementarity and synergy in the actions between RDPs and other support instruments.

Data from Mid-Term Evaluations of Rural Development Programmes for 2007-2013 in terms of complementarity and synergy are of a highly general nature and are difficult to interpret. Two problems are of particular note. First, the period under evaluation is too short. Second, an assessment of synergy will only be possible once all operations related to the projects are finished. MTEs consistently point this out.

6.1.3 Conclusions

The methods of evaluation of complementarity and synergy in MTEs are numerous and diverse, but are characterised above all by a lack of in-depth analysis, itself resulting from a lack of data. In certain cases, an evaluation was not possible at all or, at best, was limited to selected actions.

Some evaluations also seem to be subjective or stem from the specific experiences of the individuals in charge of them. Despite these comments, most MTEs make it possible to evaluate the general degree of complementarity and synergy between RDPs and other support instruments. The results of such an evaluation usually vary widely according to location, even within the borders of a single country. It is difficult, however, to draw out any regularities based on this.

6.2 Topic 3.2: Evaluation of the actual level of coordination between the RDP and other support instruments at national, programme, regional and local level

6.2.1 Findings

The coordination between the RDPs and other support instruments is primarily carried out by teams that regulate and control the degree of coordination between individual instruments. These are typically subcommittees or Advisory Committees within the Ministry of Agriculture or on a higher central level that control all the support instruments (common strategy, common managing authority and common steering group for coordination). In some countries the teams assembled by the Ministries of Agriculture include, aside from the representatives of the ministries themselves, individuals representing selected agencies, agricultural organizations, NGOs etc.

The assessment of the actual level of coordination between the RDPs and other support instruments varies greatly with each MTE. According to MTEs analysis significant level of coordination between RDPs and other support instruments reports experts from: Poland, France, Bulgaria, Latvia, regions: Brandenburg und Berlin and Sachsen in Germany, Andalucía, Asturias, Murcia and Navarra in Spain. Very low to insignificant level of coordination was reported in Austria, Finland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Portugal, Estonia and several regions in other countries.

6.2.2 Judgement

Many of the latter point out the lack of information regarding the coordination of actions, particularly on the regional and local levels. This is why some MTEs do not evaluate the coordination of instruments at all while others limit themselves to relaying the opinions of the experts in charge of drafting the document. In most cases, the evaluation of the degree of coordination relates to the national level.

6.2.3 Conclusions

The level of coordination is potentially high, but the extent to which it is implemented is low. One common view is that coordination has strong and well-designed theoretical foundations (on the level of planning for instruments), but runs into problems when put into practice. The mechanisms of regulation and control of coordination bring the administration face to face with serious bureaucratic challenges and labyrinthine procedures.

7. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 4: Delivery Systems

7.1 Topic 4.1: Consider the delivery systems established at EU level, and designed and implemented at programme level

7.1.1 Findings

Approaches to delivery in MTEs. In the guidelines issued for the MTEs, delivery systems were not an item for consideration. Therefore whatever mention is made of them in MTEs is the result of a judgement by the evaluator that the subject was worthy of being assessed.

Given this situation, a preliminary aspect that needs to be considered is whether the delivery system has been described or assessed in any way in the MTE by the evaluator. Of the 92 MTEs available, 24 (26%) did not describe or consider delivery aspects in any way[18]. The MS concerned by such absence are only 7 (see footnote 12), 4 of them characterized by centralized administrations (AT, CZ, RO, SI), while the remaining 20 cases concern regionalized programmes, more frequently found in Italy and Spain.

The analysis of delivery issues will therefore be based on the 68 cases (74%), which mention one or more delivery aspects in their MTEs.

The approach taken in the treatment of delivery –among those that do mention the theme- is quite differentiated. 4 different approaches have been identified.

In the most frequent case (41 MTEs, corresponding to 45%) there is an assessment of **general delivery aspects of programmes as a whole,** often focused not so much on a description of who does what and the procedures adopted, but rather on the identification of the problematic aspects of delivery which have emerged in the course of the evaluation. These aspects will be analysed in the next section with more detail. Both MS and regionalized programmes are well represented in this group[19].

Another group of MTEs, (16 corresponding to 17% of the total) only included **a description of some aspect of delivery considered significant,** without however making any assessment of it. The great majority of these are regional level programmes[20]: while only one corresponds to a national RDP (CY). This may suggest that at regional level delivery issues are considered relatively less frequently as an integral part of the evaluation.

[18] AT, CZ, DE-Brandemburg and Berlin, DE-Sachsen Anhalt, ES-Aragon, ES-Asturias, ES-Cantabria, ES-La Rioja, ES-Network, FR-Guyane, IT-Bolzano, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IT-Lombardia, IT-Marche, IT-Piemonte, IT-Puglia, IT-Sardegna, IT-Sicilia, IT-Toscana, IT-Trento, RO, SI

[19] Among MS: BG, DK, FR-Hexagon, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT-Continent, SE, SK, UK-England. Among regionalized RDPs, 10 German MTEs, ES-Andalucia, ES-Valencia, FR-Corse, FR-Île de la Réunion and FR-Martinique, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Basilicata, IT-Lazio, IT-Liguria, IT-Molise, IT-Umbria; PT-Açores and PT-Network, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, and UK-Wales.

[20] BE-Wallonia, CY, DE-Bayern, ES-Baleares, ES-Canarias, ES-Castilla y Leon, ES-Castilla-La Mancha, ES-Catalonia, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, FI-Åland Islands, IT-Emilia-Romagna, IT-Piemonte, IT-Valdaosta, IT-Veneto, PT-Madeira

Only 4 (4%) MTEs addressed delivery **measure by measure,** instead of at programme level. 3 of these were regional level programmes[21] while one is a MS (EE).

Finally, 7 MTEs (8%) mention delivery mechanisms in the conclusions and recommendations, as the cause for another non-delivery problem assessed[22]. In this approach delivery aspects are not the direct object of the evaluation but are mentioned as explanatory factors for other weaknesses or strengths of the programme, such as results and impacts, achievement of targets, financial progress, difficulties with specific measures. (See also below the analysis of theme 6 "Conclusions and Recommendations" for a more complete analysis on the different roles delivery systems can play in influencing programme performance).

Delivery issues considered in MTEs. An extreme variety of issues are considered in MTEs. The selection of issues is of course open and may be the result of a choice of the managing authorities to include it or of the evaluator in the course of the assessment finding an issue relevant. Since there is no common understanding of what issues to consider as part of a delivery system, it was felt that a structured list of assessed delivery issues could be useful as a reference framework.

In Table 21 below, the delivery issues mentioned at different programming levels and the assessments linked with a single issue have been listed. Not all the issues mentioned (second column) are also assessed (third column).

Table 21: Programming levels, general delivery issues mentioned and, if stated, findings resulting from assessment

Member State/Region mentioning the issue	Delivery issue mentioned	Findings/assessment
BE-Flanders; DE-Sachsen; DK; EE; FR-Corse; FR-Guadeloupe; FR-Martinique; GR; HU; IT-Basilicata; LT; NL; SK; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland; UK-Wales	Application process (documentation procedure, duration, information availability, advisory services	– delays, Increased handling time, too long process of instruction (over a year); – good application and payment system (best practice – DK) – reduce number of controls and improve sanction system – late preparation of implementing guidelines – differences of interpretation – changed requirements in different rounds of applications – bad quality of application documents, – some measures administered at central level, others at local level creates financial problems, paying problems of national paying agency – different interpretation of rules for filing applications – improve speed of payments with a guide of procedures – lack of training of employees managing axis 3 and 4 – application procedures for axis 3 & 4 cumbersome and complex – multiple checks lead to backlog – combination of national rigid administration rules with EU legal framework – presence or absence of advance payments for LAGs – applications for small projects should be simplified – attempt at calculating costs of delivery (very high) – introduce indicators of application approval rate

[21] BE-Flanders, DE-Baden Württemberg, DE-Rheinland Pfalz
[22] ES-Madrid, ES-Murcia, ES-Navarra, ES Pais Vasco, FR-Guadeloupe, GR, MT

Member State/Region mentioning the issue	Delivery issue mentioned	Findings/assessment
BE-Wallonia; CY; DE-Network; DE-Niedersachsen and Bremen; DE-Sachsen, DE-Thûringen; ES-Castilla y Leon; ES-Galicia; ES-Madrid; ESNavarra; ES Pais Vasco; FI-Åland; FI-Continent; FR-Corse; FR-Hexagon; GR; HU; IE; IT-Emilia-Romagna; IT-Lazio; IT-Liguria; IT-Marche:; IT-Umbria; IT-Valdaosta; IT-Veneto; LT; LV; NL; PL; PT-Açores; PT-Continent; PT-Madeira; SE; SK; UK-Northern Ireland;UK-Sctland	Effectiveness, efficiency of organization of management, distribution of tasks and coordination of the programme; division of labor between Managing, Paying and Certification authorities	– sector influence and delegation to other services for certain measures – understaffing, weakness, lack of skills, – lack of trust between administrations – clear or unclear roles, who does what, conflicts between MA & PA – lack of clarity on who should have a steering role – increased costs – high administrative burden, massive bureaucracy – too many measures and sub-measures (aid schemes) – increased complexity, requirements, – continuity with previous programming period good – coordination between different areas within the region creates good synergies, higher efficiency – lack of coordination between managing bodies, delegated provinces and Department of Agriculture; difficult coordination even for small areas – having contact persons for different aspects/measures helps – one programme and 21 delivery methods (in FR/Hexagone) – too hierarchical and centralized, delays due to organization of delivery system – slow implementation of axis 3 & 4, poor delegation of tasks or too strong delegation – national decisions on budget cause delays – suggestions for PAs data-bases efficiency – flexibility to shift budgets between high and low absorption measures – instructions received from EU guidelines allowed for different interpretations – too much emphasis on commitments, then no money to pay or make further calls of proposals – high transaction costs
BE-Wallonia, CY, DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklemburg-Vorpommen, DE-Schleswig-Holstein; LV; SE	Selection of projects, criteria	– need for amendments in criteria for some measures – problems with project selection
BE-Wallonia; ES-Navarra; FR-Hexagone	Effectiveness of Monitoring Committees	– good/poor – should play a more important role – role of national and regional committees not clear, weakness
CY; DE-Sachsen; DE-Thûringen; FR-Corse; FR-Ile de la Réunion	Control mechanisms	– clear, – excessive, heavy in relation to previous period – problems found with payments in 1st pillar spill over to 2nd pillar – difficulties with area controls done at national level, with other area controls at regional level – difficult when heterogeneous practices by different delegated bodies
DE-Hamburg; DE-Hessen; EE; ES-Andalucia; FR-Corse; FR-Guadeloupe; FR-Hexagone, FR-Ile de la Réunion; IT-Emila Romagna; IT-Valdaosta; LT; PT-Açores; PT-Continent; UK-Northern Ireland; UK Scotland	Partnership arrangements (vertical and horizontal) between institutional levels and actors, stakeholder involvement	– problems when political alignment at national, EU & regional level are different – communication EU/nation difficult, between national and regional not easy but improving, good, bad, allows or not some autonomy, – risk of by-passing regional decision-making at local level – very limited funding for exchanges – effectiveness – strengthen horizontal integration – creation of working groups to solve difficulties (best practice);

Member State/Region mentioning the issue	Delivery issue mentioned	Findings/assessment
		– regions play a stronger role in relation to the past, but not the main one; – heterogeneity of practices by delegated bodies – limited regionalisation
CY; ES-Andalucia; ES-Canarias; ES-Extremadura; ES-Valencia; FR-Corse; FR-Guadeloupe; FR-Hexagone; FR-Martinique; IT-Abruzzo; IT-Marche; LT; LU; PT-Madeira; SK; UK-Northern Ireland	Information system, communication with beneficiaries, monitoring, publicity	– poor/good functioning, low exchange – avoid information overload – too complex IT system, to be simplified; – improve collection of implementation data; make it available to stakeholders – improve publicity and communication of programme – absence of a unique and specific software – difficulties in payment due to IT software – Information tool imposed from national level, too top-down – limited means for info system – unforeseen needs for managing, rather than just setting-up info systems – better communication towards non-agricultural actors needed – choice of implementation only with technical assistance inefficient, caused delays – poor performance of data-collection tool
CY, DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklemburg Vorpommen, DE-Schleswig-Holstein,	Eligibility of projects, conditions	– low level of maturity
DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklemburg-Vorpommen, DE-Schleswig-Holstein,	Financial engineering	
DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklemburg-Vorpommen, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, FR-Corse	Strategic approach	No entity in charge of collecting information on achievement progress of strategy
DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklemburg-Vorpommen, DE-Nordrheinland-Westfalen, DE-Schleswig-Holstein,	Regulatory, legal framework, flexibility	– poor flexibility due to EU rigid regulation
DE-Mecklemburg-Vorpommen, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, ES-Murcia	Changes, modifications of RDPs	– implied higher costs and administrative burden – implied revision of target indicators
HU; IT-Network	National Rural Network	– not operational for a long time, could not provide support – no transnational cooperation – good construction, operational with a descending hierarchy, addressing complex objectives defined at different institutional levels

A look at the number of MS and regions associated with the same issue, of course with different assessments attached to it, gives a good idea of the very broad range of delivery issues found in MTEs and where they are found. Both positive and negative assessments have been indicated when mentioned as well as best practices and the approach taken in the assessment. Negative assessments related to the delivery systems are significant and diffused.

In the following table the same exercise is repeated for individual measures and axes. As already indicated, some MTEs have assessed the delivery system with an approach by measure, a relevant perspective since delivery arrangements often differ at measure and axis level.

Table 22: Programming levels, specific measure delivery issues mentioned and, if stated, findings resulting from assessment

Member State/Region mentioning issue	Measures or axes with delivery, implementation problems mentioned	Findings/assessment
BE-Flanders; BE-Baden Würtemberg; DE-Rheinland-Pfalz; ES-Madrid; UK England; UK-Northern Ireland	Axis 2 Agro-environmental measures 211, 212, 213, 216, 224, 225, 227	– Better effects if some managed in a territorially differentiated manner, others better if homogeneously managed; – reinforced publicity and information activities to increase uptake – significant implementing problems – calls for some measures should be for 5 years rather than annual to avoid high transaction costs – significant issues of delivery emerged through secondary sources, but not mentioned in MTE.
BE-Flanders; BE-Wallonia; BG; DE-Saarland; DK; ES-Baleares; ES-Galicia; UK-Engalnd; UK-Northern Ireland	Leader axis 431	– Delimitation of LAG areas creates administration difficulties – delays, discontent from local administrations and LAGs – animation to improve implementation – competitive tendering increases bureaucratization, – inadequate and overlapping controls (as for area measures) by MA and PA; – "jour fixe" for dealing with Leader problems and have a Leader coordinator (good practice) – management and organizational difficulties – local involvement system (good practice); – mainstreaming has changed Leader approach – increase complexity of LEADER – design and implementation of delivery structures for Leader very poor
BE-Flanders, DE-Baden Württemberg; LU; LV; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland;	Axis 3 312, 321, 331	– Implemented separately from Leader, resulted in generic targets – adoption of national guidelines, checklists – new measures on internet, new activities and infrastructures created problems for which no monitoring data, rely on questionnaires
DE-Baden Württemberg; ES-Madrid; FR-Gaudeloupe; NL; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland;	Axis 1 113, 114, 121, 132,	– application procedure difficulties – create a guarantee fund to support investing farmers – too large administrative burden for measures of this axis

Judgement

Given the fact that the assessment of delivery issues was not mandatory, it is remarkable that three quarters of the MTEs did address the issue in a quite articulated way. This finding also implies that delivery issues are relevant in the assessment of RDPs. On the other hand there is no explanation of why delivery issues were not addressed in the rest (26%) of MTEs, since there was no obligation to consider them. We may guess that it was due to different motivations, such as lack of relevance attributed to it, the lack of interest from MAs, or no significant evidence of delivery problems perceived by the evaluator. The geography of MTEs not mentioning delivery issues shows a relatively higher presence of regions in decentralized states (19 MTEs over a total of 24).

The four evaluation approaches to delivery issues found are in no way exhaustive of the range of possible approaches. The variety observed suggests that since there are no clear guidelines at different institutional levels for the evaluation of delivery aspects, this allows more freedom for MAs and evaluators in the choice of how and what aspects to look at, including not considering delivery whatsoever. Furthermore, the fact that only a minority of MTEs provides a description of

the delivery systems in place and goes directly to the assessment of some delivery issue, implies that in order to fully understand what needs to be done, it is necessary to have available a description of the procedure, norm or organization being assessed, and for this other sources of information need to be consulted. It also implies that delivery issues are present in MTEs not so much as an "object" of evaluation but rather that they play an instrumental role in explaining why other aspects of the RDP observed do not work well. For example when the result of a measure is being assessed, and it is different from what was expected, the evaluator looks for the factor that explains why this has happened and finds that there were application procedures difficulties.

Table 21 provides a structured overall framework of what are the most frequently mentioned delivery issues.

- **Effectiveness and efficiency of programme management**. This issue shows the greatest number of entries in MTEs (over half of them) and addresses a central delivery aspect. It includes aspects of organization within the managing authority, as well as aspects of coordination with other authorities and delegated entities. Difficulties mentioned range from sector capabilities not used to deal with wider rural development, understaffing, inability to anticipate functioning needs, lack of clarity in the distribution of competences, lack of cooperation between administrations; high administrative burdens, high costs; excessive number of measures and sub-measures; difficult for potential beneficiaries to know who does what; problems of partial centralisation and decentralisation for certain procedures; making available the necessary budgets in a timely manner; lack of flexibility to shift funding between measures, to change measures.
- The **functioning of the application-to-payment process** which has increased in complexity and duration in relation to previous programming periods, with the added requirement of a distinct paying authority; a division of labour between administrations not always clear, often at different institutional levels (between national and regional authorities and between regional and other agencies or administrations at the same or lower tiers of government delegated with some implementation function) and generating differences in the interpretation of procedures. Difficulties in preparing the guidelines and implementing regulations have been responsible for delays; change of criteria for applications have reproduced delays during the implementation process. Problems in skills, cost and numbers of administrators are mentioned raising issues of staff capability and adequacy.
- **Information systems and monitoring**. This issue is also frequently mentioned in negative terms, although with contrasting rationales. A unique information system is both assessed as good for some evaluators and as insufficiently flexible by others. However it appears that the setting up of information systems, of whatever character, has been problematic to deal with, either because of delays in setting it up, or because of lack of support in making it work and adapt it to different demands, or for lack of sufficient funding and expertise. Management and paying info systems are often incompatible, leading to further delays in the processing of applications. Some information systems have been developed mostly for administrative purposes, others with also an interface for potential beneficiaries, adding better transparency to procedures.

Other delivery issues are not mentioned as frequently as the above-mentioned ones and deal with more detailed aspects of delivery.

It should be observed that some issues, for example selection criteria, or the strategic approach, have received few mentions, both positive and negative. In the opinion of the rapporteur for this theme this phenomenon may be linked to the fact that MTEs are commissioned by MAs at national or regional level, and evaluators often adopt the same perspective in their outlook of the other institutional levels. For example, in explaining the absence of any treatment of the delivery system in Austria, with a centralized national MA, the geographical expert summarizing MTEs by topic notes in his own assessment that the evaluators were chosen within the administration and were not asked to treat delivery issues. Some of the German evaluations, quite good in terms of coverage of delivery issues, also provide recommendations on questions such as the non recovery of VAT costs by beneficiaries, which reflect the preferences of MAs as well as those of the evaluator. In yet another case,, the negative assessment of the centrally managed measures at national level by FR/Corse may be interpreted as a question of an ineffective delivery organization as well as a question of expressing a need for a greater degree of autonomy. The point being made here is that assessments, especially of public administrations and their functioning, -which is what delivery systems are about-, are sensitive issues- and may reflect a point of view that would be quite different when looked at from a different institutional perspective. The programming level at which the evaluation is commissioned appears to influence both the items under scrutiny as well as the contents of the assessment.

MTEs approaching delivery mechanisms at measure and axis level reflect a perception of RDPs as a menu of distinct interventions rather than as the implementation of a consistent strategic approach (Table 21).

- The mention of measure and axis specific delivery issues is less frequent in MTEs than in those adopting an approach at general-programme level.
- One key issue arising from the evaluator's comments concerns the specific difficulties emerging from the implementation of axes 3 and 4 –related to wider rural development-, in relation to axes 1 and 2 –related to individual farmers-. Many MS and Regions have designed distinct delivery mechanisms for these two pairs of axes structuring RDPs When axis 3 is partly or wholly implemented with the Leader approach, LAGs play a relevant role in the delivery of axis 3 and as a result the procedures which MAs have established for the mainstreaming of Leader extend also to the measures of axis 3. When axis 3 is implemented without the Leader approach other problems arise, related with procedures required by interventions in non-farming sectors and requiring double funding checks. The most frequently mentioned delivery issue is the inadequate mainstreaming of Leader, with reference to the re-designing of Leader areas to suit administrative boundaries, the administrative burden given to LAGs, the delays in its implementation, the difficulty for making payments for Leader projects, the changed nature of its approach.
- Agro-environmental measures have also been a source of delivery problems, of a quite different nature from those of axis 3 and 4. Low uptake, territorially undifferentiated interventions, individual versus collective or area interventions, links with first pillar benefits, high transaction costs and frequency of calls.

- In the first axis, particular delivery issues regard investment measures, due to the specific regulations, variety of controls and particularly long duration of the application-to-payment process.

7.1.2 Conclusions

The consideration of the delivery systems established at EU level (topic 1) has shown that even though not mandated to assess delivery issues, MTEs do address the theme in the majority of cases, but these appear in an unstructured way, more as explanatory factors than as an object of observation and assessment *per se*. MTEs do not –in the great majority of cases- provide a description of how the delivery issue in question is organized by the MA in the RDP being assessed. For this reason, in order to understand the multiple issues included under the delivery theme, some structuring of the issues becomes necessary. The preliminary list of issues and assessments on delivery issues as they appear in MTEs that has been provided, serves the purpose of giving an idea of the range of such issues and how they are assessed, delimiting and ordering their relevance in terms of the frequency with which they are mentioned and the location of the MA. The construction of an *ex-post* conceptual framework for a better understanding of delivery systems is useful for delimiting the field of observation for this theme and may be refined successively. It may also be useful to orient a future assessment of delivery issues in a more systematic and focused way in the next programming period. Instead of four different approaches to the assessment of delivery systems, it would be preferable to have one, addressing both those characteristics of measures and axes on the one hand, as well as general programming aspects on the other.

The structuring done has allowed us to compare and aggregate issues and assessments at EU level. Given the fact that the consideration of delivery systems in MTEs was not obligatory, it is quite significant that ¾ of the MTEs did address the theme, showing that the question of delivery effectiveness is an important factor in the success or failure of RDPs. Most MTEs consider delivery issues at general programme level, while only a minority consider them only at measure and axis level (many MTEs consider both approaches). The most often mentioned delivery problems at general programming level regard management and implementation effectiveness, application and payment procedures and information systems. On the other hand, those mentioned at measure and axis level regard mostly Leader mainstreaming, axis 3 procedures, agro-environmental measures and investment measures in axis 1. Although this hierarchy of problems is based on the frequency with which they were mentioned in MTEs, they may serve to signal in which areas such problems are concentrated.

Management authorities, which are mainly responsible for the setting up of delivery systems, take decisions and operate on the basis of a set of common rules and guidelines established at EU level as well as on the basis of the MS' own rules and procedures for the public administration. Addressing the problems generated by delivery issues and indicated in MTEs implies understanding and trying to distinguish what part of the problem comes from the EU level and what part comes from the MA's own level, as well the combination of both.

7.2 Topic 4.2: Assessment of the administrative burden of the delivery systems for Member States and individual beneficiaries as identified in the MTE reports, and where possible, recommendations for reducing this (in relation to application and/or selection procedures etc.)

The notion of administrative burden refers to a more general preoccupation with reducing such burdens in all the domains of EU intervention and known as "better regulation" at all institutional levels of government. In the case of EAFRD interventions, as well as for the other Structural Funds, the administrative burden has two complementary meanings, one referring to the arrangements of national public administrations at the level of the management authority for the RDPs, the other referring to the burden for final beneficiaries of public support. In both cases there is a built-in negative connotation to the labelling of administrative arrangements as a "burden".

The presence of a problem of administrative burden has already appeared among others in the list of assessments on delivery issues in the previous section. Here we will firstly address how many MTE's have mentioned the presence of one or more burden problems, followed by an analysis of the character of administrative burdens and for whom they are so (for management, institutional relations, beneficiaries). Finally some examples will be given about recommendations to reduce burdens.

The requirement of assessing the "administrative burden" was included in the Terms of Reference as one of the themes to be addressed in this synthesis, under the heading of "delivery systems"

7.2.1 Findings

How diffuse is the perception of administrative burden in MTEs?

Just as there was no obligation for evaluators to assess delivery systems, there was also no obligation to assess administrative burdens. In order to collect information on this sub-topic, geographical experts summarizing the different MTEs by topic were asked to survey the problematic aspects of delivery mentioned by MTEs, indicating in what way they were a "burden" and for whom. Of course not all administrative procedures are considered as burdensome, but it is true that problematic aspects of delivery are more spontaneously mentioned than non-problematic ones. This task required a judgement on the part of geographical experts, which may not have been consistent throughout all MTEs. The findings reported here should be considered as indicative because the assessment of burdens was not required and the judgement of different evaluators and different geographical experts has influenced the information synthesized, in ways that cannot be controlled. The approach taken has been to report *what evaluators in MTEs assessed as problematic and not working well in the delivery system* as an indicator of administrative burden. In the following sections (7.2.2 and 7.2.3) it is the rapporteur for this theme that judges and concludes on the findings.

25 MTEs do not mentioning any administrative burden problems, corresponding to 27% of the 92 MTEs analyzed. This implies that the great majority of MTEs (73%) has indicated one or more types of administrative burden, considered as a negative, problematic aspect of delivery. The

fact that slightly over a quarter did not mention them should not be taken as indicative of the non-existence of burdens in those MS and regions, since this may be due to the fact that this aspect was ignored in the evaluation because there was no requirement for doing so[23].

Programmes organised at the level of regions seem more numerous than those organised for whole MS in not mentioning administrative burdens, and in particular Italian regions (12 out of 21 MTEs).

Among those stating the presence of some type of burden (67 MTEs, corresponding to 73%) there is some differentiation in the approach taken:

- 29% of the total just state what is the nature of the burden,
- 33% indicate besides the type of burden, also some recommendation for reducing them,
- a further 10% have included in their evaluation work, besides types and recommend-dations, surveys of beneficiaries or specific additional work intended to find out more about their views on burdens.

Types of burden mentioned

The types of administrative burden mentioned in the MTEs may be better understood by grouping them in 4 broad types:

1. organizational burdens related to overall management of the programme
   - more demanding and complex programmes and controls than in the past
   - burdens related to adequate setting up of the delivery system (administrations understaffed, lacking necessary skills, performing multiple tasks, high turnover, difficult to acquire technical assistance capabilities)
   - approval of projects takes much longer because of growing requirements, decentralization of tasks, multiple actors intervening,
   - inadequate provision of advisory services
   - (complex or unclear?) selection and eligibility procedures
   - high concentration and overlapping of auditing tasks
   - inadequacy and incompatibility of information systems (for communication and publicity, data collection, responding to queries from potential beneficiaries, filing and follow up of applications, monitoring)
2. lack of coordination and cooperation between different administrations and bodies (horizontal and vertical)
   - lack of, or poor coordination between administrative bodies (between ministries, national-regional, regional agencies and services delegated for certain functions, between regional and sub-regional levels –provinces, municipalities-.
   - lack of, or poor coordination between managing authority and paying authorities; between certification authority and various types of controls

[23] MTEs not mentioning any burden are AT, DE-Bayern, DE-Network, DE-Rheinland Pfalz, DE-Saarland, ES-Asturias, ES-Cantabria, ES-Castilla–La-Mancha, ES-Extremadura, ES-La Rioja, ES-Network, GR, IT-Bolzano, IT-Campania, IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IT-Lombardia, IT-Marche, IT-Piemonte, IT-Puglia, IT-Sardegna, IT-Sicilia, IT-Toscana, IT-Trento, IT-Veneto, SI.

- lack of, or poor coordination, unclear division of administrative tasks, between managing authorities and LAGs
- high number of actors and stakeholders intervening in some phase of the decision-making process
- overlap between conflicting, non-matching requirements of EU regulatory framework with national frameworks, which gives rise to conflicting interpretations, compound effects of requirements from both frameworks, development of parallel delivery systems with different rationales.

3. legal and regulatory burdens (requiring modifications of norms)
   - required accompanying documents to support applications
   - budget national regulations for transferring co-financing to authorities
   - tax regulations
   - national/regional regulations for providing support
   - advance payments regulations
   - undifferentiated requirements for large and small projects (implying over-heavy requirements for small projects, in particular)
4. specific burdens related to specific measures and axes

Besides the higher burden associated with axis 3 and 4 in general, specific measures are mentioned by individual MTEs as showing particular burdens. These are:

- In axis 1: 111, 122, 123, 125 and 132.
- In axis 2: 214, 225, 227 and 226
- In axis 3: 311, 314, 321, 323
- In axis 4: 41, 421, 431.

Examples of recommendations on how to reduce administrative burdens

A significant number of MTEs (30, corresponding to 33% of the total) include not only an indication of a list of administrative burdens, but also recommendations for reducing them in the future. Such relatively rich information on a good number of cases, the highest among the 4 groups identified above, should provide alternative ways of dealing with some recurrent administrative problems[24].. These appear well distributed among different MS and Regions. Summaries of individual recommendations are available in tool 1.4 used to collect information on the various topics.

Some recommendations are linked with specific measures and others to general programme delivery. Some examples follow.

[24] The MTEs providing recommendations are: BE-Wallonie, BG, CY, CZ, DE-Brandenberg and Berlin, DE-Mecklemburg Vorpommern, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordhein Westfalen, DE-Schleswig Holstein, DE-Thüringen, DK, EE, ES-Aragon, FI-Åland Islands, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Île de la Réunion, IT-Lazio, IT-Valdaosta, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT-Continent, SE, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales

General programming recommendations

"take steps to ensure the applicants are not wasting unnecessary time and resources for benefits they are not likely to get and avoid at the same time checks and re-checks" (MTE,BG, p.54)

"for next programming period a thorough re-thinking of EU-level funding, adapting delivery systems to programme dimension, simplification of programme-changing process, replace some control rules for sanctions, abolition of 3% derogation rule, reduce reporting requirements, more clear and timely EU regulatory framework" (DE-Hamburg, p. 115-133)

"additional burden and uncertainties caused by new rules different in EAFRD from other Structural Funds: no support for VAT expenditure and EAFRD contribution only for eligible public expenditure (DE-Niedersachsen und Bremen, p.72-75)

Frequency of reporting to National Paying Agency regarding progress of projects was changed from twice a year to once a year (LT, MTE, p.269-295)

Measure specific recommendations

"heavy administration costs for the implementation of measure 132 in relation to the benefit provided; support should be increased and not limited to fixed costs" (BE-Wallonia, p.226)

"in measure 313 the support should be available only for projects from regions with touristic potential" (CZ, n.a.)

"because of administrative burdens the evaluators recommended to abandon the First Afforestation of agricultural land (measure 221) as long as requirements in the new programming period are not improved and made more attractive, by changing for example the loss of income premium for a climate premium" (DE-Thûringen, p.262)

"It is recommended to reduce the administrative burden on LAGs, so that they can focus on animation tasks, since this is their main value added. In order to reduce the burden it is proposed that a system of global and automatic data-base crossing between the regional administration and LAGs is introduced for granting benefits (ES-Aragon, MTE chapter 8).

7.2.2 Judgement

It is clear from such findings that there is indeed a problem of administrative burden in different types of delivery issues and with different levels of relevance in MAs' administrations. Such burdens are treated quite differently in MTEs: while some just describe the problem, others go a step further and provide recommendations for reducing them and some -just 10%- have included a special survey of beneficiaries. What can be said about administrative burden is therefore better as it is more frequently reported in MTEs than burdens for beneficiaries, which is rarely and poorly reported.

The type and relevance of the burdens found is coherent with the list of delivery issues found in the tables reported in the previous section. Burdens refer both to general programming aspects as well as to specific axes and measures. Cooperation and coordination are considered as

administrative burdens in quite a peculiar sense, meaning additional tasks to be performed, outside one's own administration. This may be better understood if we take into consideration that there is usually competition between administrations to take on new functions and the resources that go with them, as well as embedded forms of organizing public administrations' management according to well-delimited, hierarchical and separate competences between administrations and services, usually along sector demarcations. This typical form of organization, quite widespread among European public administrations, makes coordination and cooperation between services difficult, explaining why it is often perceived as a burden rather than a way of reducing costs, avoiding duplication and obtaining synergies between interventions.

The list of organizational burdens found at general programming level covers a wide range of delivery issues, which refer to all aspects of implementation. Administrative burdens of one type or another are widely noted, but are specific in the combination and relevance attributed to each burden in individual MTEs. In some cases recommendations for reducing burdens are expressed in quite generic terms ("massive bureaucracy requiring simplification") and in others in very detailed and specific terms ("discontinuation of on-site-controls for purchases of areas", "discontinuation of the de-minimis rule for nature conservation organizations").

Administrative burdens, because of their wide variety, represent a problem that requires attention since it affects the performance of programmes: the burdens mentioned affect not only the efficiency of the work of administrations from a technical/organizational point of view, but, most important, they affect how the support reaches which beneficiaries and therefore the effectiveness of the policy itself. For example, many MTEs mention the fact that burdens discourage beneficiaries from applying for a benefit. This is a case where a delivery burden changes the impact of a measure, its expected contribution to the programme and its strategic objectives. In contrast to the model that evaluators usually have in their minds, based on a logic that policy-makers set the objectives and targets, provide the funding, and at the other end results and impacts come out, the evidence shows that delivery systems, and particularly administrative burdens, act as filters in the process of implementation, and when they do not work well the results of programmes are influenced by this fact and they call into question the expected impacts. A further complication that requires attention and is clear from the findings, is that burdens may be very different even in the same Member State, as shown in the by the different assessments for regions in decentralized MS. It also suggests that for centralized MS administrations, territorial differences in terms of burdens may exist but are simply not observable through a national evaluation.

7.2.3 Conclusions

Looking at delivery problems in MTEs from the more value-charged perspective of "burdens" has allowed us to better understand how this aspect is treated in the assessments and what types of delivery burdens are being perceived by evaluators and MAs. Findings confirm the wide variety of problems in the delivery system and also their perception as problems. For the future would be desirable to have neutral enquiries and descriptions of delivery issues separate and prior to the analysis of burdens, to avoid influencing the views of respondents with a value-charged question encouraging a positive answer. More frequent surveys on beneficiaries views need to be conducted, since MTEs mostly reflect the assessments of MAs' functioning rather

than burdens for beneficiaries. It is also clear from the analysis that the fact that a delivery issue becomes a burden does not say much of who is responsible for that. MTEs in their assessments do in some cases attribute responsibility to the EU regulations –quite often for difficulties reported with the monitoring systems- or to MAs' inefficiencies –more frequent in the processing of applications, procedures or selection criteria-, but this is not done in a systematic way that allows a clear indication of who should do what to reduce burdens. In the opinion of the rapporteur, the problems in delivery often come from the combination of procedures at EU and MA level, the fact that the requirements introduced at different institutional levels are added up on top of each other, rather than coordinated and unified. A good example of this type of administrative burden comes from France Hexagone: "…the problem of administrative burden is assessed differently depending on the regions. It is linked to the great number of actors playing a role in the implementation of the RDP (especially the separation between managing authority and paying authority) and in the monitoring of the RDP progress. The problem of working with 2 frameworks (national and EU) defining the RDP also implies multiple interpretations of the texts" (MTE p35, p41, p107-108, p123-tome2 p7-8, p172, p175, p159). Besides multiple actors and administrative levels there are also overlapping legal frameworks, as mentioned in the Hungarian MTE: the implementing national procedures, trying to comply both with the EU and the national administrative regulations, ended up by making beneficiaries more vulnerable and necessary project adaptations more difficult; due to this complex procedure beneficiaries did not sign contracts but received an official decision quite difficult to understand (MTE pg. 261-267, 352-354).

7.3 Topic 4.3: Identification of any recurring factors facilitating or constraining successful implementation of the measures and programmes (e.g. eligibility and selection criteria, application process, interplay of different bodies) as identified in the MTE reports

The analysis of the factors facilitating or constraining the successful implementation of measures, addressed in this section, should provide some guidance for what makes delivery systems work well or not well.

7.3.1 Findings

InTable 23 below the factors facilitating or constraining successful implementation of measures, mentioned by MTEs, have been structured in meaningful aggregations, following a logic of distinct factors (first column); associating such factors with the MS or Region mentioning them (second column); and indicating whether such factor facilitated or constrained implementation and identifying its specific influence (third column).

Table 23: Factors mentioned in MTEs as facilitating or constraining delivery[25]

Factors	MTE mentioning factor	Facilitating or constraining
Definition of **eligible areas**, particularly for measures of axis 3 and 4	BE-Flanders; HU	When LAG areas coinciding with administrative boundaries facilitating, if not coinciding, constraining. Affects synergies, delays
Selection criteria for projects	DE-Hamburg; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; ES-Catalonia; FR-Guyane; HU; NL; PT-Continent; UK-England;	Constraining, discourage beneficiaries from applying, especially small ones
Changes/additions or restrictions of **eligibility criteria for beneficiaries** applying for certain measures (through legislation, during implementation), excessive requirements by EU or MS/regional authority; formalized selection document is further burden; narrow definition of beneficiaries; combining procedures of different measures	BE-Wallonia, CZ, DE-Hamburg; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; EE; ES-Andalucia; ES-Aragon; ES-Catalonia; FR-Corse; FR-Guadaloupe; FR-Guyane; IT-Veneto; LT; MT; NL; RO; UK-England	Constraining, discourage beneficiaries from applying, discriminates beneficiaries,
Changes in Authorities (Managing, Paying, Certifying)	DE-Hessen	Constraining, affects delays, payments
Changes in regulatory framework, legal framework: regional structural reforms, adjustments in EU framework, (i.e. non refundable VAT, cooperation regulation, control and monitoring requirements, low co-financing rates for axis 3); personnel and honorary services no longer considered as part of the co-financing; no complementarity between EU Funds; obligation to have plans for 5 year investments, accreditation of bodies	DE-Baden Württemberg; DE-Hamburg: DE-Hessen; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen; DE-Nordrhein-Wesfalen; DE-Rheinand & Pfalz; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; ES-Murcia; ES-Pais Vasco; FI-Continent; FR-Corse; FR-Hexagone; FR-Île de la Réunion; HU; IT-Calabria; ITCampania; IT-Piemonte; LT; LU; NL; PL; PT-Açores; PT-Continent; PT-Madeira; PT-Network; RO; UK-England;	Constraining, for Leader projects and stakeholders, for effectiveness of management, in part explains delays, reduces flexibility, increases costs of implementation
Programme revision procedures	DE-Hessen	Constraining, affects MA organisation and delays
Inadequate measures, do not fit needs of beneficiaries; modification bring more burdens	DE-Nordrhein-Wesfalen; ES-Catalonia; FR-Corse; PT-Continent	Constraining: regional structural reforms and adjustments in EU policy led to inefficiencies and slow implmentation, especially for Leader stakeholders; global contract very complex implementation; measure 211 and 212 treated as a unique measure caused many problems; some measures not designed for real needs (m.121)
Unclear division of roles between administrations, lack of cooperation between partners, overlaps between national and EU schemes	DE-Hamburg; DE-Hessen; DK; ES-Andalucia; ES-Baleares; ES-Galicia; ES-Navarra; ES-Pais Vasco; FI-Åland; FR-Hexagone; FR-Île de la Réunion; HU; IT-Trento; PT-Continent; RO; UK-England	Constraining, affects implementation, synergies, delays, especially for Leader, 121, 311, delegation of environmental schemes to other services, differing criteria Facilitating when good coordination
No realistic consideration of **time required** for processing, especially for realising investments (121), to get EU approval (312), to select LAGs (421, 431), to do preparatory work (213, 224)	BE-Wallonia; EE; ES-Baleares; FR-Corse; FR-Martinique; HU; LT; UK-England; UK-Scotland	Constraining, affects delays

[25] The list of factors results from aggregations made by the author of this report on the basis of specific factors identified by geographical experts summarizing MTEs; their classification in facilitating or constraining ones, done by the author is based on the judgement given in the MTE of specific factors, as reported by the geographical rapporteur.

Factors	MTE mentioning factor	Facilitating or constraining
Applications with incomplete data, mistakes not considered, late approval of guidelines, bad quality of application docs, too much documentation required, timing	BE-Wallonia; EE; ES-Baleares; FI-Åland; FR-Guadaloupe; FR-Guadaloupe; FR-Martinique; HU; IT-Molise; IT-Puglia; LT; MT; PT-Madeira; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland; UK-Scotland	Constraining, affects delays
Simplification of procedures	ES-Navarra	Facilitating for beneficiaries but not for administrations
Inadequate staffing, lack of required skill of the MAs, Pas, inability to coordinate complex tasks; high costs	CY, DE-Baden Württemberg; DE-Hamburg; DE-Hessen; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen;DE-Nordrhein-Wesfalen; DE-Saarland; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; ES-Madrid; ES-Navarra; FI-Continent; FR-Guyane; IT-Basilicata; ITLiguria; IT-Piemonte; IT-Umbria; LU; MT; PT-Continent; PT-Network; RO; SK; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland; UK-Scotland; UK-Wales	Constraining, affects efficiency and effectiveness of implementation, discourages beneficiaries, influence delays;
Complex **set-up of LAGs** by MAs, administration, paying procedures; competitive tendering,	DK; ES-Baleares; ES-Castilla y Leon; ES-Catalonia; FR-Île de la Réunion; IE; PT-MadeiraIT-Abruzzo; PT-Açores; UK-England; UK-Wales	Constraining, local development approaches, bureaucratization of a successful approach
Absence, deficiencies of advisory services to assist beneficiaries with applications, training activities,	BG; FR-Hexagone; FR-Île de la Réunion; LU	Constraining, affects quality of beneficiaries' applications; if present and efficient it is an important facilitating factor (FR-Île de la Réunion)
Multiple audits and controls, overlapping and from different services, for different purposes	DE-Hessen; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Nordrhein-Wesfalen; DE-Sachsen; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; DE-Thuringen; ES-Andalucia; ES-Navarra; LU; MT; PL;	Constraining, affects beneficiaries requirements, coordination of bodies, increases administrative burden, causes delays
Animation and communication activities (articles, leaflets, conferences, training) for administrators and target beneficiaries, consultation a d stakeholder involvement	BE-Wallonia; EE, ES-Castilla y Leon; FR-Guadaloupe; FR-Hexagone; FR-Martinique	Facilitating – affects good uptake, synergies between actions, mobilisation of potential beneficiaries
Ineffective **information system**, not functioning, data entry problems	CY, ES-Andalucia; ES-Baleares; FI-Continent; FR-Corse; FR-Guadaloupe; FR-Guadaloupe; FR-Hexagone; IT-Piemonte; LU; PL; SE; SK; UK-Wales	Constraining – affects project selection, monitoring & evaluation, delay start of programme; prevents applications from Leader;
Wrong **identification of indicators by the EU and MS/Region**	CZ, DE-Hamburg; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; SE; SK	Constraining, affects monitoring and evaluation, does not produce meaningful data
Economic crisis, reduction in available resources	DE-Brandemburg & Berlin; ES-Murcia; IT-Basilicata; IT-Sicilia; IT-Veneto; LT; PT-Continent; UK-Scotland	Constraining, affects budgets, delays

The most mentioned factors are not necessarily the most important ones, but do say something about which ones are responsible for the critical constraints. Two are the most frequently mentioned by MTEs:

- **Changes in the regulatory, legal framework** (28 mentions), referring both to the impact of changes in the EU set of regulations, both before the programming period (in relation to the previous one) and during the programming period (Health Check and European Recovery Package) as well as changes decided by the MS and Regions (shifts of competences for management or delegated bodies, new bodies, restructuring of

administrations for various reasons, national/regional implementation procedures of intervening administrations). This factor acts almost exclusively as a constraining factor and refers to different types of changes: Leader mainstreaming (decisions made at EU and at national/regional level; other stakeholders of different measure-changes, changes in the criteria for calculating the eligible costs (such as VAT, cooperation measure), new monitoring and control requirements, new reporting (on various selection criteria), new or revised measures, difficult to establish complementarities between funds, difficult accreditation of authorities. It is interesting that indications are given on the kind of constraints these types of factor have created for the programme: delays, flexibility, costs, particular beneficiaries (LAGs and axis 3 measures), effectiveness of management.

- **Inadequate staffing of MAs and PAs** (27 mentions), referring to the difficulties and pressures for administrative personnel in dealing with the changes in the legal framework (i.e. understaffing, lack of skills, capacity to deal with complex tasks, costs of technical assistance). The impact on programmes is constraining, and affects both efficiency and effectiveness of the Authorities, discourages potential beneficiaries from making applications, and is a major source of delays.
- **Changes, additions or restrictions of eligibility criteria for beneficiaries (18 mentions)**. The range of factors is quite wide in this case, ranging from the frequently mentioned restricted eligibility rules for certain measures only established for Leader groups, to the restricted eligibility of beneficiaries in axis 1 measures, making it difficult for small private or public stakeholders to apply, discouraging them with complex, excessive and difficult to understand requirements. Another issue raised here is the miscalculation of potential beneficiaries made by managing authorities, leading to restrictive criteria (again referred mostly to axis 1), as well as inadequate information given to potential beneficiaries about changes in eligibility criteria in the course of successive calls for applications. Differences in the interpretation of eligibility procedures by officials were also reported when many bodies/agencies were involved in the implementation.
- Incomplete applications,, mistakes, late approval of guidelines, bad quality of application documents, too much documentation required, timing of calls (16 mentions). Constraining factors, which are dominant, reflect the views of managing authorities and of beneficiaries. In the first case the problems refer to the changes in relation to previous practice which leads to an accumulation of work at the beginning of the programming period of rewriting procedures and application forms, which requires time and successive adjustments: the responsibility for this is in part attributed to the EU for changing every period the rules of the game, and in part to the lack of adequate skills by administrators. In the case of beneficiaries the emphasis is placed on the lack of straightforward information, advisory services, excessive and costly requirements, which lead to mistakes in filling out applications and then having to resubmit applications, losing time. The role of clear guidelines and streamlined application forms appear to be an important facilitating factor, when they are there. These factors are those more often perceived by MTEs as explaining delays in financial execution.
- Unclear division of labour between administrations, lack of cooperation between partners, overlaps between national and EU schemes (13 mentions) : the increased complexity of managing RDPs leads to a division of labour between different

administrations at horizontal level, as well as with other institutional levels (such as sub-regional authorities) which is mentioned as being ambiguous in the definition of the roles of each; this may refer to the relations between managing and paying authorities, authorities delegated for controls, as well as between the MA and the LAGs in relation to the processing of applications, and for environmental schemes involving multiple intervening authorities. Usually this factor is assessed by MTEs as constraining even though when the coordination works well it is not always mentioned as a facilitating factor.

