



# Rural Evaluation **NEWS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## A MAJOR EVALUATION MILESTONE: ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORTS 2017

In the programming period 2014-2020, the Managing Authorities of rural development programmes submit Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), which include information on the implementation of the evaluation plan (EP). In 2017 and 2019, the so-called "enhanced AIRs" also include evaluation findings.

**T**he first of these enhanced reports has been submitted in June 2017 and provides a valuable first look at how Member States are progressing in the implementation of their evaluation plans and the evaluation activities they have conducted.

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development has assessed chapters 2 and 7 of the AIRs to judge both whether the evaluations carried out provide a reliable and accurate picture of the achievements of the RDPs and to synthesize the findings for EU-level reporting. For this purpose, 50 criteria have been extracted for each of the 21 Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) and additional programme specific evaluation questions answered in the AIR submitted in 2017. >



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## Plan your work, then work your plan!

As Member States have steadily grown into their programmes, modifications of their EPs have considerably increased. RDP evaluation concepts have been fine-tuned, the timing has been revised and evaluation elements have been complemented. Modifications have predominantly been concentrated in the following areas:

- Changes/updates in the evaluation timeline (e.g. due to delays in the implementation of the programme);
- Updates/changes to procedures and human resources;
- Updates of the units used, the judgement criteria, indicators, and the development of further detailed evaluation concepts;
- Selection and contracting of RDP evaluators.

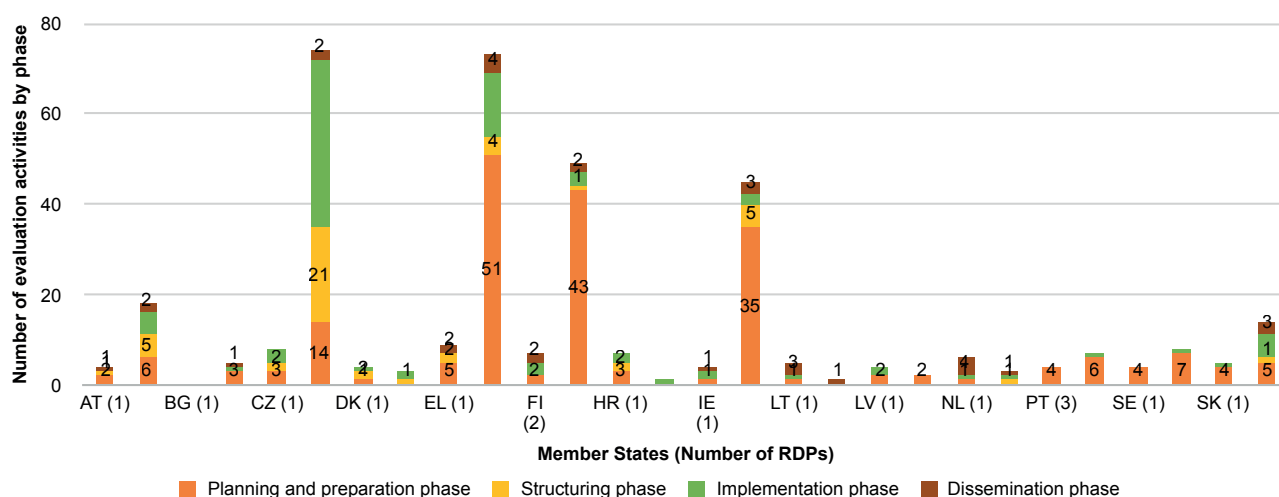
Member States have shown strong growth in evaluation-

## Finding the right match

While RDPs may not be racing to the finish, RDPs have progressed considerably in contracting independent evaluators for carrying out evaluation activities, a key step to achieving a robust evaluation. Almost 80% of the AIRs submitted in 2017 provide some information regarding what step in the process of contracting of an independent evaluator for this programming period they are in.

However, monitoring and data management activities reported indicate that RDPs are still largely setting up and adapting their monitoring systems. Activities related to data management refer to the set-up of the monitoring system in administrative and technical terms, and ensuring data provision and the collection of data. Member States continue to face challenges in relation to data management (e.g.

Figure 1: Evaluation activities by Member State and phase



Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

related activities, with almost double the amount compared to the previous years. The majority of this progress can be seen concentrated in activities related to the planning and preparation phases of the evaluations (Figure 1). Remarkably, though it is still early in the programming period, already, one third of the total number of reported evaluation activities concern the implementation and dissemination phases of the evaluations. This is significantly more than in the AIR submitted in 2016, where only one out of seven activities were related to these two later phases.