- **Multiple audits and controls, overlapping and from different services, for different purposes (11 mentions).** The current programming period has required new reporting and control mechanisms which confront administrations with relevant challenges, the bodies making controls are numerous, and requirements are continouously refined, influencing administrative burden and delays. Controls are particularly relevant for compliance with environmental measures or the setting up of inadequate procedures.

These factors are frequently linked with each other even though MTEs mentioning one, do not necessarily mention the others as well.

Some national patterns seem to emerge: for example France and its D.O.M have had common difficulties with the unique software information system that was introduced at national level and caused delays in the start of the programme and project selection, in the implementation of Leader. German regions have common negative assessments of some changes which occurred in the EU legal framework, and on the uselessness of data gathered through the monitoring system of indicators.

7.3.2 Judgement

It should not come as a surprise that constraining factors occupy a predominant place in most MTEs: this is not because there are no facilitating factors but because they are most often not mentioned, since they are not problematic. MTEs, because of their evaluative character, provide little information on factors of success in general and focus on constraining factors. Also, not necessarily all constraints have been identified, but only those perceived by evaluators as most important and affecting implementation performance. Therefore, even though all factors mentioned and picked up by geographical experts are considered here, this is still an indicative list, by no means exhaustive.

The nature of constraining factors is differentiated: these might be legal, administrative, institutional, contextual, or due to monitoring and evaluation requirements. In each case, intervening in order to address what is acting as a constraint may be possible or not. For example, if a law establishes the restructuring of an administration and its new competences (who does what in the implementation) there is little that can be done if this does not work well, except through a legal procedure, which will take time to re-design and implement. The same can be said about the EU regulations for a programming period: once they are approved, they act as a stable and rigid common legal framework. On the other hand, administrative procedures are defined according to national or regional guidelines and previous procedures, which are specific to each administration, and are usually more easy to adapt or change if they do not work well. An example is the information software used by an administration. The point

being made here is that there are "rigid" and "flexible" factors, originating at different institutional levels, causing constraints. The economic crisis, for example, is acting as a quite rigid constraint for MA staff costs, as well as the timeliness of co-financing budgets.

It is difficult in many cases to identify who is responsible for a constraining factor: the analysis of individual explanations attributes, wholly or partly, this responsibility to the new legal requirements introduced by the EU level; to decisions taken at MS and regional level about implementing procedures; or to a combination of both. In the opinion of the rapporteur for this theme, the most frequent case is the combination. National and regional administrations have well-established organizations and procedures that were established for administering national/regional policies, are specific to each MS and officials have been trained to operate within this set of rules and procedures. It is from this administrative perspective that EU regulations and procedures are adopted and implemented and assessed as more or less "bureaucratic". This process may be smooth if the operating rationales are similar, or it may be bumpy, if they are divergent. Experience counts: over successive programming periods there is a progressive cross-influence in administration styles, with slow adaptation and learning proceeding in both directions. This is quite evident with monitoring and evaluation practices. Many MAs had very little experience in this practice within the public administration and the adoption of transparent criteria and indicators in the management of EU funding: on the one hand this improves standard practice, accountability and learning by the staff involved, on the other it generates resistance precisely for the same reasons. Significant changes in the regulations require a long time to become embedded into administrative practice, while continuity is appreciated because it reduces the need for adaptation. In this sense, the practice of changing substantially the common procedures at EU level every programming period (7 years) has an in-built implication of delays to the start of the programmes.

7.3.3 Conclusions

The list of issues and burdens analyzed in this section and structured around meaningful aggregations, still does not say much about who is responsible for introducing administrative burdens or should be responsible for reducing them. The comparison of assessments given for individual MTEs makes it possible to identify the delivery issues that more frequently create constraints, however classifying factors as constraining or facilitating for each delivery issue is not always easy and relies on subjective assessments and varied criteria. The findings presented here should therefore be considered as indicative: valuable because it has not been common practice to analyze delivery issues in individual MTEs in a systematic way, and even less to attempt a synthesis of results across Europe. We suggest that this approach needs to be consolidated and more consistently planned and structured, in the future.

One key conclusion on facilitating factors mostly relates to the degree of flexibility that MAs have in solving a problem in respect of a delivery issue. For example, if different types of controls and audits are mandatory, there is little that an administration can do to change this. On a different issue, such as the selection criteria for projects, the margins of flexibility are significant in principle but the constraining factors could include the different goals that interest groups may seek from the chosen criteria, or a lack of understanding about the reasons underlying particular choices (such that the means may inadvertently frustrate the ends). In these cases, policy learning is a necessary pre-requisite for positive change.

7.4 Topic 4.4: Identification of the issues and impacts of the role of the social partners in the implementation and orientation of the programme as identified in the MTE reports

7.4.1 Findings

The role of social partners in the implementation and orientation of programmes was analyzed by asking specific questions about their participation in different phases of the implementation process. In principle social partners should be involved in the initial consultation about the orientation of the programme, in the decision-making about the allocation of funding, about eligibility criteria, should be represented in Monitoring Committees and working groups, in the mainstreaming of Leader.

However, very few MTEs addressed these different aspects of their role with any detail. The information on social partners is very thin. In fact, 42 MTEs, corresponding to 46% of the total did not provide any information at all on social partners. The remaining 50 MTEs (54%) in most cases limit themselves to the description of the components of the Monitoring Committee and, when present, the working groups connected to its functioning, to the implementation of the principle of partnership and the participation of Leader groups with other social partners. The roles of different partners are assessed in very few cases and just a handful of MTE address issues of balance, e.g. the weight of agricultural partners in relation to other economic and social partners.

In this section, some examples of roles played by social actors as assessed by MTEs are given, in order to illustrate their variety and the approaches taken by evaluators, for this topic.

"The federation of farmers participates in the implementation and animation of measure 111; some social actors are involved in the selection committee that selects eligible proects; local actors are involved in Leader partnerships, in more than project selection and including the implementation of local strategies. Regional structures leave local actors to be the main actors in the decision making process and assist them when needed. The role of technical assistance (for LAGs) has been entrusted to social actors as well. The little involvement of farmers in LEADER is however cited by the evaluator" (BE-Wallonia, MTE, p.19-20, 209-210, 231).

"The Monitoring Committee involves all the key partners in rural development. The Consultative Partnership Working Group will form the basis of the MC. It is aided in its work by permanent working groups, one for each axis of the RDP. The working groups discuss the implementation of the particular measures and help the MA to draft decisions to be discussed during the MC meetings, held usually in the spring and autumn of each calendar year" (BG, MTE, p66).

"The partnership is exemplary. Large interest of all involved persons; discussions between regional partners and responsible officials in the ministry has been very respectful, checking the contributions of the regional partners' regarding implementation. The evaluator recommends that the principle of partnership as implanted in the RDP should be diffused as best practice throughout the EU" (DE-Brandenburg und Berlin, MTE p.8, 12.)

"The economic and social partners seek a greater degree of participation and transparency: strong and steady involvement is encouraged for the next programming period and to avoid dominance by few powerful organizations". The geographical expert adds: "valuable recommendation based on comprehensive survey". (DE-Niedersachsen und Bremen, p.79).

"The implementation of the Leader concept is accompanied by actors from the civil society and controlled by coordination groups. The average representation of economic and social partners is above 50% and their tasks include the assessment of the eligibility of projects" (DE-Sachsen, p.184-186).

"The evaluators assess the participation of the socio-economic actors and local administrations as "average". Their influence is especially important in establishing the criteria to select the beneficiaries. For the measures oriented to the private sector, the sectorial entrepreneurial organisations are consulted. For example, the forestry measures are discussed with the forestry intersectorial table. All the LEADER regulations are also consulted with the socio-economic actors affected. For the training measures, the definition of activities and the implementation is done through the professional agrarian schools…The civil society is represented in the MC by the Network for Land Stewardship". (ES-Catalonia, MTE, p.77-79).

"The role of social partners is very important. Some of the communication and advisory services are delegated to them, mostly farmers' organizations. The partners in the MC are 7 from the government side and 6 from the private side, 2 of these for farmer organizations" (FI-Åland Islands, MTE, p33).

"In general, the main actors involved are farmers. In the initial decision-making, several working groups involved social partners; decision making about funding is delegated to the Board for rural development and relations with local authorities. The representation of social partners in the national MC is weak, only meets once a year. On the other hand, Regional MC set up in most regions have informal meetings taking place regularly at different levels". (FR-Hexagon, p.30, p94-95).

7.4.2 Judgement

The modest consideration of social partners in MTEs, in contrast to the other topics included in the delivery theme, shows that this topic is not always associated with delivery, and that its relevance for implementation is perceived to be lower. Some MTEs even state this explicitly when stating that social partners (Monitoring Committees more precisely) are formally present but play a very marginal role in decision-making. Even though social partners may influence delivery systems in other ways, their role does not come up spontaneously. As the geographical expert of the MTE DE-Baden-Württemberg put it "in a multi-tier system, stakeholder constellations are very complex and tricky to assess; however the communication flow between different actors (horizontal and vertical) is considered to be good" (MTE, pg.213-215, 462-473). This statement was based on interviews and online questionnaires, assessed quantitatively and qualitatively in the MTE.

7.4.3 Conclusions

MTEs provide little information on the role of social partners and even less assess its functioning. This fact has an evident low priority in the evaluations and the topic is not generally perceived as a component of delivery systems, but rather as additional information not linked with the other topics and themes of the evaluation. This implies that in the few cases where the role of social partners is considered relevant, specific surveys have to be done to find out their views and roles in the functioning of the delivery system and the programme. There is a question of balance between interest groups' ability in influencing decision-making by the managing authorities that comes up sometimes in MTEs, but not systematically. This is a highly political question, which appears to be weakly addressed in consultations and in the composition of Monitoring Committees. Although formal participation is always ensured, this does not always translate into active dialogue and deliberation, nor does it mean that all views have the same weight.

The main tools mentioned for giving a voice to social actors are initial consultation procedures, Monitoring Committes and Leader partnerships. In general, the effectiveness of these different tools is judged as sometimes very effective and sometimes almost entirely ineffective, in the MTEs. A few MTEs make recommendations to improve the level of active deliberation and involvement in Monitoring Committees, in cases where these are judged as not particularly effective, to date.

If the consideration of this topic in evaluations is considered relevant, then actions must be taken to make sure that the topic is dealt with systematically, is not limited to formal participation, and that its connection with other evaluation themes is considered. There is no doubt social partners' involvement in all the phases of the delivery process can influence very significantly the design of programmes, the allocation of resources, selection procedures, and in this way affect the results and impact of programmes. However based upon the findings drawn from MTEs at this point in time, our conclusions on this topic are quite modest.

8. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Subtheme 5.1: Preparation

8.1 Topic 5.1.1: Were all indicators/targets included in the RDPs, so that there was an adequate description of the baseline situation allowing assessment of progress?

8.1.1 Findings

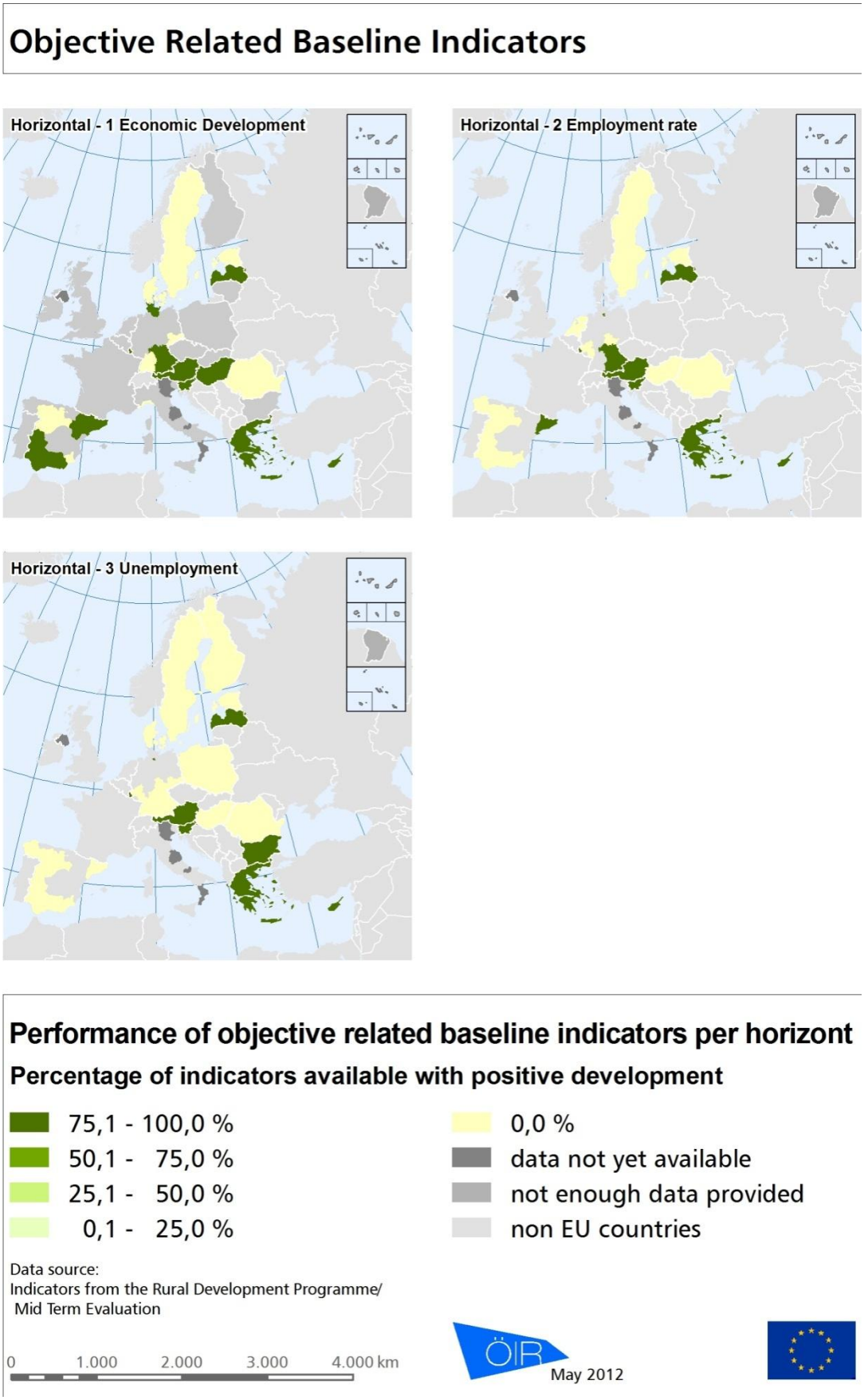
Rather than analyzing every single indicator from statistical databases (this has been done in other studies – we recommend the "Rural Development in the European Union – Statistical And Economic Information Report 2011"), we intend to give an overview of the general baseline situation development by axis as used in the documents analysed. We used the baseline indicators given in the original 2007 RDPs, and calculated upward or downward trends (according to the policy goals) up to the 2009 updates (either MTEs or updated programme documents according to availability). These values were then aggregated by the corresponding axes and horizontal topics. Through this method we could cope with varying measurements, scale levels and data gaps. The result gives an impression of the general direction of the baseline situation in the programming areas over the period 2007-2009. However, data gaps do not always allow for an exhaustive analysis (see dedicated section).

Baseline indicators "objective"

Generally, in many areas indicators in both the 2007 and 2009 documents were not provided (see "Availability of data" below). These countries appear grey in the maps ("not enough data provided"). Statements on the development of the baseline situation in these areas consequently cannot be made on the basis of the reports analysed.

The illustrations in Map 1 show the performance of the horizontal objective indicators. Comparable reference data for both 2007 and 2009 was scarce. The upper left map shows the general economic development: Latvia, Greece, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, and DE-Bavaria, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Spanish regions Extremadura, Andalucía, Aragón and Cataluña were the areas which showed strong positive development compared to the European average. With respect to employment and unemployment (upper right and lower left maps) the situation is similar: Latvia, Austria, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Cataluña, Greece and Cyprus were the only areas facing an upward baseline trend. However, doubts arise in some cases whether the values delivered in the programming documents are correct, comparable and current enough (see section "Remaining gaps in the information").

Map 1: Performance of horizontal objective related baseline indicators for the axes



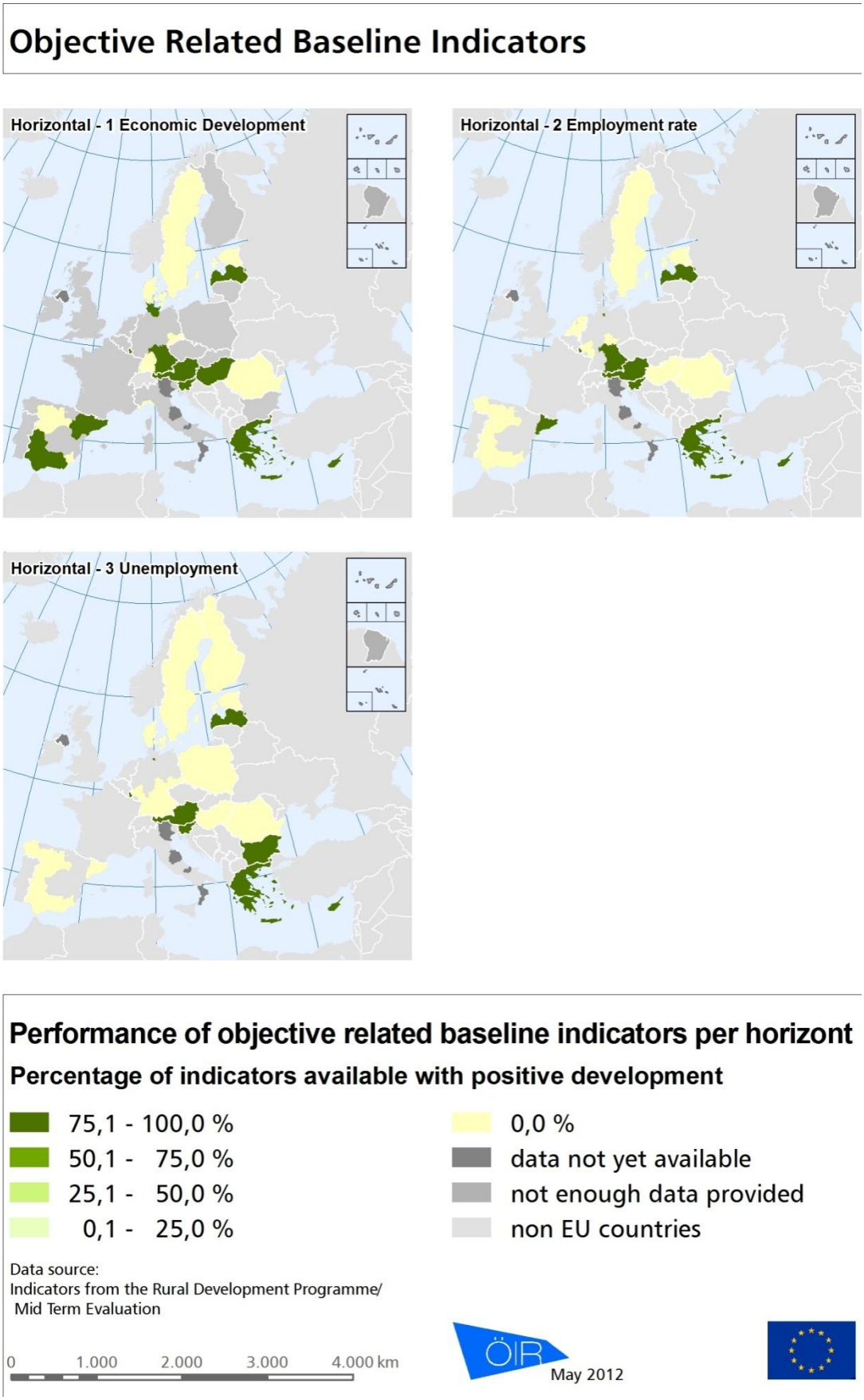
The illustrations in Map 2 show the performance of the objective indicators for the single axes. A major rising tendency of the baseline situation in axis 1 (upper left map, more than 75% of baseline indicators showed an upward trend) was observed in the programming areas of Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria, Belgium-Wallonia and Murcia. Lithuania, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Italy Toscana and Aragón and Extremadura follow with at least more than 50% of baseline indicators rising. A major improvement of the environmental situation (upper right map) was observed only in the programming areas of Finland, Poland, Germany Schleswig-Holstein and Nordrhein-Westfalen, Belgium-Wallonia, Wales and Spain Galicia. Denmark, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus and Spain – Extremadura, Andalucía and Cataluña are in the next best category. The axis 3 related objective indicators (lower left map) provide information on the development on the non-agricultural sector and quality of life. A major improvement of the broader rural development situation (more than 75% of baseline indicators showed an upward trend) was observed in the programming areas of Austria, Poland, Luxembourg, Ireland, Liguria, Greece and ES-Galicia, ES-Aragón, ES-Extremadura, ES-Andalucía and ES-Murcia. Latvia, Cyprus and Cataluña had more than 50% of the indicators suggesting an upward baseline trend. The lower right map shows only the single indicator of the development of population covered by Local Action groups (Leader Axis). Only a small number of programmes provided two comparable numbers; out of these only Sweden, Demark, Germany – Sachsen-Anhalt, Austria, Luxembourg and the Spanish autonomous regions Castilla y León, Cataluña and Murcia faced an increase in the share of the population covered by Leader.

Baseline indicators "context"

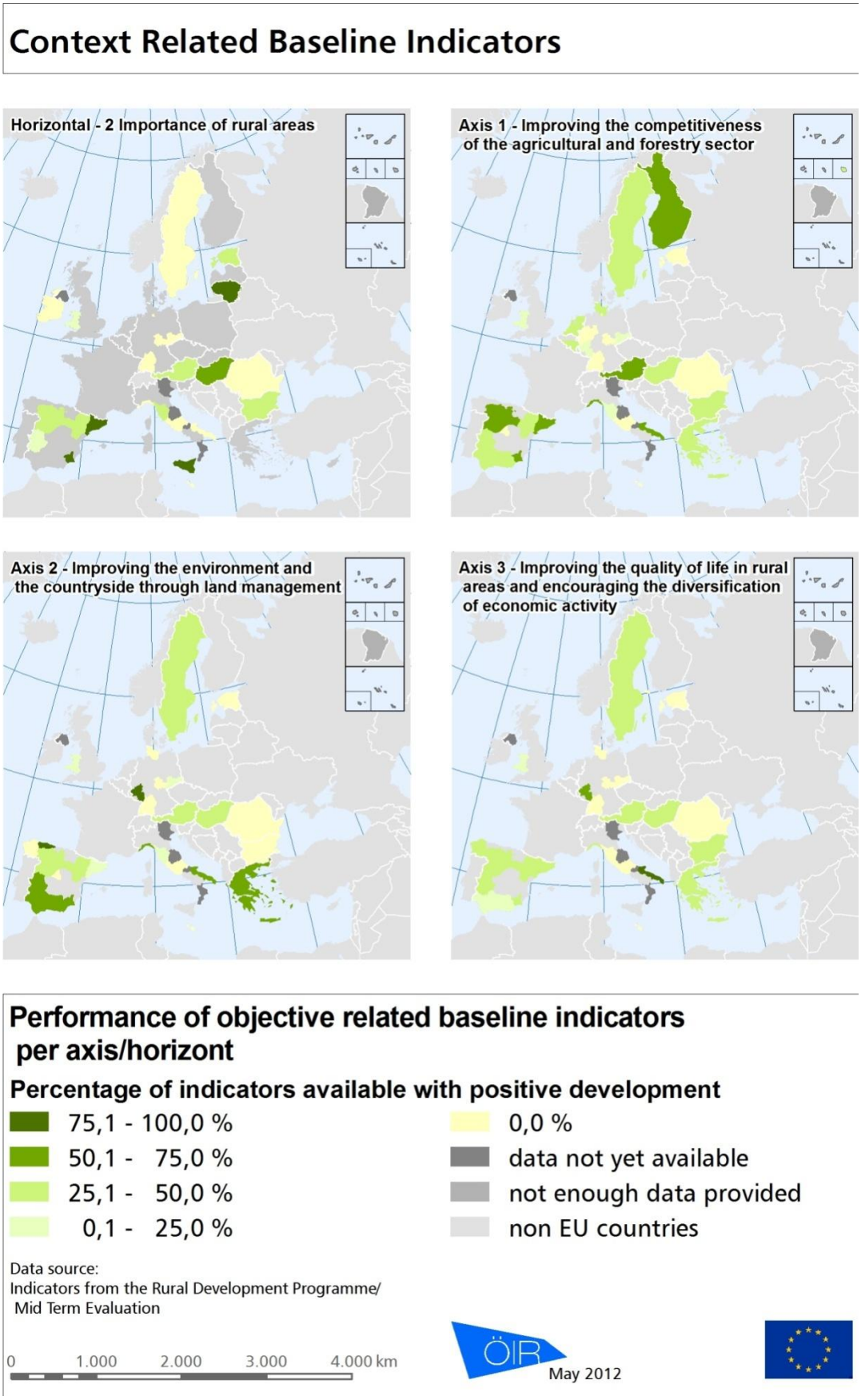
As with the objective-related baseline indicators, many data gaps remain for the analysis of context-related baseline indicators on the basis of the documents analysed. The illustrations in Map 3 show the performance of the context indicators, horizontal and for axis 1-3.

The horizontal indicator "designation of rural areas" was not included in the analysis because its explanatory power for the interpretation of trends is limited. Also in the horizontal baseline indicators "context", comparable reference data for both 2007 and 2009 was scarce. The upper left map shows the rural performance compared to intermediate and urban areas according to the OECD definition: Lithuania, Hungary Toscana, Cataluña and Murcia score best. The upper right map shows the development of the axis 1 related context indicators dealing mainly with the structure of agriculture and forestry. A major improvement of the baseline situation (more than 75% of baseline indicators showed a upward trend) according to availability was observed in the programming areas of Finland, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Aragón, ES-Cataluña and ES-Murcia. The lower right map shows the development of the axis 2 related context indicators describing the environmental status of the regions. A major improvement of the environmental status (more than 75% of baseline indicators showed an upward trend) was only observed in the programming areas of Sachsen and Asturias had a upward trend in more than 75% of the indicators. DE-Rheinland-Pfalz, Greece, ES-Aragón, Extremadura, Andalucía and Murcia are in the 50%+ category. The lower right map shows the development of the axis 3 related context indicators. These provide information on the structure of the non-agricultural sector and quality of life. A major improvement of the broader rural development situation (more than 50% of baseline indicators showed an upward trend) was observed only in the programming areas of DE-Rheinland-Pfalz and IT-Puglia.

Map 2: Performance of objective related baseline indicators for the four axes



Map 3: Performance of context related baseline indicators



Gaps in the information

This section gives an impression of the quality and completeness of data from the MTEs or, in some cases, from the APRs or updated RDPs.

On average, all over the programming area, only some 43% of the objective baseline indicators have been provided in the original 2007 RDPs. Especially a number of German programmes did not provide any values (Hessen, Niedersachsen & Bremen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg & Berlin) or only a limited selection. Also in Italy, in many regional programmes baseline indicators were missing (Piemonte, Friuli-Venezia Gulia, Lombardia, Valldaosta, Campania, Puglia, Sicilia, Sardegna). In BE-Flanders, the Baleares, the French overseas departments, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta and the UK the baseline dataset was of poor coverage. Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, most Spanish programmes, Finland, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Slovenia had the best coverage of 70% or more of the indicators provided. 2009 updates were provided in 35% of all cases in the EU. The provision by country differs significantly from the original RDP coverage, as most German MTEs or APRs provided baseline indicators that were not included in the 2007 RDPs (this of course makes it impossible to analyse a development). On the other hand, most programming authorities and their evaluators did not provide any updated values in 2009 at all. So from today's view, very few programmes can be analysed vis-a-vis the development of the objective-related baseline situation. Only Austria, Cyprus, DE-Sachsen, Estonia, some Spanish programmes (Aragón, Cataluña, Andalucía, Castilla y León, Extremadura), Greece, Hungary, Romania, Sweden and Slovenia a significant share of the objective baseline indicators available both from 2007 and 2009.

For the context related baseline indicators, the situation from the MTEs or, in some cases, from the APRs or updated RDPs is similar to the objective related indicators. 47% (EU total 2007) and 36% (EU total 2009) of the indicators were provided. The coverage by programming areas is also quite similar to the objective related indicators, with most German and Italian programming areas having lots of data missing in 2007, as well as Flanders, French overseas departments, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and the UK. Only in Austria, Germany Baden-Württemberg, Germany Sachsen, some Spanish programmes (Aragón, Extremadura), Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Sweden and Slovenia a significant share of the context indicators is available both from 2007 and 2009.

For the usefulness of the baseline analysis, also timeliness of data is a crucial issue. Already early during the data collection it was noticed that in many RDPs outdated indicators were provided. It is acknowledged that there are serious problems with providing timely data for environment-related indicators (such as biodiversity, water quality) that usually do not get assessed on a regular basis. Nonetheless, also very basic socio-economic information often dated back to before 2005 in the RDPs. A limited number of APRs and MTEs provided more recent data, however. In average, all over the programming area only some 13% of the objective baseline indicators were less than 3 years old in the original 2007 RDPs. The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, two Spanish programmes (Aragón, Andalucía), Hungary, Italy – Emilia Romagna, Luxembourg, Poland, Sweden and Slovakia provided more than 50% of the objective baseline indicators from 2005 or newer in their original 2007 RDPs. 2009 updates that were less than 3 years old were provided in only 11% of all cases in the EU. More than 50% of values of appropriate timeliness in the 2009 updates (ARPs or MTEs), i.e. from 2007 or newer, were

provided in Austria, Denmark, three Spanish programmes (Aragón, Andalucía, Castilla y Léon), Hungary and Luxembourg.

The situation for the baseline indicators "context" is similar to the objective related indicators, however, although generally more recent data was used: 22% (EU total 2007) and 19% (EU total 2009) respectively were less than 3 years old. Especially in the original RDPs the context-related indicators were quite current in a number of countries, notably the Czech Republic, most Spanish programmes, Hungary, IT-Emilia-Romagna, Lithuania, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia and Slovakia. In 2009, only DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, three Spanish programmes (Aragón, Andalucía, Castillia y León) and Hungary provided more than 50% of indicators were less than 3 years old.

8.1.2 Judgement

Even though qualitative descriptions of the baseline situation can be found in the programmes, compared to output and result indicators, the complete coverage of baseline indicators was low in the MTEs. Baseline indicators have indeed been included in most of the original 2007 RDPs (of varying quality); however in APRs and/or MTEs they were rarely updated. In many cases, they are also very outdated. For most of the programmes, it is therefore almost impossible to make estimations about the assessment of progress of the baseline situation let alone its correlation with the programme. It would have been easy for the evaluators to at least refer to the indicator set from the yearly "Rural Development in the European Union – Statistical And Economic Information" reports made available by DG Agriculture and Rural Development to the public.

8.1.3 Conclusions

The usefulness of the evaluation of the CMEF baseline indicators is limited as long it is not based on a sound and comparable statistical basis, for instance the indicator set from the yearly "Rural Development in the European Union – Statistical and Economic Information" reports. An obligatory regular update and an interpretation of the development, either in the yearly reporting or at least in the midterm, would be a benefit for the authorities involved.

8.2 Topic 5.1.2: What work was done after RDP approval to complete gaps/prepare for MTE? Was it adequate?

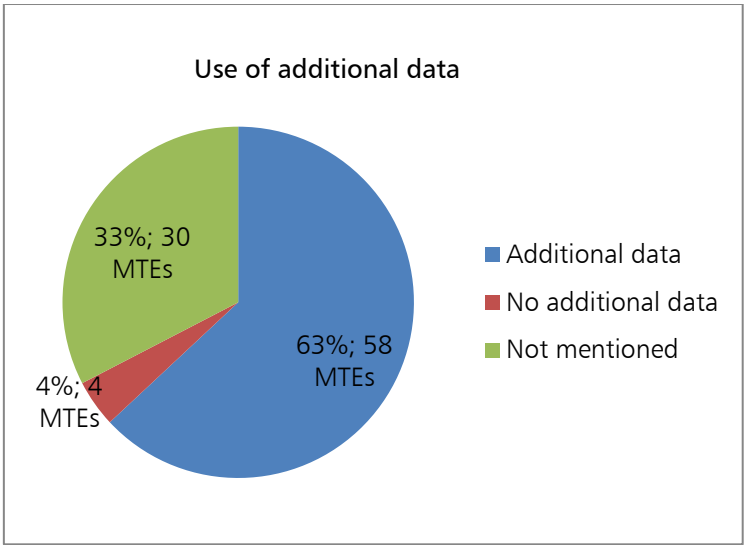
8.2.1 Findings

For 63% of the MTEs additional data was used

In most of the programmes the CMEF-indicators are the basis for the evaluation (baseline, output, result and impact). Most of the evaluators have used the information of the monitoring system to collect primary data. For some programmes there were values for indicators missing in the system, especially for the impact indicators (and as it appears from the above discussion, many gaps of baseline indicators also). The timing of the MTE is mentioned as a cause of the

lack of recent quantitative data. Some data was not timely available before the deadline of the MTE. In some evaluations there was such a major change with respect to the baseline situation that an additional SWOT analysis was performed. This was mostly because the data used in the baseline situation was out-dated.

Figure 20: The use of additional data by programmes to complete gaps/prepare for the MTE



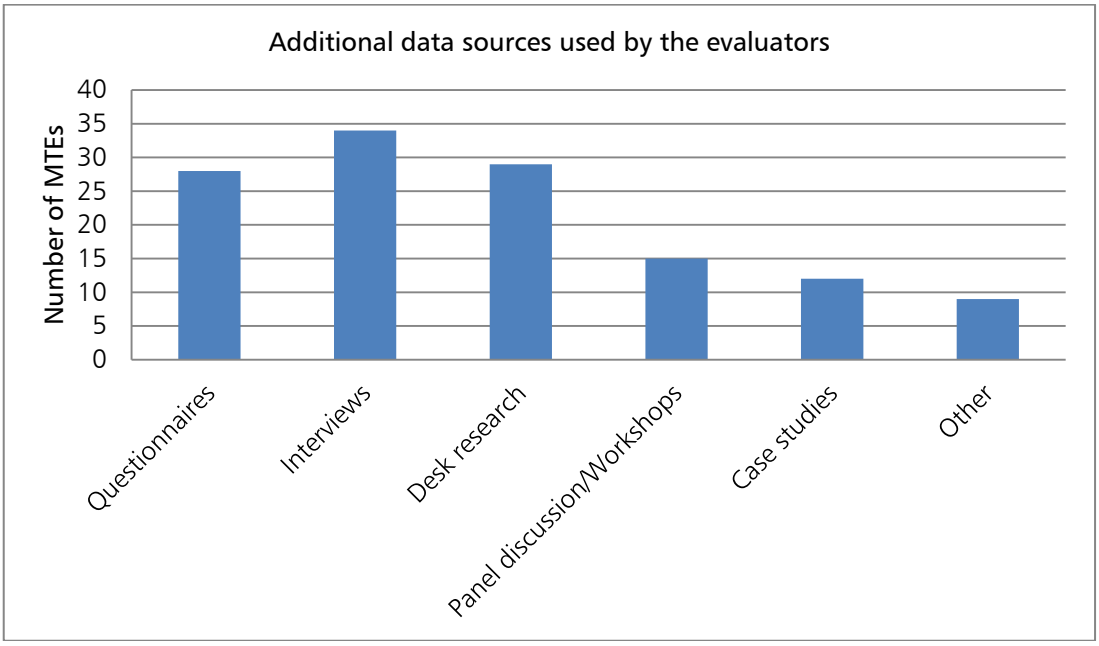
Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The synthesis of the answers shows us that in 58 of the 92 evaluations additional data, to the monitoring system, was collected to complete the gaps or prepare for the MTE. Only in 4 evaluations it is explicit that no additional data was collected to complete gaps or to prepare for the MTE. However, for 30 evaluations the evaluators did not mention whether additional data was used for the MTE.

Questionnaires, desk research and interviews are most often used

Desk research was an often used method to gather additional data via primary data sources. In 29 evaluations this method was used to complete gaps or to prepare for the MTE. For most of the evaluations additional data was collected by interviews (34 MTEs) and questionnaires (28 MTEs), see figure below. Also a combination of these methods was often used. The use of case studies (12 MTEs), was almost always combined with the use of desk research, as is the use of workshops/panel discussions (15 MTEs), for example with regional monitoring committee, producers organisations or farming organisations and managing authorities. On average the MTEs which used additional research used 2-3 of the approaches mentioned in the figure below. The "other" sources used are for example the French Osiris system, a spatial regression analysis (Sweden), an online monitor system (IT-Toscany), etc.

Figure 21: The source of additional data used by programmes to complete gaps/prepare for the MTE



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Four MTEs used only questionnaires, six MTEs used only desk research, and two MTEs used only interviews to complete gaps or prepare for the MTE. Desk research can be for example an analysis of relevant policy documents or the use of statistics like Eurostat, or national statistics, etc. Interviews can be face-to-face, via a normal phone interview, via CATI-technique (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) and via CAWI-technique (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing).

Sometimes these approaches have been used to generate quantitative data for the CMEF indicators, but in many cases they are used to generate complementary evidence and information including qualitative material about how things worked and potential causal relations; as well as additional quantitative information which sheds light on the efficiency or effectiveness of the measures and/or programmes.

Specific findings

- In DE-Network, DE-Saarland, FR-Guyana, FR-Ile de la Reunion, HU, PT-Acores, PT-Continent, ES-Andalusia, ES-Aragon, ES-Canarias and UK-Scotland, the method used for the additional data collection is not mentioned in the MTE.
- In FR-Ile de la Reunion there has been relevant adjustment of target values and the set of indicators to the specificities of the region after the ex-ante evaluation. However, the precision in identification of impact indicators remain low. The evaluators did not mention the use of additional data in the MTE.
- In FR-Martinique the evaluators had 2 sequences of interviews: the first one with decisional institutions and financial partners to identify the phenomenons in interaction in the implementation of programme, and the second one with project holders to identify the perception of programmes by beneficiaries. To complete the gap in the data the evaluators tried to have a view on the trends for 2010 by extending the current picture.

- In Portugal the evaluators encountered some problems with the compatibility of data from the RDPs information system (SIProDeR) and the Payment Authority's information system (SIIPAF). After the MTE, APR 2010 reveals an effort in order to facilitate the electronic linkage between the systems.
- For example Sweden used a counterfactual approach with matched control groups when possible and a spatial regression for the overall impact.

8.2.2 Judgement

It is not surprising that additional data is needed to be able to do the evaluation. However, little information is given on what type of information has been collected. Although most of the evaluators have done desk research, some of them however do not explicitly mention this as an additional data source in the MTE. It is therefore to be expected that more MTEs have actually used desk research. Although most MTEs did not mention whether this approach was adequate, it can be assumed that at least it was considered to have resulted in enough information to make it possible to deliver the MTE.

8.2.3 Conclusions

A clear majority of the MTEs used additional data for the MTE. Often a mixture of sources is used to complement, extend and deepen their evaluative evidence in addition to the patterns observed in the CMEF indicators. Other methods are an essential part of identifying causal links, understanding delivery issues, assessing additionality and generating ideas for improvement. Sources that are mentioned are interviews, desk research, questionnaires, panel discussions or workshops, case studies or other sources such as for example a spatial regression analysis. Using interviews, questionnaires and workshops have each their own purpose. Questionnaires, desk research and interviews are mostly used to gather additional information. Interviews and questionnaires are mostly used to fill the gaps in the monitoring and evaluation systems or for gathering extra information. Questionnaires are mainly good for larger groups such as the beneficiaries. Interviews are more in depth and therefore more appropriate to use for smaller or more specific groups (such as MA, regional groups, etc.). Panel discussions and workshops are more a check and deepening on the information already found. In general, it seems to depend on the quality of the information in the monitoring system how many information sources were needed to gather all the relevant information for the MTE but certainly also the resources available to the evaluators determined to a certain extent in how far additional data sources were utilised.

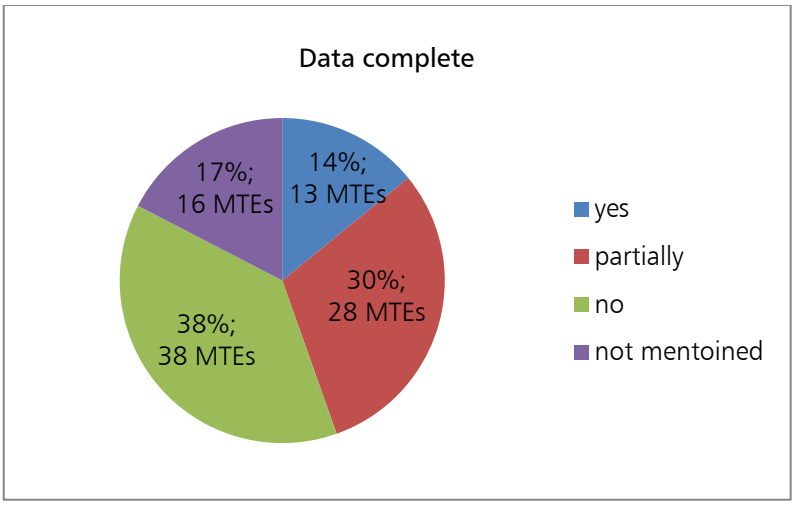
8.3 Topic 5.1.3: Were appropriate data sets available to MTE evaluators (was data complete, of adequate quality and available in time)?

8.3.1 Findings

Data was not complete in 40% of the MTEs

In 13 MTEs the data was considered as complete, in 28 MTEs partially complete, in 38 MTEs not complete and for the other 16 MTEs it was not mentioned if data was complete. In most cases the output indicators were available to the evaluators. Mostly result and especially impact indicators were missing. Also a number of evaluators had difficulties to gather appropriate data about the environmental impacts, high nature values and forestry indicators. Most MTEs had to use additional sources as questionnaires, interviews, surveys as mentioned in the previous section. Also several mentioned that no baseline and no target were defined.

Figure 22: Was the data set complete?



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

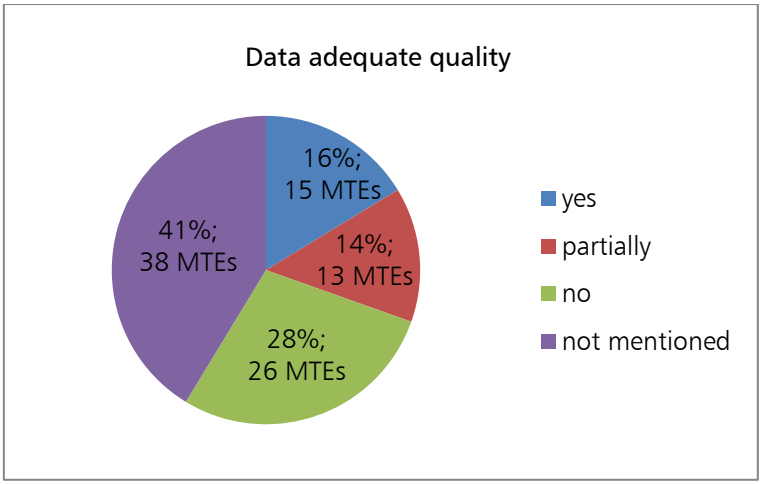
Some specific findings

- In Bulgaria the collected data was according CMEF guidelines, and when they were collected, they were not always registered in the IT system, or they could be registered with errors and misunderstandings.
- In Cyprus the main problems were: non-functioning of the information system, the limited number of completed projects, the lack of data on economic developments at micro level and the lack of a baseline regarding the environmental indicators.
- In Portugal the data provided to the MTE was neither complete, nor sufficiently relevant and/or of sufficient quality for the evaluation, despite the earlier improvement of the Information System.
- In Luxembourg it was mentioned that the data was of good quality and complete but that there was no data at beneficiary level.

Data quality was not mentioned in half of the evaluations

For many MTEs (41%) the quality of the data was not mentioned. In almost one third of the MTEs the data was not considered to be of adequate quality, in 16% of the MTEs the data was considered of adequate quality and in 14% a part of the data was considered to be of sufficient quality (e.g. indicators of one priority of good quality and less for another priority, or output of sufficient quality but result and impact not enough quality). Mostly the interpretation and the measuring of the target values was discussed by the evaluators of the MTEs. For example it was mentioned that a conversion of the impact and result indicators was necessary (Slovenia). Other remarks were that data was inadequate, too general or too detailed, not relevant, not sufficient quality, too difficult to measure, not updated, the period was too short and data inconsistent.

Figure 23: Was the data set adequate quality?



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

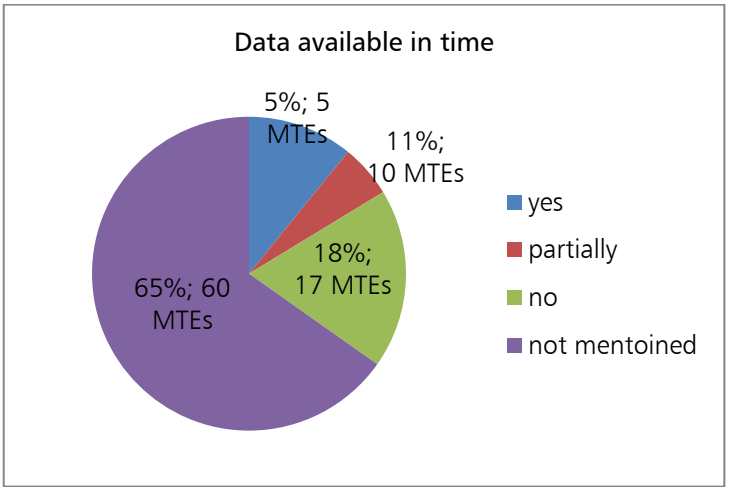
Specific findings

- In Belgium two databases were available for measure 214, providing different values as the treatment of data was different.
- In Germany (in general) the evaluators have assessed the data sets as a sound basis for the MTEs.
- In the UK-Wales "there is a serious problem with poorly documented and undocumented data". This made it very difficult for the Welsh Assembly Government to supply data required for the evaluations.

Majority of MTE does not mention if the data was available on time

In two-thirds of the evaluations the timely availability of the data was not mentioned. In 11% of the MTEs the data was available in time, and in 5% a part of the data was available in time, while in 18% of the MTEs the data was not. The most mentioned reasons for this is that most of the projects were not completed yet, data not (well) being collected, systems not (yet) operational, MA did not have sufficient capacity and there was no access to the data.

Figure 24: Was the data set available in time?



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Specific findings

- In Poland some data was delivered during the MTE investigation.
- In Sweden the relevant data sets has been available in time, but it was incomplete and therefore often of poor quality.

8.3.2 Judgement

When the data is not complete, of low quality or not timely available, it will be difficult to deliver a reliable MTE and therefore to have a solid basis for potential corrective actions.

It seems wise to explore how data could be made better available. It could be explored, e.g. if monitoring systems should include more data to enable the evaluators to answer the evaluation questions or what is needed for all stakeholders in terms of capacity building to enable them to regularly update and have a complete dataset in a functioning system or if evaluators should be the ones to collect the data.

8.3.3 Conclusion

In about half of the MTEs that provided information on the availability of the data the datasets were not available. This is valid for all three elements of the availability (complete, of good quality and timely available). However, not all MTEs indicated if data is complete (17% did not mention if data is complete), of good quality (41% did not mention if data was of good quality) or timely available (65% did not mention if data was timely available). Therefore the observation that about half of datasets is not available is mostly valid for the completeness and to a limited extent for its quality.

Most MTEs had to do additional research before they were actually able to evaluate. Problems they encountered were that data was inadequate, too general or too detailed, not relevant, not

sufficient quality, too difficult to measure, not updated, too short implementation period (little number of projects finished or measures only just started), data inconsistency, systems not (yet) operational, data timely available but of not good quality, or data of good quality but only partially, or difficult access to databases, etc. Generally output indicators were better available than result and impact indicators, which seems logical as the RDPs did not have many finished projects at the time of the MTEs.

Subtheme 5.2: Methodology

8.4 Topic 5.2.1: Identification of the different methodologies used in the MTEs and their advantages and disadvantages, particularly in relation to the seven impact indicators

8.4.1 Findings on economic impacts

Economic impacts

In most cases, the direct link between calculated impacts upon growth, productivity and jobs from MTE expenditure, and the wider state of and trends in the rural economy, is not quantified in the MTE.

In the majority of MTE reports, the estimated economic impacts of the RDP by the end of 2009 are simply calculated in relation to the projected direct, gross impact of funded projects, *ceteris paribus*, using standard formulae to estimate impacts based upon results, rather than attempting any direct, empirical measurement. Thus, many such impacts are not calculated or reported *net* of underlying trends, and many are reported only at the level of individual measures, which are then combined in the horizontal questions.

Whilst GVA and employment impacts are reported and even calculated in the majority of MTE, the labour productivity indicator is much less used, with more than half the MTE reports saying either that there has been no impact or that it is too soon to measure any impact.

In a few reports, more sophisticated techniques are used: for example Austria has used an input-output model of the whole economy which enables the measured stimulus of MTE funding to be fed into a model to predict direct and indirect impacts on all sectors, including multiplier effects. In total, at least 11 MTE appear to use input-output models in this way: Austria, 7 German regions, one Spanish region, Greece and Slovenia, while BE-Flanders and another Spanish region make reference to using an Input-Output (I-O) table to calculate indirect effects. However, questions are raised by the geographical experts about the validity of the calculations based upon I-O that are used in the Greek and one Spanish MTE and it is not clear in figures presented for Greece how far the approach is, or is not, used for each evaluation question.

A number of MTE reports use beneficiary surveys to estimate direct gross impacts (combining the findings from each interview to estimate programme-scale relationships between amounts

of funding and reported impacts upon business turnover, jobs created or maintained, and factor productivity), and also to ask questions designed to assess the likely proportion of deadweight and displacement, in the calculated figures for impacts. This appears a sensible approach for such a relatively short timescale for reporting, but in many cases the survey captures only a small number of respondents and therefore there is a risk of bias wherever uptake is much higher than the sample size.

A third cohort of MTE reports declines to calculate the impact indicators at all, on the basis of low implementation rates and short timescales for impacts to be felt.

8.4.2 Judgement on economic impacts

In respect of calculating economic growth, the problems with the dominant approach to this found in the MTE are clear:

- This measure-by-measure, summative method ignores displacement, which may be significant for some measures, and similarly it does not allow for any synergistic or conflicting impacts arising from the combined application of more than one measure in a particular territory;
- The method produces figures which must then be adjusted for deadweight (i.e. where funding supports actions which would have happened anyway without the funding), somehow, at measure-level, before they are combined. It is not certain that this has been done, in the majority of cases. Again, deadweight is likely to be quite important for several of the most relevant measures including 121 in particular (based upon secondary research findings);
- The method will not capture the economic effects of other elements in the programme, which could sometimes be significant. For instance, large-scale expenditure under axis 2 of the RDP might have a negative impact upon productivity by slowing structural change on some farms: this will not be measured if the MTE only calculates the productivity effect of measures 211, 121 and 123.

By contrast, input-output methods (or more sophisticated CGE, which have some similar characteristics), where appropriate models are available, offer a way to overcome these issues because they seek to model how all RDP aid affects both direct and indirect performance, across the whole territory that is included in the model. However, these kinds of model are data-hungry and relatively costly to assemble and update. More critical for Pillar 2 assessment is the fact that if the I-O model is for the economy as a whole, within a region, it is not possible to assess the impact of RDP expenditures upon rural economies, but only on the economy of whole regions (urban and rural together), which is not the intended target of RDPs. This makes I-O models more attractive in the following circumstances:

- Where pillar 2 expenditure is sufficiently large, by comparison with the scale of the regional economy, to have a measurable impact upon it;
- Where regions can be clearly differentiated into more and less rural ones, within a (non-federal) Member State or where this can be done sub-regionally in the case of a

regional RDP, which then allows a qualitative judgement about the impacts of the RDP just upon rural areas, as well as more general economic impacts;

- Where comprehensive and regularly updated economic data exists for the territory in question, covering all those sectors and functions that are likely to be significant for rural development, and where resources have been invested in setting up the I-O (or regional SAM, for comparable CGE approaches) model.

In the commentary within one MTE (ES-Aragon) which uses this approach, the following points about the use of I-O are made:

- changes of regional productive structure are not considered (the same relationships are assumed for both years 2007 and 2009);
- leverage effects and deadweight are not considered;
- direct and indirect impact at measure level and programme level can be estimated;
- measure and programme effects can be calculated in a separate way;
- forecast estimations are possible;
- "it avoids mistakes due to the macro-approach used" (the meaning of this phrase is not clarified).

Thus, I-O or CGE models may offer some benefits over direct calculations at measure level, but they are not altogether unproblematic. In particular, it is necessary to know the accuracy and timeliness of the data used to assemble the I-O model in order to make a judgement of the likely accuracy of the relationships and results that it reports.

Beneficiary surveys are generally used to gather information on the results of RDP spending, from which estimated impacts are then calculated as with the dominant method, but in some cases, the evaluators used the survey also to ask beneficiaries to speak about the impacts of funding, from their experience. This type of questioning is usually only possible in an extended interview format, however (implying small sample sizes), and will usually generate qualitative, rather than quantified, data (e.g. "significant" or "insignificant" impacts, as judged by reference to some yardsticks determined by the evaluators). The advantage of surveys over direct indicator measurements from monitoring, (for measuring economic impacts) in this particular context is that they can also ask questions to gather information about deadweight and displacement and, if triangulation is used (interviewing both beneficiaries, other stakeholders and independent economic experts), they can attempt to avoid undue bias.

8.4.3 Conclusions on economic impacts

It seems reasonable for RDP evaluations to seek to measure the impacts of expenditure on key economic indicators for each territory. However, achieving this in a robust way remains elusive, with none of the reported methods used at MTE being clearly superior to others. Any complex modelling approach faces the problem of a lack of specifically rural economic data, as well as issues of cost and capacity; whereas methods based upon beneficiary reporting plus standard calculations are clearly likely to overstate the scale of impacts achieved, whether assessed quantitatively or qualitatively.

Remembering that economic indicators are a means to an end – i.e. a way to test whether the RDPs are reaching their goals – it is important to consider whether having standard indicators, largely uncalibrated by context, is entirely appropriate. For example, if at EU level the RDPs are aimed at generating rural employment in parts of the EU where rural unemployment is a problem, it could be argued that any EU-level assessment should place more weight upon jobs created in lagging regions with high unemployment, than those created in places where there are no such problems. Thus, the considerable effort to produce standard measures which can be aggregated quantitatively may be misguided, as a summation of total jobs created tells one nothing about whether this occurred where it was most needed. At the very least, some calibration by reference to baseline trends would seem sensible, at the level of each RDP, before the findings are aggregated (i.e. what contribution did each RDP make to reducing rural unemployment, rather than simply "how many jobs"?).

Of course, it would be possible to seek to require all quantified impacts to be reported in a calibrated way, but, given the evident challenges faced by evaluators in merely making the basic uncalibrated calculations, it could be questioned whether this is the most cost-effective way for the EC to reach a judgement about the overall impact of RDPs on rural economic challenges and needs. Alternative approaches would include EU-level modelling: some ongoing FP7 projects are potential sources for this kind of work. At the other extreme, evaluators could be asked to make a much more thorough qualitative assessment of RDP performance based upon triangulation of opinions and relevant local data, and then scored against some kinds of Likaert scale, and/or reported against specific categories of desired impact (e.g. did the RDP target job creation in areas of rural unemployment? What impacts did this have in these areas?).

8.4.4 Findings on environmental impacts

Biodiversity and HNV

In general, the impacts of the RDPs on biodiversity are hardly quantified in the MTE reports. Almost without exception, quantified values relate to the anticipated impact of selected axis 2 measures, calculated separately at measure level.

Where there are calculations for specific types of impact, many are really based upon "informed" expert judgement, in the sense that a prediction is made concerning the likely impact of farmers adopting the prescribed management practices at the scales reported from uptake statistics (i.e. predictions, using extrapolation from measure-level output and result indicators). Sometimes these calculations are adjusted for the geographic location of uptake and sometimes they are not (one would normally expect location to affect the types and degree of benefits produced from certain kinds of management). This approach also is commonly applied in respect of quantifying the expected benefits to water quality from measure 214.

Where this technique is used, its weaknesses are as follows:

- There is an expectation that farmers perform adequately in their implementation of the prescribed management practices – this is not always certain;
- There is usually no consideration of the possible displacement effects of RDP measure uptake upon the management of adjacent areas of land. In many countries, a

phenomenon of compensatory intensification of non-scheme land has been observed, which can lead to reduced positive environmental impacts from RDP expenditure on axis 2 measures.

- These techniques can only really be applied at the level of individual measures. Thus they are unable to assess the combined effects of expenditure at the programme level, taking account of any synergies or competitive effects between different measures.
- The lack of spatial analysis of the combination of uptake of practices reduces the ability to benchmark the calculated expected impacts by reference to underlying trends or relative needs, which are mostly geographically-varying.

In several cases, only the output indicators are reported, as though these were sufficient measures of impact on their own. In some of the Spanish regions, no impacts are reported and the questions are "answered" merely with descriptions of the extent of forests in the region, etc.

The CMEF Farmland Bird Index indicator demonstrates particularly low usability in the context of the MTE, for several reasons:

- trends in many cases cannot be measured due to insufficiently frequent data collection;
- where trends are measured, the causal links with the RDP cannot be demonstrated and in many cases no attempt is even made to consider whether or not the RDP is the cause (either it is assumed to be so, or it is assumed not to be so, but without rationales or supporting evidence clearly stated)
- for some RDP the FBI is stated as completely inappropriate for the kinds of measures being used, which are not anticipated to affect farmland bird populations (mainly related to axis 2 and some axis 1 measures, in these programmes)
- for many RDP, the evaluators judge it is too soon to expect responses in the FBI from measures implemented under AEM.

Overall, the HNV indicator is much less used in the MTE than the FBI, largely because it was late being defined at EU level, so several reports only measure baseline values, if at all. For those 20 MTE that report HNV impact quantified, the method is overwhelmingly simply to quote the uptake of these areas into some kind of Axis II scheme. This is therefore an output-based indicator, and not an impact indicator. Almost no MTE consider the counterfactual, and most do not attempt to assess whether uptake ensures protection. Luxembourg clearly considers this indicator to be subjective and therefore not valid.

On the other hand, several of the regional programmes in Germany and the UK, and some in new MS, have developed and used a range of more detailed environmental indicators at the measure level for Axis 2, and although most report only qualitative signals from these at Mid-Term, it appears that they should be both robust and useable for the ex-post evaluations. This could be an area for more emphasis in the new programmes (i.e. devising locally-appropriate measures of biodiversity improvement for RDP interventions).

For example, in DE-Schleswig-Holstein, the following methods are reported for assessing impacts of measure 214:

1. description of initial situation using specific local indicators; also assessing pressures and drivers,

2. analysis of programme strategy and intervention logic;
3. determination of relevant measures with impacts according to a 5-grade scale;
4. assessment of financial implementation/output;
5. (qualitative) impacts assessment through expert judgements at this stage, further and deeper assessment at Ex-post; when primary data will be collected through expert interviews, online survey; before and after field comparisons, with- and without field comparisons, econometric and statistical models, model-based policy analysis and GIS.

While in Sachsen-Anhalt, it is reported: The evaluator tried to collect adequate data from 15 reference farms [in and not in the scheme], from monitoring systems of the biosphere reserves, and from own investigations of arable land. The methods seem to be adequate, but there was too little time between starting of the programme implementation and the MTE, [to demonstrate impact].

A recent OECD workshop on the monitoring and evaluation of agri-environment measures (Braunschweig, 2011) provides a useful state-of-the art picture of the available techniques for seeking to assess the impacts of measure 214 upon biodiversity and water quality, in particular.

Water quality

For water quality, gross nutrient balance is frequently stated to be a sub-optimal choice of impact indicator. This is explained with the difficulties in disentangling changes in farming systems as a result of market and CAP Pillar 1 effects from specific actions under Pillar 2. Although the evaluators knew about the necessity to evaluate net effects, the scientific complexity of establishing clear cause-effect relations within this impact field has been responsible for this assessment. This indicator or impact is only assessed for just over half of the total number of programmes, and in many cases the assessment is largely qualitative, sometimes just opinion, sometimes based upon expectations concerning measure uptake under AEM.

A few RDP provide more thorough mixed-method analysis combining local indicators of water quality (measured either on-farm or in nearby water bodies) with expert judgement, mapping and/or hydrological modelling, to gain an overall evaluation. Having taken this stance, one MTE proposes that a basket of indicators derived from WFD goals (e.g. nutrient status of surface waters, biological contamination levels, groundwater quality) would be much better than gross nutrient balance, in this context and indeed, this appears to be what some MTE have adopted, on the basis of the anticipated impacts of water quality measures adopted under measures 214, 216 and sometimes 111, 221 and 125.

As with biodiversity impacts, no MTE seek to quantify whole-RDP impacts upon water quality: any whole-RDP judgements will be qualitative or summative based only on selected measures. Detailed reporting is always based upon the anticipated impact of only those measures which were intended to have a beneficial effect upon water (as with those listed in the previous paragraph).

Climate change

The impact of RDPs on climate change has been at least partially calculated for 25 programmes, but using different units and different approaches to assessment, in many cases. The most common approaches taken are either to calculate renewable energy investment contributions, or to calculate savings in CO_2 from AEM and other axis 2 measures: only 2 programmes try to do both. In general it is apparent that because this was not a main focus of most RDPs, the task of trying "ex-post" to assess impacts is still in its infancy. Some evaluations simply calculate changes in GHG emissions from agriculture as a whole, but of course there is no demonstrated causal link between this and the impact of the RDP.

8.4.5 Judgement on environmental impacts

There is a clear inference from these findings that the actual choice of common impact indicators for the environment may have been a significant problem, here.

In respect of biodiversity, FBI is too far removed from measure impacts to be meaningful while HNV is not yet able to indicate much more than a measure output. Those evaluators seeking to measure the positive environmental impacts of their programmes have instead used locally-tailored indicators such as habitat quality and extent, and relevant species abundance, for measure 214 in particular, where the choice of habitats and species monitored is made at the level of the RDP, based upon anticipated impacts and local/national environmental priorities.

In respect of water quality, gross nutrient balance across a territory is felt inappropriate because it is more likely influenced by non-RDP factors than by RDP measures so causal linkage is again difficult. By contrast, if nutrient levels and/or contaminant levels in local water sources (surface or ground waters into which farmland drains) are monitored, there is more chance of picking up direct impacts as a result of RDP effects, whether these be on fertiliser usage, stocking rate, soil conservation and/or reduced pesticide applications.

For climate change, whilst common currencies for estimating impacts are easily identified as fossil-fuel equivalent or carbon-equivalent savings, it is clear that indicators should seek to capture both the extensification and other LUC effects of axis 2 measures, as well as the effects of renewable energy generation. However these should be reported separately, as there remain considerable controversies surrounding bio-energy and renewables, as well as methodological issues concerning the accuracy of approaches related to land use and management changes.

8.4.6 Conclusions on environmental impacts

The fact that none of these approaches readily enables evaluators to consider the overall environmental impacts of RDP expenditure across all axes and measures, is another significant problem for this category of impact. It would clearly be inappropriate to assume that the only environmental impacts of RDPs are the positive ones arising from axis 2 and selected other measures, yet no-one has properly considered how best to gauge the environmental impacts of, for example, farm investment aids.

It is perhaps ironic that the chosen CMEF indicators for RDP environmental impacts may have more clear resonance with attempts to measure programme-wide impact, than with measure-level impact. However, the strong influence of CAP Pillar 1 provisions on the same factors remains a problem even in this wider context, which would frustrate causal linkage.

8.4.7 Findings on social and quality of life impacts

As there are no clear CMEF impact indicators for these, other than the jobs indicator already discussed under "economic", the MTEs report on these issues in a largely qualitative way and mainly in response to the horizontal evaluation questions, only.

As stated in chapter 5 of this report, the level of reporting in respect of cohesion and the involvement of women and young people is very general. This means that it is not possible for most of the MTE to make confident or robust responses to the horizontal evaluation questions on these topics.

Whilst most MTE make assessments of the performance of axis 4 in their response to the measure-level evaluation questions, the commonly experienced delay in LEADER implementation means that in the overwhelming majority of cases the findings are that there is little to report because it is too early. Many MTE include recommendations designed to address what have been identified as significant administrative burdens and related issues in respect of LEADER, but few are able at this stage to say much about its impact upon quality of life.

8.4.8 Judgement on quality of life impacts

Social and quality of life impacts are not comprehensively captured, analysed or reported in MTEs. This is one area where it is strongly recommended that the Commission produce more succinct and robust guidance on evaluation, well in advance of the ex-post reporting period. Quality of life (QoL) is an important constituent part of RDP goals and it may be composed of a number of more specific, quantifiable indicators such as access to services, health, migration patterns and settlement growth or contraction, in rural areas. Work has also been done to develop approaches to measure quality of governance, which is a QoL concern relating to LEADER-like approaches and their intended impacts.

8.4.9 Conclusions on quality of life impacts

The social and quality of life impacts of RDPs should be an important aspect to evaluate, bearing in mind the objectives of the EAFRD and the CAP as a whole. Because no CMEF impact indicators were defined for these impacts, most MTE have given them relatively little attention. However, there is evidence from a selection of MTE to suggest that they can be significant and valued. Drawing from approaches used in OECD rural policy evaluation, we suggest that the Commission could identify a basket of appropriate indicators to help assess the social impacts of RDPs, based around demographic trends and the distribution and quality of, and thus rural access to, a range of basic services. These indicators could be interpreted alongside findings from qualitative assessment involving stakeholder and beneficiary interviews and/or focus groups, to draw meaningful and robust conclusions.

8.5 Topic 5.2.2: Identification of good practices with regard to the assessment of impacts

8.5.1 Findings

Economic

Where available, dynamic economic models appear to offer some advantages to modelling the economic impacts of RDPs. However, a lack of differentiation between urban and rural economic data will in most cases mean that specific effects upon the non-agricultural component of *rural* economies cannot be detected with accuracy. Resource limitations on the ability to ensure that the models are compiled with sufficiently up-to-date data may also introduce inaccuracies. Where beneficiary surveys include questions designed to assess deadweight and displacement and where these findings are triangulated with secondary sources, net impacts can be assessed with more confidence. Most critically, assessments which are properly contextualised by reference to baseline trends and other external influences represent rare examples of good practice, in MTE evaluations. However, the comments made in the judgement section for economic impacts, above, are also pertinent because they suggest that simple improvement of analytical data-handling may not be sufficient to address issues, in this area of enquiry.

Environmental

For environmental impacts, the identification of programme-specific indicators to measure biodiversity enhancement directly related to farm management practices represents a best practice for this impact. However, the fact that this is almost always done only for axis 2 measures means that the assessment at programme level will be partial. The Commission may need to think about how best to approach RDP-level assessment of environmental impacts – it is unclear from this evidence whether it would be preferable to work "bottom-up" by acknowledging the axis 2 achievements so far and then seeking to add on methods for assessing the impacts of other non-environmental measures; or to work from a more general level from the start. However, in recognition that many measure 214 schemes have an established monitoring and evaluation process which pre-dates RDPs and indeed, the "second pillar", altogether, it is probably important to seek to devise approaches which build upon these longstanding processes, rather than ignoring them.

When comparing RDP impact assessments with those undertaken for CAP regimes under the Commission's external evaluation programme, it is notable that the latter tend to make much greater use of longitudinal analysis to determine causal linkages, they also frequently triangulate quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources, and they tend to make valuable use of case-studies of specific territories in more depth, to tease out the ways in which policy instruments combine at the local level to achieve impacts. These approaches could be considered as potential examples of good practice which could be transferable to the RDP context.

For social impacts, the best practice examples are those where the evaluators have used a thorough qualitative and mixed-method approach, in which expert and stakeholder views are triangulated wherever possible with uptake data and data from wider surveys and secondary

sources, to attempt a fuller understanding of the impact of the programme on different groups and locations and thus upon the territory and population as a whole. In many respects, opinion-gathering from stakeholders is a particularly valid approach when dealing with the assessment of impacts upon quality of life, as this is a perceived quality derived from multiple factors, as much as a direct consequence of some specific change. Nevertheless, RDP evaluators could learn from good practice employed in OECD rural policy assessments and in some ERDF evaluations, where a wide variety of demographic, socio-economic and governance data has been used to build up a picture of key elements of Quality of Life in rural areas.

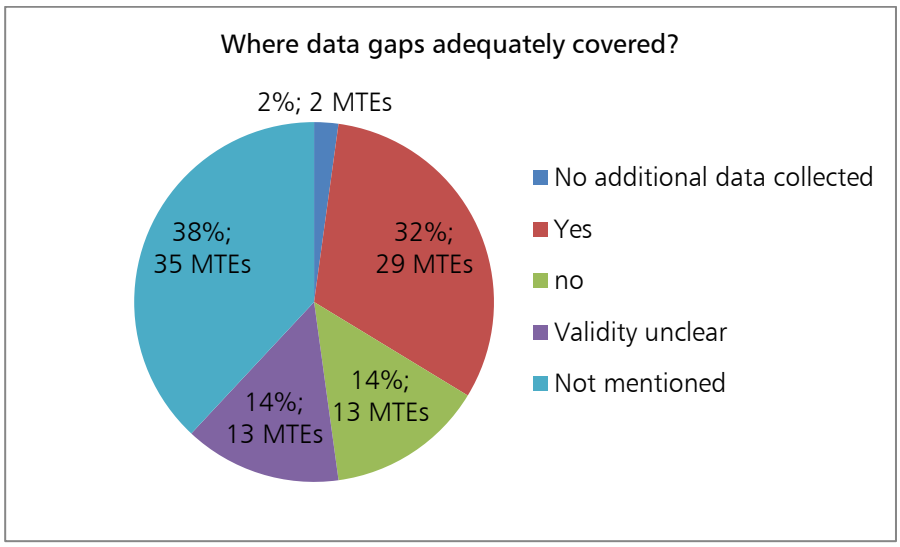
8.6 Topic 5.2.3: Assessment of the additional data collection undertaken as part of the MTEs (were data gaps adequately covered?)

8.6.1 Findings

In slightly less than one-third of the cases data gaps were adequately covered

In slightly less than one-third of the cases data gaps were considered to be adequately covered with the extra information gathered from e.g. interviews, desk research or questionnaires. In 14% of the MTEs data gaps were not adequately covered, mostly because of missing data in databases. In the same number of MTEs the validity of the additional data was unclear. In the remaining 38% of the MTEs the evaluators did not mention if the data gaps were adequately covered. As can be seen below for only 2 MTEs it is specifically mentioned that they did not undertake additional data collection.

Figure 25: Adequate covering of data gaps



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

For most MTEs is described how they covered the data gaps which is also detailed in an earlier section (8.1): through interviews, questionnaires, desk research, panel discussions or workshops. Most MTEs used a combination of approaches to achieve reliable and validated results.

Specific findings

- In for example FI-Åland Islands additional information was collected by interviews. The number of interviews was too small to provide statistically relevant information but gave a fair picture of the situation and of possible impacts in the future. In ES-Baleares they used telephone and face-to-face interviews among 5,5% of the beneficiaries. This was mostly useful to get additional information but not for completing the missing indicators.
- In Ireland was the response rate for the survey among beneficiaries high (about 40%) and had a wide geographical coverage. Also in Bulgaria the response rate was high with 36%. In the Netherlands interviews provided useful information, but the response rate on the questionnaire was low.
- In DE-Baden-Württemberg, it was specified what kind of additional sources were used: literature review, data for approved projects, investment concepts, obligatory book-keeping, test holdings, specific statistics, financial data, the German data bank "InVeKos", surveys on farm holdings, expert interviews, case studies. DE-Hamburg used next to primary sources (questionnaires, desk research, interviews) the following secondary sources: e.g. data of paying agency, Monitoring 2007-2009 (GAK and EAFRD), indicative financial plans, data of national statistic agency, results of the measure assessment.
- In Hungary there were 4 strategic level evaluations in the themes of: 1) The situation and role of agriculture and food industry in the Hungarian economy and public finances, 2) the role of agriculture in the labour market, 3) climate change, 4) comparative assessment of NHRDP and NHDP. The results of these studies were used mostly for MTE conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore interviews, focus groups with people from agricultural extension service and LAGs, case studies with 4 LAGs, 2 online questionnaires with beneficiaries, 2 questionnaires with LAGs and National Park Directorates, statistical data collection from different data sources (e.g. CSO, FADN, tax office, MÉTA, OPTEN, land parcell identification system, Central Agricultural Office) were used.

8.6.2 Judgement

Additional sources are important for a quality evaluation but this does not automatically ensure that the data gap is sufficiently covered. Having a reliable and complete indicator set requests does not only depend on the ability of the evaluator to collect the data but also on the ability of the beneficiary and the programme stakeholders to have a good indicator system. For the next programming period it is recommended to reconsider the needs for monitoring and evaluation, but also the availability of data with national statistical bureaus and beneficiaries.

8.6.3 Conclusions

The collection of additional data was needed but it seems to have been insufficient in most cases to cover the gaps. Only in 32% of the MTEs indicate that the additional sources covered

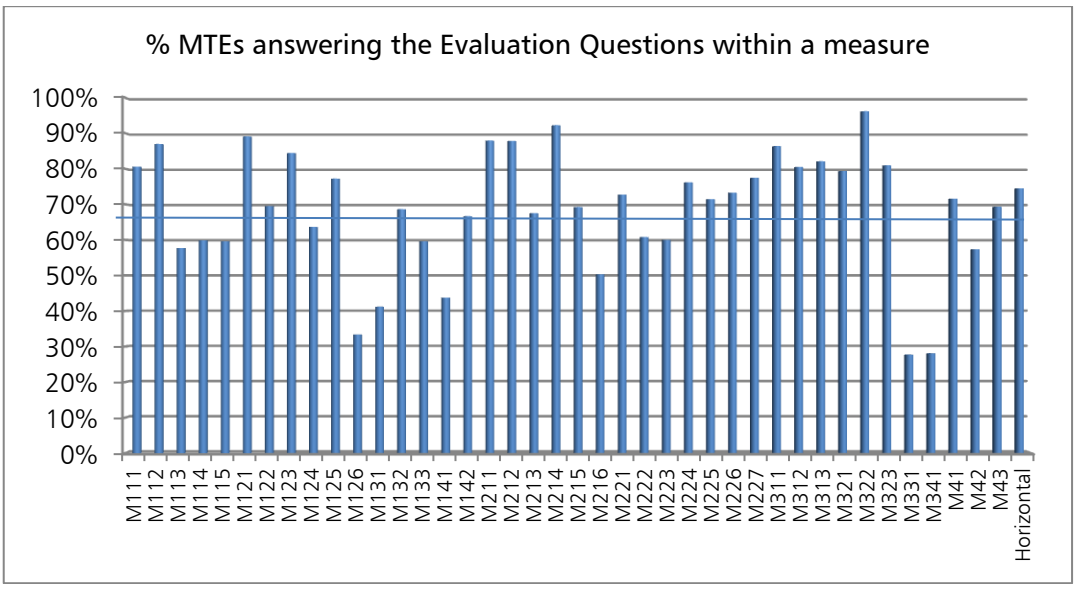
sufficiently the data gaps. However, one should mention as well that for 38% of the MTEs it was not mentioned if data gaps were covered. In general the collection of additional data has been more difficult and time consuming for the most evaluators than foreseen (see also Topic 5.1.2: What work was done after RDP approval to complete gaps/prepare for MTE? Was it adequate?).

8.7 Topic 5.2.4: Assessment of the Evaluation Questions (common and specific). Each Evaluation Question (EQ) should be assessed to determine at least: relevance of the question to the policy objectives, availability and quality of necessary data, completeness and utility of answers provided

There are 155 Evaluation Questions (including 19 horizontal questions) divided over 41 Measures. On average the evaluators answered 80 of these questions. Evaluators in IT-Sardegna answered the most questions (120), while 7 programmes did not answer any evaluation question (the 4 network programmes in DE, IT, ES and PT) and FR-Corse, IT-Basilicata and IT-Molise).

As not all RDPs applied all measures the information below is related to the RDPs actually applying the measures. For example 81% of the MTEs answered the evaluation questions for measure 111. This 81% represents 64[26] of the 79 RDPs which applied measure 111.

Figure 26: MTEs that answered the evaluation questions within a measure (average is 67%)



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

[26] To be precise: there are three evaluation questions under measure 111. 65 MTEs answered to the first question under 111, 64 MTEs answered to the second question and 62 MTEs answered to the third question. On average this is 64 MTEs

On average, 67% of MTEs answered the evaluation questions. The evaluation questions that are answered by most MTEs are under measure 322 (96%), followed by measure 214 (92%). The evaluation questions that are answered by least MTEs are under measure measure 331 and measure 341 (28%) followed by measure 126 (33%).

Regardless of wheater the EQs of certain measures are answered in a high or low percentage of the MTEs, usually all associated questions of one measure are answered by a similar number of MTEs. Great differences can be noted among the number of answeres to questions in measure 141, 213 and 225. In M141 question 1 and 3 are answered by half the MTEs, whereas question 2 and 4 is answered only by 38%. In M213 the differences are most pronounced rainging form 53% to 77% (question 1: 77%, question 2: 53%, question 3: 67%, question 4:73%). The first three questions in M225 are answered by roughly 75%, number 4 to 6 by 70% and number 7 by only 63%.

The MTEs do not give an explanation why some questions were more answered than others. There is no correlation between the response rate and the numbers of RDPs applying this measure. For example measure 331 and 341 (with a response rate of 28%) is applied in almost all RDPs (88 RPDs). A reason could be that the measures started later or did not yet start. In case of the least answered questions, possible explanations could be the focus of measure 126 on the special case of natural desasters as well as the expectation that training measures like M331 and 341 need more time to show results.

The relevance of the answers on the evaluation questions from the different axes differ a lot from country to country. Some countries see a clear link between policy objectives and the evaluation questions, other countries found the evaluation questions of no relevance. There is no clear pattern in these responses.

The quality of the answers was not mentioned in most of the MTEs.

In most MTEs an overall evaluation of the usefulness of the evaluation questions is missing. But it is mentioned that the horizontal evaluation questions are an unsystematic series of thematic-impact- and implementation-related questions which makes it more difficult to assess them in a structured way. When comparing the answers it can be said that when the quality of the data is good, the answers to the questions are mostly useful.

In the next paragraph a more detailed assessment of the evaluation questions per axis has been carried out. Also the relevance, quality, completeness and utility will be discussed.

8.7.1 Findings

More detailed assessment of the Evaluation Questions

The paragraph before shows the number of questions per axis answered in the MTEs. In the following sub-paragraphs each axis will be treated separately. Firstly, the response rate per axis per measure will be discussed, then also the relevance, quality, completeness and utility of the evaluation questions will come forward.

Axis 1

Under priority axis 1 there are 50 evaluation questions, divided over 16 measures. The table below shows the number of RDPs actually applying the measure and shows furthermore the percentages of MTEs which answered the evaluation questions for the RDPs that used the measure. On average 67% of the MTEs are answering the evaluation questions under the measures of axis 1. Measure 111, measure 112, measure 121 and measure 123 show the highest response rate with above 80% of the MTEs responding to the evaluation question. The lowest percentage is shown in measure 126, measure 131 and 141 (answered in 33-44% of the MTEs). Unfortunately no reasons were given why some questions were more answered than others, but a reason could be a delayed implementation of the measure.

Table 24: MTEs answering the evaluation questions per measure of axis 1

Measure	RDPs using the measure	% of MTEs answering EQ in case the measure was applied in RDP
PA1	57%	67%
M111	79	81%
M112	69	87%
M113	52	58%
M114	59	60%
M115	33	60%
M121	87	89%
M122	50	70%
M123	86	84%
M124	55	64%
M125	79	77%
M126	27	33%
M131	17	41%
M132	51	69%
M133	47	60%
M141	8	44%
M142	11	67%

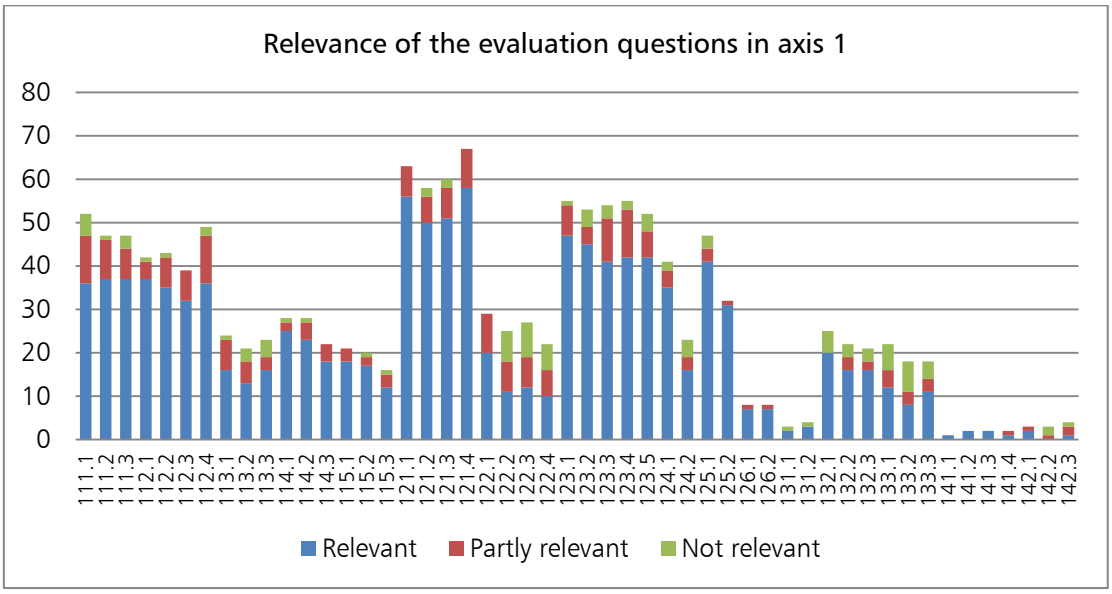
green = above 80%, red = below 40%

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012

Relevance, Quality, Completeness and utility

In the figures below the outcomes of the MTEs for the themes relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the answers to the evaluation questions provided for axis 1 (the figures are based on the MTEs that used the measure).

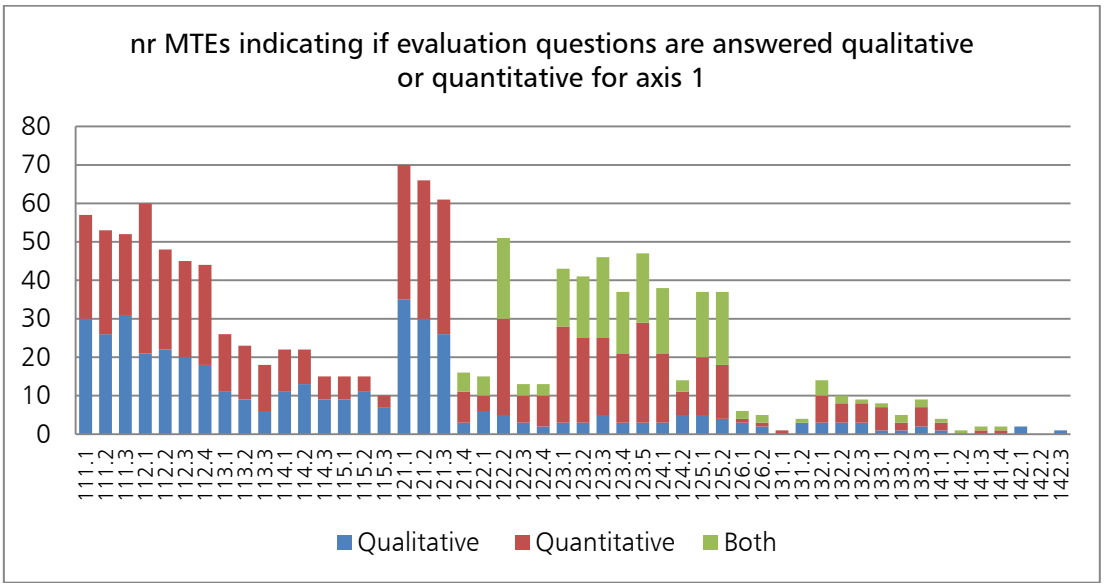
Figure 27: MTEs that indicated the relevance of the answer given in the evaluation question to the policy objectives



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

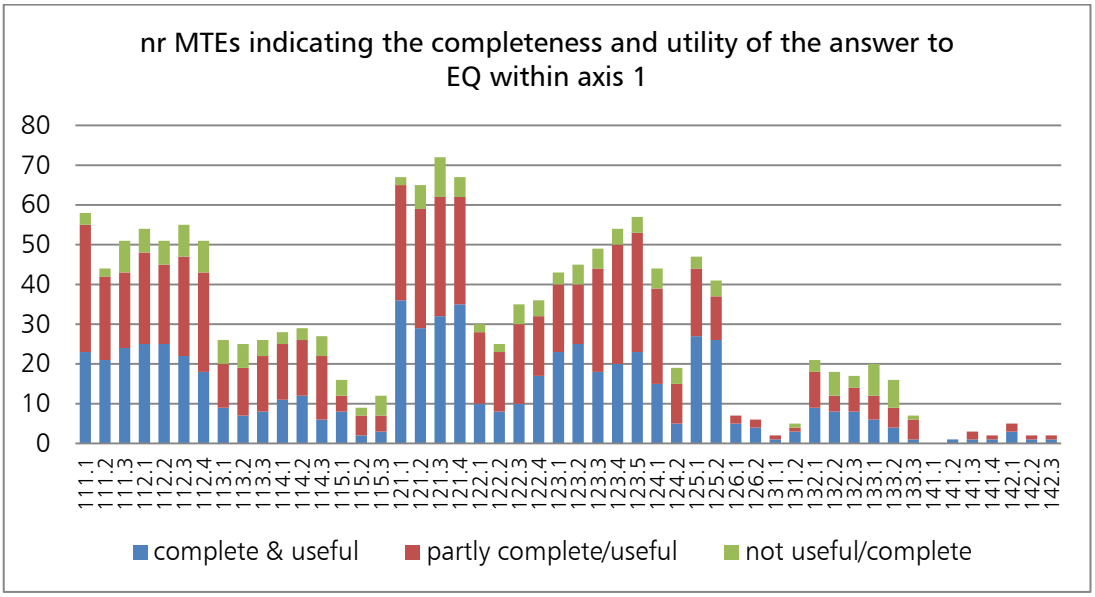
As can be seen in the figure above the evaluation questions were assessed by the evaluators in most cases as relevant. The majority of the answers to the evaluation questions were considered relevant for the policy objectives by the evaluators. Only for measure 122 about half of the answers are considered relevant.

Figure 28: MTEs that describe the quality of the data used (if the evaluation question is answered qualitative, quantitative or both) within axis 1



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Figure 29: MTEs that indicate the utility and completeness of the answers to the evaluation questions within axis 1



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Figure 28 shows that the information provided in the evaluation questions of axis 1 was both qualitative and quantitative based. For most measures half of the information was qualitative or quantitative based or both. For measure 112 and 113 more than half of the evaluation questions are answered quantitatively. For measure 115 the majority of the answers were given qualitatively. For measures 126, 13 and 14 there were only very limited number of MTEs which provided an answer.

Figure 29 shows that about half of the answers to the evaluation questions under axis 1 were considered complete and useful. For the evaluation questions under measure 113, 122 and EQ 124.2 the answers are considered less complete/useful. Reasons for this are either lack of data to be able to answer the question, a poor or late implementation of the measure, overlap with other measures or the fact that the MTE is rather early (mentioned by most of the measures). See also the table below.

Table 25: Relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the horizontal evaluation questions

Main reason why answer is partly complete or not useful	Measure
Lack of data	111.2, 112, 115.2, 115.3, 141, 142
Poor/late implementation of the measure	111.1, 111.3
Overlap with other measure	113 has overlap with 112
MTE too early	114, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 131, 132, 133

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Axis 2

Whereas only 55% of the RDPs make use of the measures under priority axis 2 (see below table), which is actually the lowest of all priority axes, the evaluation questions are answered by a large majority of the MTEs. On average 75% of the MTEs answer the evaluation questions under axis 2.

Measure 214, measure 211 and measure 212 have the highest response rate with around 90%. The lowest response rate is for measure 216 which is still 50%.

Table 26: MTEs answering the evaluation questions per measure of axis 2

Measure	RDPs using the measure	% of MTEs answering EQ in case the measure was applied in RDP
PA2	55%	75%
M211	60	88%
M212	76	88%
M213	30	68%
M214	88	92%
M215	26	69%
M216	51	50%
M221	66	73%
M222	17	61%
M223	40	60%
M224	14	76%
M225	30	71%
M226	58	73%
M227	71	77%

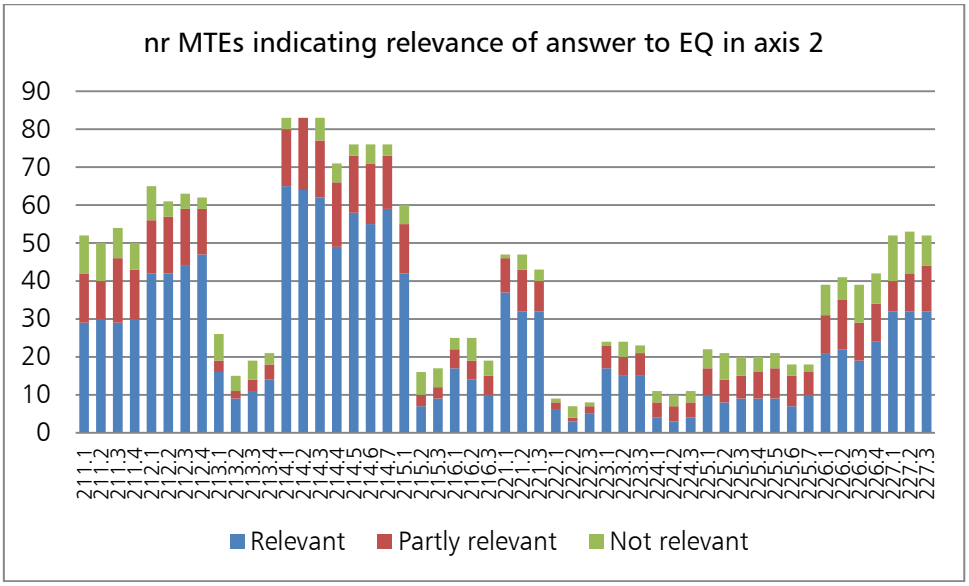
green = above 80%, red = below 40%

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Relevance, Quality, Completeness and utility

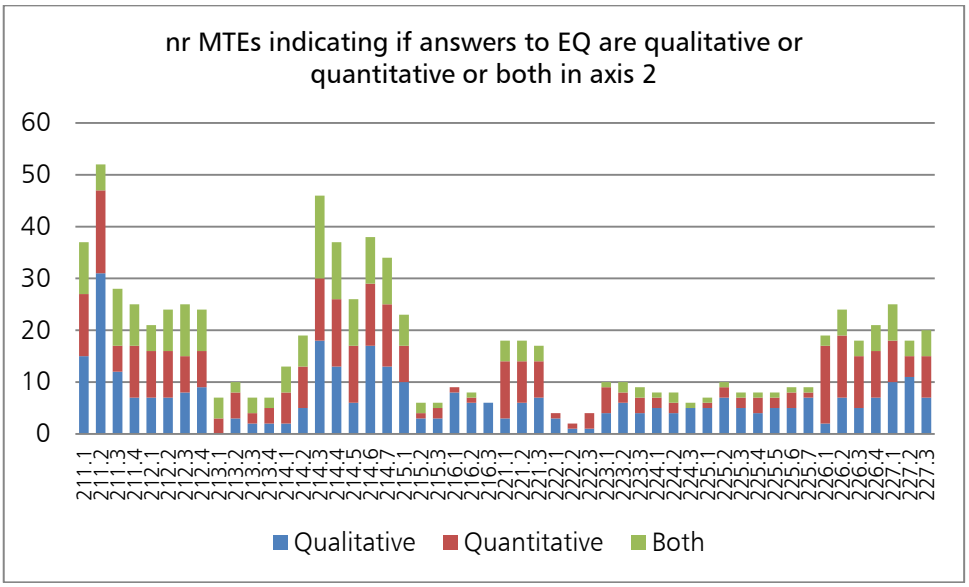
In the figures below the outcomes of the MTEs for the themes relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the answers to the evaluation questions are provided for axis 2.

Figure 30: MTEs that indicated the relevance of the answer given in the evaluation question to the policy objectives



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Figure 31: MTEs that describe the quality of the data used (if the evaluation question is answered qualitative, quantitative or both) within axis 2

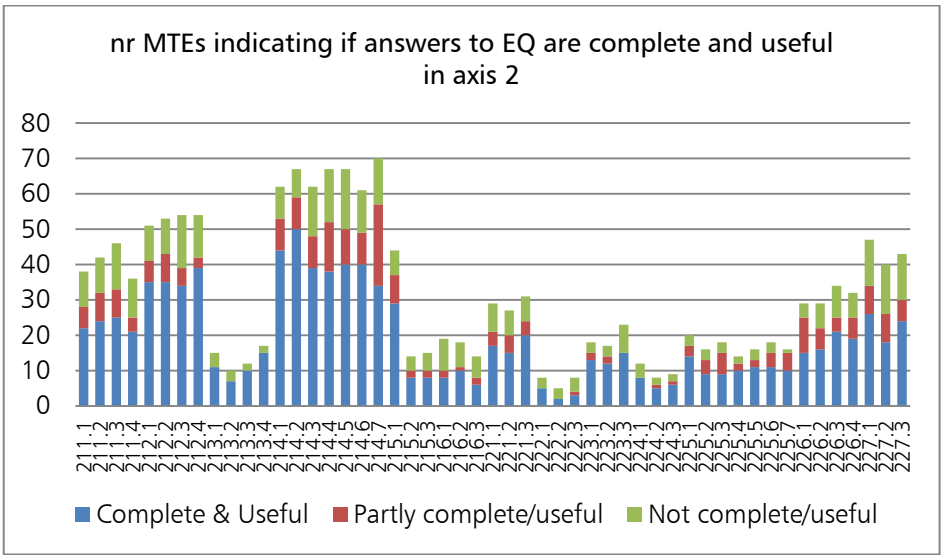


Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Figure 30 shows that a large majority of evaluators consider that the evaluation questions of axis 2 are relevant as they are contributing to the policy objectives. Only for measure 224 has a bit less than half of the answers are considered relevant for the policy objectives. However, one should also be aware that this is on basis of a small number of answers. For measure 226 and 227 a bit less than 20% indicated that the measures are not relevant.

Figure 31 shows that little information is available if the evaluation questions are qualitatively or quantitatively answered. However, for the answers that were given it seems that they are both qualitative and quantitative based. No further explanation is given on why there was only a little number of answers.

Figure 32 MTEs that indicate the utility and completeness of the answers to the evaluation questions within axis 2



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The figure above shows that the answers to the evaluation questions were mostly complete and useful. For measure 222 only very few answers are provided, which is largely due to a lack of data.

Table 27: Reasons for partially complete/useful answer to the evaluation questions of axis 2

Reasons for a partially complete/useful answer	EQ
quantitative information e.g. from the funding and monitoring database.	212.3
no or limited data available.	212.4, 222

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Axis 3

Most of the evaluation questions for measures of axis 3 were answered in the MTEs (average 72%). The table below shows the percentages of MTEs which answered the evaluation questions (for the RDPs that actually applied the measure). Only measure 331 and 341 have a very low response rate with only 28% (the lowest response rate for all measures). For all the other measures under axis 3 the response rate is around or above 80%, with measure 322 even having a response rate of 96%.

Table 28: MTEs answering the evaluation questions per measure of axis 3

Measure	RDPs using the measure	% of MTEs answering EQ in case the measure was applied in RDP
PA3	74%	72%
M311	66	86%
M312	50	81%
M313	67	82%
M321	71	79%
M322	52	96%
M323	70	81%
M331	88	28%
M341	88	28%

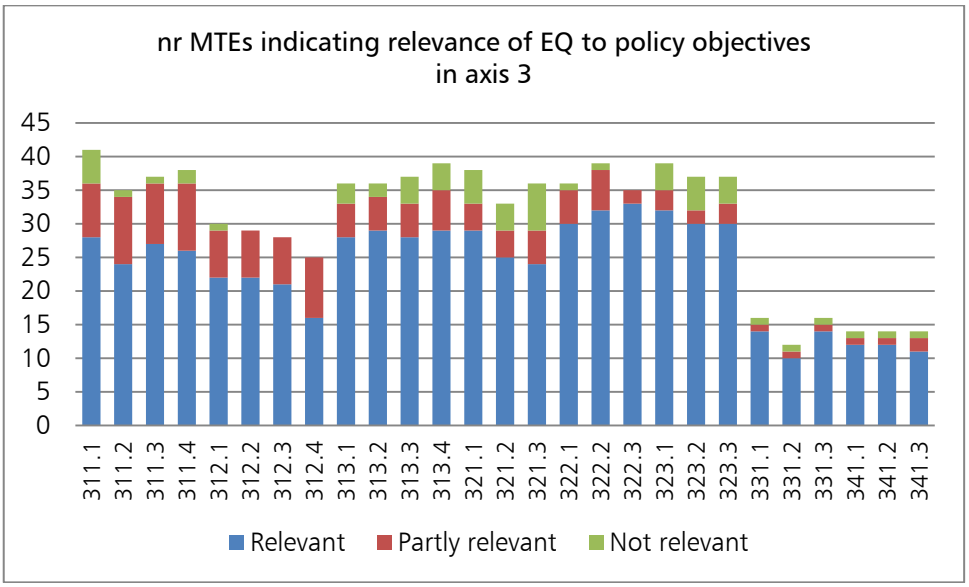
green = above 80%, red = below 40%

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012

Relevance, Quality, Completeness and utility

In the figures below the outcomes of the MTEs for the themes relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the answers to the evaluation questions provided for axis 3.

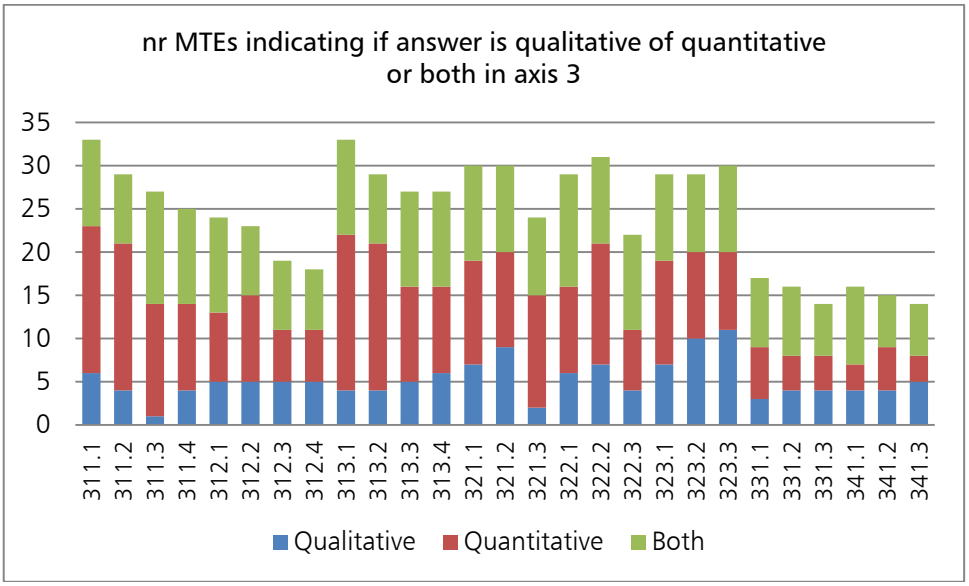
Figure 33: MTEs that indicated the relevance of the answer given in the evaluation question to the policy objectives



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The figure above shows the high relevance of the answers of the evaluation question to the policy objectives, especially for measure 312, 331 and 341.

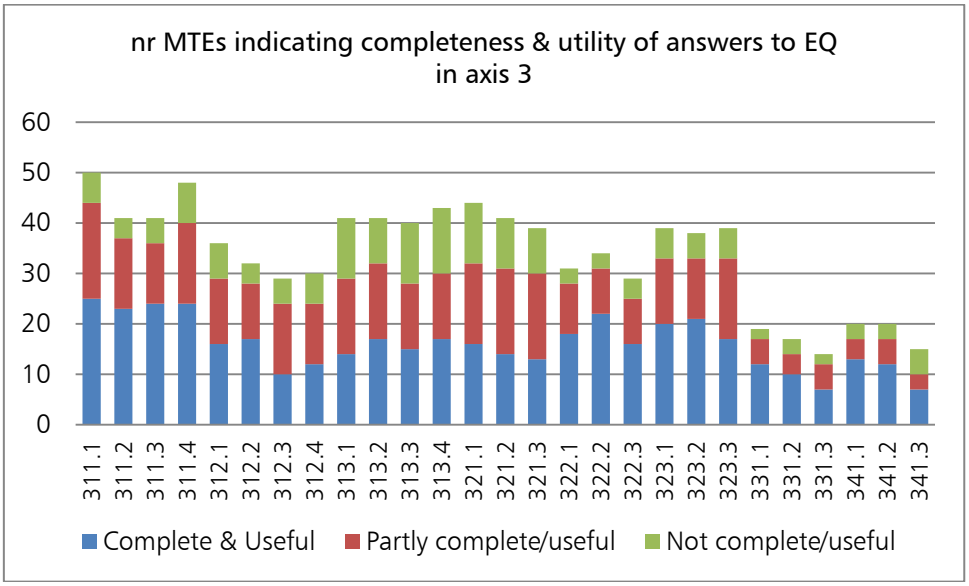
Figure 34: MTEs that describe the quality of the data used (if the evaluation question is answered qualitative, quantitative or both) within axis 3



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

As for the way the information was obtained, it was both qualitative and quantitative based or a combination of both (see figure above). For evaluation questions 311.3 and 321.3 there are hardly any MTEs who use only the qualitative approach to obtain an answer to the question, it is done either quantitatively or with a combination of both.

Figure 35: MTEs that indicate the utility and completeness of the answers to the evaluation questions within axis 3



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The figure above shows that about half of the answers to the evaluation questions in axis 3 were complete and useful. For measure 313 and 321 there is about a quarter of the answers which are not considered complete or useful.

Axis 4

The table below shows the number of RDPs using the measure, which is high in priority axis 4 with 88 out of 92 RDPs using the measure. Furthermore the table shows the percentages of MTEs which answered the evaluation questions per measure. As shown in the figure all the evaluation questions of the measures of axis 4 are answered by more than 50% of the MTEs. The highest percentage is for measure 41 with more than 70% of the MTEs answered the evaluation questions of this measure, but also measure 431 faces a response rates per evaluation question which is above the average of all measures. Overall the evaluation questions for axis 4 are well answered in the MTEs.

Table 29: MTEs answering the EQs of axis 4

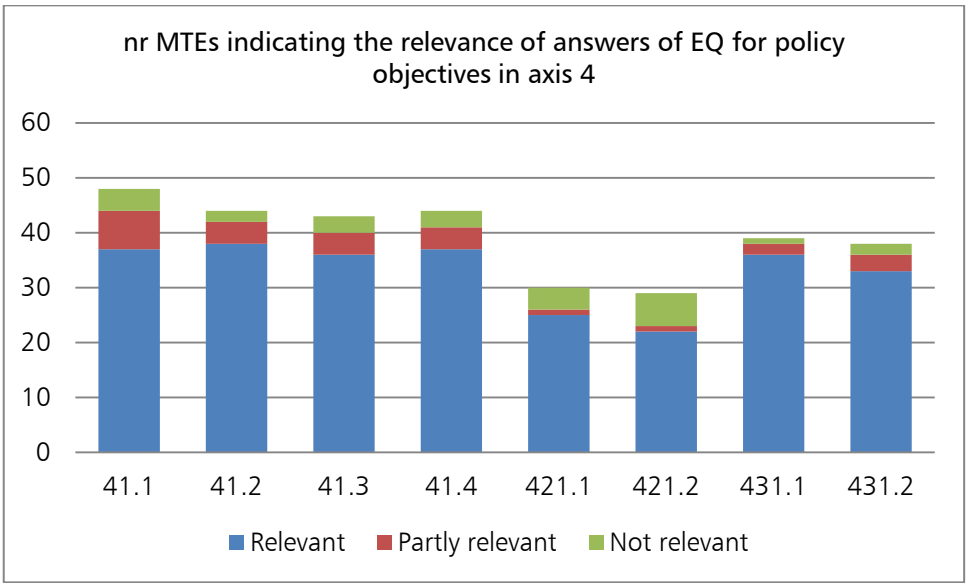
Measure	RDPs using the measure	% of MTEs answering EQ in case the measure was applied in RDP
PA4	**88**	**67%**
M41	88	72%
M421	88	57%
M431	88	69%

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Relevance, Quality, Completeness and utility

In the figures below the outcomes of the MTEs for the themes relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the answers to the evaluation questions are provided for axis 4.

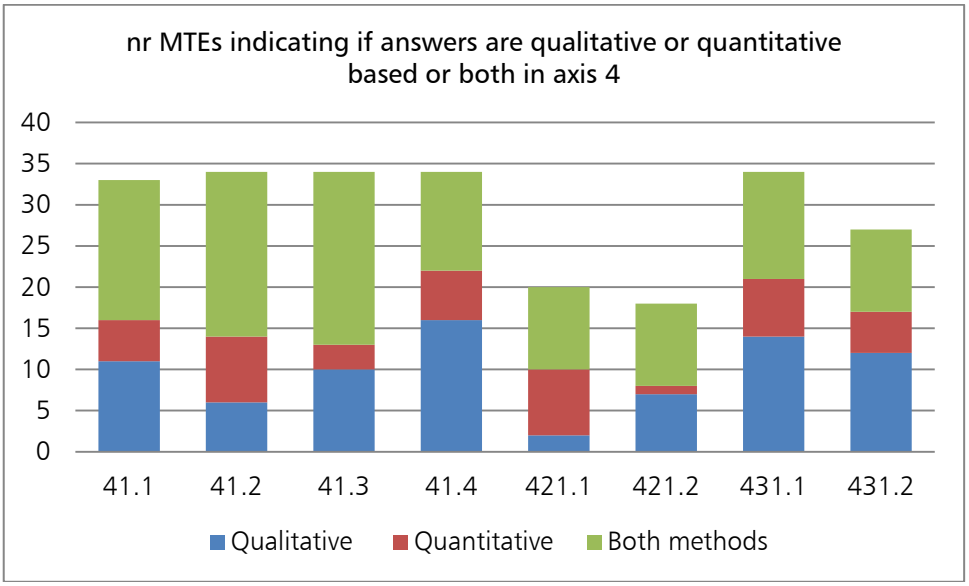
Figure 36: MTEs that indicated the relevance of the answer given in the evaluation question to the policy objectives



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The figure above shows that the answer to the evaluation questions under axis 4 are assessed by the evaluators as very relevant. This is valid for all measures.

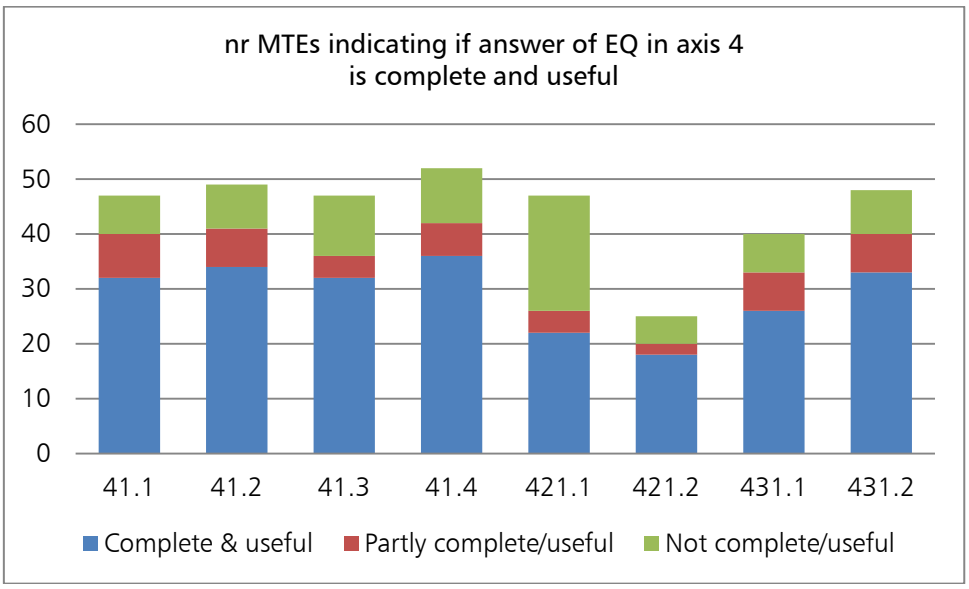
Figure 37: MTEs that describe the quality of the data used (if the evaluation question is answered qualitative, quantitative or both) within axis 4



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The figure above shows that most MTEs use both qualitative as quantitative data to answer the evaluation questions under axis 4. The figure also shows that there is only a limited number of MTEs which use only quantitative data, especially for evaluation question 421.2 and 41.3 there is a limited use of only quantitative data. This is probably because LEADER is mostly a "soft" measure about cooperation for which qualitative data are in general better placed.

Figure 38: MTEs that indicate the utility and completeness of the answers to the evaluation questions within axis 4



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The figure above shows that the majority of the answers to the evaluation questions were complete and useful. The only exception is evaluation question 421.1 where almost half of the MTEs did not have a complete answer to the evaluation question. As a reason is given that due to the low implementation rate so far there is in a number of MTEs no data available yet which affects the completeness and utility of the answers. For 41.4 it can be mentioned that although in a number of MTEs no or insufficient quantitative data was available, a large number of MTEs judged the information as useful and complete.

Horizontal questions

The 19 horizontal questions were answered by 74% of the MTEs. As they are not linked to a specific measure all MTEs could include the horizontal evaluation questions. There is not much difference between the evaluation questions in response rate. The lowest response rate was 67% (for question 10) and the highest 78% (for question 2 and 3).

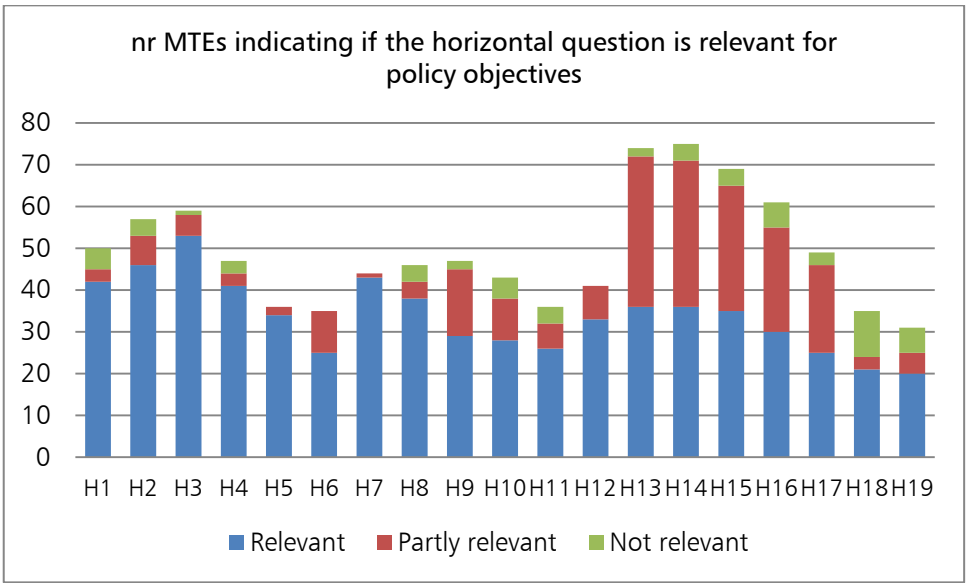
Relevance, Quality, Completeness and utility

In the figures below the outcomes of the MTEs for the themes relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the answers to the evaluation questions are provided for the horizontal evaluation questions.

Figure 39 shows that most horizontal evaluation question are assessed by the evaluators as relevant. There is only a minority of MTEs which consider the answer to the horizontal evaluation question not relevant.

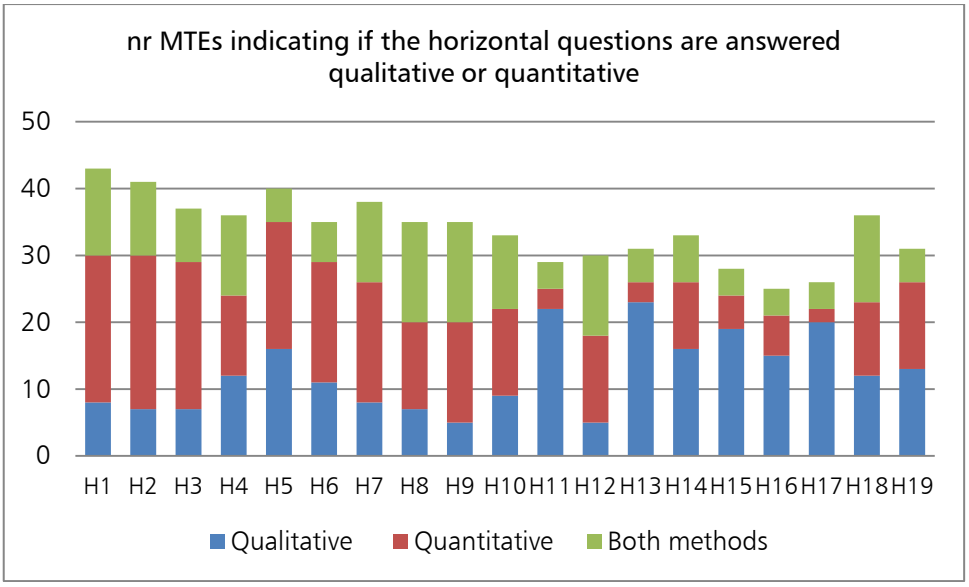
Figure 40 shows a mixed picture: Some horizontal questions are merely answered with qualitative data (H13 until H17), where other horizontal questions tend to have a more quantitative approach (e.g. H1, H2, H3).

Figure 39: MTEs that indicated the relevance of the answer given in the evaluation question to the policy objectives



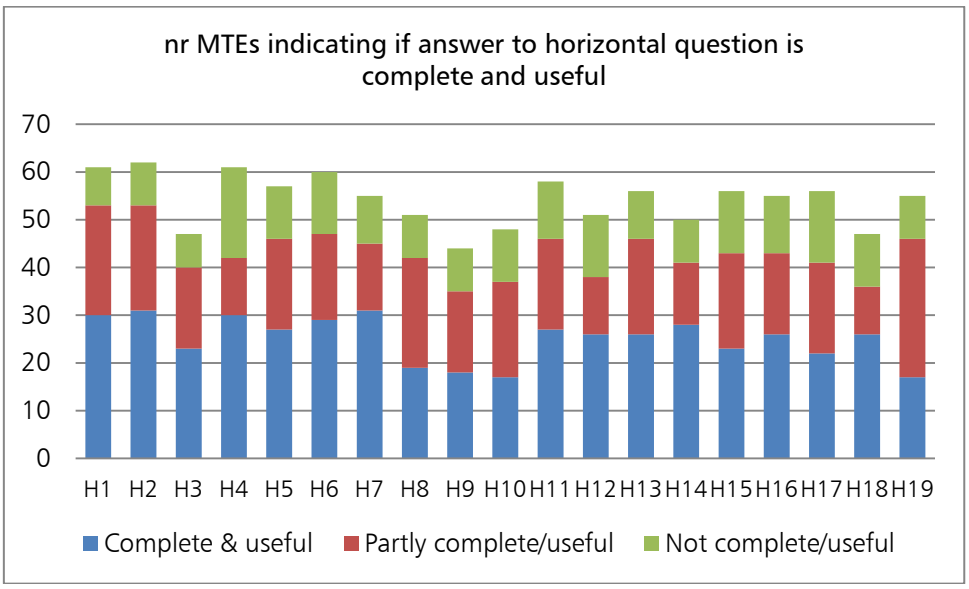
Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Figure 40: MTEs that describe the quality of the data used (if the evaluation question is answered qualitative, quantitative or both) for the horizontal questions



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Figure 41: MTEs that indicate the utility and completeness of the answers to the horizontal evaluation questions



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Around half of the answers of the horizontal questions are considered complete and useful. Especially for H8, H9 and H10 the answers are considered less complete/useful.

Table 30 sums up particular issues that were mentioned in the MTEs regarding the relevance, quality and completeness of the horizontal evaluation questions.

Table 30: Relevance, quality and completeness and utility of the horizontal evaluation questions

Horizontal	Conclusions
H1	A number of MTEs mentioned that it is too early to give a complete and useful answer this question.
H2	A number of MTEs indicated that it was too early to answer this question, in the light of implementation so far.
H3	Highly relevant to the policy objectives, especially the RDP has a high contribution to implement the Göteborg commitment. The answers are mostly based on quantitative information.
H4	Relevant to the policy objectives. Answers are based on all methods evenly.
H5	All the MTEs assessed the answers on this question as partially or highly relevant for the policy objectives. The question is mostly answered on a quantitative basis.
H6	A number of MTEs indicates the indirect way in which the RDP influences depopulation. The RDP is not able to reverse depopulation but the possibilities to create employment and additional income plus to increase the attractiveness have positive influence in the long run. Answers are based on quantitative data.
H7	A large number of MTEs indicated the relevance of the answers to the policy objectives. This is indirectly given to the stabilisation of agricultural enterprises, access to new markets and the creation of new jobs. This question is mostly based on quantitative data.
H8, 18	Relevant to the policy objectives, mostly based as well on qualitative as on quantitative data.
H9	Relevant to the policy objectives, although some MTEs indicated that the measures Code 123 and 124 contribute marginal to promote a European agrifood sector and that relevance is indirectly given to the stabilisation of agricultural enterprises, access to new markets and the creation of new jobs. The answers are mostly based on quantitative and qualitative data.
H10, 12	Relevant to the policy objectives, mostly based on quantitative data.
H11, 13, 14, 15, 16	Relevant to the policy objectives, mostly based on qualitative data.
H17	Relevant to the policy objectives. Mostly answered by interviews with relevant stakeholders e.g. AA.
H19	Relevant to the policy objectives, although some of the MTEs refer to the indirect effect via multipliers.

Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Additional questions

About 70% of RDPs have additional questions[27], in total 127 additional questions were added. Hungary formulated most additional questions (28 additional questions). Furthermore the networks of Germany, Spain and Portugal have formulated additional questions (respectively 11, 8 and 7).

For 120 of the 127 the data was available, only for 1 the data was not available and for 6 MTEs it was not mentioned if data was available. As for the thematic concentration of additional questions, most were linked with NRN (32 questions), while 9 questions were linked with the horizontal evaluation questions.

While some of the MTEs refer to the policy objectives in the additional questions, in most MTEs this link is not made. The quality of the data differs between the additional questions, some of them are based on the data of the earlier evaluations in the MTE, while others have conducted a survey. Also there is no clear link between the additional questions and the completeness and the utility of the data. Although a large number of MTEs indicated that the answer was complete and very useful, a few others indicated that the answers were incomplete and of moderate use.

[27] When including the county network to all the programmes underneath

8.7.2 Judgement

Most MTEs answered only some of the evaluation questions or answered some questions together. Also for a complete analysis in this synthesis report, the sheer amount of data provided in the answers to these evaluation questions proved to be very difficult to process. Furthermore there is an overlap in the evaluation questions, a number of MTEs refers to other questions for the answers (especially within the horizontal evaluation questions).

Another problem was the availability of data. Because of the low implementation rate at the time of the MTE there were only a few projects implemented. The amount of data was therefore limited.

8.7.3 Conclusions

For most of the programmes the 155 evaluation questions (including the horizontal questions, but excluding the additional questions) are too many. The questions which were considered least relevant are mostly under priority 2 and 1 (please note that for some there has been a very low number to refer to):

- More than 30% of MTEs considered the following evaluation question not relevant: 131.1, 133.2, 142.2, 215.2, 222.2, 225.2;
- Between 25 and 30% considered the following evaluation questions not relevant: 122.2, 122.3, 122.4, 133.1, 213.1, 213.1, 213.3, 215.3, 224.1, 224.2, 224.3, 226.3;
- Between 20 and 25% considered the following evaluation questions not relevant: 131.2, 133.3, 142.3, 216.2, 216.3, 225.1, 225.3, 226.1, 227.1, 227.2;
- Between 15 and 20% considered the following evaluation questions not relevant: 113.3, 124.2, 132.1, 211.1, 211.2, 223.2, 225.4, 225.5, 225.6, 226.4, 321.3, H18, H19.
- Between 10 and 15% considered the evaluation question not relevant: 113.2, 132.2, 132.3, 211.3, 211.4, 212.1, 213.4, 216.1, 222.1, 222.3, 225.7, 226.2, 227.3, 311.1, 313.3, 321.1, 321.2, 323.2, 323.3, 421.2

For the next programme period it is recommended to limit the number of evaluation questions for example by grouping them to themes. For the MTE there should be carefully determined which questions are possible to answer at half time of implementation to prevent non-useful information in the MTE.

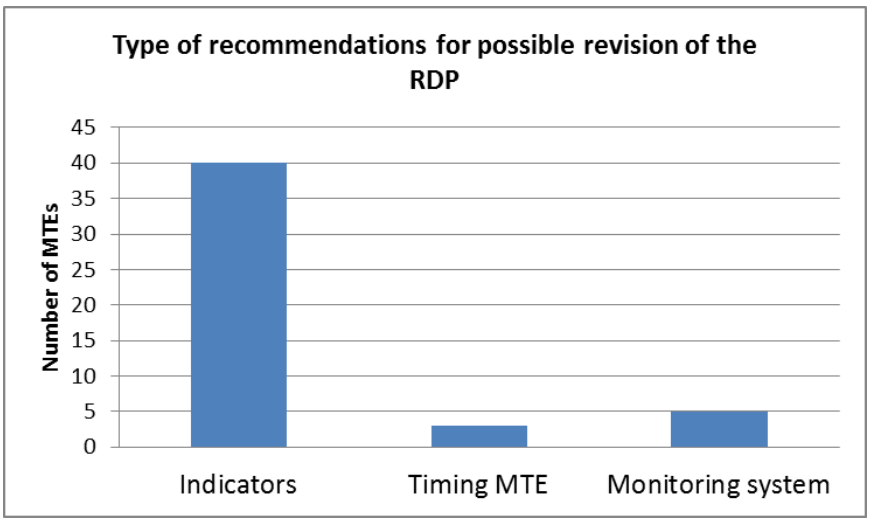
8.8 Topic 5.2.5: Recommendations for possible revision of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), for the remainder of the 2007-2013 period and for the post-2013 period

8.8.1 Findings

Most recommendations relate to revision of indicators

In almost half of all the MTEs carried out, the possible revision of the indicators was mentioned. Also the timing of the MTE and the data availability of the monitoring system were mentioned. However, an equal number of MTEs mentioned that the indicators are of good quality and no revision is needed. Most MTEs did not propose in which programming period the revisions should be made.

Figure 42: Type of recommendations for possible revision of the RDP



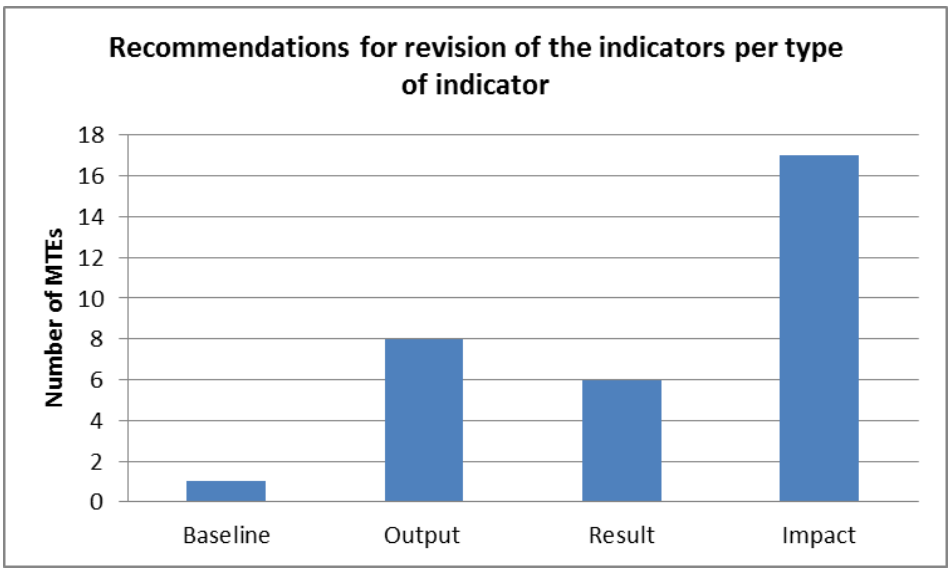
Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

In most cases the impact indicators are recommended as a field for improvement

Where improvements in the indicator set are mentioned in the MTEs as a recommendation, these recommendations concern mostly the impact indicators. Also some recommendations for output indicators are given. Most of the recommendations concern the indicators of axis 3 (16 times) and axis 4 (12 times).

According to the evaluators the focus of the indicators used for axes 3 and 4 is mainly on economic impact. This does not cover the intervention logic of the measures, which is more on the social level. The recommendations that are made by the evaluators are therefore mainly to incorporate social aspects in the indicators for these axes.

Figure 43: Recommendations for revision of the indicators per type of indicator



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

A number of evaluators recommended in the MTE to monitor the employment impact not only for axis 3, but also for axis 1 and 4. For the result indicators a number of evaluators mentioned that some are rather impact indicators: e.g. gross added value.

For a more detailed description of the indicators per measure please see chapter 8.14.

8.8.2 Judgement

The fact that many MTE reports propose a revision of the indicators, addressing mainly impact indicators, shows that some of the indicators contained in the CMEF are regarded as not always relevant for the measures.

8.8.3 Conclusions

The proposals for revision of indicators may suggest that sometimes more "soft indicators" can give a better view of the progress made in an RDP, especially when it comes to assessing impacts. Information of this kind is likely not to be available readily from a national statistical office, but may mean that data has to be collected directly at the level of the beneficiaries. However, when using information from beneficiaries one should always be sure that the relevant information is easily available for them, otherwise the information provided may be of low quality.

8.9 Topic 5.2.6: Assessment of the coherence between EQs and indicators

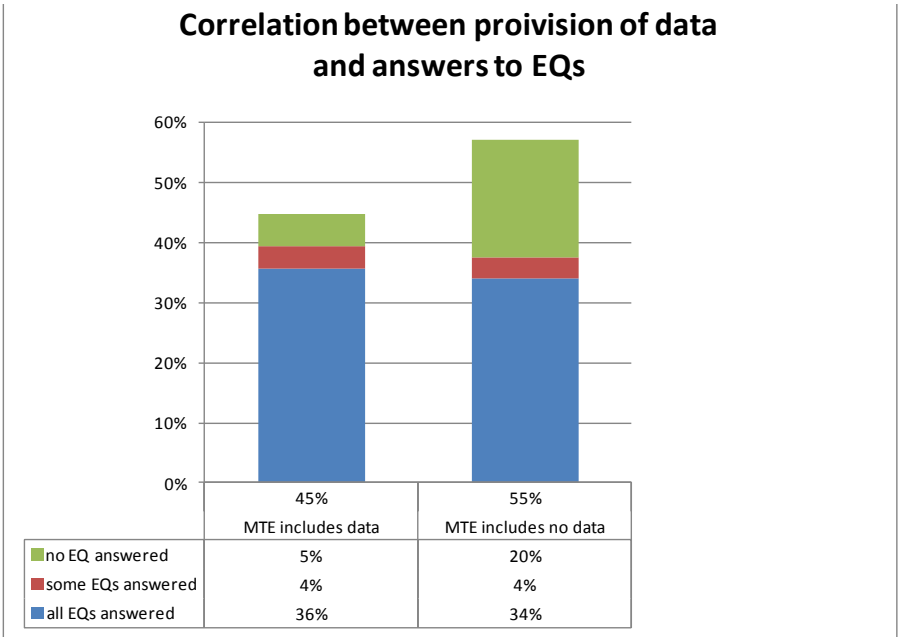
The assessment of the coherence between EQs and indicators within this study focuses on a quantitative approach. All kinds of common CMEF indicators should be taken into account when answering the EQs, however only the output indicators are linked to specific measures. This quantitative approach is based on the fact that both EQs and output indicators are linked to measures.

In total 136 EQs correspond to 82 output indicators per programme. Up to seven EQs are assigned to each measure, which in turn is represented by up to five output indicators. Additionally 19 horizontal EQs are posed in each programme without being referenced to specific measures. Because of this data quantity it was not possible to analyse the content of the answers given and compare them with the indicator values. Instead, it was assessed if the MTEs (excluding those of NRN which did not have to answer the EQs) provide output indicator values for each measure and if the corresponding EQs were answered.

8.9.1 Findings

On average, a measure is scheduled in about 56 programmes, but less than half of the MTEs that have these measure scheduled (25 MTEs which equals 45% of these 56 programmes) present output indicator data. Reassuringly, the majority of those that do present data answered the evaluation questions. On average 36% answered all evaluation questions posed within one measure, 5% gave no answer at all and 4% answered only some of the evaluation questions.

Figure 44: Coherence between indicator and EQs



Source: Data from Financial Implementation Reports 2009 and MTEs.

Note: Due to rounding, the figures do not add up exactly at all times.

The majority of the other 21 MTEs (representing 55% of the 56 programmes that have scheduled a measure on average) that did not include the output indicator data still answered the EQs. On average 33% MTEs offered answers to all evaluation questions within one measure; 19% did not include an answer and 3% answered only some questions.

MTEs that include indicator data and answered all or some EQs (on average per measure), make up about 40% of all programmes. In those cases the indicators and EQs can be evaluated as coherent. Questionable are those 38% where all or some EQs are answered but no indicators are available. Clearly no coherence with the output indicators can be assessed here.

The table below splits the results on an aggregated axis level. The table should be read as follows: For example, a measure in axis 3 is on average budgeted in 55 programmes. Of these 55 programmes 26 MTEs gathered output indicator data, while 29 MTEs did not state any targets or achieved values. Looking more closely, it becomes apparent that the majority (20 MTEs) of those 26 MTEs that do provide data, answered all EQs related to one measure, while 3 answered some and 3 MTEs answered none of the questions posed.

Table 31: Coherence between indicator and EQs

	Number of programmes were								
Axis	**Measure budgeted**	**MTE includes data**	all EQs answered	some EQs answered	no EW answered	**MTE includes no data**	all EQs answered	some EQs answered	no EW answered
Axis 1	54,2	26,0	20,3	2,4	3,3	28,1	16,9	1,3	10,0
	100,0%	48,0%	37,5%	4,4%	6,1%	51,8%	31,2%	2,4%	18,5%
Axis 2	51,1	21,4	16,8	2,2	2,4	29,7	19,2	2,8	7,8
	100,0%	41,9%	32,9%	4,3%	4,7%	58,1%	37,6%	5,5%	15,3%
Axis 3	55,2	25,8	20,3	2,8	2,7	29,4	15,8	0,9	12,7%
	100,0%	46,7%	36,8%	5,1%	4,9%	53,3%	28,6%	1,6%	23,0%
Axis 4	88,5	37,8	31,4	1,1	5,3	50,8	29,1	0,6	21,0
	100,0%	42,7%	35,5%	1,2%	6,0%	57,4%	32,9%	0,7%	23,7%
Total	56,5	25,3	20,0	2,2	3,0	31,2	18,8	1,7	10,7
	100,0%	44,8%	35,4%	3,9%	5,3%	55,2%	33,3%	3,0%	18,9%

Source: Data from Financial Implementation Reports 2009 and MTEs.

Note: Due to rounding, the figures do not add up exactly at all times.

8.9.2 Judgement

Roughly 39% of the MTEs seem to rely on the output indicator data when answering the EQs. Only 5% did not answer the EQs although having assessed and provided the data in the reports. Conversely, 19% of those that did not include the indicator data, also did not answer any EQs. This can be rated as a sign that the indicators are used and helpful in order to reply.

A contrary finding is that 33% gave an answer without having collected the necessary output data. The evaluators used other indicators and other methods in order to arrive at an answer to the EQs. This implies that the proposed CMEF indicator data was not regarded as appropriate means by which to arrive at an answer.

8.9.3 Conclusions

While the EQs are an important part of the CMEF, the question remains if the MTE is the right moment to give an answer. With only partially available data, precise and final answers to the EQs are difficult.

8.10 Topic 5.2.7: Assessment of indicators. Each indicator should be assessed to determine at least: availability and quality of necessary data, relevance and utility of the indicator

The following chapter presents an assessment of the common output and result indicators as well as information on additional specific output and result indicators mentioned in the programme. It provides a comprehensive about availability, quality and progress of the indicators. For information on progress by MS or support levels for the output indicators please refer to topic 1.1.

Assessment of output indicators

The first part of this chapter comprises the findings for the common output indicators, additionally specified indicators are listed. The findings on common output indicators are presented by topic, giving an overview on the development of the indicators at the aggregated level. It is shown for each indicator:

- the number of programmes implementing the related measure
- the number of programmes that reported the indicator (quantitatively or qualitatively)
- the availability of quantitative information
- the achievement of the targets (achievement in % of targets) – for all indicators stating quantitative achievements and targets, which are 52% of all indicators reported.
- the sources of the common output indicator data collection in Tool 2

Number of programmes implementing the measure

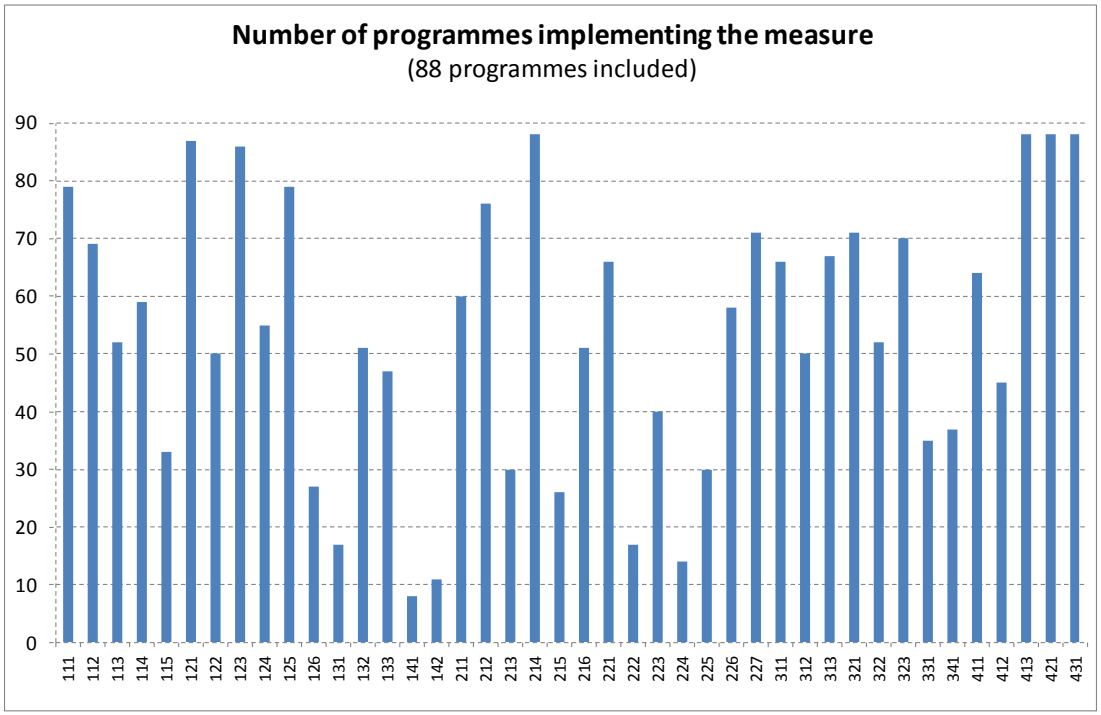
A measure is seen as implemented by a programme, if the programme has foreseen a budget for the measure. In average a measure is implemented by 51 programmes (Figure 45), however the range differs widely. Measures that are foreseen in all programmes are M214 agri-environment and the LEADER measures. Others like M141 semi-subsistencefarming and M142 producer groups are only budgeted in 8 – 11 programmes.

For axis 1 "improving competitiveness" one measure is implemented by 51 programmes on average. Almost every programme includes M121 modernisation of agricultural holdings, which is implemented by all programmes except IT–Valldaosta.

For axis 2 "improving the environment" one measure is implemented by 48 programmes on average. The range is from M214 agri-environmental payments which is implemented by all programmes to M224 Natural 2000 payments which is reported by 14 programmes only.

For Axis 3 "improving the quality of life" one measure is averagely implemented by 56 programmes, with 71 programmes as a maximum (M321 basic services for the economy and rural population) and 35 programmes as a minimum (M331 training and information). The LEADER measures of axis 4 are implemented by all programmes , except of implementing local development strategies for competitiveness (M411) and environment/land (M412).

Figure 45: Number of programmes implementing the measure



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; Targeting of measures

General information on targeting of measures

The majority of measures followed closely the stipulations about the target groups (i.e. the group of beneficiaries) and the target areas as foreseen in the description of measures – see Handbook on Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – Guidance Note E: Measure Fiches; DG Agriculture (2007).

Still the Mid-term evaluations offered some findings about the effectiveness of the targeting of measures applied in the single RDPs:

- The most common case described as problematic with respect to targeting the measures has been that eligibility criteria are overly strict thus hemming applications in an unduly manner (in about a third of the Programmes this problem is articulated in various forms – see list below). Especially the beginning of the economic crisis has been described as a change in the programme environment, thus resulting in prohibitive programme selection criteria – e.g. in terms of expected output (jobs created- BE-Wallonia, CZ, DE-Rheinland-Pfalz, LT).
- In some cases the eligibility criteria have been set too tight in technical terms (e.g. size of firms), so that the number of beneficiaries has been cut down considerably – e.g.

restricting the applicability of a sub-measure to very restricted fields of intervention (e.g. CZ – limiting the applicability of measure 124 only to biogas for own agricultural production, ES-Murcia, FR-Guadeloupe)

- Especially in Axis 3 eligibility criteria have been set too tight, which resulted in a lack of project applications and a drain of potential applicants towards other funding opportunities (National/regional policy support) – e.g. DE-Rheinland-Pfalz
- This overly restrictive application of eligibility has also been applied for the target areas – e.g. the applicability of measure 226 has been reduced to areas with "high or medium fire hazard" calculated on the basis of risks thus excluding potential areas – e.g. EE
- Another case has been the discontinuity of the application of eligibility criteria over time. Some programmes changed the criteria for project selection between calls without sufficient information provided for the beneficiaries – thus creating dissatisfaction and low application levels – see e.g. RO
- Finally a few MTEs pointed out the large number of sub-measures as hurdles for an effective targeting of measures – the delimitation of these sub-measures produced confusion with potential beneficiaries – especially for measure 214 (see e.g. ES-Castilla y Leon) and measures under Axis 3 (e.g. 312 – business set-up FR-Guadeloupe).

Reporting of common output indicators

It would be anticipated, that all programmes that budgeted a measure report on the indicators, e.g. set at least a target for the indicators linked to the measure budgeted. As Figure 46, Figure 47 and Figure 48 show, there are three different cases of reporting:

- programmes that budgeted a measure and report on the indicators linked
- programmes that report on an indicator (i.e. show at least target values), but did not budget the measure according to the RDIS annual financial implementation up to 2009
- programmes that budgeted a measure but do not report on the indicators linked, i.e. neither state target nor achieved values or qualitative information.

As shown below the vast majority of cases belong to the first case and thus show a number of programmes fitting to the budget plans. The number of programmes unexpectedly reporting on indicators without budgeting the measure is marginal and generally confined to measures of axis 3 (see explanations below). The number of programmes with "missing" indicator information becomes more noticeable, especially for measure M226 (already addressed above) as well as the LEADER measures. In the cases of M114 use of advisory services and M214 the programmes obviously did not report on all CMEF indicators linked to the measure.

Indicators that are reported, but the underlying measure is not included in the budget (yet)

The information used for Figure 46, Figure 47 and Figure 48 is based on two sources: the RDIS annual financial implementation reports up to 2009 and the information on physical progress collected with Tool 2 of the MTE (see chapter 3, methodology). While the first informs about budget planned and expenditures executed per programme and measure, the latter contains the values on targets and achievements of CMEF indicators collected from the MTE reports.

Differences like the number of programmes reporting on the indicator without budgeting the related measure occur due to inconsistent reporting of these two data sources. While the financial implementation reports are strictly orientated on the date the budget is planned and expenditures are declared, the reporting on the physical performance of the programme rather focuses on the "effort" undertaken by the administrative to implement the measures. Thus already measureable "effects" are accounted – e.g. contracts agreed upon – even if there has not been a financial transfer in the period analysed. This problem was discussed in the steering committee of this project but cannot be solved within this evaluation.

There are 183 cases where programmes report targets and/or achievements for common output indicators, although the measure linked to these indicators is not budgeted yet. This is the case for 52 indicators of axis 1 but most frequently for axis 3. While measures of axis 1 and axis 2 seem to be "occasionally" reported without budgeting the measure in some programmes (e.g. Denmark, Latvia, Poland, Estonia, ES-Castilla-La-Mancha, IT-Friuli-Venezia Guilia), the phenomenon is more frequently observed for the indicators of axis 3. As discussed in detail in the paragraph below, some LEADER measures seem to be measured with more appropriate axis 3 indicators.

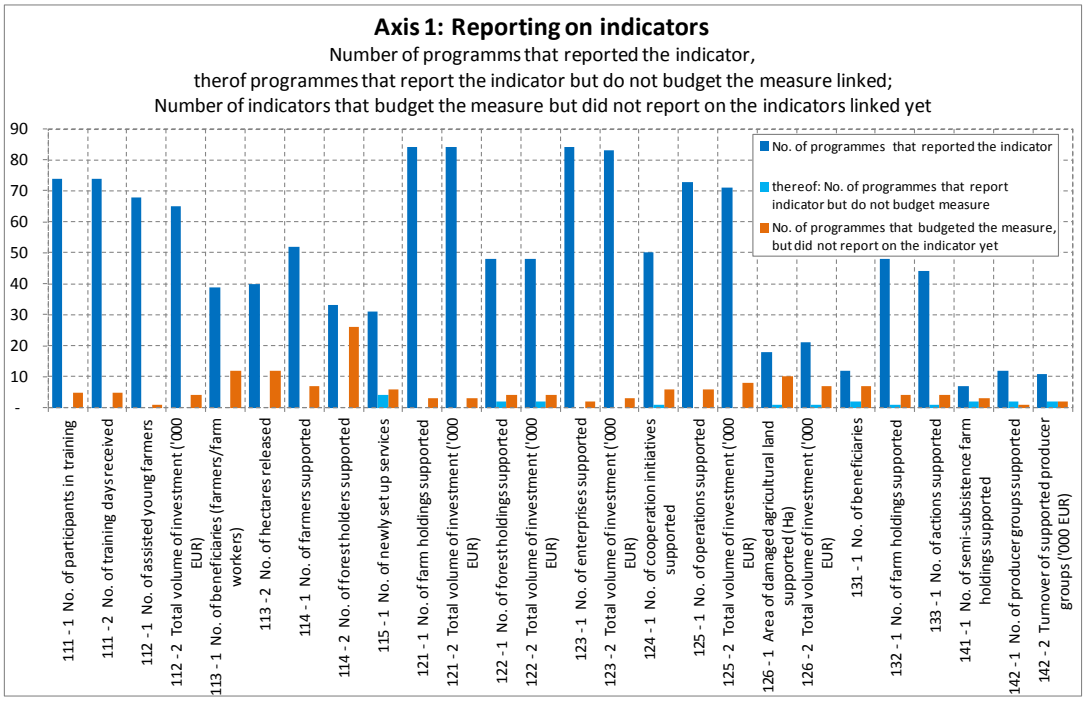
Indicators reported in the majority of reports are those, that are applicable in all MS regardless of their agricultural and/or forestry structure, topography or climate (M111 vocational training, M121 modernisation of agricultural holdings, M123 adding value to agricultural and forestry products and M125 infrastructure related to the development and adaption of agriculture and forestry, M214 agri-environment payments, M227 non-productive investments as well as the indicators of axis 3 and LEADER measures.)

The indicators "missing", i.e. indicators not reported on, although the underlying measures are budgeted, are those of LEADER. Coincidently the indicators of axis 3 show a higher number of indicators reported, although the measure was not included in the budget plans. These facts point to the assumption, that some RDP implement axis 3 through LEADER, where it has been considered relevant to set some axis 3 targets because the common indicators for LEADER were not sufficient. This seems to be the case in DE-Schleswig-Holstein, ES-Cataluña, EE, IT-Marche, IE, LV, PT-Açores and PT-Continent. All these programmes report on indicators of axis 3, although they did not plan the measure linked to these indicators and they coincidently show a number of LEADER measures budgeted, without reporting on the physical process of the indicators.

However there are more programme indicators for LEADER "missing" than additional indicators for axis 3 reported. Thus it seems that the difficulties of LEADER implementation in several

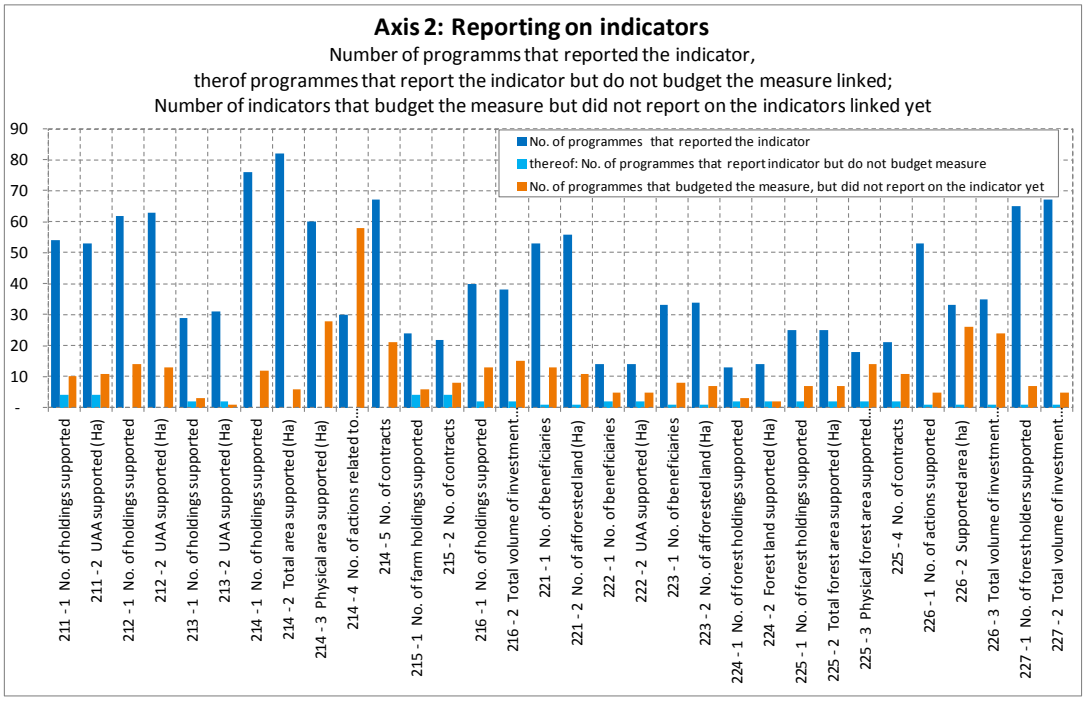
programmes (see topic 1.2 in chapter 4.2) find expression in the fragmented reporting on LEADER indicators.

Figure 46: Reporting on common output indicators, axis 1



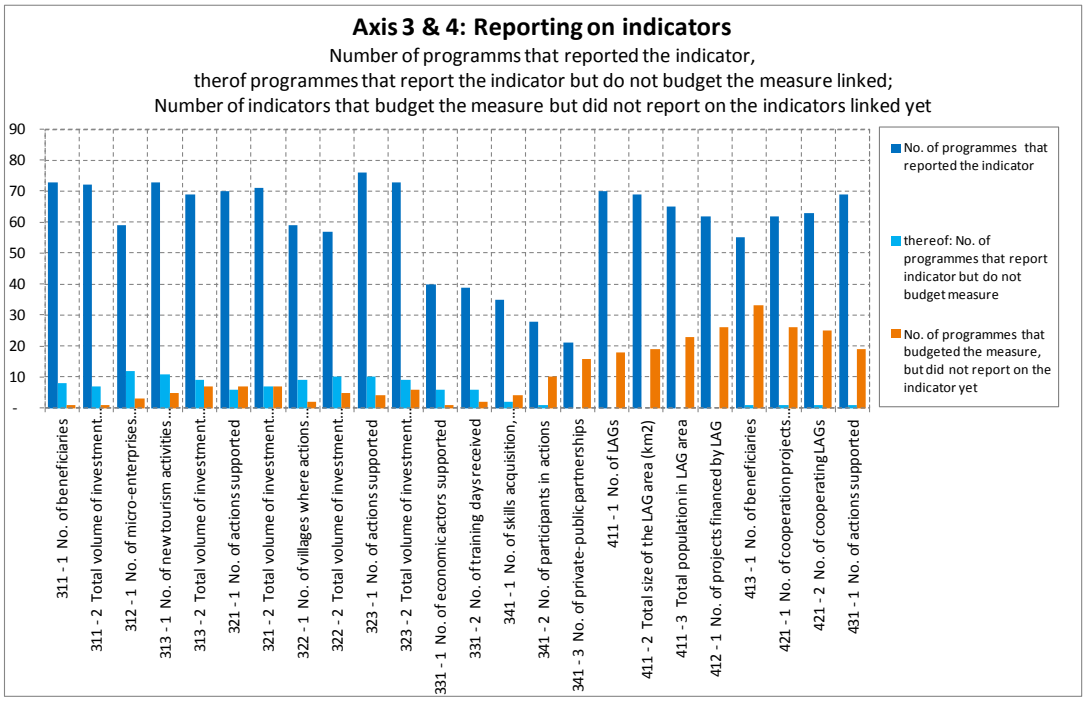
Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 47: Reporting on common output indicators, axis 2



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 48: Reporting on common output indicators, axis 3 and 4



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Availability of quantitative information

In the following the number of programmes reporting target values, achieved values and both values is illustrated by common output indicator. There are common output indicators that have either quantitative information on the target or the achievement, or on both or neither figure.

97% of the indicators reported show quantitative, 3% qualitative information. For most common output indicators stated in the reports quantitative targets are set (over 90%, Figure 49). Not quite as much programmes report on achievements up to the year 2009 (54%, Figure 50). Most programmes reporting on achievements simultaneously state targets, almost the same share of programmes report targets and achievements (52%, Figure 51). Thus the figures of programmes showing achievements (Figure 50) are quite similar to the programmes that reported target and achievements (Figure 51). However information on targets and achievements was not always available in the same document. In some cases the target corresponding to an achieved value had to be drawn from another document than the MTE or the latest APR stating the achievement. Here the consistency of the data was a major principle in the collection of data, but might not be guaranteed in every case.

The common indicators least frequently expressed by quantitative targets (mostly no targets at all) are 141_1 Number of semi-subsistence farm holdings supported, 131_1 Number of beneficiaries, 215_2 Number of contracts, 215_1 Number of farm holdings supported, 142_2 Turnover of supported producer groups (EUR '000), 126_1 Area of damaged agricultural land supported (ha), 222_1 Number of beneficiaries, 222_2 UAA supported (ha), 225_4 Number of contracts and 225_3 Physical forest area supported (ha).

Some documents reported target and/or achievements as aggregation over several measures, e.g. on value for 211 natural handicap payments to farmers in mountain areas and 212 payments to farmers in areas with handicaps, other than mountain areas. This information could not be included in the quantitative analysis and is thus only considered qualitative.

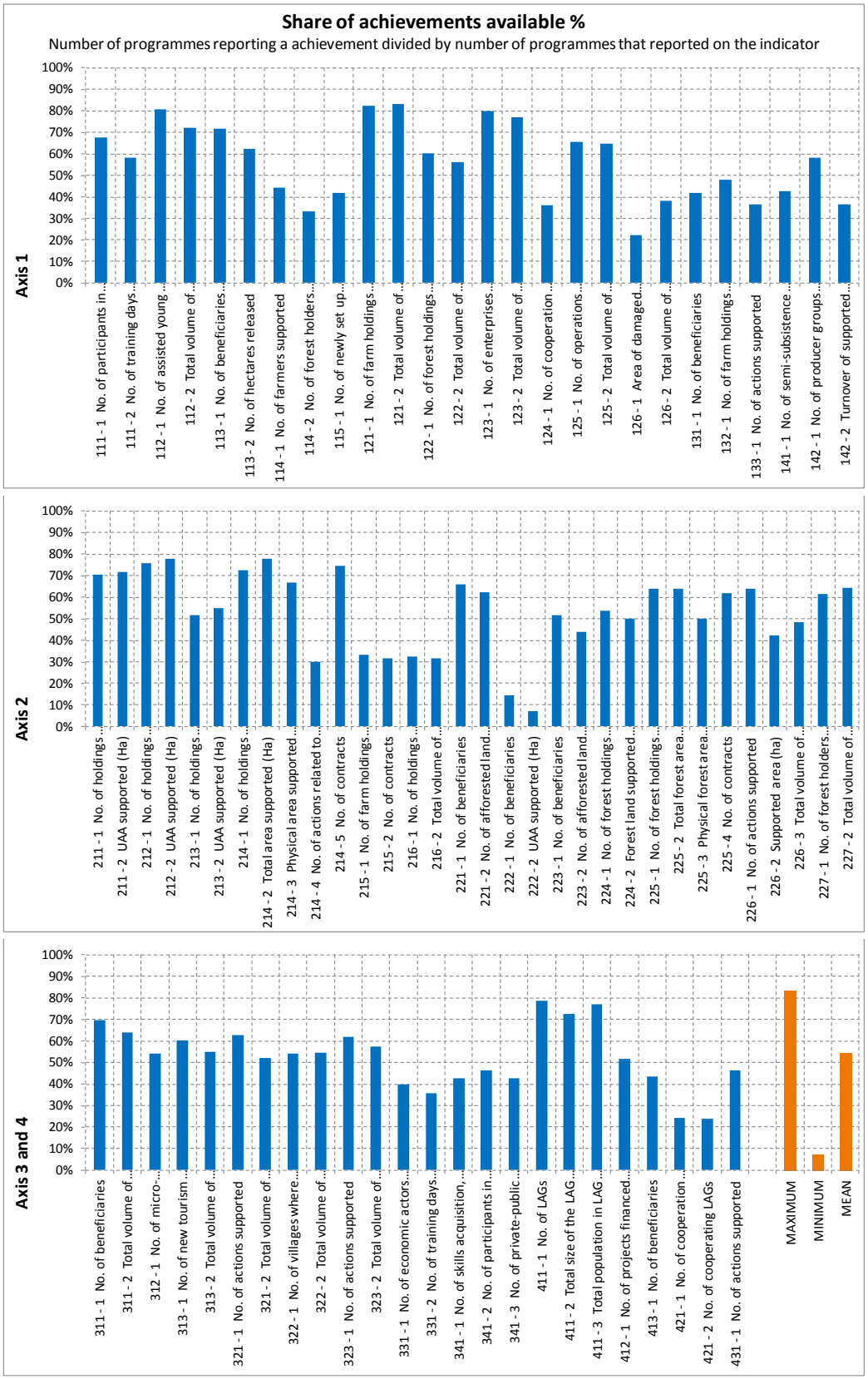
Availability of qualitative information

Most of the information on output indicators are quantitative, seldom qualitative values are stated. Qualitative information is only included for 18 measures. On average there is one programme per indicator that includes either a qualitative target or a qualitative achievement. At maximum 5 programmes report qualitatively on one particular indicator. Due to the small number of these occurrences, qualitative values are not subject of further analysis.

Figure 49: Share of common output indicators reported that stated a target value

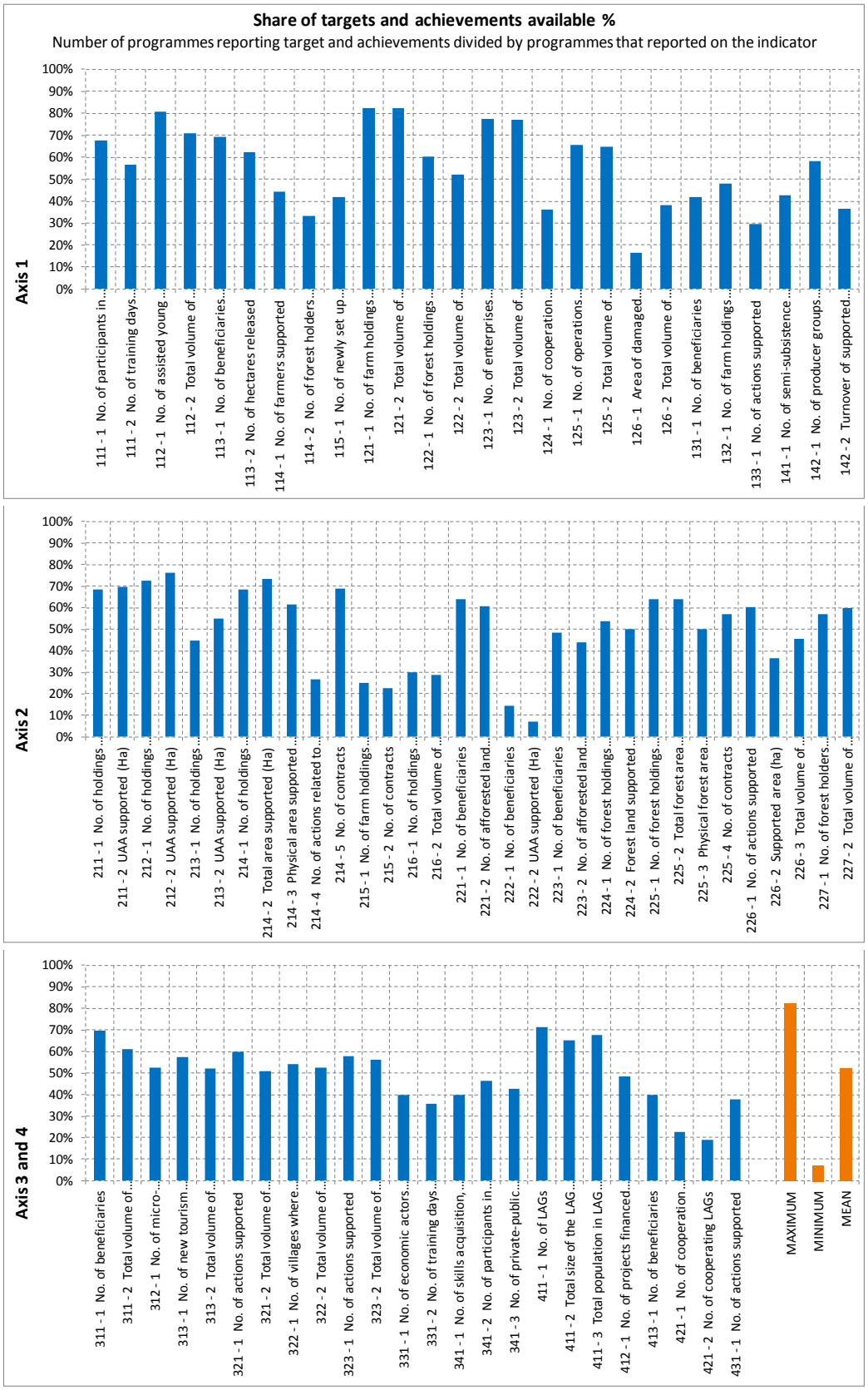
Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 50: Share of common output indicators reported that stated an achievement



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 51: Share of common output indicators reported that stated both target and achievement



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Targets and achievements by common output indicator

Figure 52 compares achievements and targets by indicator, aggregated for all datasets where both are available. On average 38% of the target values are achieved by the end of the reporting period. The rage varies from maximum 118% (341-2 Number of participants in actions) to minimum 6% (225-4 Number of contracts).

This figure was reduced by outliers of more than 500% of achievement that are reported in the following common output indicators and programmes:

- Hungary: 341-1 Number of skills acquisition, animation actions supported: target 4.500, achievement 84.000; 341-2 Number of participants in actions: target 100.000, achievement 1,4 m. Both MTE and APR values are quite questionable – however it shows the scale of mobilisation for setting up LAGs.
- Sweden 341-1 Number of skills acquisition, animation actions supported: target 200, achievement 1011
- BE-Flandern, two indicators: 331-1 Number of economic actors supported: target 70, achievement 70.332 and 331-2 Number of training days received: target 27.000; achievement 58.514. The reference period for the target is 2007-2013, the reference period for the achieved value is 2007-2009. The indicators include also non-economic actors. Targets have been changed in 2010, which seems to be the administrative reaction to the misadjusted targets

The achievements of indicators from axis 1 leads one to assume slow implementation, as on average 30% of the targets for 2007 – 2013 are achieved. The range of achievement is from 10% (M114 use of advisory services, number of forest holders supported) to about 60% (M126 area of damaged agricultural land supported and M133 number of information and promotion actions supported). These differences in progress reflect the good progress of indicators underlying multi-annual contracts on the one hand and the generally slow implementation of measures supporting services on the other. High achievements like for M133 thus are rather explained by inappropriately low targets.

The indicators from axis 2 show the highest progress, on average 40%. This is not surprising, as those represent measures were prolonged from the previous period or underlying clear, easy to administrate targeting criteria. Moreover they concern payments under multi-annual contracts which, once successfully negotiated, are paid annually without further administrative effort.

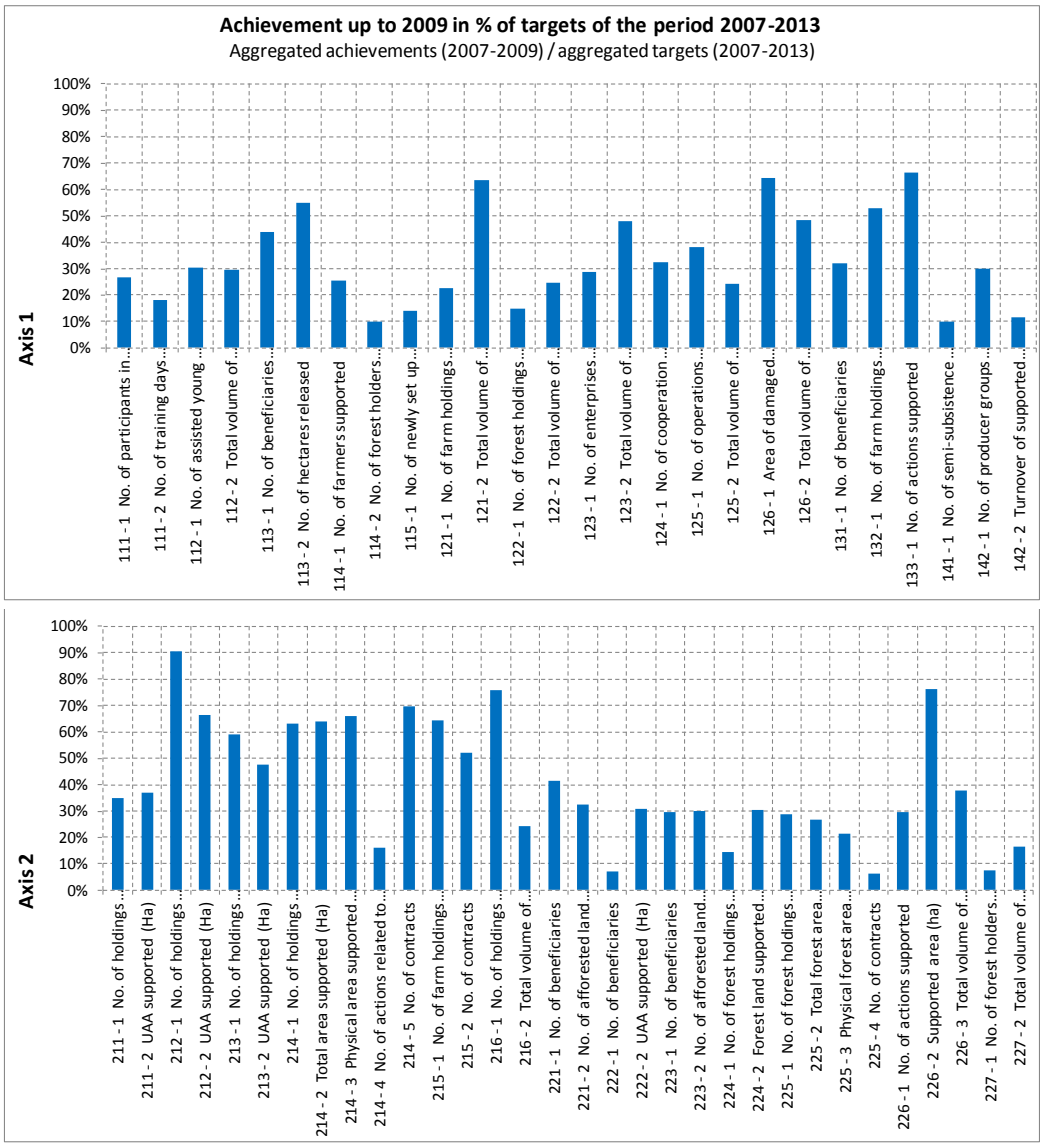
Axis 3 indicators perform divergently, the indicators of M 341 local developments strategies, namely the number of participants in actions and the number of actions supported show questionable overachievements of over 200% in several programmes and thus rather reflect unrealistic low targets.[28] Others indictors are progressing well within the anticipated level, these are the indicators for M331 training and information same is true for M322 – village renewal and development that perform well with more than 40% of the targets achieved. The other indicators have reached less than 25% of their aggregated targets, even if their financial

[28] The outliers found for indicators of M341 are reported in Hungary, Sweden, Slovakia, UK-Wales, Austria and DE-Baden-Württemberg, At least the numbers stated in Hungary are highly questionable and it seems that different methods of delimitation have been applied for setting the targets and measuring the achievements.

execution is below 10% of the planned budget. This points to an assessment of measures financially executed via LEADER, but physically measured through axis 3 indicators, as discussed above with the reporting on the indicators.

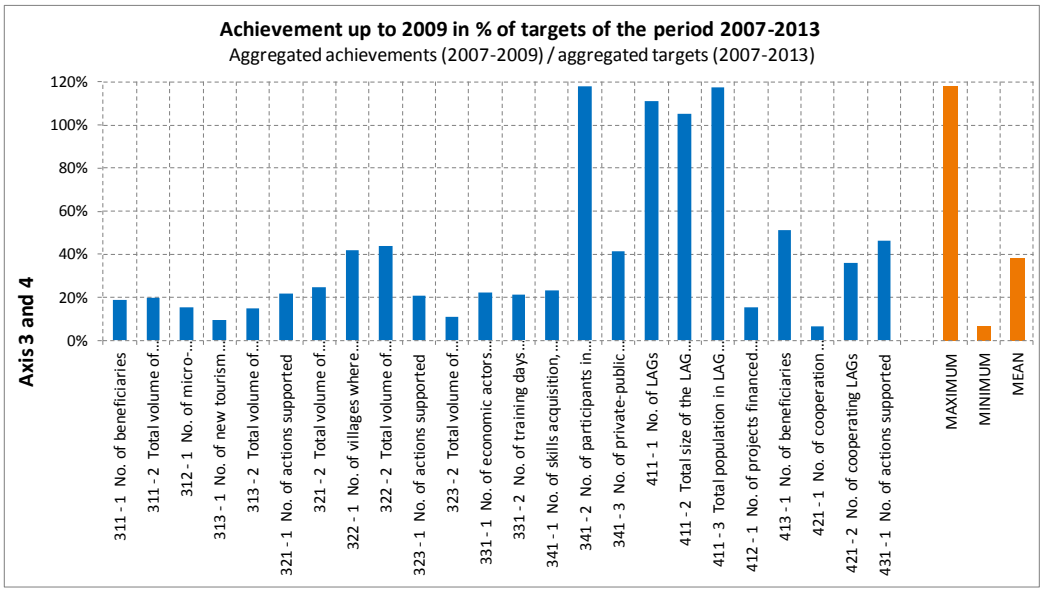
The indicators of axis 4 are budgeted in all programmes, however more than 20% of the programmes have not reported on them yet. However, the programmes reporting have already set successfully their framework conditions as the targeted number of LAGs for implementing local development strategies, is already contracted. Nevertheless the physical progress in terms of projects financed by LAG, number of beneficiaries etc., is widely below the anticipated numbers. This picture matches with the poor financial execution rate illustrated in chapter 4.1 (Topic 1.1: An overview of progress made).

Figure 52: Share of targets for the period 2007-2014 achieved up to the year 2009 in %, Axis 1, 2



Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Figure 53: Share of targets for the period 2007-2014 achieved up to the year 2009 in %, Axis 2-4



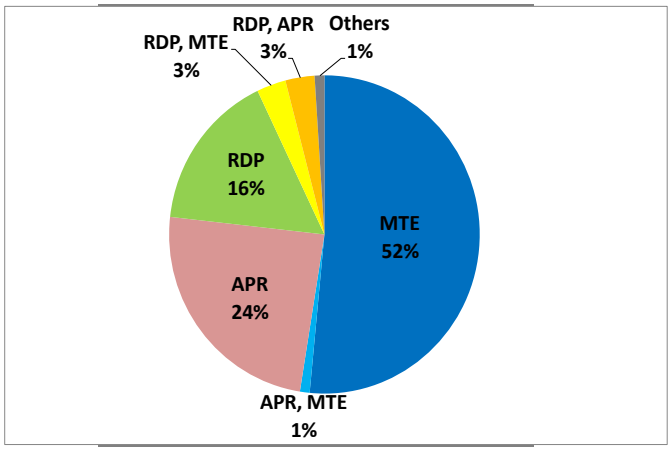
Source: RDIS Annual Financial Implementation (2010): European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development EAFRD. Financial Implementation report 2009; MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Sources of the common output indicator data collection

The sources of the data are illustrated by indicator programme combination, i.e. if both targets and achievements originate from the MTE, the source is "MTE". If case the achievement comes from the MTE but the target originates from the RDP the source is "RDP, MTE". Here the source is only taken into account if it is linked to a value, i.e. indicators that are not included in either source or have no value reported are not incorporated in Figure 54.

More than the half of the information originates from the MTE, one quarter from the APR and 16% from the RDPs. For 8% of the output indicator values, the information was gathered from a combination of sources, as neither MTE nor APR stated both target and achievement value. This makes it extraordinarily difficult to gather consistent information on the indicator development.

Figure 54: Sources of information on common output indicators



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

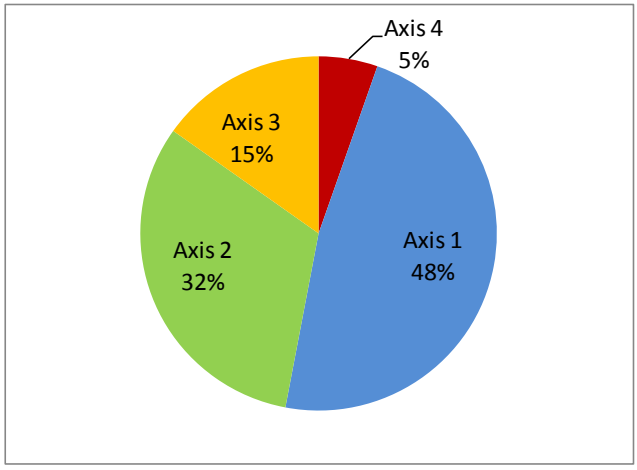
Detailed analysis on common indicator level

The following paragraph analyses the common output indicators in more detail and shows for each measure the programmes implementing it, the targets set as well as the achievements stated so far and the sources of the information on each indicator.

Additional output indicators specified

There are 651 specific output indicators proposed, 48% for axis 1, 32% for axis 2, 15% for axis 3 and 5% for axis 4 (figure). Some of these are described in more detail in the following paragraphs. Here only those measures are listed for which several programmes introduced specific indicators.

Figure 55: Share of specific indicator by axis



Source: MTE Tool 2 data collection on common output indicators

Measure 123: Adding value to agricultural and forestry products

32 specific indicators out of 10 programmes are linked to measure 123. Thereof 12 new indicators indicate specifics like the projects supported, cooperation initiatives supported, increase in exported production etc. 8 indicators specify the volume of investment (in environmental factors, innovation, immaterial investment etc). 8 indicators distinguish between agricultural and forestry products, 2 indicators state other thematic specifications. Two indicate jobs created.

Measure 125: Infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry

64 specific indicators out of 19 programmes are linked to measure 125. Most of them (51) are new indicators specifying either the type of infrastructure/operation supported (e.g. degrease in water use, meters of canalization built) or the area profiting from the measure as well as the number of farm holdings supported. 6 specify the financial investment in more detail (e.g. for irrigation) and 4 specify the number of operations in more detail (i.e. improving of farm structure, irrigation or improvement of soil characteristics).

Measure 227: Non-productive investments

There are 19 specific indicators stated in 7 programmes (France – Corse, France – Guadeloupe, France – Île de la Réunion, Lithuania, Spain – Madrid, Spain – Valencia, United Kingdom – England). 11 additional indicators specify the area supported by specific kind of grants (habitat protected, area reconstituted, diagnosed area). 5 determine the number of species protected while the others state the investments in Natura 2000 Networks or the natural habitats restored as well as the newly built or renovated recreational forest infrastructure facilities.

Measure 313: Encouragement of tourism activities

There are 19 specific indictors stated in 9 programmes. Seven concern the construction or reconstruction from infrastructure (rail, road, water supply and sewage network). Two indicators determine the number of sports and social service facilities supported as well as cultural initiatives supported (Bulgaria). One specifies the number of jobs created (Luxembourg). Further indicators include the actions related to economic activity (Spain-Madrid) and the number of tourism actions in recreational infrastructure and tourist accommodation (Romania), municipalities beneficiaries, the number of person hosted/welcome in forest, the number of itineraries involved, the number of events in which views of members of the community are sought through meetings under measure 313 and the number of specific studies commissioned to provide further knowledge of a product, process or market.

Measure 322: Village renewal and development

There are 18 specific indicators stated in 5 programmes (Italy – Emilia-Romagna, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia). One determines the number of jobs created. 4 make thematic specifications, thereof three about the total volume invested (e.g. in basic services), one specifies the villages connected to basic services. In all remaining cases the indicators are very heterogeneous from the number of rural buildings respectively objects renovated to the power of energy plants activated to the number of inhabitants benefiting from the measure.

8.10.1 Judgement output indicators

The availability and quality of target information on the common output indicators is very good, as in average 96% of the indicator reported have quantitative target values available. Due to the small number of qualitative data, qualitative values a not subject of further analysis.

The availability of achievement values is inferior, 59% of the programmes report achievements and 54% set quantitative values for targets and achievements. Thus statements of the progress of the common output indicators are limited to 52% of the indicators stated in the reports.

However assessment of these data shows in general good progress of the common output indicators. On average 38% of the targets are achieved up to now. However the range of achievement varies widely.

Axis 1 demonstrates a decent but not too enthusiastic progress, 30% of the targets are achieved on average. While the indicators M113 “number of beneficiaries of early retirement” or M125 “number of infrastructure related operations” are progressing well, the indicators for measures

concerning advisory services and likewise actions did not perform as anticipated. Interestingly the total volume of investment is progressing quicker than the number of projects financed by them. Hence either the targets for total investments of axis 1 where underestimated, or the projects supported are more expensive than scheduled.

Axis 2 advanced as anticipated after the first half of the programme, 40% of the targets are achieved. This number matches advanced financial execution of axis 2 measures and is due to the clear and experienced administrative framework, clear eligibility criteria, continual character over programmes, multi-annual contracts, etc.).

Measures of axis 3 perform divergently, especially the achievements for indicators of M341 local development strategies exceed the targets set by far pointing to unrealistic low targets. Compared to the financial execution reported so far, the achievements are likewise high for the other indicators. This phenomenon confirms the presumption that some programmes measured their physical progress of LEADER measures by using axis 3 indicators, because the latter suited better to the effects achieved. A first idea of this development was formed after the analysis of the number of indicators reported in axis 3 and LEADER.

LEADER measures are budgeted in all programmes, but only 80% of the MTEs reported on LEADER indicators so far. Those that stated achievements fulfilled the targets regarding number of LAGs implementing local development strategies to almost 100%, but were slow on the number of projects financed and beneficiaries reached, which is in line with the arguments discussed before. Thus LEADER met on average 20% of the targets so far.

There are several specific indicators stated, in general specifying important regional characteristics. Most specific indicators are included for measure 214 agri-environment payments, especially to monitor the development of organic farming. There are obvious inconsistencies regarding the timeline of financial budgets and targets as well as achievements reported for 183 common output indicators where targets and/or achievements are reported, but the budget for the measure is not certified yet. This problem occurs particularly for measures performing exceedingly late in 2009 and bias the results.

8.10.2 Conclusion output indicators

Comparison of targets and achievements and thus an overview on the development of the indicator could be extremely enhanced by stressing the importance of tables that indicate targets and achieved values in parallel within the documents. This helps to the authors and the audience to get a clear picture based on consistent data.

Indicators for LEADER are not always suiting the progress achieved and are thus seems to have been exchanged in some cases for axis 3 indicators that suit the topics better. This circumstance should be addressed when revising the CMEF indicators.

Assessment result indicators

Axis 1

Result Indicators for Axis 1 aim at quantifying the improvement of the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector.

Result Indicator (1): Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity related to agriculture and/or forestry

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 71 programmes include the indicator, thereof four give qualitative information. 37 programmes (52,1%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse; DE-Baden-Württemberg; DE-Bayern; DE-Hessen; DE-Saarland; DE-Sachsen; IT-Campania; IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia; IT-Piemonte; IT-Umbria; IT-Valldaosta; PT-Açores; ES-Andalucía; ES-Asturias; ES-Baleares; ES-Castilla y León; ES-Navarra.

Table 32: Result Indicator (1) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity related to agriculture and/or forestry	71	4	70	37

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 37 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 27,4% (table).

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity related to agriculture and/or forestry	2.946.277	1.946.642	532.893	27,4	9.050	2.751

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Source

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 14%, RDP & MTE 3%, RDP & APR 2%, MTE 47%, MTE & APR 3%, APR 5%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 22%.

Result Indicator (2): Increase in agricultural gross value added in supported farms

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 68 programmes include the indicator, thereof eleven give qualitative information. 31 programmes (45,6%) state target and

achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes Czech Republic; Estonia; FR-Corse; FR-Guadeloupe; DE-Hamburg; DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen; DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen; DE-Thüringen; IT-Bolzano; IT-Piemonte; IT-Umbria; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Poland; ES-Andalucía; ES-Baleares; ES-Canarias; ES-Extremadura; UK-Scotland; UK-Wales.

Table 33: Result Indicator (2) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Increase in agricultural gross value added in supported farms	68	11	56	31

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 31 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 20,8%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Increase in agricultural gross value added in supported farms	27.518.302	22.816.447	4.736.334	20,8	72.661	25.500

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Source

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 13%, RDP & MTE 3%, RDP & APR 4%, MTE 47%, MTE & APR 2%, APR 4%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 23%.

Result Indicator (3): Number of holdings introducing new products and/or new techniques

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 78 programmes include the indicator, thereof eight give qualitative information. 50 programmes (64,1%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse; FR-Guadeloupe; DE-Rheinland-Pfalz; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; IT-Campania; IT-Piemonte; IT-Umbria; Netherlands; Romania; ES-Cantabria.

Table 34: Result Indicator (3) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Number of holdings/enterprises introducing new products and/or new techniques	78	8	72	50

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 50 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 21,1%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Number of holdings/ enterprises introducing new products and/or new techniques	207.212	129.076	27.201	21,1	751	141

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Source

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 12%, RDP & MTE 5%, RDP & APR 5%, MTE 52%, MTE & APR 2%, APR 7%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 14%.

Result Indicator (4): Value of agricultural production under recognized quality label/standards

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 37 programmes include the indicator, thereof four give qualitative information. Eleven programmes (29,7%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes BE-Flanders; Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland-Åland; Finland-Continent; FR-Corse; FR-Guyane; FR-Île de la Réunion; FR-Martinique; DE-Baden-Württemberg; DE-Bayern; DE-Brandenburg & Berlin; DE-Hamburg; DE-Hessen; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen; DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen; DE-Saarland; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; Hungary; Ireland; IT-Basilicata; IT-Campania; IT-Lombardia; IT-Marche; IT-Piemonte; IT-Sardegna; IT-Trento; IT-Umbria; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Poland; PT-Açores; PT-Madeira; Romania; Slovakia; ES-Canarias; ES-Cantabria; ES-Castilla y León; ES-Madrid; ES-Murcia; ES-Navarra; ES-Valencia; Sweden; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland; UK-Wales.

Table 35: Result Indicator (4) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Value of agricultural production under recognized quality label/standards (million EUR)	37	4	37	11

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The eleven programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 25,4%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Value of agricultural production under recognized quality label/standards (million EUR)	14.375	8.709	2.211	25,4	100	55

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 13%, RDP & MTE 1%, RDP & APR 2%, MTE 22%, APR 5%, European Network for rural development 1%, no values 55%.

Result Indicator (5): Number of farms entering the market

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 15 programmes include the indicator, thereof three give qualitative information. Seven programmes (46,7%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes Austria; BE-Flanders; BE-Wallonia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland-Åland; Finland-Continent; FR-Corse; FR-Hexagone; FR-Martinique; DE-Baden-Württemberg; DE-Bayern; DE-Brandenburg & Berlin; DE-Hamburg; DE-Hessen; DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen; DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen; DE-Saarland; DE-Sachsen-Anhalt; DE-Schleswig-Holstein; DE-Thüringen; Greece; Ireland; IT-Abruzzo; IT-Basilicata; IT-Bolzano; IT-Calabria; IT-Campania; IT-Emilia-Romagna; IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia; IT-Lazio; IT-Liguria; IT-Lombardia; IT-Marche; IT-Molise; IT-Piemonte; IT-Puglia; IT-Sardegna; IT-Sicilia; IT-Toscana; IT-Trento; IT-Umbria; IT-Valldaosta; IT-Veneto; Netherlands; PT-Açores; PT-Continent; PT-Madeira; Slovakia; Slovenia; ES-Andalucía; ES-Aragón; ES-Asturias; ES-Baleares; ES-Canarias; ES-Cantabria; ES-Castilla y León; ES-Castilla-La Mancha; ES-Cataluña; ES-Extremadura; ES-Galicia; ES-La Rioja; ES-Madrid; ES-Murcia; ES-Navarra; ES-Pays Basque; ES-Valencia; UK-England; UK-Northern Ireland; UK-Scotland; UK-Wales.

Table 36: Result Indicator (5) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Number of farms entering the market	15	3	13	7

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative, although one fifth of those programmes that stated data for that indicator did that in a qualitative way. The seven programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 24,2%

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Number of farms entering the market	102.127	11.409	2.756	24,2	1.300	67

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 1%, RDP & APR 1%, MTE 13%, APR 3%, European Network for rural development 1%, no values 80%.

Alternative indicators proposed in Axis 1

In this axis 166 programme specific indicators were stated in 37 programmes. Most of these (79%) can be attributed to the category "New Indicator". Thereof one quarter each refers to modernization, water reduction and socio-demographic topics. Other topics include creation of workplaces, green investments product development. 8% of the specific indicators in axis 1 give detailed specifications about the holdings introducing new products or techniques (R3) and the number of participants (R1), e.g. "Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity thanks to replacement services" or "Number of holdings with higher added value per area unit through an additional processing and marketing step on the holding". Little make sectoral specifications. In 14 cases another measurement was used as basis to assess the result indicators. In particular the indicator (R2) "Increase in GVA in supported holdings/enterprises" was expressed in percent in 7 cases.

Axis 2

Result Indicators for Axis 2 aim at quantifying the improvement of the environment and the countryside through land management

Result Indicator (6a): Area under successful land management contribution to bio diversity and high nature value farming/forestry

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 75 programmes include the indicator, thereof ten give qualitative information. 50 programmes (66,7%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, DE-Hamburg, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, PT-Açores, PT-Madeira, ES-Baleares.

Table 37: Result Indicator (6a) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Area under successful land management contributing to: (a) bio diversity and high nature value farming/forestry	75	10	65	50

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 50 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 79,4%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Area under successful land management contributing to: (a) bio diversity and high nature value farming/forestry	42.795.410	30.847.035	24.482.715	79,4	219.153	138.920

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 11%, RDP & MTE 5%, RDP & APR 5%, MTE 49%, MTE & APR 2%, APR 8%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 17%,

Result Indicator (6b): Area under successful land management contribution to water quality

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 70 programmes include the indicator, thereof ten give qualitative information. 48 programmes (68,6%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Île de la Réunion, DE-Hamburg, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, Hungary, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Luxembourg, Malta, PT-Açores, PT-Madeira, Romania, ES-Baleares, UK-Northern Ireland.

Table 38: Result Indicator (6b) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Area under successful land management contributing to: (b) water quality	70	10	59	48

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 48 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 52,3%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Area under successful land management contributing to: (b) water quality	37.976.146	30.716.020	16.066.191	52,3	133.000	124.884

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 11%, RDP & MTE 8%, RDP & APR 5%, MTE 42%, MTE & APR 1%, APR 8%, APR & European Network for rural development 1%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 22%,

Result Indicator (6c): Area under successful land management contribution to mitigating climate change

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 62 programmes include the indicator, thereof ten give qualitative information. 38 programmes (61,3%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Île de la Réunion, FR-Martinique, DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, PT-Açores, PT-Madeira, Romania, ES-Baleares, ES-Cantabria, Sweden, UK-Northern Ireland.

Table 39: Result Indicator (6c) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	62	10	52	38

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 38 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 121,8%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	19.246.442	14.784.076	18.010.430	121,8	127.010	115.267

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 11%, RDP & MTE 8%, RDP & APR 4%, MTE 36%, MTE & APR 2%, APR 8%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 29%,

Result Indicator (6d): Area under successful land management contribution to soil quality

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 67 programmes include the indicator, thereof ten give qualitative information. 42 programmes (62,7%) state target and achievements

(table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Île de la Réunion, DE-Hamburg, DE-Hessen, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Luxembourg, Malta, PT-Açores, PT-Madeira, ES-Baleares, ES-Cantabria, UK-Northern Ireland.

Table 40: Result Indicator (6d) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Area under successful land management contributing to: (d) soil quality	67	10	57	42

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 42 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 99,2%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Area under successful land management contributing to: (d) soil quality	31.818.767	24.295.513	24.108.401	99,2	128.668	125.840

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 11%, RDP & MTE 5%, RDP & APR 3%, MTE 41%, MTE & APR 2%, APR 8%, APR & European Network for rural development 1%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 26%,

Result Indicator (6e): Area under successful land management contribution to avoidance of marginalization and land abandonment

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 68 programmes include the indicator, thereof eleven give qualitative information. 42 programmes (61,8%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes Denmark, FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Île de la Réunion, DE-Bayern, DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, Greece, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, IT-Valldaosta, Netherlands, ES-Baleares.

Table 41: Result Indicator (6e) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Area under successful land management contributing to: (e) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment	68	11	58	42

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 42 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 94,9%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Area under successful land management contributing to: (e) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment	46.527.089	32.384.306	30.741.774	94,9	144.193	118.522

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 11%, RDP & MTE 7%, RDP & APR 5%, MTE 41%, MTE & APR 1%, APR 8%, APR & European Network for rural development 1%, European Network for rural development 2%, no values 24%.

Alternative indicators proposed in Axis 2

For axis 2 twenty-nine programmes provide 166 programme specific indicators. Most of these (60%) can be attributed to the category "New Indicator". The vast majority of which deals with environmental issues, with natural and cultural values (e.g. increase in organic farming area, area regain of wasteland). Other topics include public access, employment and education, management, production, research and techniques as well as socio-demographic issues. Another third of the specific indicators in axis 2 give detailed specifications to each of the 5 indicators, in particular to (R1) e.g. increase in hare population or increase in appropriate invertebrate species. Little make sectoral specifications or used another measurement

Axis 3

Result Indicators for Axis 3 aim the improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity

Result Indicator (7): Increase in non-agricultural gross value added in supported businesses

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 55 programmes include the indicator, thereof four give qualitative information. 19 programmes (34,5%) state target and

achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes BE-Flanders, BE-Wallonia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland-Åland, FR-Corse, DE-Hamburg, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Rheinland-Pfalz, DE-Saarland, DE-Sachsen, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Lithuania, Poland, PT-Açores, PT-Continent, PT-Madeira, ES-Andalucía, ES-Baleares, ES-Cantabria, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Castilla-La Mancha, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, ES-Madrid, ES-Murcia, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland.

Table 42: Result Indicator (7) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business (EUR '000)	55	4	52	19

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 19 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 55,1%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business (EUR '000)	2.528.709	1.431.700	789.467	55,1	11.250	2.437

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 14%, RDP & MTE 3%, RDP & APR 3%, MTE 35%, APR 4%, European Network for rural development 2%, others 1%, no values 36%,

Result Indicator (8): Gross number of jobs created

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 76 programmes include the indicator, thereof four give qualitative information. 36 programmes (47,4%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes FR-Corse, FR-Île de la Réunion, DE-Hamburg, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Sachsen, IT-Campania, IT-Emilia-Romagna, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Romania.

Table 43: Result Indicator (8) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Gross number of jobs created	76	4	74	36

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 36 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 8,5%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Gross number of jobs created	235.412	188.749	15.950	8,5	440	88

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 16%, RDP & MTE 4%, RDP & APR 3%, MTE 48%, MTE & APR 2%, APR 5%, European Network for rural development 2%, others 1%, no values 16%,

Result Indicator (9): Additional number of tourists

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 56 programmes include the indicator, thereof five give qualitative information. 19 programmes (33,9%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes BE-Wallonia, FR-Corse, DE-Baden-Württemberg, DE-Bayern, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, DE-Hamburg, DE-Hessen, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Saarland, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Bolzano, IT-Campania, IT-Emilia-Romagna, IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IT-Lombardia, IT-Molise, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Poland, PT-Açores, PT-Continent, Slovenia, ES-Andalucía, ES-Baleares, ES-Cantabria, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Galicia, ES-Navarra, UK-Northern Ireland.

Table 44: Result Indicator (9) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Additional number of tourist visits	56	5	52	19

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 19 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 26,7%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Additional number of tourist visits	20.754.039	3.403.298	910.352	26,7	19.450	20.836

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 10%, RDP & MTE 2%, RDP & APR 4%, MTE 39%, MTE & APR 1%, APR 5%, European Network for rural development 2%, others 1%, no values 35%,

Result Indicator (10): Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 76 programmes include the indicator, thereof four give qualitative information. 34 programmes (44,7%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes Estonia, Finland-Continent, FR-Corse, DE-Hamburg, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, Lithuania, PT-Açores, PT-Continent.

Table 45: Result Indicator (10) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services (unique number of persons)	76	4	72	34

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 34 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 74,1%.

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services (unique number of persons)	51.788.365	21.638.353	16.043.622	74,1	224.879	76.095

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 16%, RDP & MTE 2%, RDP & APR 3%, MTE 49%, MTE & APR 1%, APR 8%, European Network for rural development 1%, others 1%, no values 18%,

Result Indicator (11): Increase in internet penetration in rural areas

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 36 programmes include the indicator, thereof five give qualitative information. Ten programmes (27,8%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes Cyprus, Denmark, Finland-Åland, Finland-Continent, FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Hexagone, FR-Martinique, DE-Baden-Württemberg, DE-Bayern, DE-Hamburg, DE-Hessen, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Saarland, DE-Sachsen, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, DE-Thüringen, Greece, Ireland, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Bolzano, IT-Campania, IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IT-Lombardia, IT-Piemonte, IT-Umbria, IT-Valldaosta, IT-Veneto, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, PT-Açores, PT-Continent, PT-Madeira, Romania, ES-Andalucía, ES-Asturias, ES-Baleares, ES-Canarias, ES-Cantabria, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Castilla-La Mancha, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, ES-La Rioja, ES-Madrid, ES-Navarra, UK-Northern Ireland.

Table 46: Result Indicator (11) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Increase in internet penetration in rural areas (unique no of persons)	36	5	31	10

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The ten programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 67% (table).

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Increase in internet penetration in rural areas (unique no of persons)	6.777.645	753.135	504.929	67,0	35.000	6.166

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 3%, RDP & MTE 2%, RDP & APR 2%, MTE 26%, APR 4%, European Network for rural development 2%, others 1%, no values 58%,

Result Indicator (12): Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity

From all 88 programmes (excl. 4 networks) analysed, 53 programmes include the indicator, thereof four give qualitative information. 19 programmes (35,8%) state target and achievements (table). No information on the indicator is given in the programmes Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Île de la Réunion, DE-Bayern, DE-Hamburg, DE-Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, DE-Nordrhein-Westfalen, DE-Saarland, DE-Sachsen, DE-Sachsen-Anhalt, DE-Schleswig-Holstein, Greece, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Campania, IT-Lombardia, IT-Molise, IT-Piemonte, IT-Toscana, IT-Trento, IT-Umbria, Latvia, Netherlands, PT-Açores, PT-Continent, Slovenia, ES-Baleares, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Cataluña, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, ES-La Rioja, UK-England.

Table 47: Result Indicator (12) – Availability and quality of necessary data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity in the field of axis 3 (unique no of persons)	53	4	49	19

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Relevance and utility of the indicator

Most of the information collected was quantitative. The 19 programmes that state both, targets and achievements, allow for aggregation and hence for calculating the rate of achievement: the achievement rate for this indicator is 59,4% (table).

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity in the field of axis 3 (unique no of persons)	621.580	243.069	144.284	59,4	1.500	1.389

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

Sources

The indicator values stem mainly from the MTE reports, followed by information from the RDPs. In more detail, the indicator values are collected from the following reports: RDP 11%, RDP & MTE 4%, RDP & APR 1%, MTE 34%, MTE & APR 1%, APR 8%, European Network for rural development 1%, no values 40%,

Alternative indicators proposed in Axis 3

For axis 3 thirty-nine programmes stated a total of 92 programme specific indicators. These are attributed to those that used another measurement (42%), those that can be classified as new indicators (35%) and those that give more detailed specifications (23%).

Other measurements are used mostly in Indicators R7 and R11, in which the increase in non-agricultural gross value respectively in internet penetration in rural areas is assessed in percent.

New indicators are proposed above all (19 out of 39) for "population in rural areas benefiting from improved services" (R10), e.g. number of engagements of citizens, number of new residents or renewable energy produced. Thematic specifications are quite evenly distributed among the indicators of the third axis with only R7 sticking out. Here some additional indicators refer to jobs secured, temporary jobs or jobs by industry.

Another group of programme specific indicators concern LEADER. In eleven countries a total of 23 indicators were stated under that headline. The majority (14) play a role in the third axis, since they refer e.g. to improved services (e.g. Projects supported to encourage good cross community relations), training activities or created workplaces.

8.10.3 Judgement result indicators

The result indicators are referenced in two thirds of the reports analysed. Axis 1 includes the most and least assessed indicator. While 78 reports present data regarding (R3) "Number of holdings/enterprises introducing new products and/or new techniques", only 15 report data on the (R5) "Number of farms entering the market". The majority of the indicators in all three axes are assessed quantitatively. About 13-15% in axis 1 and 2, and 8% in axis 3 offer either additionally or solely qualitative information. In average about 50% of those programmes that do include the indicators state information to both achieved and target value. For axis 2 the database is better: the average percentage accounts for 64%, while for axis 3 only 37% offer reliable data.

Table 48: Overview over the result indicators: Availability of data

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
R1: Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity related to agriculture and/or forestry	71	4	70	37
R2: Increase in agricultural gross value added in supported farms	68	11	56	31
R3: Number of holdings/enterprises introducing new products and/or new techniques	78	8	72	50
R4: Value of agricultural production under recognized quality label/standards (million EUR)	37	4	37	11
R5: Number of farms entering the market	15	3	13	7
R61: Area under successful land management contributing to: (a) bio diversity and high nature value farming/forestry	75	10	65	50
R62: Area under successful land management contributing to: (b) water quality	70	10	59	48
R63: Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	62	10	52	38
R64: Area under successful land management contributing to: (d) soil quality	67	10	57	42
R65: Area under successful land management contributing to: (e) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment	68	11	58	42
R7: Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business	55	4	52	19
R8: Gross number of jobs created	76	4	74	36
R9: Additional number of tourist visits	56	5	52	19

	Number of programmes where			
Name of indicator	Report includes indicator	Qualitative information available	Quantitative target value available	Quantitative achieved & target values available
R10: Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services	76	4	72	34
R11: Increase in internet penetration in rural areas	36	5	31	10
R12: Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity in the field of axis 3	53	4	49	19
Average	60	7	54	31

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

In cases in which the target value as well as the achieved value was measured quantitatively in the units proposed in the CMEF it was possible to aggregate the numbers and calculate the rate of achievements for each programme and indicator. The evaluation shows a greatly varying outcome. Indicator (R8) "Gross number of jobs created" sticks out as having achieved less than 10% of the value targeted. In contrast indicator (R6.3) "Area under successful land management contributing to soil quality" has already surpassed the target value by more than 20%. Overall axis 2 is further advanced (averaging at 90%), than axis 1 (24%) and axis 3 (48%).

Table 49: Overview over the result indicators: Targets and achievements

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
R1: Number of participants that successfully ended a training activity related to agriculture and/or forestry	2.946.277	1.946.642	532.893	27,37	9.050	2.751
R2: Increase in agricultural gross value added in supported farms	27.518.302	22.816.447	4.736.334	20,76	72.661	25.500
R3: Number of holdings/enter-prises introducing new products and/or new techniques	207.212	129.076	27.201	21,07	751	140,5
R4: Value of agricultural production under recognized quality label/standards	14.375	8.709	2.211	25,38	100	54,55
R5: Number of farms entering the market	102.127	11.409	2.756	24,16	1.300	67
R61: Area under successful land management contributing to: (a) bio diversity and high nature value farming/forestry	42.795.410	30.847.035	24.482.715	79,37	219.153	138.920
R62: Area under successful land management contributing to: (b) water quality	37.976.146	30.716.020	16.066.191	52,31	133.000	124.884
R63: Area under successful land management contributing to: (c) mitigating climate change	19.246.442	14.784.076	18.010.430	121,82	127.010	115.267
R64: Area under successful land management contributing to: (d) soil quality	31.818.767	24.295.513	24.108.401	99,23	128.668	125.840
R65: Area under successful land management contributing to: (e) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment	46.527.089	32.384.306	30.741.774	94,93	144.193	118.522
R7: Increase in Non-agricultural gross value added in supported business	2.528.709	1.431.700	789.467	55,14	11.250	2.437

Name of indicator	Target value all pro-grammes	Target value of progr. with achieved values	Achieved value	in %	Median Target	Median Achievement
R8: Gross number of jobs created	235.412	188.749	15.950	8,45	439,5	87,5
R9: Additional number of tourist visits	20.754.039	3.403.298	910.352	26,75	19.450	20.836
R10: Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services	51.788.365	21.638.353	16.043.622	74,14	224.879	76.095
R11: Increase in internet penetration in rural areas	6.777.645	753.135	504.929	67,04	35.000	6.166
R12: Number of participants that successfully ended a train-ing activity in the field of axis 3	621.580	243.069	144.284	59,36	1.500	1.389
Average	18.241.119	11.599.846	8.569.969	54	70.525	47.435

Source: Data from MTEs, RDPs, APR according to data availability in the reports.

A late start of implementation, hence a short time span in which the measures were implemented often lead to a low achievement of the indicators. Overachievements occurred mostly in axis 2: between 13 and 15 programmes per indicator have achieved more than 100% of the target value halfway through the programming period. This adds up to an average of 20% overachievers in axis 2 while in axis 1 and 3, 6% respectively 8% overachieving programmes can be identified. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia have reported overachievements in 6 result indicators, followed by BE-Flanders, DE-Sachsen and ES-Galicia (5 indicators). These overachievements suggest that the target values were set too conservatively, especially in axis 2. E.g. ES-Galicia exceeded the target value for the result indicators of axis 2 by an average of 907%. Other reasons might be an overestimation of the indicator achievements by the evaluators, an alternative method of assessing the indicators or inaccurate entries.

Looking more closely into the individual indicators, the following specificities or challenges were identified:

R(3) Number of holdings/enterprises introducing new products and/or new techniques: Although the CMEF definition on "new techniques" was seen as problematic, being difficult to operationalise, this indicator was one of the most assessed– about 64% of the MTEs state target and achieved values. Furthermore the indicator shows a development which is below average with an achievement rate of 21% and very low deviations. The implementation of the related measures 121 to 123 started off well, showing a satisfying absorption rate. This corresponds to the emphasis the programmes put on these measures which is reflected in the very high budgets assigned and shows again in the good availability of data. The rather low achievement rate is not astonishing since the effects expressed in this result indicator take time to show.

R(5): Number of farms entering the market: This indicator sticks out for being the least assessed but no explanation for that fact could be found in the MTEs. From the data available (13 MTEs provided target values and 7 reported target and achievement values) one can conclude a steady progress, having achieved 24% of the targeted value. However, the low number of observations does not allow a thorough analysis. Interesting is the rather high financial absorption rate of the related measures (between 30 and 35%) combined with the reluctance to provide result data. This signifies difficulties in assessing new market entries of (semi-) substance farms and a lack of definition in the CMEF. Information provided in the MTEs suggests that hardly any surveys were undertaken for the mid-term evaluation.

R(61-65): Area under successful land management contributing to: (61) bio diversity and high nature value farming/forestry (62) water quality (63) mitigating climate change (64) soil quality (65) avoidance of marginalisation and land abandonment: These indicators of axis 2 are in many ways extraordinary.

First, data availability is very good with 61% (R63) to 69% (R2). Second, these indicators show the furthest development, ranging from 53% (R2) to 122% (R3), averaging at having achieved 90% of the target value. Third, about one fifth of all MTEs that included these indicators, reported overachievements. Comparing these achievements with the financial absorption (chapter 4.1) a reason for these high results becomes obvious: Measures contributing to the result indicators 61-65 have already received high amounts of public funds compared to other axis. This high share of released funds is due to the continuation of the budget for LFA measures, those imposed by the Natura 2000 or WFD management plans and the agri-environmental payments. A little surprising is the high number of overachievers. The experience with these measures should have enabled the managing authorities to establish more realistic targets. Critical remarks concerned the term "successful" in the CMEF definition, which is difficult to quantify.

R(8): Gross number of jobs created: this indicator is difficult to interpret. The data availability is good – 47% of the MTEs include both targets and achievement values. This data suggests the lowest achievement rate of all result indicators. Only 8% of the targets set were achieved. This corresponds to the low financial absorption rate of the related measures (less than 5% in average). The MTEs state the late start of the implementation, the lack of social partners and support for micro entrepreneurs as the main reason for the underachievement. Apart from that this indicator data is a sign that diversification into non-agricultural activities by means of RDPs is hard to accomplish. The data indicates that the horizontal cooperation between agriculture and other economic sectors on a regional scale is problematic and the complementarity with other funds active in this thematic area (structural funds, regional funds for economic development) seems to be weak.

R(10): Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services: This indicator shows similar results as the indicators of axis 2: good data availability (45%), a high achievement rate (74%) and a high number of overachievers reported in the MTEs (14). On the one hand this is due to an underestimation of the targets set – many programmes ask for additional funds for the related measures. On the other hand the high achievements may point to an overestimation of the "real" result due to using the total number of inhabitants of an administrative area instead of the beneficiaries in a narrower sense.

R(11) Increase in internet penetration in rural areas: A very low number of MTEs (36) reported that indicator and even less (10 MTEs) provided target and achieved values. Apart from the fact that this indicator depends very little on the related measure 321 the assessment method specified in the CMEF is highly questionable: "Compare internet penetration in the supported areas the year before and the year after the support and make the difference for each supported area." In the light of the quality criteria of the CMEF – which determines that effects that cannot be attributed to the intervention (double counting, deadweight) should no be taken into account – the CMEF recommended method is inadequate. The increase of internet access of an area can not exclusively be attributed to the RDP.

The majority of the MTE reports offer information at measure level. This holds true for Cyprus, Estonia, FR-Guyane, FR-Hexagone,, Hungary, Ireland, IT-Basilicata, IT-Liguria, IT-Lombardia, IT-Marche, IT-Sardegna, IT-Sicilia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, ES-Canarias, ES-Cantabria, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Cataluña, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, ES-La Rioja, ES-Navarra, ES-Valencia, Sweden, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Wales as well as for all of Belgium's, Germany's and Portugal's programmes.

This bears the difficulty for the recipient of the report to search for the different indicator values in each associated measure. In some cases each measure's result values are stated and subsequently summed up in one table. However, this implies a bigger problem: the sum of the target values respectively achieved values contains double counting. For example: The indicator (R10) "Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services" is mentioned the Irish MTE in measure 321, 322, 323 with 2,5 m people each as target value. This adds up to 7,5 m, which exceeds the total population in Ireland by roughly 3 m people.

Aggregating the result indicators from measure level bears another data inconsistency. While the CMEF defines the measures that are relevant for each result indicator's calculation, in many reports more (or less) measures were used as source for the aggregated result indicator. This does not only vary between the programmes, but also within one programme. The target value in the RDP might have been the sum of more measure – level indicators, than the achieved value for the same result indicator.

In addition to the existing result indicators, programmes reacted to the specifics of their programme or shortcomings of the CMEF indicator set by changing the units, interpreting some indicators in a slightly different way, adding sectoral or thematic specifics or introducing completely new indicators. In 59 programmes a total of 450 programme specific result indicators can be found (excluding NRN programmes): about 37% each in axis 1 and 2, 20% in axis 3 and 5% in LEADER. Half of these indicators can be classified as new, meaning that they differ from the CMEF in more than in measurement, sectoral or thematic specification. Their main focus on environmental issues and other core themes like modernisation and service provision points to the necessity to improve the CMEF indicator set in these regards. It has to be noted, that 19% of the programme specific indicators defined in the individual RDPs were not followed up in the MTE.

8.10.4 Conclusions result indicators

The result indicators are stated in two thirds of the programmes but only one third of the programmes include data for target and achieved values, hence allow for calculations on the achievement rate. These apparent gaps of data as well as the provision on measure level and consequential data uncertainties entail a rather weak database.

In order to strengthen the database following actions are proposed:

- The CMEF needs to be streamlined in order to be more operational in the evaluation exercise. On the one side, this includes refined definitions on the indicators and methods in use. On the other side this can also mean an adaption of indicators, its unit or method to assess it. For instance: The assessment method of R11 is at best doubtful and should be reformulated; R5 does not deliver sound data – its adaptation or even its removal should be considered.

- The proposed programme specific indicators and their thematic focus, as well as the quantity of assessed standard CMEF result indicators can serve as a starting point of the discussion on a revised indicator set.
- The MTEs but also the other documents analysed are rather reluctant to present result indicators on axis level. The CMEF needs to put more emphasis on the importance of providing result indicator data on that level to make the data more reliable. Clear tables indicating targets and achieved values in reports can furthermore help to minimise mistakes by the authors, regarding denominator or units used.

Subtheme 5.3: Monitoring and Evaluation

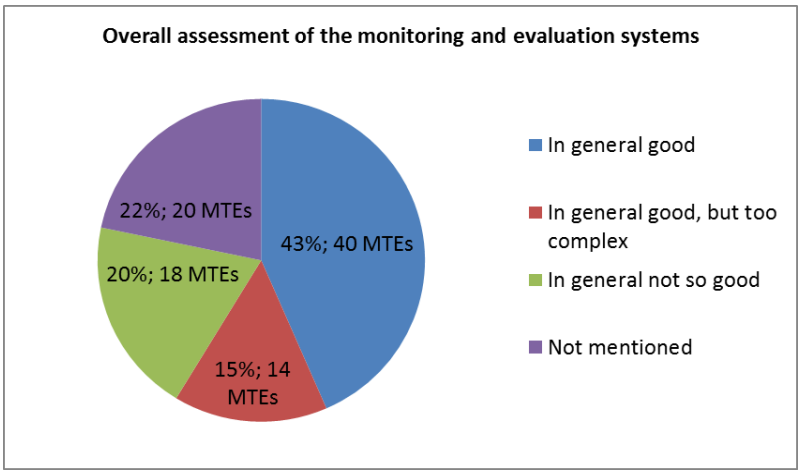
8.11 Topic 5.3.1: Overall assessment of the monitoring and evaluation systems established by the Member States for the RDPs, in particular the output and effectiveness of ongoing evaluation

8.11.1 Findings

Almost half of the MTEs assessed the monitoring and evaluation systems as good

Most of the evaluators assessed the monitoring and evaluation systems established by the Member States for the RDPs as good (40 MTEs). 15% of the MTEs mentioned that the system is in general good, but too complex (14 MTEs). Almost one fifth of the evaluators assessed the monitoring and evaluation system as not so good (18 MTEs). Mostly because of the lack of adequate and timely availability of data (especially for result and impact indicators). In France the Osiris system, which was especially designed for monitoring and evaluation, caused problems: the Osiris information system for management and payment does not allow providing indicators to measure the results, effects and impacts of the programme.

Figure 56: Overall assessment of the monitoring and evaluation systems



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Specific findings

- In Austria, Cyprus, Spain Asturias, Spain Cantabria, Spain Castilla-la-Mancha, Spain La Rioja and Spain Murcia monitoring and evaluation are performed separately, but coordinated. Those responsible for monitoring collect and provide data during the implementation of the programme. Furthermore they aggregate this data to input, output and result indicators. The assessment and evaluation of the impacts of the programme respectively measures is part of the evaluation by independent evaluators, based on predetermined and additional indicators.
- In Denmark the evaluator lacked access to a (functioning) MIS, and therefore had to rely to a higher degree on survey data and secondary data. Still the monitoring achieved was found useful.
- In France the information system for management and payment (OSIRIS) does not allow providing indicators to measure the results, effects and impacts of the programme.
- In Rumania the MTE findings point to the two payment agencies using each its own information system slowing the management process.

8.11.2 Judgement

Although the monitoring system is assessed as good in most MTEs, an up to date monitoring system is of great importance for all programmes. A well-functioning monitoring system leads to early detection of under- or over absorption, and thereafter to timely adjustments in the programme. A monitoring system which is not (well) functioning can lead to information problems in output, result, impact and financial fields. This lack of information leads to problems in programme management because there is no information to take corrective actions. Some of the evaluators assessed the monitoring system as good, but too complex, especially for the time and effort required for good information. The risk is that the information is not used (or used on time) to make necessary adjustments because of the time consuming nature of obtaining the information.

8.11.3 Conclusions

Although the systems are working well for the greater part of the programmes, for a substantial part improvement is needed. Almost 15% mentioned that the system is too complex. Also some of the evaluators assessed the monitoring system as not so good. A clear, accessible and reliable system is of great importance for good information provision and well-considered adjustments in the programme.

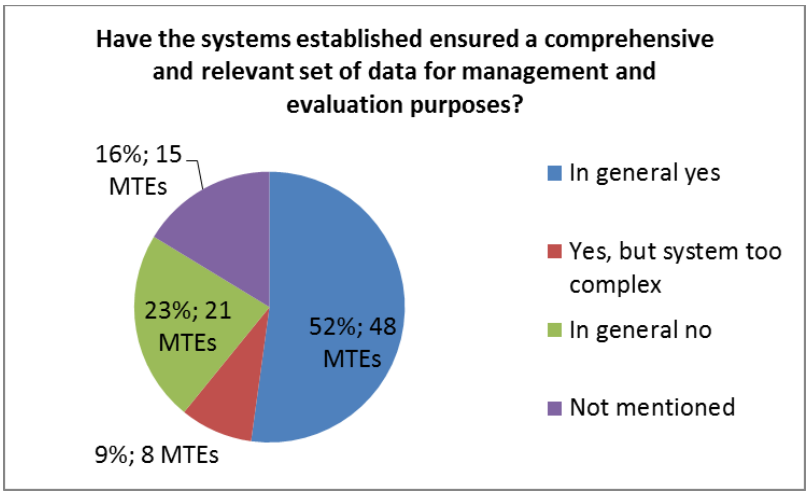
8.12 Topic 5.3.2: Have the systems established ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data for management and evaluation purposes?

8.12.1 Findings

Most MTEs have assessed the data of the monitoring system as comprehensive and relevant

In more than half of the RDPs the evaluation- and monitoring systems have ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data for management and evaluation purposes, according to the MTEs. However, some of the evaluators have mentioned that the system has ensured a comprehensive and relevant data set, but that the system is too complex. In almost one-quarter of the RDPs the evaluators mentioned that the system did not ensure a comprehensive and relevant data set.

Figure 57: Comprehensive and relevant data set

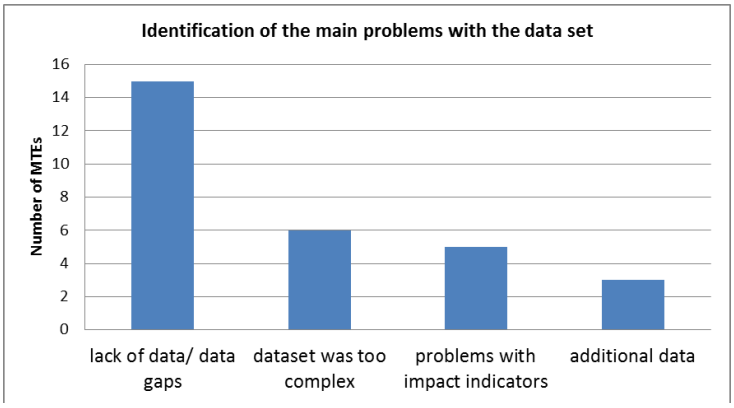


Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

The main problem is the lack of data or data gaps in the system.

The main problem mentioned by the evaluators with the data set was the lack of data or the data gaps in the monitoring and evaluation system. In 15 MTEs this problem was mentioned as a reason why the systems had not ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data. In addition 5 MTEs experienced problems with the impact indicators and 3 with the collection of the additional data set As stated above 8 MTEs mentioned that the information available ensured a comprehensive and relevant set of data, but that the data set was too complex.

Figure 58: Main problems with the data set



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Specific findings

- In Belgium Wallonia the evaluator has cited that the monitoring system does not allow to compile easily the data on physical and financial progress of the programme, which was a problem for the MTE and limits the monitoring capacities;
- In the United Kingdom the system does not contain the information required. The systems provided insufficient evidence on results and impact to support the evaluation of axes 1, 3 and 4 and insufficient evidence on beneficiary-level impact to support the evaluation of measures in axis 2;
- In Bulgaria the evaluators mentioned that it is important to conclude that the monitoring system is not working as well as it could. Data according to proper monitoring – see CMEF guidelines – are not collected, and if they are collected, they are not always registered in the IT system, or they might be registered with errors and misunderstandings;
- In Germany, Ireland and in Spain the monitoring systems are (in general) are assessed by the evaluators as working well.

8.12.2 Judgement

The fact that the projects are not yet finished at the time of the MTE evaluation leads to lack of data or data gaps in especially the result and impact indicators in the monitoring system. It is of some concern that in the reports of the evaluators for some programmes, some data is not collected or is registered with errors and misunderstandings.

8.12.3 Conclusions

Most of the problems mentioned with respect to the lack of availability of data for result and impact indicators are unavoidable in this state of implementation of the programme. The fact that in some of the MTEs certain data is does not seem to be collected or registered with errors and misunderstandings implies that the definition of the indicators should be further improved but also that sufficiently qualified personnel for the monitoring system is necessary

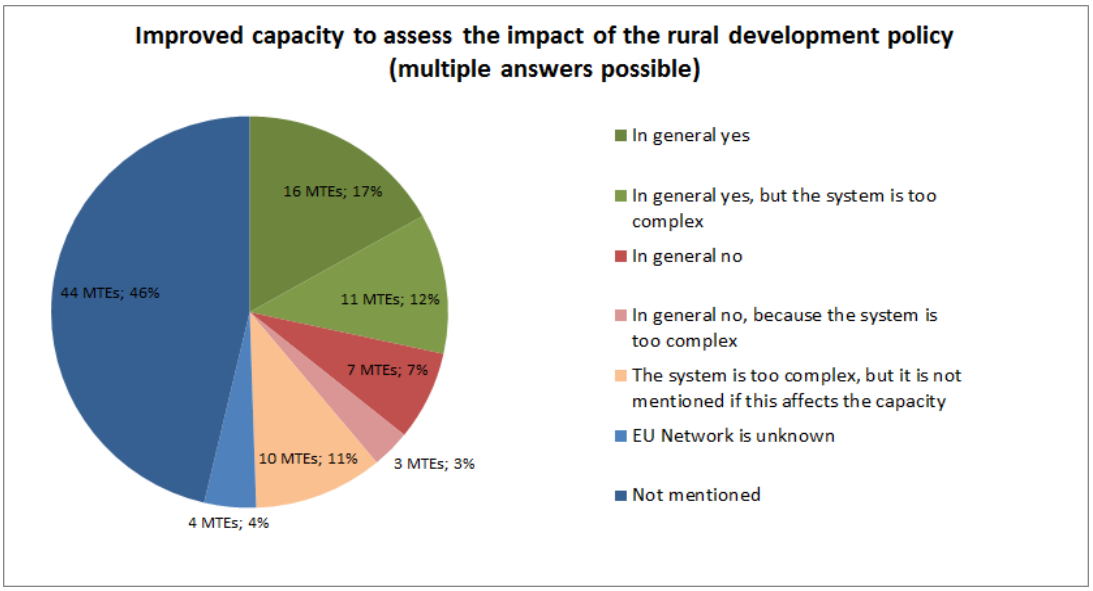
8.13 Topic 5.3.3: Have the regulatory requirements and associated guidance on monitoring and evaluation led to improved capacity to assess the impact of rural development policy?

8.13.1 Findings

Complexity of the systems and regulations are the main barriers to improving the society's capacity to assess the impact of rural development policy

In almost half of the evaluations (46%; 44 MTEs) it was not mentioned if the regulatory requirements and associated guidance on monitoring and evaluation led to improved capacity to assess the impact of rural development policy. Most of the MTEs which mentioned the impact of the regulatory requirements and associated guidance on monitoring and evaluation assessed the impact on the rural development policy as positive (27 out of 48). However, 11 of the 27 MTEs which assessed the impact as positive made also the remark that the system is too complex. The complexity of the system was also the cause of the negative assessment of some evaluators. Also some evaluators only mentioned that the system was too complex, but they did not give an opinion on how the capacity to assess the impact of the rural development policy was affected hereby. Four MTEs mentioned that the EU Network was unknown.

Figure 59: Improved capacity to assess the impact of the rural development policy



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Specific findings

- In Belgium Wallonia the support in the form of guidance has increased the capacities of managing authorities and other partners. The technical support led to: an improvement of human resources, an improvement of managing capacities and publicity on the RDP, time-saving and improvement of expertise in the monitoring and indicators.
- In Germany Hamburg it is mentioned that EU evaluation network is mainly unknown and the various institutions like the European Network or the Contact Point are confusing.

- In Germany Sachsen-Anhalt the evaluators assessed the guidance of the European evaluation network as too abstract and not practical.
- In Luxemburg the authorities have limited capacities to manage the programme because the axis "technical assistance" does not have to be supported by EAFRD. Those means would have led to more rapid progression of some obligations such as the set-up of tools and databases for monitoring and to have means to deal in itineraries with some questions.
- In Portugal the guideline and practices suggested either by CMEF or by European Evaluation Network for RD were forgotten in many situations, especially as far as the evaluation of axis 2 and 4 is concerned, and to estimate relevant impact indicators.

8.13.2 Judgement

Regulations and guidance are well appreciated in a large number of evaluations, but also criticism is directed to the EC. It concerns the issues that most of the guidelines came too late and were found complex and not practical. Therefore the necessary changes were time consuming and did not improve the capacity.

8.13.3 Conclusions

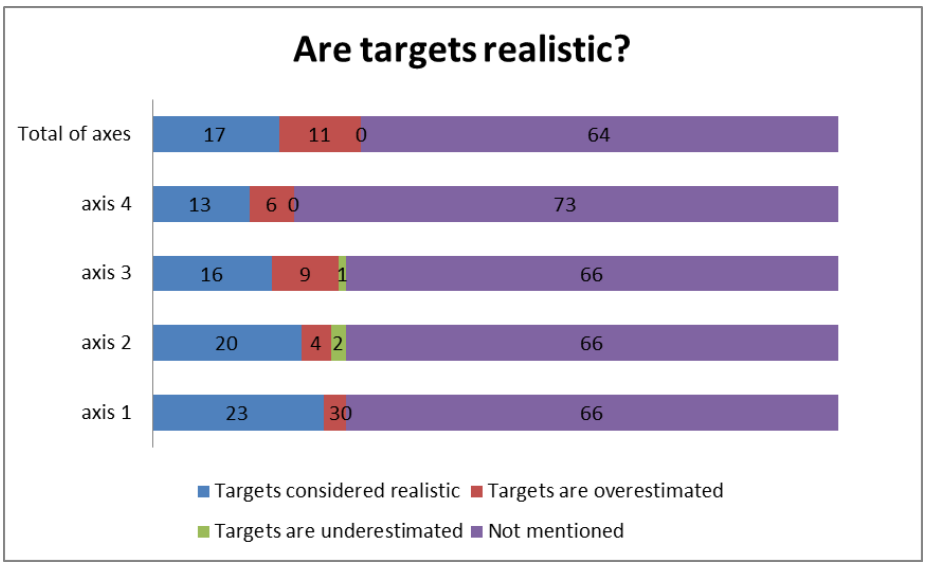
It is recommended to look carefully after deadlines to be sure that the guidance documents are ready on time for the programmes and evaluators who work with them. Also regulations and guidelines should be made more clear and practical. This could for example be done in a working group in which individuals responsible for implementing the programmes and evaluators are involved as well.

8.14 Topic 5.3.4: Comment on whether the targets established in the RDPs appear realistic in the light of implementation so far

Most of the targets are considered realistic if they are mentioned in the MTE

Where targets are mentioned in the MTEs and related documents most of them are considered to be realistic. Some of the targets are overestimated, especially in axes 3 and in axis 4 . However, as can be seen below most MTEs did not mention if the targets are realistc. One reason for this is the beginning of the global economic crisis (Some also when the targets are considered realistic the global economic crisis is mentioned in most of the MTEs – 11 of the MTEs mentioned the effects of the global economic crisis).

Figure 60: Are targets realistic?



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

8.14.1 Findings

- The evaluators in Spain Andalucía mention that the targets (outputs, results,…) in the three axes were realistic at the moment they were set, but the current economic crisis may make some targets unrealistic. Also in Spain Valencia and Italy Abruzzo the economic targets seem less realistic than the environmental targets.

8.14.2 Judgement

The beginning of the economic crisis influenced the outcomes of the programmes, also if the evaluators found that the targets in general are realistically set. One can say there was a change in context. A number of programmes have overestimated targets, especially in axis 3 and axis 4 (see above). The reason for this is probably that a large number of private investors are included in these axes for the quality of life in rural areas. These private investors spent less money than foreseen beforehand.

8.14.3 Conclusions

Obviously, the economic crisis could not be foreseen at the moment that the programmes were setting their targets, but a lesson for the future could be to monitor the economic situation and adjust the targets if that is needed to have a reliable target for monitoring and evaluation.

Subtheme 5.4: Evaluation Development

8.15 Topic 5.4.1: Identification of the possible future needs of Member States for the implementation of the ongoing evaluation system for the remainder of the current period, good practices, administrative burden, and potential synergy with other systems

8.15.1 Findings

Identification of the possible future needs of Member States

In 68 of the 92 MTEs no identification of possible future needs is done. In the MTEs which identified future needs most (8 MTEs) propose to include fieldwork in the evaluation system. Three others mention that a mix of methods could be a good addition to the current evaluation system. Other future needs mentioned are a better coordination between regions and EU systems, and a better coordination between the different European funds (such as EAFRD, ERDF, etc).

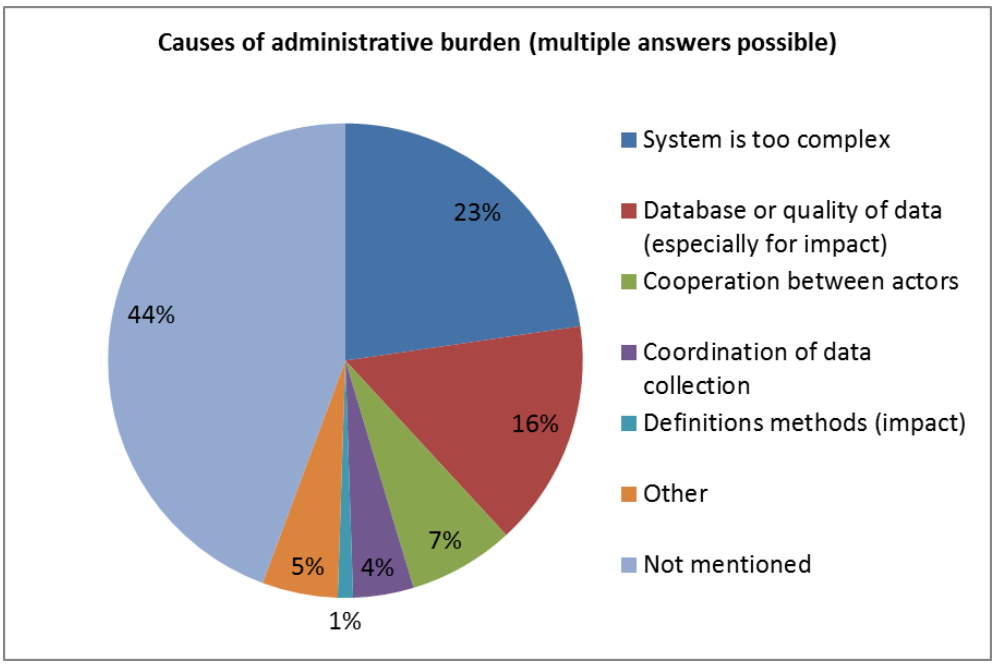
Good practices

The above mentioned fieldwork is mentioned as a good practice in the Midterm Evaluations. Six of the MTEs mentioned fieldwork as a good practice, while two others mentioned the mixed methods as a good practice. In three MTEs there was a critical note over the timing of the MTE. The MTE is in the opinion of the evaluators too early to see the first results, while the ex-post evaluation is too late to change policy objectives (see also Topic 5.2.2: Identification of good practices with regard to the assessment of impacts).

Administrative burden

The most mentioned reason of administrative burden is that the system is too complex. Also the database or quality of data is mentioned frequently as a reason of administrative burden. The cooperation between actors and the coordination of data collection are with respectively 7% and 4% less mentioned causes. This is also in line with the information in previous chapters of this synthesis.

Figure 61: Causes of administrative burden

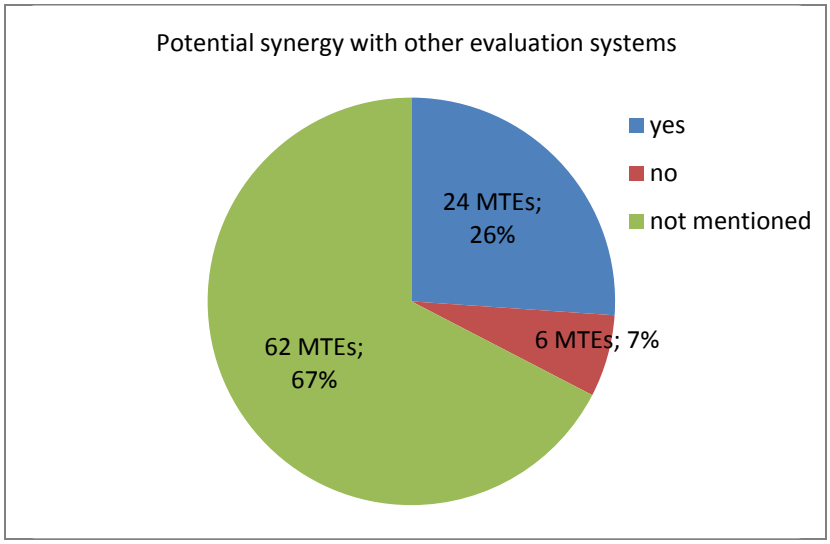


Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Potential synergy with other systems

In most evaluations the potential synergy with other evaluation systems is not mentioned. Out of the 30 MTEs that mentioned this topic, most of them (24 MTEs) recognised potential synergy with other evaluation systems.

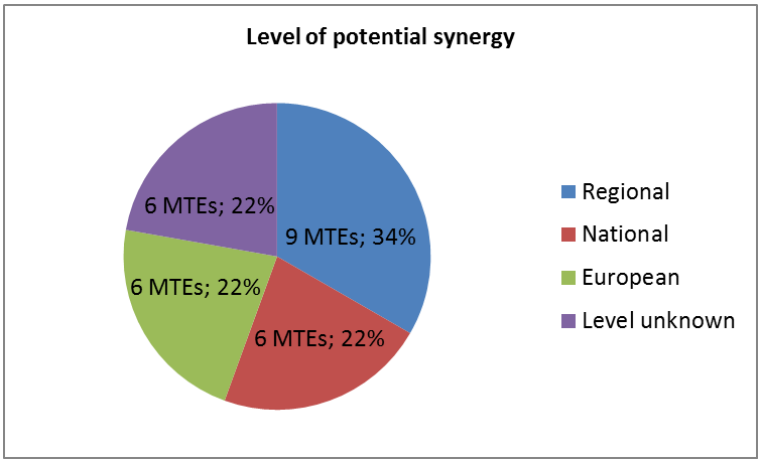
Figure 62: Potential synergy with other evaluation systems



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Most of the 27 MTEs that indicate the potential synergy with other evaluation systems, indicate that the level of potential synergy is at the regional level. 6 MTEs indicate the level of potential synergy at national level, and the same number of MTEs suggests potential synergy with other European Systems.

Figure 63: Level of potential synergy



Source: based on information collected for MTE synthesis, 2012.

Specific finding

- The link with other European system could be the link with ERDF/ESF according to the Germany Mecklenburg-Vorpommern MTE.

8.15.2 Judgement

Issues addressed in the MTEs with respect to future needs relate to an adjustment in the timing of the MTE, adjustments in the evaluation questions or adjustments in the monitoring and evaluation system (e.g. by adding more addition field work to complete the data set).

8.15.3 Conclusions

While approaches such as field work and a mix of methods are of course already used in many evaluations, guidance could be made clearer on the value of such approaches, in particular when investigating the impacts of programmes.

Potential synergies with other evaluation systems should be further explored, however taking into consideration the need to prevent extra administrative burden and complexity in the process.

8.16 Topic 5.4.2: Identification of possible ways of supporting the Member States in the implementation of ongoing evaluation in the future

In most evaluations the support of the European Commission to the Member States is not mentioned. Only 24 of the 92 evaluations have made an identification of possible ways to support the Member States. In seven MTEs a less complicated monitoring and evaluation system is proposed, in two MTEs a less bureaucratic implementation system is proposed and in another two MTEs earlier dissemination of the EC Guidelines on evaluation is mentioned. Another 15 MTEs have mentioned a number of other problems, such as improvement in the data collection and a linkage between the monitoring system and the evaluation system. The remaining 68 MTEs did not mention any recommendations to support the Member States.

8.16.1 Findings

- Lithuania and Finland have mentioned that the EC Guidelines for evaluation were not available in time.
- The Netherlands have proposed another method for data collection and the use of control groups.

8.16.2 Judgement

The most mentioned problem in the MTEs is the complicated structure of the monitoring and evaluation system and the timing of the exercise as well as for the provision of guidelines. Therefore

8.16.3 Conclusions

Adjustment in the timing of the MTE should be considered and the timeliness of guidelines needs to be ensured. The monitoring and evaluation system should be adjusted to make it more simple, e.g. by reducing the number of evaluation questions.

9. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Structured synthesis of the findings in the individual MTE reports

MTEs have approached conclusions and recommendations in different ways.

- MTEs not providing a C&R section (6 cases)
- MTEs providing C&R only at measure level (25 cases)[29];
- MTEs providing C&R by axes only (9 cases)[30];
- MTEs providing C&R at general programme level, usually with a list of diverse topics summarizing the evaluation (may include general context changes, relevance, effectiveness, expected impacts, coherence and synergy, balance between axes, implementation or delivery problems) (52 cases)[31].

Some MTEs not containing a concluding section, do however give recommendations: while those offering conclusions of a general nature or by axis are only 61 (66%), those providing recommendations are 84 (91%).

The synthesis of the conclusions and recommendations of MTEs is structured according to the issues addressed in them. Only those that are most frequently mentioned and of a general nature will be reported. Overall, a greater emphasis is given to critical aspects (what did not work well) than to what worked well. The broad issues emerged from the analysis are:

- implementation and budget allocations;
- delivery systems, including monitoring;
- how axes and measures worked;
- complementarities and coordination, external factors;
- coherence of actions with broad policy objectives.

[29] AT, DE-Baden Württemberg, DE-Bayern, DE-Rheinland Pfalz, DE-Saarland, DE-Sachsen, EE, ES-Baleares, ES-Castilla – La Mancha, ES-Pais Vasco, ES-Valencia, IT-Campania, IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IT-Lazio, IT-Lombardia, IT-Molise, IT-Puglia, IT-Sardegna, IT-Sicilia, IT-Umbria, IT-Veneto, LV, PT-Açores, PT-Continent, PT-Madeira

[30] CY, CZ, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, DE-Thuringen, ES-Asturias, FR-Hexagone, FR-Isle Réunion, IT-Emilia Romagna, IT-Liguria

[31] BE-Flanders, BE-Wallonie, BG, DE-Hamburg, DE-Hessen, DE-Mecklenburg Vorpommern, DE-Network, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordrhein Westfalen, DE-Sachsen Anhalt, DE-Schleswig Holstein, DK, ES-Andalucía, ES-Aragón, ES-Canarias, ES-Castilla y León, ES-Cataluña, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, ES-La Rioja, ES-Madrid, ES-Murcia, ES-Navarra, ES-Network, FI-Åland, FI-Continent, FR-Corse, FR-Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Martinique, GR, HU, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Basilicata, IT-Bolzano, IT-Calabria, IT-Marche, IT-Toscana, IT-Val d'Aosta, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK-England, UK-Northern Ireland, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales

9.2 Topic 6.1: Synthesis of the conclusions and recommendations

9.2.1 Findings on C&R

MTE evaluators in their conclusions provide an overall assessment of the RDP: this may be positive, merely descriptive or argued in terms of positive and critical aspects, as follows:

- overall positive assessment (17 MTEs): these do not include a critical assessment of any aspect of the programme in the conclusions; in some cases this is not coherent with the previous analysis, where for example problems with delays, some measures, or management were found, but are not been picked up in the conclusions[32];
- descriptive conclusions (4 MTEs): these avoid giving a final assessment of the RDP, providing just a summary of what has been implemented[33];
- Mixed positive and negative assessment: This type of conclusions refers to the majority of MTEs: 40, equal to 66% of those analyzed in this section. They give specific information on what has worked well and what has worked less well. The latter category is usually better developed than the former and conclusions in this case are often linked to recommendations. This group is not homogeneous: the issues assessed are varied and criteria for judging what is negative or positive are not consistent between evaluators[34].

The broad issues identified in the previous section will be used to structure the findings on conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions and recommendations on issues related to implementation and budget allocations

Delays in the implementation –understood in terms of financial execution- are the most important and often-mentioned issue in MTEs' conclusions. Delays affect the performance of programmes in substantial ways. They are usually measured by the ratios of committed and paid funds in relation to budgeted allocations. Delays are explained as the result of problems of different origin. One that is widely mentioned is the operation of the n+2 rule that leads to a carry-over of past commitments in the first years of the new programming period. This implies that the MA has a heavier work-load, concentrated in time: closing the previous programme on the one hand, while at the same time designing the new programmes, negotiating and having them approved, setting up the implementing procedures and guidelines, organizing who does what in terms of authorities, agencies and institutional levels involved. This overlap of tasks is reported to put pressure on the limited resources and capacity of MAs. Some MTEs raise also the issue of the increasing costs and complexity of these activities in the current context of the economic crisis and pressures on public administrations to reduce them.

[32] BE-Flanders, CZ, DE-Network, DK, ES-Aragon, ES-Canarias, ES-Castilla y Leon, ES-Catalunia, ES-Extremadura, ES-Galicia, IT-Bolzano, IT-Emilia Romagna, IT-Liguria, IT-Marche, IT-Toscana, IT-Valdaosta, UK-Northern Ireland.

[33] BG, DE-Brandenburg & Berlin, ES-Madrid, GR

[34] BE-Wallonia, CY, DE-Hamburg, DE-Hessen, DE-Mecklenburg Vorpommern, DE-Niedersachsen & Bremen, DE-Nordhein Westfalen, DE-Sachsen Anhalt, DESchleswig Holstein, DE-Thuringen, ES-Andalucia, ES-Asturias, ES-La Rioja, ES-Murcia, ES-Navarra, ES-Network, FI-Åland, FI-Continental, FR-Corse, FR-Gualeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Hexagon, FR-Île de la Réunion, FR-Martinique, HU, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Basilicata, IT-Calabria, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK-England, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales

Recommendations related to financial matters and intended to deal with the problem of delays suggest to have substantially greater flexibility in modifying budget allocations between axes to address new priorities as well as to make future expenditure more efficient for the remaining period of programme implementation. Such recommendations regard, for example:

- the modification of budget allocations in favour of new priorities or measures with higher demand, or shifts of funds between investment measures and support for wider rural development, or between large and small projects, considering the costs of administration;
- additional financing for technical assistance;
- the reduction of reporting tasks;
- the modification of objectives and funding allocation to address the economic crisis.

Conclusions and recommendations related to delivery issues, including monitoring systems

Broad delivery issues were found to be the most often mentioned aspect in the conclusions, associated with the explanation of delays during the period evaluated. Even when delays are not present, issues related to the delivery system, including the monitoring information system are often indicated as the cause for inadequate data availability for carrying out the evaluation[35].

Recommendations for solving the inefficiencies in delivery systems are well developed in MTEs and refer to different aspects of delivery. These are summarized below.

- **Monitoring and evaluation tools.** This theme is the most frequently mentioned in the recommendations of MTEs – in 39 of them, corresponding to 46% of the total.
  - Some focus on the users of monitoring data and suggest the need for a new monitoring tool in the future, better adapted to the needs of MAs and evaluators;
  - Another group of recommendations refers the collection and input modalities of the monitoring system, stressing the need for coordination between different agencies providing data, particularly between Managing and Paying Authorities; the need for standardizing methods of collection, developing a "minimum requirement" recording system for all ongoing and closed projects to ensure continuity; the need for stability in the monitoring system since it takes time to organize data collection; improved methods for cross-checking data; better transparency and controls; the convenience of asking the evaluation questions only in ex-post evaluations. All French MTEs, stress the need to adapt and consolidate the OSIRIS data collection system in the second term of the programming period.
  - Still another group of recommendations deals specifically with indicators, for example: for differentiating types of investments, in finding periodic indicators capable of monitoring contextual socio-economic change; to revise current physical and financial indicators; to include beneficiaries' surveys; to devise better impact

[35] Delivery systems are understood here in a wide sense, including not only implementation with its usual meaning of budget execution, but also who does what in the different phases of the programming cycle: the presence or absence of cooperation between authorities, the organization of consultations and monitoring committees, preparing calls for proposals, checking the eligibility of applications, ranking and selecting them according to established priorities and targets, develop and introduce data in a functioning electronic information system, authorize payments when all the controls and audits procedures have been met.

indicators, to monitor the reasons for the decrease in demand for certain measures; to clarify how specific programme indicators fit in the overall monitoring framework; to re-assess the intervention logic when there is an absence of valid effects, results and output indicators in the different axes; a method for capturing delivery costs with some indicators. For axis 2 better monitoring and controls are recommended, simplifying the programme structure so that beneficiaries can receive payments more quickly, also to delete and replace some of the CMEF environmental indicators, choosing them more carefully and considering specific geographic conditions. In general for the future, a more accurate monitoring of axis 2 is considered a key issue.

- **Processing of applications.** This aspect of delivery attracts frequent recommendations, dealing with the whole application to payment cycle, for example: introducting a preliminary phase in which the context situation for potential project holders should have been assessed (which applications need which procedures to apply); streamlining tendering procedures; with application forms and selection criteria linked to the established targets (i.e. employment) of the RDP, so that projects implying a reduction of staff are not supported; then considering more efficient, faster and well coordinated selection criteria and processing of applications at key points in decision-making by the MA (eligibility, grant concession and final payment), tailoring it to the type and size of projects; making a better use of ICT to speed up slow processing, especially for high-demand measures; elaborating user-friendly guidelines of procedures.
- **MA capabilities and adequacy.** Recommendations on this aspect are numerous and include solving understaffing, capabilities and training problems of MAs, especially about the operation of the CMEF; a better control of MAs, adopting efficiency indicators; in few cases, when a thorough restructuring of the MAs has taken place, to make sure that acquired competences migrate to the new institutional set-up; the clarification of responsibilities between different bodies intervening in the delivery, possibly simplifying their structure and improving coordination between national and EU delivery systems, often operating separately. More generally, the evaluators draw contrasting conclusions: Some RDPs suggest the strengthening of the principle of one authority for the approval of all the measures, concentration of tasks to avoid double work and reduce costs, while others recommend the territorial decentralization of management: of course this is closely related to the different institutional arrangements of centralized and decentralized administrations.
- **Audits and controls.** Recommendations on this aspect are in part explicitly addressed at the EU level. Many MTEs made the quite general statement that responsibilities, criteria and number of audits and controls should be revised. In some MTEs the concept of a "single audit" is suggested, reducing the high fragmentation of current control systems by different authorities; in others it is asked that the sanction provision be applied to the overall claim and not to the individual part payments, and that in the future there should be no change in already accredited authorities for continuing measures; the certification of expenditure should be an ongoing task of the MAs, realized earlier in the implementation process.
- **Communication.** Some MTEs recommend a communication plan as a priority for future RDPs, addressing a better up-take of measures by beneficiaries, the building of

confidence and exchanges between different actors/sectors and more transparent calls for proposals.

- **Financial engineering.** On this delivery issue a few MTEs recommend the creation of a regional guarantee fund to facilitate access to support, especially for small and medium farmers and enterprises; the provision of financial advances for projects; to establish links with banks to facilitate credit access; to consider using loans instead of grants for some initiatives.
- **Monitoring Committees and social partners.** Some MTEs signal in their conclusions the strong weight of the agricultural sector in the MC, recommending changes and counterbalances, especially with LEADER representatives and other interest groups, opening up and strengthening participation. To achieve this objective, consultations with different actors should be improved, training for stakeholders considered, better dissemination of information ensured, continuous interaction facilitated through meetings and common actions, networking.
- **Networks.** Recommendation on this aspect include the request for a clearer definition of role of the EU rural network, the strengthening of national networks with the participation of academics; the participation of rural networks in Monitoring Committees; the improvement of on-line access to project information in national networks.

Conclusions and recommendations on how the axes worked

C&R considering only an axis approach are a small number (9 MTEs). However, references to the functioning of axes are more frequent, since many of the 52 MTEs providing general programme conclusions also contain statements on how the axes worked. There are two approaches in the assessment of axes: the first considers them as containers of measures, useful for bundling together, for conclusion purposes, the findings about individual measures; the second assimilates the axes to the objectives of the programme, with measures contributing in different ways to their achievement. In the first case the axis approach is very near the measure approach, since it looks separately at each axis; in the second case it is closer to the general programme-level conclusions. The LEADER axis is the main and most frequently mentioned axis not working well, with its mainstreaming procedures and slow implementation. Axis 2 has received a more balanced assessment: very positive in some MTEs and to be expanded, and very negative for others and to be reduced or modified. Among MTEs addressing axis 2 in their conclusions, it is frequent to find a quite critical view of the monitoring system especially for certain measures (see below).

Recommendations for different axes are often very programme specific: only the more general ones are reported here.

- Axis 1: investment measures are often mentioned for showing very long processing time and effort on behalf of managing authorities: suggestions for improving this situation concern better training and information, differentiating projects in two categories: small and large ones with differentiated procedures, simplification and streamlining of controls.
- Axis 2: recommendations in this case are more varied and articulate: In relation to agro-environmental measures, which some MTEs assess as having a complicated system

implying that one piece of land often receives several payments for different purposes, should have a simpler result-oriented system, possibly based on a contract between the farmer and society, with payments referring to the landscape and not to the individual farm. Possibly an incentive should be given to facilitate the creation of contiguous areas that are functional from a conservation or nutrient leaching perspective. It is the desired environmental impacts –such as biodiversity, water or climate change- that should inform the design of measures and payments, involving higher or lower benefits, defined at regional level and site-specific, since these are more cost-efficient. The emphasis on entry-level in agro-environment uptake should be reduced in favour of better targeting. Focus should be on organic farming, small-holdings. In relation to monitoring it is suggested to support a project on impact monitoring of agro-environmental measures. Some MTEs suggest the elimination of support for renewable energies while others suggest the opposite. A proposal for the next programming period to launch pilot projects for integrating LFAs, Natura 2000 and agro-environmental measures.

- Axis 3 and 4: The borderline between axis 3 and 4 is sometimes perceived as blurred and as a result some MTEs recommend to move some measures, such as the support for basic services and village renewal, to axis 4. Others suggest that the different ways in which axis 3 is delivered –with and without the LEADER approach- is clarified, in relation to the weight private and public actors should have. [36] It is also recommended to develop better quality of life indicators, insist on job creation targets for these axes. It should be possible to bundle together measures with similar objectives (micro-enterprises, tourism) and delivery procedures. Almost all MTEs include recommendations for improving the LEADER approach referring to capacity building, area delimitations, multi-sector and innovative, integrated approaches, participation, networking, reducing the administrative burden for LAGs. Not all recommendations are geared to re-establishing the past characteristics of LEADER, some MTEs advance more innovative suggestions, such as including research institutions in networking, intervene in axis 1 schemes (i.e. for young farmers, small scale food processing) in order to closely link farm and non-farm enterprises.

Conclusions and recommendations on complementarities and external factors influencing RDPs

Only very few MTEs consider in their C&R the relevance of complementarities with other EU Structural Funds, external coherence with other policies, including national and regional policies, and other external factors how it affects ongoing policy. Unlike the fact that budget shifts have already started due to the economic crisis, the C&R hardly articulate its relevance. The conclusions pick up the factors constraining the development of complementarities, such as the impossibility of integrating different streams of EU funding because of the different criteria on eligible expenditure (VAT) and selection procedures, overlaps in the division of labour between the Structural Funds and national/regional state aid interventions. The economic crisis is seen as

[36] We are fully cognizant of the fact, that LEADER delivers all axes and that a measure like "support for basic services" could be implemented via the LEADER approach. However, this chapter reflects the opinion of the MTE evaluators and gives an account of their conclusions and recommendations.

altering both previous growth opportunities as well as employment objectives, others affecting co-financing and programme management.

Recommendations on this issue range from better coordination between authorities at different institutional levels to rural and urban exchanges, better diffusion of information, explicit support for better coordination between funds, promoting targeted territorial approaches with integrated funds and integration along the food-chain.

C&R on coherence of actions implemented with strategic objectives and targets

This issue, which should be a key aspect of a programme evaluation, is dealt with only marginally in MTEs. When overall coherence with strategic objectives is mentioned, it is often for making very general statements indicating that this aspect cannot be assessed. Many justifications are given for this: that it is too early to make such an assessment, that the monitoring system does not provide the data for doing it, that strategies are not followed in the day to day implementation of the RDPs, that the multiple modifications of the programmes and the rigidity of indicators do not allow it.

There are quite contrasting views among evaluators on the objectives of labour productivity and competitiveness in agriculture and how priorities should operate: some support the elimination of small-scale projects and local initiatives as too costly in terms of delivery, while others support their expansion in view of their employment creation effects. The same dualism is observed in the promotion of innovation through the LEADER approach or through closer linkages with research institutions.

Recommendations on these broader policy issues suggest in some MTEs the elimination of the 3 axes structuring RDPs in favour of well-defined objectives to be pursued with any combination of measures from the menu, a strengthening of the strategic approach as well as its abandonment, closer attention to the internal and external coherence of programmes and the extension of employment or innovation targets across all measures.

Some MTEs indicate that C&R given are not complete since further investigation and surveys had not been completed at the time of submitting their reports. Therefore some further information on particular issues may be made available at a later date.

Reliability, relevance and clarity of recommendations

The findings about C&R are based on summaries and assessments made by the geographical experts. They are generally succinct and do not allow in many cases for an in-depth analysis or verification of the assessment given.

Of the 84 MTEs analyzed for C&R, 30 (36%) were assessed as poor, vague, too cautious, very generic, or not linked to the contents of the analysis, not operational or applicable. The remaining 66% has been assessed as sufficiently reliable, relevant and clear as well as based on and coherent with the contents of the analysis made.

9.2.2 Judgements on findings on C&R

MTEs approach C&R sections with different types of approaches: while only a minority of them does not contain such a section, the majority has them, but follows different rationales in what is considered in them, and in general give more emphasis to recommendations than to conclusions. The issues treated are heterogeneous, in terms of aspects assessed, approach adopted and depth of the exercise, ranging from very succinct information, sometimes not related to the evidence presented throughout the evaluation, to very comprehensive conclusions, well reasoned, which assess a wide array of factors, including external coherence, coordination, or in some cases the effects of the economic crisis on the programmes.

The different approaches taken imply the presence of alternative views on what rural development policy is about: in a minority of cases, by focusing on measures or the axes, the programme appears as a "mere" container of a menu of measures; on the other hand, in the majority of cases, by looking at horizontal programme aspects MTEs treat RDPs as a coherent and mutually supporting set of actions oriented towards defined objectives. Both understandings are there, side by side within the EU. While negative assessments are not present, positive and descriptive overall assessments do not always appear as an indicator of good evaluations or well-performing programmes since some of them are formal exercises, with modest analyses and conclusions. Mixed positive and critical conclusions appear more realistic, showing more explicitly what works well and less well and offering more substantial recommendations for improvement.

In this report, the structuring of C&R along the broad issues mentioned by MTEs has provided a framework for synthesizing findings. This is not an a-priori structure but rather a pragmatic collection, classification and comparison of the issues mentioned in a very heterogeneously constructed set of conclusions. The result of the exercise suggests some common problem-areas: such as delays, inefficiencies in the delivery systems, recurring problems in some axes, poor attention for complementarities with other policies, a modest awareness of the impact of the economic crisis and difficulties in showing coherence between actions and strategic objectives. There is a link between delays and problems in some aspects of the delivery system. There are of course very different combinations of problems in different MAs. There are quite distinct issues within what has been labelled as delivery system, which have different implications for programme performance: specific measures or axes difficulties, as for example the LEADER axis, influence processing of applications and cause delays in budget execution, problems of monitoring data affect programme availability of information for evaluations.

Recommendations refer to issues similar to those raised in the conclusions and are often quite programme-specific. Delays are one of the most frequently mentioned issues in the conclusions and are addressed in the recommendations mostly in terms of requests for flexibility and budget re-allocations, which may deal with the short-term problem of accelerating expenditure but often does not deal with the causes of delays. There are specific problems linked to axes and measures: the implementation of the LEADER axis, the design of some environmental measures, appear more generalized than those found with investment measures in axis 1. Recommendations for axis 2 are sometimes contradictory (as in the case of renewable energies) and often imply alternative understandings of the objectives of environmental measures and consequently with their indicators. Recommendations for axis 4, in all cases ask for a strengthening of the approach. The selectivity of measures is a source of critical assessment and

recommendations for improvement by introducing higher standards by type of project (most innovative, employment creating, higher productivity), by individual beneficiary (large or small) or by sector (agricultural or wider) targeted. The recommendation does not seem to be *less* selectivity but rather a *different* selectivity, more adapted to existing or new priorities, more scarce resources.

There is an extremely long list (in fact the longest one of all) of delivery recommendations. The most relevant one refers to monitoring and evaluation tools: to the need of adapting indicators, simplifying the system, making it flexible, integrating different data systems, making it work, changing its logic, making it able to produce the information required by evaluations, and so on. The changes proposed are quite substantial and shared by a high number of MTEs. The wide variety of delivery issues mentioned should be taken into consideration not only by the MAs to whom is being mainly addressed, but also by considering more closely the part that EU regulations have contributed to this complexity, and acknowledging that this issue is a serious one, since it may imply high costs and far from being just an organization or technical aspect, it affects significantly the performance of the policy. The fact that these delivery issues come up in the recommendations, much more clearly than anywhere else, is revealing the linkage that evaluators establish between the assessment of performance and progress of the RDPs on the one hand and the functioning of the delivery system on the other. This further stresses the causal hypothesis linking the two issues as suggested above.

Coordination and complementarities are not mentioned as problematic issues as frequently as the others. Poor fund coordination appears in the conclusions as a problem and the issue is picked up in few recommendations. It is possible that the modest attention paid to this issue is also linked to the administrative complexity of coordination at all institutional levels especially between sector administrations trying to deal with territorial multi-sector policies. Wider issues of internal and external coherence of programmes are also not frequently found in MTEs.

9.2.3 Conclusions on C&R

What can be concluded from the findings and their judgement may be summarized in the following points.

- Drawing conclusions and recommendations of one kind or another, after making an evaluation, should be an obligation and good practice requested to all evaluators. A majority of evaluators did so in the MTEs analyzed. What appears less positive is that there is a considerable number of MTEs that understand the evaluation task mainly as an assessment of individual measures, which reduces significantly the scope for a strategic approach. The conclusion on this matter is not that there should not be evaluations by measures, since these are quite different from each other and have different problems, but that there should also be a general assessment of how the RDP holds itself together and how it is achieving its overall objectives. Therefore an effort on the part of the Commission to make this point clear and obligatory in its guidelines and by MAs to include it in their tender specification for MTEs, would be advised as this could contribute to improving the comparability and quality of MTEs.
- There is an important question in the timing of MTEs, caused by delays in starting effectively the programmes at the beginning of a new programming period, which

suggest pushing the date of MTEs backward to bring them closer to the middle of the effective implementation period.

- The findings and its analysis have shown heterogeneous approaches to drawing conclusions, going from not having them (a minority), to an approach assessing only individual measures, axes and general-programme aspects (a majority). The fact that about a third of MTEs' C&R have been judged by geographical experts as poor, vague, too cautious, generic, not linked to the contents of the previous analysis and, in the case of recommendations, not operational or applicable, suggests that minimum standards of assessment need to be agreed. In this sense promoting exchanges and transfer of good practices between evaluators and MAs could contribute both to adopt good methods and improve the awareness of the benefits that may be acquired from higher quality evaluations.
- The analysis of the main issues considered in C&R sections point out the relevance of the problems of delays, linked to those of delivery. Both have important implications on the overall performance of programmes. They are of course not present with the same intensity in all RDPs but their relative diffusion suggest to address both of them considering the overlapping of tasks for MAs at the beginning of the programming period in future EU regulations as well as intervening in the growing complexity of RDPs and supporting networking between administrations to facilitate the circulation of efficient delivery methods.
- It should be clear that budget reallocations to solve problems of accumulated delays in expenditure are only a partial and poor solution to the multiple issues that have caused them. Greater flexibility is therefore a short-term solution but should the other issues raised need also attention in order to solve more structural and long-term inefficiencies.
- Greater selectivity of measures would certainly contribute to more targeted, efficient and effective programmes, but it should be also considered that in those cases reported by MTEs where this has been applied this has implied more delivery complications, as for example the bundling of measures for selected beneficiaries, or introducing innovation as a selective criteria, or the difficulties in delivering environmental measures. This is a key question that requires attention since it is likely to become more severe in the future.
- There are long-standing problems with different aspect of the delivery systems, affecting in different ways the performance of programmes. Monitoring information systems appear to be complex instruments not always judged as efficient and effective in producing the data expected of them. An evaluation of this tool in the light of the experience reported by MTEs would be useful to make the necessary adaptations. It is also relevant to reflect more systematically on who should do what in terms of revisions required by each of the delivery aspects signalled in this report. MTEs have been useful in detecting the key issues but provide insufficient information regarding the responsibilities of various authorities for addressing delivery problems.

9.3 Topic 6.2: Potential revisions of rural policy for the rest of the programming period (2009-2013) suggested by MTEs

9.3.1 Findings

Evaluators were asked to formulate the revisions needed in individual MTEs for the rest of the programming period (2009-2013). Of the 92 MTEs available, 30 (33%) did not provide any information. This may mean either that no revision was necessary, or that they did not address this aspect of the evaluation[37]. The findings presented here refer to the remaining 62 MTEs (67%).

The type of revisions indicated may be classified as follows:

- No revision of the RDP was explicitly expected: 3MTEs (5%);
- 29 MTEs indicated the intention of making budget reallocations between axes and measures;
- 18 MTEs indicated simplification and changes in the delivery system;
- 9 MTEs foresaw revisions both in terms of budget reallocations and interventions in the delivery system;
- 3 MTEs intended to revise and adapt the architecture of the programme (coherence of actions, objectives and targets).

A majority of MTEs therefore do foresee one type of revision or another, besides those that already occurred in the period covered by the mid-term evaluation. Budget shifts, as already mentioned, are the most frequent form of revision. The stated rationale for this is to reduce the funding from measures and axes that are not progressing well to those that are easier to spend (or on higher demand) in this way achieving a more satisfactory financial progress. Revisions intended to simplify and improve the functioning of the delivery system include all its aspects, as already identified in previous sections. The number of MTEs considering budget revisions is relatively high (47 MTEs, 76% of those providing answers) while others types of revision are less frequent, including facing the delivery problems found.

9.3.2 Judgements

Revisions envisaged for the short-term concentrate on funding reallocations as the main form of solving the various problems found during programme implementation. The findings indicate that the main preoccupation of MS and regions for the rest of the programming period is to address problems of delay in order to be able to accelerate expenditure, when these were mentioned and to avoid the application of the n+2 rule. Other problems, which have also emerged, appear to be only marginally addressed in the short term. In some cases, successive

[37] BG, DE-Baden Württemberg, DE-Hessen, DE-Network, DE-Rheinland-Pfalz, ES-Baleares, ES-Extremadura, ES-Pais Vasco, FI-Continent, HU, IT-Abruzzo, IT-Basilicata, IT-Bolzano, IT-Calabria, IT-Campania, IT-Emilia-Romagna, IT-Friuli-Venezia Giulia, IT-Lazio, IT-Liguria, IT-Lombardia, IT-Marche, IT-Molise, IT-Piemonte, IT-Puglia, IT-Sardegna, IT-Trento, IT-Valdaosta, IT-Veneto, PT-Network, SI

budget reallocations indicate a weak initial diagnosis of the problems and stakeholders to be addressed in the RDP, strategic objectives and targets.

9.3.3 Conclusion

Considering that this analysis is being prepared in 2012 and that the closure of the programming period is expected by the end of 2013, we may conclude that there is little substantial scope for finding out what revisions are desirable for the 2009-2013 period at the present time from the analysis in the MTEs. The analysis in this report may be quite useful however by providing input into the current discussion on the future regulatory framework.

The findings show that the driving logic for introducing revisions for the rest of the current programming period is largely short-term and driven by the objective of financial execution. Budget reallocations are likely to accelerate expenditure but will also put further stress on the flexibility of the monitoring systems to reflect those changes in the indicators, targets and overall objectives of the programmes. It will also put pressure on the capacity of the administration's staff to deal with the burden of negotiating the programme changes. More generally, for the future, if budget reallocations are facilitated -as requested by many MTEs-, would solve in part the problem of delays but would leave unsolved all the other issues not working well, and which are in mostly responsible for those delays.

9.4 Topic 6.3: Identification of programme-level recommendations which could have scope and relevance for wider implementation

9.4.1 Findings

Of the 92 MTEs available for analysis, 41 (45%) did not provide any programme-level recommendation that could have a scope and relevance for wider implementation. The remaining 51 MTEs providing recommendations give brief descriptions and often repeat the points already analyzed in section 9.2.1 above. The issues addressed by MTEs providing answers to this topic may be structured in the same broad categories used above.

Recommendations related to:

- implementation issues and budget allocations, contain suggestions to reduce the minimum allocations per axis, especially for axis 2 and devise arrangements for ensuring co-financing in the future;
- delivery issues, include introducing greater selectivity in programmes and measures to improve the quality of programmes, making sure that target groups are reached and innovation promoted; also one-stop-shops for collecting projects, an advance schedule for calls for applications, more centralization and coordination between authorities, reducing the number of controls and sanctions while strengthening the responsibility of beneficiaries, simplification of procedures for small projects, training in management also the sub-regional level, revising the mainstreaming of LEADER according to previous

programme practices; set up advisory services or networks for administrators are recommended;

- monitoring systems, stress the need for a more flexible system of indicators better adapted to the programmes, the identification of more relevant indicators for biodiversity and water, and axis 2 more generally;
- complementarities and external factors, focus on a better SF coordination with similar rules and procedures;
- the improvement of the coherence of actions with strategic objectives and targets, include giving a stronger emphasis to employment objectives, growth and innovation to meet the challenges of the economic crisis

9.4.2 Judgements

The low rate of response and the poor differentiation of recommendations at programme level reduce the significance of this topic. In relation to the previous topic of general recommendations they add precision and are well in line with them. Given the similarities it would seem that not much difference is made by evaluators between short-term recommendations for a specific programme and longer-term recommendations that have a wider scope. Recommendations are intended for the specific MA and the EU level, seldom reflecting on the needs of rural areas in Europe as a whole.

Findings referring to implementation and budget allocations suggesting the revision of the minimum threshold of axis 2 raise a general issue not only about the spending capacity for environmental measures but also about the balance between the different axes and the need for greater flexibility in combining measures across axes. Introducing more stringent selectivity in the measures could be highly relevant for improving the link between different measures and the overall objectives of the programme, formulated in a less generic way for the future. The references to the current economic crisis further strengthen the stronger selectivity and targeting argument.

9.4.3 Conclusion

MTEs are not a good source of information for wider-relevance recommendations. They assess past actions and in general follow a quite narrow implementation perspective; when required to reflect about the future many evaluators project the specific context findings to a general level. Individual recommendations require a comparison and synthesis in order to give them a wider scope, as this report attempts to do at an expert level. However, in order to better use the knowledge and experience of management authorities, administrators and evaluators, it would be useful to promote exchanges among them on specific problems and best practices. This could provide more substantial inputs to the process of designing new regulations for the EU level and facilitate the transfer of knowledge between administrations.

9.5 Topic 6.4: Recommendations regarding selected types of territories

9.5.1 Findings

Only 20 MTEs (22%) mention types of rural areas in their recommendations. These refer to the following issues regarding types of rural areas:

- The different meanings of LFAs in relation to natural and agricultural conditions and areas with handicaps different than mountain areas and the need to revise them;
- The definition of High Natural Value areas with diff0
- ering criteria;
- The priority given in a horizontal measure to beneficiaries residing in a particular area (for example giving higher support to young farmers operating in small islands);
- The delimitation of LEADER areas;
- The principle of regionalization of support, which is not based on a specific disadvantage (like LFAs) but rather on the delegation of competences for rural policy to regions in centralized MS or to sub-regional administrations in the case of decentralized MS with a logic similar to that of subsidiarity;[38]
- In relation to specific groups, gender issues are mentioned by 6 MTEs, recommending a better and more deliberate consideration at programme level.

The recommendation, often implicit rather than explicit in these cases, is to maintain the support for the area in question, or to strengthen it. There is also a recommendation for combining specific kinds of measures for operating only in selected territories: for example to concentrate axis 3 and 4 in mountain areas (for example in ES-Cataluña). Two other MTEs explicitly recommend to introduce territorial selectivity for certain measures (DE-Baden Württemberg and DE-Hessen).

In the case of LEADER areas, some MTEs state that the practice diffused with the mainstreaming of LEADER to have "top-down" definitions of the areas, usually coinciding with an administrative boundary (a municipality or district at sub-regional level) is inefficient, recommending that the delimitation take into account the homogenous socio-economic area of the previous LEADER initiatives.

Another type of territorial recommendation given by MTEs refers to the possibility of making territorial impact analyses on the basis of monitoring and evaluation activities, in order to check the fact that a horizontal measure may have a differentiated territorial impact creating asymmetries and equity problems between regions and sectors.

Specific studies on socio-economic conditions (gender, small farms) are suggested by very few MTEs.

[38] We are aware of the fact, that this is mixing two different matters, however this reflectes the opinion mentioned in the MTEs.

9.5.2 Judgements

MTEs do not pay much attention to territorial and other forms of differentiation. On the other hand, it should be noted that the LFA measures, designed at EU level and one of the most popular and widely used measure by many MS and regions, for quite a long time, is by definition implemented in a territorially differentiated way. Furthermore LEADER areas, having a different intervention logic – based on local development strategy rather than on their handicaps – have also been successful and imply a geographic differentiation of the needs of rural areas. Therefore the judgement must be balanced: even though MTEs provide few insights on types of rural areas, this does not imply that territorially differentiated interventions are not present in MTEs.

It was considered useful to identify the different ways in which differentiations of support are mentioned in MTEs, since these may be useful for further work and as starting ground for strengthening the support services in the future (or not). Recommendations on this topic support the continuation of existing forms of differentiation and even their expansion. This is however not the case for gender issues (only one mention). Even though MTEs recommend quite frequently the revision of eligibility criteria, selection procedures and ranking of applications according to priorities, they seldom specify if such revisions should address types of rural areas from a territorial, geographic or socio-economic perspective.

9.5.3 Conclusion

The very small number of recommendations and their succinct character do not allow any significant conclusion on this topic. The few responses surveyed show nevertheless the variety of territorial differentiations already present in the currently available measures, used in quite different ways by MAs. The roles of the EU and MA level are quite different: while LFAs criteria are established at EU level for all MS and regions, other forms of differentiation are in the hands of Managing authorities. The definition of selective criteria favouring a certain territory or socio-economic group may be introduced in the design of RDPs, through strategic targets and selective procedures for ranking or prioritizing applications. MAs have delimited LEADER areas. MTEs however have not used territorial or socio-economic readings of RDPs, and even less evaluated the impact of territorially differentiated measures or vice-versa the territorial impact of horizontal measures. In the future, if such a topic is considered relevant, then guidelines must be issued indicating how it should be included in the assessment.

10. The analysis and synthesis of evaluation theme 7: Networking

The MTE of the following MS contain information about an NRN: Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland (Aland Islands and Continental), France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

10.1 Topic 7.1: Identification of indicators used for assessing the progress of the National Rural Networks (NRNs)

10.1.1 Findings

The analyzed MTEs showed the presence of indicators for 12 networks in 11 member states including the MS with own network programmes ("NRNP-4": Germany, Portugal, Spain and Italy).

Most of the indicators used in the MTE are output indicators, measurable in quantitative entities. They can be clustered alongside different topics:

- Public relation: e.g. new content in website introduced, number of leaflets, NRN participation at fairs
- Events (workshops/meeting/training courses): e.g. numbers of events, number of topics.
- Good practice: e.g. number of good practices identified and disseminated (sometimes in combination with a good practice web based project database)

For some indicators it is harder to decide, whether they can be categorized as output or result indicators. They represent the "use of the output", which is somehow in a "twilight zone". Examples for that are numbers of participants (events, workshops, etc.) or the number of visits on the NRN website.

Clear result indicators are mainly represented by the degree of satisfaction that participants/stakeholders feel with certain network activities or how useful these activities are perceived. A further kind of result indicators is for example used in the German NRN MTE, namely indicators on consultative support (number and type of answered inquiries).

The result indicators of Denmark and Estonia show a strong connection to Leader. In that respect the criterion for the assessment of the NRN was mainly the extent of contribution to LAG internal as well as LAG co-operation performance.

10.1.2 Judgement

Generally speaking, the indicators in use mainly reflect the "minimum tasks" of a National Rural Network in the sense of the EU Commission defined in article 68 of Reg. (EC) 1698/2005, which seem to represent the most objective and common understanding of RD-networking:

- "identification and analysis of good transferable practices and the provision of information about them
- network management
- the organisation of exchanges of experience and know-how
- the preparation of training programmes for local action groups in the process of formation and technical assistance for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation"

Yet, there are differences between the MS in the quantity and quality of their NRN indicators. Especially the MS with own NRN programmes (the "NRNP-4") show a large variety of indicators which seem to have the capacity to go into the NRN system more deeply by representing output – result relations.

In many cases, indicators of the NRNP-4 offer target values, whereas some other MS use indicators in a more descriptive and fragmentary way to underpin network performance.

Although the indicators represent important tasks of networking, it is difficult to identify their ability to cover a holistic view of what can be seen as "the added value of networking"[39]. Especially clear concepts on causal paths in networking (which output should lead to which result that contributes to which impact) seem not to be fully developed.

10.1.3 Conclusions

Evaluating networking performance is a complex issue. To unfold the potential of monitoring and evaluation indicators they should base upon an – at least simple – intervention logic, representing the interconnectedness between outputs, results and intended impacts of network activities. These impacts in turn should be connected to RDP objectives, for example in terms of how increased capacity of network members leads to more quality of life in rural areas. These causal paths should be formulated as hypotheses that can be tested via self-assessment tools respectively ongoing evaluation.

Developing and using an intervention logic and the corresponding indicators would have three major effects:

- It provides a clear and retraceable structure of NRN strategies and activities and makes it easier to synchronize different expectations from MA, NSU (network support unit) and network members. When discussing networking "speaking the same language" is rather ensured.

[39] „added value of networking" refers to an initiative of the ENRD Contact Point.

- This indicator hierarchy can function as a useful tool that helps the NRNs monitor their activities (*between* ex-ante ⇨ mid-term ⇨ ex-post). This can enable further developments of activities by testing, if the initially formulated "hypotheses" on output ⇨ result ⇨ impact relations prove true or false. In that respect it is not only possible to judge *if* the NRN generated (or not) results or impacts but also *why* or *how*.
- help NRNs communicating the "added value of networking" and their role within the rural development system (see Topic 3)

Due to the diversity among networks (roles, tasks, structure, etc.) and the ongoing methodological discussion (mainly concerning NRNP-4) on EU level it is questionable, if it is useful to standardize the intervention logic. This still needs further discussions.

10.2 Topic 7.2: Assessment of the different methodological approaches and tools used to evaluate the NRNs and assess the achievements

10.2.1 Findings

The following methods and combinations of methods could be extracted from them MTE:

Table 50: Methods used to evaluate the NRNs

Programme	Findings
AT	Presenting few **indicators** (numbers of events, best practise projects submitted and awarded, expenditures) and **qualitative description** of organisation and activities.
BE/Flanders	**Interview** with Rural network and workshop with provincial coordinators of axis 3, LAG-managers and MA of axis 3 and 4.
BE/Wallonia	The evaluator has participated to the initial **meeting** of the Rural Development Network of Wallonia (WRN) in April 2009 and has based his assessment on the **content of the newsletters and publications** of the Rural Network
CY	Tools used were **output indicators** (numbers of events, number of participants, expenditures) and **qualitative description** of organisation and activities.
DE/Network	MTE is based on the recommended programme specific **output and result indicators** defined and quantified in the Ex Ante Evaluation which was based on the LEADER+ Mid-Term evaluation. In addition to the data gained from the **questionnaires** linked to the events/workshops the evaluator conducted a written survey with the programme coordinators of the RDPs" Two methodological approaches: 1st, **analysis of documents** (incl. monitoring data) 2nd, **expert interviews**
DK	**Interviews** with key persons, **questionnaire-based survey,** finding **good-practice examples. Desk research** of instructions, guidance notes and local development strategies
EE	Presenting **expenditure data** and a **qualitative description (based on interviews, focus groups and panel discussions)**
ES/Network	The methodology proposed included desk work and field work. The field work includes **interviews** with the managers and the managing authorities # different phases of the research are established: preparation, design, research, analysis, and conclusions # a **triangulation evaluation strategy** is used# the method uses top-down and bottom-up approaches in a complementary way.
HU	LAG **questionnaire** (return rate above 90%), **interviews, focus groups**
IT/Network	The overall approach used by the evaluator is based on the consideration of **direct and indirect results**. In addition, the rationale behind it is threefold: based on i) utility; ii) communication and iii) participation. There are 5 main methodological approaches: i) structure of the evaluating system; ii) observation; iii) analysis; iv) judgement; v)spread of the results

Programme	Findings
LT	**Desk research, internet survey** of NRN members (implemented by NRN secretariat), **interviews** with representatives of NRN secretariat.
LV	# The evaluation of implemented measures in Action plan for 2009 and 2010 (in total 17 different measures and 10 tasks of secretariat) based on **statistics of NRN** and materials from the **reports on work results**. The evaluation is structured by the directions of measures in Action programme, analysing the amount of work done in every measure/activity, the planned achieved results, actually achieved results and used funding. # Quality evaluation of NRN work using the results of the carried **inquiry** (140 respondents) within this evaluation and **self-assessments** previously carried by NRN Secretariat (252 respondents). # In addition to the inquiries of direct beneficiaries: (a) Inquiry of members of Cooperation Board; (b) Opinion of NRN Secretariat managers on work results and future plans of NRN; (c) Inquiry of rural inhabitants within the aims and tasks of other researches. # **Financial assessment** is given for the certain financially big measures of 2009.
PL	(1) **analysing programme documents,** reports from functioning of the programme, reports from the meetings, law documents, strategies and (2) **in-depth interviews** with the people responsible in implementation the programme (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, regional self-government and others).
PT/Network	To deal with the level of absorption, outputs & results, the MT evaluator had to develop a set of **inquiries** to NRN's members, NRNP's future beneficiaries (at time) & governance bodies (7 «focal points» of NRN) in order "to draw lessons to RD policy". The surveys were focused in the following specific EQ: What is the implementation state and operation of NRN? Are the mission and goals of NRN and NRNP relevant and appropriate? Are the operational logistics and management practices of NRNP adequate? Despite the simplicity of the questionnaires, the answers provided are relevant and useful in many cases, namely to provide a preliminary assessment for the EQ indicated by EC/EEN-RD in the "Working Paper on The Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes". The MT evaluator complemented the surveys with 9 interviews to selected stakeholders (e.g. persons directly related with the design, implementation and management of NRN/NRNP).
UK/England	**Stakeholder interviews,** delivery agent/officer interviews, **records of events** held by the network, **written feedback sheets** gathered from participants at network-sponsored events.
UK/Northern Ireland	**interviews** and **process analysis,** documentary evidence of activities
UK/Scotland	Key Performance Indicators; stakeholder consultation

The table above shows the range of methods applied for evaluating NRN per programme. Amongst others they contain: content analysis of publications and newsletters, analysis of reports, interviews and workshops, questionnaire based surveys, focus groups and panel discussions, analysis of feedback sheets distributed at network events, process analysis. Sometimes these methods were used solely, sometimes in combination.

10.2.2 Judgement

It can be stated positively, that the MS approach the complex undertaking of evaluating NRN performance with versatile methods. Due to the limited possibilities within this MTE synthesis (without collection of additional data) it was not possible to retrace the interconnectedness of the different methods in detail. So it remains unclear if and how the methods were part of methodological "triangulations" or just implemented parallel and loosely.

The "investigative interaction with stakeholders and actors in the field" seems to be well balanced with desk work, as the Evaluation Helpdesk recommend in their "Working Paper on the Evaluation of National Rural Network Programmes" (2010). That offers a larger potential of identifying results of NRN activities than referring solely to output indicators.

Another noticeable fact in the methodological context is, that though there is a huge diversity in methods, it seems that the focus lies stronger on more "simple" ones. (Social) Network Analysis, for example, would have been a tool for assessing social capital between rural development actors but was never mentioned as used in the MTE. This methodological gap also limits the possibilities of drawing "the big picture" of networking.

10.2.3 Conclusions

Compared to other MTE themes where the CMEF often suggests the use of certain methods, the choice of methods for assessing NRN activities is more or less up to the evaluator. The same is true for the way, how the chosen methods are used. In that respect the current process undertaken by the Evaluation Helpdesk for evaluations of the NRNP-4 shows the limitations concerning the knowledge of "optimal" methodology and yet no clear suggestions can be made for (non-programme) NRN. So it is not possible to conclude on the different methods in use as such, but some aspects can be discussed: One factor that can be considered as being important for an "optimal" evaluation design is the cost/benefit ratio. The geographical expert for UK-England states on the methods applied:

> "This was a reasonable approach to use, given limited resources"

That limits the possibilities for the use of more complex and often more expensive or time consuming methods, like the social network analysis.

In methodological terms the integration of subjective experiences with NRN work via interviews, focus groups, etc. can be seen as very useful and important part:

- it helps visualizing and measuring results that are related to changes that occur inter-personally (e.g. social capital) as well as intra-personally (e.g. enhanced knowledge via best practice).
- if impact categories are not pre-defined (what is currently mainly the case) it may lead to identify them in the function of an "explorative" research which in a further stage can be transferred into monitoring and evaluation indicators.

10.3 Topic 7.3: Summary of the problems/challenges that have occurred in implementing the NRNs

10.3.1 Findings

- **Inside and outside perception:** Some MTE showed, that roles and tasks of NRN are unclear or too broad (Poland, UK-Scotland, BE-Flanders, Finland) or the division of tasks at national level is scarce (Italy); Others described the level of knowledge about the NRN in rural areas as not fully developed (Slovenia, Latvia)
- **Network composition:** Problems with ensuring a certain degree of diversity in the network with regard to the representation of specific and relevant stakeholder-groups (Latvia, BE-Wallonia, Germany, Hungary). The Latvian MTE states for example, that the

participation especially from organisations outside the agricultural sector has to be strengthened.

- **Integrated networking**: Difficulties in enabling a cross-axes-networking/NRN focusing only on specific axes (UK-Northern Ireland, Estonia)
- **Lack of competences and resources** of both NSU-staff as well as network members (Cyprus, BE-Flanders), "particular constraints in relation to the ability of human resources" (Ireland).
- **Framework**: Late start due to delay in creating law and institutional capacity (Poland), late approval of budget and action plan (Hungary). In Lithuania for example only 0,1% of funds were allocated during the evaluation period.
- **Context specific challenges regarding the network structure**: e.g. complex structure (presidency elected by MA, secretariat elected by Minister) (Hungary) or unclear role allocation between the Managing Authority and the Cooperation Council (Network Advisory Board) (Latvia).

10.3.2 Judgement

The information in the MTEs do not provide clear patterns of problems and/or challenges and show a rather diverse picture that reflects more or less the broad variety of networks. Nevertheless unclear roles and tasks could be connected to the former mentioned sometimes vague images of aims and impacts of networks. Also an unbalanced network composition can result out of it, especially when the benefit resulting from network-participation is not tangible for certain stakeholder-groups and prevent them from joining the network.

10.3.3 Conclusions

It might be that some evaluators explored problems that also affect other networks but did not reach the surface there (possibly due to the chosen methods and/or indicators). So findings can be seen more as an *exploration* of possible problems than a comprehensive collection which is representative for all the NRNs. Anyhow the mentioned problems are a good possibility to get an idea of things that can complicate rural development networking and should be further examined and monitored, especially in the light of the allocation of roles and tasks between the actors.

10.4 Topic 7.4: Identification of the main impacts of the NRNs

10.4.1 Findings

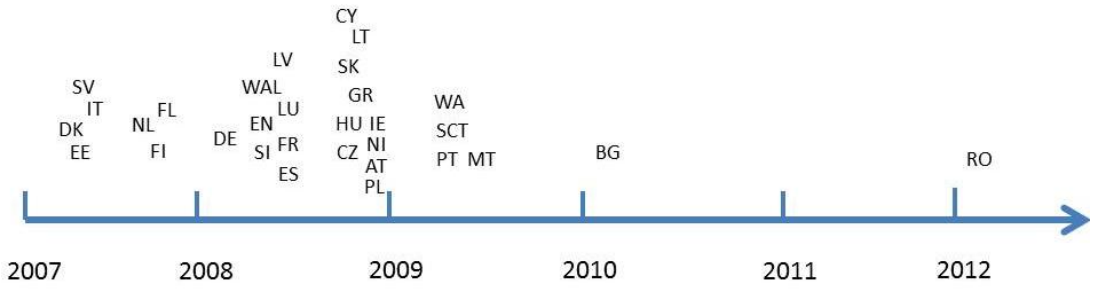
The MTE information on impacts (seen in a broader sense) can be clustered in four main categories:

- **Experience/best practices and expertise are exchanged and distributed** via different media (publications, seminars/workshops, study trips…) (Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Germany, Estonia, Portugal-Network, UK-Scotland)
- **capacity of actors/partnerships is enhanced** (Belgium-Flanders, Spain-Network, Finland, France-Guyane, Italy-Network, UK-England, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales)
- **Awareness for RDP is risen** on different levels (Belgium-Flanders, UK-Wales)– Denmark for example speaks of a "local anchoring", the MTE of UK-Northern Ireland mentions the general support of axis 3 delivery.
- **Networking and cooperation have been supported and improved** (nationally and/or internationally) (Cyprus, Spain-Andalucia, Finland, Hungary, Portugal-Network, UK-England)

10.4.2 Judgement

The identification and communication of good and transferrable practices seems to be well covered. In addition to that it should be highlighted that even capacity building and the support and improvement of cooperation were already being realized bearing in mind the often rather late starting time (see figure below).

Figure 64: Date when NRN started their work



Source: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu, compiled by author

All in all most of the "common NRN tasks" defined by the former mentioned Art. 68 Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 seem to generate different kinds of results and impacts, although – as already mentioned – a clear vertically connection (output – result – impact) as well as an attribution to RD-objectives is not always clearly retraceable. In the absence of clear and common judgement criteria for networking and due to a very heterogeneous way of evaluating and describing networking activities, a more elaborated comparison of NRN impacts does not seem practicable at that point in time.

10.4.3 Conclusions

Considering the indicators it seems, that the pictures of what an NRN is expected to do (in terms of basic outputs) are quite similar throughout Europe. But these pictures seem to become vague and heterogeneous when talking about what NRN are expected to achieve (in terms of results and impacts). It might be the case, that for this reason some aspects of networking might have not been measured. So if the "findings" do not include networking results/impacts of a special network it is not said that they are not there – they could have been simply been outside the evaluation focus.

10.5 Topic 7.5: Structured synthesis of the findings (conclusions and recommendations) in relation to NRNs

10.5.1 Findings

Some evaluators focused in their findings on if and how the planned outputs/results/impacts set in. In that sense many positive statements regarding successful information transfer and capacity building were made. Ireland for example, underlines the "value as a neutral forum". Others placed more emphasis on recommendations: improving/extending NRN evaluation (Cyprus, IT-Network, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, UK-England), ensuring representativity of network members/motivation of new members (BE-Wallonia, UK-England), strengthening resources and/or competences within the network (BE-Flanders, Cyprus, France-Guyane), further clarification and/or communication of the role of the NRN (Cyprus, IT-Network, Finland-Continental, UK-Scotland), strengthening the role of the NRN (France-Ile de la Reunion) enriching the actions and improving the organization (Greece). Few concluded rather critical on NRN's work/effectiveness (Hungary, Slovenia)

10.5.2 Judgement

The information from the MTE identified as "conclusions and recommendations" is diverse, equal to the topics above and rather fragmentary. The logic of "concluding" often differs between the MTE and provides a wide spectrum from rather outcome orientated statements to more general lessons learnt.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter on conclusions and recommendations is structured in two parts.

In the first section the conclusions and recommendations follow the structure by themes of the report, as demanded in the Terms of Reference. It is kept brief and focuses on the essential findings and judgement of the previous sections.

In the second section, the chapter presents general, overall conclusions and recommendations, which constitute a horizontal point of view and shall provide information which may be useful for the design and implementation of the future EAFRD.

All judgements in these conclusions and recommendations are based on the analysis done in this synthesis report. The limits and validity of the judgement are specified where appropriate.

Theme 1: Implementation

- The MTEs showed an overall slow uptake for RDP – however, the picture is varied as some programmes showed quite advanced implementation. The reasons for more advanced implementation are mainly that measures already existing in previous programming periods have been prolonged thus facilitating the uptake and/or measures are implemented that are relying on long term funding agreements (e.g. LFA, Natura 2000)
- On the other hand those programmes lagging behind particularly have been islands and/or outermost regions (FR/Guadeloupe, FR-Guyane, FR-Martinique, PT-Madeira), where administrate and managerial capacity among both public administrations and beneficiaries might be expected to be lower than in EU average. In some regional programmes slow administarive procedures have been listed as reasons for slow uptake (IT-Calabria, IT-Lazio). Also the new MS Bulgaria and Romania, who had to adapt their administrative to the framework of the new programmes, where thus hampered in their progress.
- The aggregated output, results and impacts of the RDPs as per end of 2009 are not easily accessible, despite the intention of the CMEF and the establishment of the set of common indicators. The reasons are:
  - Lack of common understanding of the definitions within the indicators
  - The low number of observable performance (i.e. the indicator achieved values as well as the target values are available) in combination with extreme achievement values reported leads to problems in reliable aggregation.
  - Non-homogeneity of reporting and assessing programme performances – e.g. the implementation of measures through Axis 4 LEADER leads to difficulties in attributing the performance to specific measures
- Budget shifts:
  - In the majority of the programmes modifications were made and in some measures have been dropped. Most of the changes observed have been budget shifts and changes to the beneficiaries and subjects supported or the eligibility criteria for

measures. There appears to have been a tendency for RDPs to have been modified in order to increase the rate of spending – so shifting funds into those measures already spending well, or dropping measures with low or no spend, as well as to make some changes to overcome unforeseen problems or issues arising due to changed economic or wider policy/legislative contexts, in these early years. Whilst shifting funds or loosening eligibility conditions in order to increase RDP spending may often be fully justified in the context of local needs and opportunities, it might also in some cases represent a move towards less targeted or less ambitious measures or delivery approaches, which might eventually suggest lower additionality from the RDPs. There is generally a lack of information regarding Health Check and Recovery Package within the MTEs and the accompanying documents (APRs).

- In general the strengthening of investment measures at the expense of education and training as well as dropping of financially insignificant measures can be observed.

Theme 2: Impacts

- A large proportion of MTEs state it is too early to judge an overall impact.
- In general the economic impact is more completely assessed than the environmental impact.

Economic impacts

- Probable explanation for the more complete assessment of economic impacts: there is a longer tradition in assessing economic impact than environmental one. This has also an effect on the quality of assessment: it is more probable that counterfactuals and dead-weights were considered.
- Although many evaluators state that it is too early to assess an impact, those that do, state in most cases a positive impact. However as impacts of programmes only become observable in the longer term, it can be doubted in some cases that these reported positive impacts derive solely from this funding period.

Environmental Impacts

- These are not convincingly measured on the basis of CMEF impact indicators, because the causal links between programme expenditure and changes in indicator values are not established or demonstrable, and because in many cases, indicators cannot be measured accurately due to lack of data.
- Most commonly, positive impact inferred from results plus expert judgement/prediction, but this has been done only for Axis 2 measures (214, forestry, 216, a few 212)
- Evidence of some promising alternative indicators, tailored to local circumstances and using a more systemic approach.

General

- Assessing of impacts at measure level rather than programme level is a common shortcoming ⇨ deadweight, counterfactuals, conflicts between indicators are therefore not considered appropriately
- There is very little focus on social impacts but evidence from some MTEs suggests that these impacts could be important and should be captured in CMEF more consistently.
- Good practice in the measurement of impacts requires triangulation of sources of information and the use of both quantified and qualitative data, to establish a balanced view. Indicators are not an end in themselves – high-quality evaluative analysis is equally important, in meeting CMEF goals.

Theme 3: Complementarity

- As also for the issue of delivery mechanism (see Theme 4), assessing complementarity was not compulsory for the MTEs. There is no guideline for "measuring" complementarity which leads to a lack of structured information
- Basis of the information that is provided stems mainly from evaluator's judgement and some social research rather than on sound analysis.
- Due to this rather weak information basis it is impossible to say, that there is a positive correlation between "more effort in complementarity" leads to "better" performance in rural development, which would be the underlying hypothesis for the establishment of complementarity between different support instruments in place. Consequently the recommendation is that such evidence should be established through the MTEs.

Theme 4: Delivery mechanisms

- The assessment of Delivery Mechanisms is not a compulsory item in evaluation therefore it stayed as piecemeal presentation of unstructured findings
- Still: delivery mechanisms matter, since they are explaining factors for the performance of RDPs.

Main issues addressed in the MTEs are

- Management organisation and division of labour between the different levels of management: Difficulties mentioned range from sector capabilities not used to deal with wider rural development, understaffing, inability to anticipate functioning needs, lack of clarity in the distribution of competences, lack of cooperation between administrations; high administrative burdens, high costs; excessive number of measures and sub-measures; difficult for potential beneficiaries to know who does what; problems of partial centralisation and decentralisation for certain procedures; making available the necessary budgets in a timely manner; lack of flexibility to shift funding between measures, to change measures.
- Management of applications, payment procedures, staff capacity: the division of labour between administrations were not always clear, often at different institutional levels

(between national and regional authorities and between regional and other agencies or administrations at the same or lower tiers of government delegated with some implementation function) and generating differences in the interpretation of procedures. Difficulties in preparing the guidelines and implementing regulations have been responsible for delays; change of criteria for applications have reproduced delays during the implementation process. Problems in skills, cost and numbers of administrators are mentioned raising issues of staff capability and adequacy.

- M&E problems: A unique information system is both assessed as good for some evaluators and as insufficiently flexible by others. However it appears that the setting up of information systems, of whatever character, has been problematic to deal with, either because of delays in setting it up, or because of lack of support in making it work and adapt it to different demands, or for lack of sufficient funding and expertise. Management and paying info systems are often incompatible, leading to further delays in the processing of applications. Some information systems have been developed mostly for administrative purposes, others with also an interface for potential beneficiaries, adding better transparency to procedures.
- Leader as key point in delivery mechanism: implementation of axes 3 and 4 –related to wider rural development When axis 3 is partly or wholly implemented with the Leader approach, LAGs play a relevant role in the delivery of axis 3 and as a result the procedures which MAs have established for the mainstreaming of Leader extend also to the measures of axis 3. When axis 3 is implemented without the Leader approach other problems arise, related with procedures required by interventions in non-farming sectors and requiring double funding checks. The most frequently mentioned delivery issue is the inadequate mainstreaming of Leader, with reference to the re-designing of Leader areas to suit administrative boundaries, the administrative burden given to LAGs, the delays in its implementation, the difficulty for making payments for Leader projects, the changed nature of its approach.
- Delivery "burden" seems not to be a good approach for analysing delivery mechanisms; one key conclusion on facilitating factors mostly relates to the degree of flexibility that MAs have in solving a problem in respect of a delivery issue.

Theme 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation comprises the assessment of these issues along the phases of the evaluation process – i.e. the preparation, the methods applied and how the evaluation questions have been tackled, the process of monitoring and evaluation as well as recommendations for the future CMEF.

- Generally monitoring and evaluations has been confronted with data issues and data gaps: especially the establishment of baseline situations has been a problem. Compared to output and result indicators, the inquiry of baseline indicators was underrepresented in many MTEs. Baseline indicators have indeed been included in most of the original 2007 RDPs (of varying quality); however in APRs and/or MTEs they were rarely updated.
- Timing of the MTE – according to the MTEs for the future it is important that the questions asked in the MTE could be answered in a proper way. Therefore adjustment

in the timing of the MTE, adjustments in the evaluation questions or adjustments in the monitoring system are needed.

- Indicators: there is a large variance within the quality of the indicators:
  - Relevance: these indicators which are dealing with rather complex results, e.g. environment, something other than heads or economic units, wider social economic effects have problems of delimitations and definitions. Moreover with respect to environmental indicators there are problems of causality and of insufficient sensitivity to local variations in what is relevant to measure.
  - Completeness – both for output and result indicators information on targets is generally available, but only 50% of the programmes include data for target and achieved values, hence allow for calculations on the achievement rate. These apparent gaps of data weaken the quality of the database.
  - Targeting: some MTEs pointed out that the overestimation of targets is caused by the economic crises. But there are also other reasons (e.g. underestimation in CZ, shifts of funding should imply change of indicators (has this been done)
- Methods for evaluation: All in all fieldwork and a mixture of methods are good practices for obtaining good results
- For most of the programmes the 155 evaluation questions (including the horizontal questions, but excluding the additional questions) are too many. They answered only some of them, or answered some questions together. Also there is an overlap in the evaluation questions, a number of MTEs refers to other questions for the answers (especially within the horizontal evaluation questions).. On average 80 of 155 are answered (both quantitative & qualitative). However, MTEs considered all EQ relevant for policy objectives.

Theme 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The section on conclusions and recommendations represent the findings within the MTEs – i.e. those conclusions and recommendations, which have been provided by the evaluators. Generally the following synthesis may be drawn:

- The MTEs listed rather recommendations than conclusions – with the topics treated ranging from very succinct information, sometimes not related to the evidence presented throughout the evaluation, to very comprehensive conclusions, well reasoned, which assess a wide array of factors, including external coherence, coordination, or in some cases the effects of the economic crisis on the programmes.
- Problem of timing of MTE: too early for results – MTEs widely complain and conclude that MTEs have been conducted too early for a well founded assessment of RDP performances.
- Delays are a good indicator of delivery problems in general, however they are not present with the same intensity in all MTEs
- Some of the recommendations suggest:
  - Work on selectivity of measures for better coherence with objectives and targets;
  - Integrated packages between measures and across axes;

  - Axis 2 and Leader attract most suggestions for improvement with the latter in all cases ask for a strengthening of the approach.
  - Delivery mechanisms are most frequently mentioned issue, and monitoring and evaluation practices needed greatest revision
- Revisions suggested mostly to accelerate expenditure in the short term
- There are only vague indications of recommendations for wider application – however there are long-standing and underestimated problems with different aspect of the delivery systems, affecting in different ways the performance of programmes. Monitoring information systems appear to be complex instruments not always judged as efficient and effective in producing the data expected of them. An evaluation of this tool in the light of the experience reported by MTEs would be useful to make the necessary adaptations.

Theme 7: Networks

- It seems that there is a shared opinion on "what to do" as a network but a common perspective on "what to achieve" remains vague
- Evaluations of NRN in the MTE provide a quite diverse mixture of evaluation methods. The indicators used vary between the MTE and show a strong tendency towards output indicators, often without defined target values. This heterogeneity made it difficult to derive clear clusters or EU-wide systematics. .
- "Added value" or "big picture" of networking is missing
- All things considered, the whole exercise of collecting and collating information on NRN evaluation integrated in the MTE has highlighted additional and suitable information on problems/challenges, (possible) impacts as well as monitoring and evaluation practices. Considered as an "exploration" this information can be used as a good learning possibility for the next programming period.

General Conclusions

On the basis of the theme-specific analysis in this synthesis report, the following general conclusions may be drawn. It should in this context be underlined that the expectations for arriving at a large number of useful conclusions and recommendations for future RD programmes on the basis of the MTE reports were rather low from the outset of the work due to the fact that many of the difficulties, such as the fact that RDP implementation has been slow and the "grasp" on substantial results or impacts of the programmes is weak due to timing and methodological issues, were already known to the evaluators. However, the analysis in this report has shown that some substantial lessons can actually be drawn on the basis of the current exercise.

Conclusions from this synthesis exercise may be grouped in two major fields:

Lessons learnt for the future CMEF

The CMEF constitutes a framework for monitoring and evaluation which *"is based on the arrangements in the last periods, but will be implemented in a more systematic manner and adapted to a number of new requirements in the RD regulation.*

- *The explicit definition of objectives in the regulation, strategic guidelines and their necessary reflection in the programmes increases the necessity for a correspondingly clear and robust monitoring and evaluation system.*
- *The new rural development regulation foresees strategic monitoring of the Community and national strategies, linked to EU priorities,* ***therefore requiring the definition of common indicators and their quantification.***

There is a need to ***better define baseline indicators*** *at the start of the programming period to assess the starting situation and form the basis for the development of the programme strategy.*

The aggregation of outputs, results and impacts at the EU level will help to assess progress in achieving Community priorities. ***The organisation of evaluation activities on an ongoing basis will ensure better preparation for formal mid-term*** *and ex-post evaluation notably through improved data collection.*

The new arrangements provide a single framework for monitoring and evaluation of all rural development interventions. It provides broad continuity as regards monitoring requirements and constitutes a ***significant simplification as regards assessment of results and impacts,*** *while at the same time offering greater flexibility to Member States. In general,* ***the CMEF introduces few additional data collection requirements*** *compared to the existing period except where the scope of a measure or an objective has been changed in the regulation or the European Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development."* (quoted from the Handbook on Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework – Guidance Document; DG Agriculture 2006; Brussels).

This has been the intention when setting out for the ongoing programming period and at the mid-term stage it is worthwhile to assess whether these requirements have been met. We will therefore pick out the single issues addressed (marked bold) in these overall requirements for the CMEF and assess what may be deducted from the findings of this synthesis.

The timing of the Mid Term Evaluation – the dilemma of "too little too early"

It can be concluded that the organisation of evaluation activities on an ongoing basis was not really able to ensure a better preparation of the mid-term evaluation. This has not been the fault of the approaches themselves but simply of the timing of the mid-term evaluation at a too early stage in the life cycle of the programmes. Even with the best of intentions the evaluations could not come up with observations on results and impacts, when no or little activity has been happening at the time of the evaluation. Still the aim of the MTE to serve as an "early-warning tool" for taking up counter measures should not be underestimated. Therefore the complete elimination of this element of the evaluation process is not to be recommended.

Practically three options for a revision are available:

- Shifting the MTE to a later point in time in the programme – allowing for some flexibility when programme authorities decide when enough critical mass has been accumulated for some significant results to be captured. The consequence would be that an overall synthesis of the MTEs will be endangered as MTEs would be available at different moments in different Member States. Furthermore, the use of MTEs for programme steering or "early warning" in the current period could be compromised if results come in too late to still have any impact in this respect.
- Ensuring that the RDPs start with fewer delays – by safeguarding earlier and overlapping programming processes from one programming period to the other. This would mean that programming processes would have to start well within the ongoing programming period in order to ensure that all measures are up and running at the beginning of the periods.
- Change the character of the MTE – right now the content of the MTE is a small scale final evaluation. This means that the overall orientation is on the outputs, results and impacts of the programmes at the mid-term stage. In other words from an analytical point of view the concentration is on the "What" of the programmes. Still, especially at this stage of the programmes the question "How" would probably be more rewarding to ask. The information on how a programme is running, what are the reasons for slow/fast uptake of the programme, how a programme is implemented and reaching its beneficiaries is a crucial one at the mid-term stage as the answers will perfectly serve the aim of the "early-warning" system, which will allow for counter actions. Moreover this kind of information is readily available even if very little results or impacts have been achieved. This means that an orientation of the MTE towards delivery mechanisms and implementation of programmes would probably gain more useful feedback than the result/impact orientation as it is now.

The delivery mechanism

One of the most important lessons learnt from this synthesis work is the importance of including delivery mechanism aspects in the evaluation. The CMEF does not call for this element in the evaluation – however the findings of this synthesis clearly indicate that without inclusion of delivery mechanism aspects the explanation and insight in programme performance will be limited at best. Especially in the case of programmes where uptake has been slow and where some measures were implemented with difficulties almost always the delivery mechanism of the programme played a role to explain why this has been the case. It has been a clear indication that quite a substantial share of MTEs included an assessment of the delivery mechanisms in the report without being explicitly asked to do so.

This means that a more process oriented evaluation will be of value – especially at the mid term stage of the programmes, where the lessons from this evaluation may be used for reacting and improving the performance of the programmes. It goes without saying that this approach will only be useful, if the evaluation is really seen as independent exercise without prejudice and intervention from the Managing Authority. We have found some indication that the requirement of engaging independent evaluators as stipulated in the CMEF and good evaluation practice has not always been followed consequently by the Managing Authorities and the

results of the evaluations have therefore been of limited use with respect to institutional learning for the authorities managing and implementing the programmes.

A very important side effect of this shift in evaluation emphasis on delivery mechanisms will be that the repetitive emphasising of the "administrational burden" in the MTEs will become more concrete and open to possible improvement. Administrational burdens are – as mentioned within this synthesis – a rather vague concept and therefore any specifications in terms of "burden for whom", "burden in which respect" and "burden caused by whom and how" would be necessary in order to counteract. The analysis of processes in the delivery of programmes as put forward by this conclusion would certainly help to shed some light on these issues and path the way to concrete improvements.

So a recommendation will be to introduce the analysis and assessment of delivery mechanisms into the MTE as a compulsory part and in a standardized and structured way.

The indicators

The indicator system is certainly the backbone of the CMEF and in its logic – set of common indicators with a very precise definition so that aggregation may be possible. Theoretical considerations suggest that this would be a rather useful instrument for programme evaluation. Previous synthesis exercises have recommended exactly this aggregation of information onto the EU scale (see e.g. Conclusions and Recommendations of the synthesis of LEADER mid-term evaluations and the synthesis of ex-ante evaluations of RDP 2007-2013). Moreover the experience from the synthesis of evaluations of the Cohesion Funds (e.g. see WP9: Ex post evaluation of Cohesion policy programmes 2000-2006 co-financed by the European Fund for Regional Development (Objective 1 and 2): Rural Development) shows that the practice of applying no common indicator set for the overall assessment of policy performance does cause substantial problems in achieving EU wide evaluation results.

Still the reality of the MTEs has brought to light various critical aspects of the common indicator approach and thus to a certain degree put into question the practical usefulness of this elegant theoretical approach.

First of all the main problem and criticism from the MTEs is the sheer **number of common indicators** to be covered by the programmes. The general notion has been that by establishing a rather strict corset of indicators the ratio between the cost for establishing single indicators and the benefits derived from the knowledge gained through their information is for some indicators clearly negative. This is especially true in those cases where the performance of the measures feeding into the performance of the indicator has been low, so that it would have been foreseeable that hardly any information will be gained. Moreover the notion of the CMEF that a simplification of the assessment of results and impacts has been achieved as well as the effort of collecting additional information would be small, is largely not shared by the MS. The amount of 85 common output indicators, 12 (16) result indicators, 7 impact indicators and 72 baseline indicators (a total of 180 indicators!) to be assessed could hardly be called a "small" effort.

What is more is the fact that programme authorities are additionally expected to develop and implement programme specific indicators, in order to tailor the CMEF indicator set to the

regional/national specifics. It is remarkable that quite some programmes did develop programme specific indicators, which may serve as thesaurus for future indicator improvements within the CMEF. So in short the major recommendation is that a simplification and slimming down of the common indicator set would certainly improve the general acceptance of the framework.

The second critical aspect with respect to the indicator set is the fact that the idea of having set up a common base of information, which could then be relatively simply aggregated up to the EU scale and which will allow for **overall comparability of the performance of the RDPs** has proven to be overly optimistic. The findings of the synthesis clearly show that despite the fact that the common indicators are very precisely defined (through the indicator fiches within the CMEF guidelines), there is a lack of common understanding of these definitions all over Europe.

Obviously this may best be observed in the case of the more complex indicators (i.e. impact indicators), where the assessment itself already calls for a more advanced methodology and comprehensive data. The synthesis has shown that no real aggregated picture may be drawn from the assessment of impacts, which is only partly due to the short period of time into the programmes, which did not allow for impacts to evolve. To some extent this is due to the fact that the assessment of impacts has not been conducted in a harmonized way. But it already shows at such apparently trivial things as output indicator terminology, which – prima facie – should not cause any problem at all: the understanding what is an "operation" may differ widely from programme to programme and causes substantial biases in the attempt to aggregate the indicator values.

What is the lesson learned from these observations? It would certainly be going too far to claim that the intention of strategic monitoring and evaluation as stipulated in the CMEF – using a common set of indicators, which would allow for the overall measurement of the achievement of the EU strategic goals – has been a failure. This synthesis has shown that at least at the lower levels of indicators, i.e. output and to a certain extent also result indicators, aggregation and comparison has been possible and useful in giving insights into programme implementation and performance, albeit with certain limitations. However, full scale comparisons and aggregations on a high scale, in particular at the level of results, on the basis of an often heterogeneous set of basic information and set of applied methods have been found to be impossible.

Therefore the approach of the CMEF would have to be reconsidered with respect to the formulation and interpretation of the indicators, especially at the higher indicator levels. In other words, the assessment of the achievements of strategic goals on the European scale should put more emphasis on a qualitative way accepting the weak comparability and commensurability of the single RDP performances. It is also a question of what methods can be used to calculate meaningful EU level values for performance against certain goals, drawing upon quantified values supplied from indicators used in MTEs. E.g. jobs created is not a good focus for the EU level indicator – it would be better to seek to measure EAFRD impact upon rural unemployment, examining those places with the biggest problems, than to compute numbers of jobs.

It is therefore recommended to differentiate clearly what may be aggregated and what may not be contributing to the measurement of overall achievements and should be replaced by more appropriate approaches:

- **Indicators to be aggregated**: the use and collection of a limited and well established set of common indicators shall be kept up in the future in order to establish a base for the assessment of the general performance of the RDP programmes. This set will consist of those output indicators, which are widely accepted and cause no major misinterpretation of terminology (output indicators related to agricultural output and agricultural holdings as well as number of beneficiaries). Indicators, which clearly posed substantial problems, were those which dealt with complex realms and which were not easily embedded into the intervention logics of the measures. This especially holds true for all measures intervening in the environment, as cause effect relations are complex there and therefore the assessment of achievements related to the policy intervention are difficult (contribution gap).
- Clearer definitions and guidance to be provided: in particular with respect to many of the result indicators, it was observed that aggregation was often possible but provided various difficulties. The fact that different combinations of measures were used in different MTEs as the source for the aggregated result indicator and that it is not always clear whether the same measures form the basis for achieved and target values and the slightly different interpretation of indicators between programmes clearly illustrate these problems. The resulting rather weak database with only one third of programmes providing data for both targets and achievements of result indicators make it clear that there is clearly need not only for a more solid and clearly defined set of indicators but also for further improving guidance on how to aggregate result indicators, which should precisely provide information on the sources from which to calculate the indicator values.
- **Additional methods to triangulate information for aggregation**: as for the rest of the indicators more leeway for programme specific approaches shall be granted thus losing comparability over all programmes. Still the acceptance and applicability of the CMEF will be increased. In terms of aggregation, additional information – mostly of a qualitative type – will be needed to come up with aggregated information on these aspects. This information will be added to the set of common indicator information, thus providing a triangulation for achieving EU level, overall policy performance results and impacts.

By combining a narrow set of common indicators in combination with a larger set of programme specific indicators the aim of the CMEF – i.e. to link the programme performance to the EU, national and regional goals will be possible in a more concrete way for the single programme. However the aggregation on the EU level will only be possible by adding information and apply a triangulation of approaches.

The third aspect is directly linked to the before said: the **assessment of impacts** has been a main point of complaint within the MTEs and has caused the most problems: sure enough there is the caveat of low implementation levels of the RDPs by 2009, which in many cases did not allow for an evolvement of impacts and in due course for their assessment. However the findings from the synthesis of the MTEs show that for one the assessment of impacts in the

single MTEs will not allow for an overall aggregation onto the EU scale. As mentioned before, this is due to the problem of common understanding and application of the indicator definitions and the lack of availability of underlying data. There are several challenges related to the assessment of impacts, which are more or less addressed in the CMEF (see CMEF: Guidance note A – Choice and use of indicators) but are still causing severe problems in the evaluation practice:

- Challenge of **data availability**: the CMEF states: "the responsibility of the Managing Authority is to ensure that the evaluators have sufficient data on general trends, outputs and results to carry out such an assessment" (CMEF Guidance note A – Choice and use of indicators; p. 5). However the findings from the MTEs show that lack of data is one of the major obstacles evaluators had to face. The collection of basic information seemed to be underestimated by many MAs – see e.g. the implementation of long term environmental research (LTER), which would be necessary to capture effects in the field of biodiversity, water quality and/or HNV. It will be necessary especially on the level of the MS/regions to acknowledge that the provision of data/information goes beyond the simple monitoring of the programme, but needs effort, planning and money.
- Challenge **level of assessment of impacts**: the CMEF states: "impact indicators refer to the benefits of the programme beyond the immediate effects on its direct beneficiaries both at the level of the intervention but also more generally in the programme area. They are linked to the wider objectives of the programme. They are normally expressed in "net" terms, which means subtracting effects that cannot be attributed to the intervention (e.g. double counting, deadweight), and taking into account indirect effects (displacement and multipliers)" (see CMEF Handbook on CMEF – Guidance Document; p. 8). This implies that impact assessment is NOT simply an adding up of measure related impacts, but a programme related information. The reality of the MTEs shows however, that in many cases exactly this has been done. Still the assessment of programme impacts in the form the CMEF expects, would call for a more "systemic" approach of capturing the impacts, which is actually requested by the CMEF (see e.g. recommendation of bottom-up estimation of impacts in CMEF Guidance note A – Choice and use of indicators: p. 5), but hardly applied within the MTEs. It would mean too harsh a critique to put all the blame of this shortcoming on the evaluators as this is also a systematic flaw within the logic of the CMEF. The requirements within the CMEF put the evaluators into a dilemma between a narrow assessment of impacts along the seven impact indicators and the broad, systemic assessment of impacts by the bottom-up estimation and the application of the "net-effect" principle of assessment of impacts. On the one hand the capturing of impacts has to follow the narrowing down of information into a single indicator value per impact field, which methodologically implies that complexity will have to be reduced and aggregation of information will be high. On the other hand the capturing of impacts on the programme scale in "net terms" subtracting effects that cannot be attributed to the intervention (e.g. double counting, deadweight), and taking into account indirect effects (displacement and multipliers) calls for a complex and methodologically sophisticated approach (e.g. applying advanced statistical methods), which does not allow for a reduction of complexity, but needs to apply systemic thinking and modelling. There is a contradiction in itself if these two approaches have to be combined. In short a clearer guidance on the purpose of the assessment of impacts will be needed and – more radically – the use of the seven common impact indicators shall be reconsidered.

- Challenge **aggregation onto the EU scale**: even if aggregation of indicator values would be possible (all assessments harmonized and all programmes using same definitions), the problem of incomparability of the regional setting, within which the indicator value is to be found, remains – e.g. jobs created through the implementation of the RDP do not say anything about the quality of these jobs (maybe just "Mc Jobs" with salaries well below the subsistence level) or the regional setting they are created in (A job in rural England is not of the same value as a job in rural Romania or Greece, given their current situations. An improvement in rural productivity in a place which already enjoys a good level of competitiveness is not the same as a numerically-identical improvement in productivity if it occurs somewhere where the baseline value was much lower).

The last aspect in relation with the CMEF indicators touches upon a rather important aspect of the MTEs, which are the shortcomings in the **assessment of the baseline indicators**. In principle the use of baseline indicators is stipulated within the CMEF as:

"Baseline analysis is used as the basis for the programme SWOT and is therefore part of the analytical justification for the programme objectives and choice of priorities. Baselines reflect the situation in the programme area and are an essential element in the definition of the programme strategy.

In many cases, it will not be possible to link directly programme impacts with baseline trends due to the scale of the intervention or the lack of baseline data at an appropriate level. Evaluation of impact should therefore focus on a bottom-up approach to assessing programme effects. Evaluators should seek to assess the link between the impact of the programme and baseline trends, but this need not necessarily be quantified." (see CMEF Guidance note A – Choice and use of indicators; p. 4)

It becomes clear that baseline indicators play a vital role within the wider assessment of impacts. A proper establishment of counterfactual impact assessment will not be possible without baseline information and its periodic updating throughout the programme life cycle. The baseline indicators are therefore rather important in the beginning and the mid-term stage of the programmes, where additional information for the assessment of programme effects are needed, as direct observations of these effects may be limited.

The experiences from the synthesis of MTEs have shown that this importance of the assessment of the baseline indicators has not been shared by the Managing Authorities as the collection and representation of baseline indicators has been reluctant at best. Quite a substantial share of baseline indicators has not been collected at all and another substantial share of indicators has been collected, but presenting rather outdated data. This comes as a surprise, as a fair share of this data is available through the DG Agriculture and Rural Development periodical agricultural statistics, as foreseen in the CMEF[40]. The interpretation of this fact seems to be rather somewhat unpleasant: either the Managing Authorities showed ignorance vis-à-vis the readily available information provided by the Commission, or the information has not been regarded as relevant.

[40] *"During the course of the programming period, the Commission will seek to ensure, in collaboration with Member States and other Community institutions, that data is available at national level for all common baseline indicators."* (see CMEF Guidance note A – Choice and use of indicators; p. 3)

In any case there seems to be a lack of understanding of the function of the baseline indicators as basis and important element of counterfactual impact assessment. A clear recommendation would therefore be to point out this importance and the proper use of baseline data to the Managing Authorities and the evaluators. The Evaluation Helpdesk may serve as relay station in this respect.

The absence of "good practices"

One expected output of this synthesis work has been to provide the MS and regions as well as the Commission with "good practices" of evaluation approaches and method applications (e.g. in the field of impacts and evaluation in general). Looking at the results it becomes quite clear that MTEs are not a thesaurus of methodological approaches but show in fact limited descriptions of methods and detailed methodological tools applied. The MTEs in general seem to have regarded it as their aim rather to be output and result oriented than to give detailed information on their methodological approaches. If a collection of "good practices" would heva been intended through the synthesis, another approach would have been needed. As the synthesis only provides a very aggregated picture of the approaches applied by the MTEs and a more detailed picture would be needed in order to present "good practices" in a way, that institutional learning may be possible, a case study approach would have been needed, providing detailed analysis of the appropriate examples.

Another more general problem is the reluctance of evaluators to share specially developed methodological tools with others. The reason being, that these are their market assets so why should these assets be shared? – Still learning from each other will be crucial as the challenges of RDP evaluation are large and some aspects of evaluation are comparatively new (climate change effects assessment, HNV), so an exchange on approaches will be needed. A way out of this could be the exchange initiated by the National Networks (as done in Spain or Italy), or the exchange on the EU scale, but with very specific foci (see e.g. the initiative of DG Regio to conduct workshop series on counterfactual impact assessment). Many MTEs have suggested such exchanges within their own conclusions and recommendations.

More help in options for dealing with balanced evaluation in a context where data is missing or incomplete, is badly needed. A more open approach to methodologies applied (similar to the EVALSED approach providing a vendor's tray of applicable methods and tools) within RDP evaluations will be needed (see e.g. the application of case study techniques and other qualitative and semi-qualitative methods).

A general recommendation for the set-up of MTEs would be to clearer demand evaluations to explain their methodological approaches (in guidance documents).

Lessons learnt for the design and implementation of the future EAFRD

Another set of conclusions is directly addressing the design and implementation of the RDPs themselves. The upcoming period for the RDPs will meet some fundamental changes within the fabric of the implementation of the programmes. The design and implementation of EU policies will be signified by common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic

Framework. This implies that a stronger complementarity between the single funds will be envisaged and MS will have to safeguard, that this complementarity is translated onto the national and regional level.

The delivery mechanisms

The lessons for the implementation of the programmes is that an important factor of the success of a programme in terms of absorption and capacity to reach beneficiaries, is the way how the programme is implemented and in which way it is operating.

Although the findings from the MTEs are limited with respect to identifying the success factors of "good" delivery mechanisms, it becomes quite clear that our understanding of programme delivery is rather determined and mislead by only concentrating on "administrative burdens" rather than analysing the success factors. One clear factor of success for the successful delivery of RDPs relates to the degree of flexibility that Managing Authorities have in solving a problem with respect to a delivery issue.

Another recurring factor which has to be stressed is the inadequate staffing of Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies. This has to be enlarged by the ability and know-how of the staff in place at the Managing Authorities. The MTEs have shown between the lines that as important as a good and well elaborated evaluation is the capacity of the Managing Authority to digest the results and assess the quality of the evaluation. What is more – the quality of the evaluation will be highly determined by the ability of the Managing Authority at the outset to ask the right questions and set up the best possible frame for an evaluation. Many problems reported in the MTEs are connected to this lack of proper preparation of the evaluation work: the collection and systematisation of data, the setting up of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation and the assessment of the tools and methods applied therein are crucial steps, which need knowledge and time to be spent by the administrations. Especially the reservation for funds for data collection and maintenance is to be emphasised.

A clear recommendation in this respect will be to strengthen the importance of training of staff and sufficient staffing of Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies. Moreover the planning of evaluations as well as the preparatory activities shall be better implemented in the evaluation plans of the CMEF – thus safeguarding the availability of data and the application of appropriate methods such as counterfactual impact assessment in due course.

LEADER

The mainstreaming of LEADER within the RDPs has been regarded as success at the outset of the programming period. High expectations have been raised that the LEADER methodology will safeguard a more effective delivery of the RDPs.

A first analysis through the MTEs shows a more disillusioning picture. The so called seven LEADER principles (area based approach, bottom-up approach, local partnership, multi-sectoral approach, innovation, cooperation and networking) have not really been incorporated in the implementation of the RDPs. The most obvious break with the principles is the impression that LEADER is in many MS regarded as just one more funding opportunity for rural areas. This may be deducted from the fact that in contradiction to the area based and bottom-up approach and

the aim of delimitating LAGs by a felt identity of the LAG members, many Managing Authorities have simply requested a full coverage of the programming area by LAGs – thus creating rather administrational delimitations, than LAGs on the basis of an area and bottom-up approach.

Other breaks in LEADER principle applications may be seen from the procedures of project selection, which is in many cases heavily influenced by Managing Authorities rather than depending on the LAG decisions.

In quite some MTEs the problems of LEADER to operationalise projects from other Axes have been articulated – either as lack of possibility of Axis 4 to handle all other Axes projects (in many cases Axis 1 measures are not eligible to be handled through LEADER), or as difficulty to deal with the rather strict corset of predefined measures. LEADER lived through the innovation principle allowing for a self-definition of projects, but with the restrictions through predefined measures in the RDP Axes, this innovative spirit is hampered.

The selection of measures

Finally the first findings from the MTEs suggest that in some cases a concentration of RDPs on a more limited number of measures seems to be useful. The concentration of funds and the economies of administration will call for a limitation of the number of measures. The cost effectiveness ratio of some measures is clearly to be questioned – this means that quite high efforts have been applied in some cases, which did not arrive at substantial effects yet. However this last point has to be treated with high caution, as the slow uptake of the RDPs clearly biases these observations and it will be necessary to observe the full programming period with respect to judging which measures should be dropped altogether in a future programming period.

Indices

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Maps

Abbreviations

AEM	Agri-Environmental Measures
APR	Annual Progress Report
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
bn	billion
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CATI	Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CAWI	Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing
CMEF	Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EE	Estonia
EENRD	European Evaluation Network for Rural Development
EERP	European Economic Recovery Plan
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ES	Spain
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FBI	Farmland Bird Index
FI	Finland
FR	France
FOWL	Forest and Other Wooded Land
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFCF	Gross Fixed Capital Formation
GHG	GreenHouse Gas
GR	Greece
GVA	Gross Value Added
ha	hectare
HNV	High Nature Value farming
HU	Hungary
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
kg	kilo gram
kt	kilo tons
ktoe	kilo tons oil equivalent
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (Community Initiative)
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxemburg
LV	Latvia
m	million
M111	Measure 111
MS	Member State
MT	Malta
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NL	Netherlands
NRN	National Rural Network
NSP	National Strategy Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Priority Axes
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
QoL	Quality of Life
RD	Rural Development
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RO	Romania
RuDI	Rural Development Impacts, EU 7th RD Framework project
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SIIPAF	Payment Authority information system
SIProDeR	RDPs information system
SK	Slovak Republic
SWOT	Qualitative analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UAA	Utilized Agricultural Area
UK	United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax
WFD	Water Framework Directive
yr	year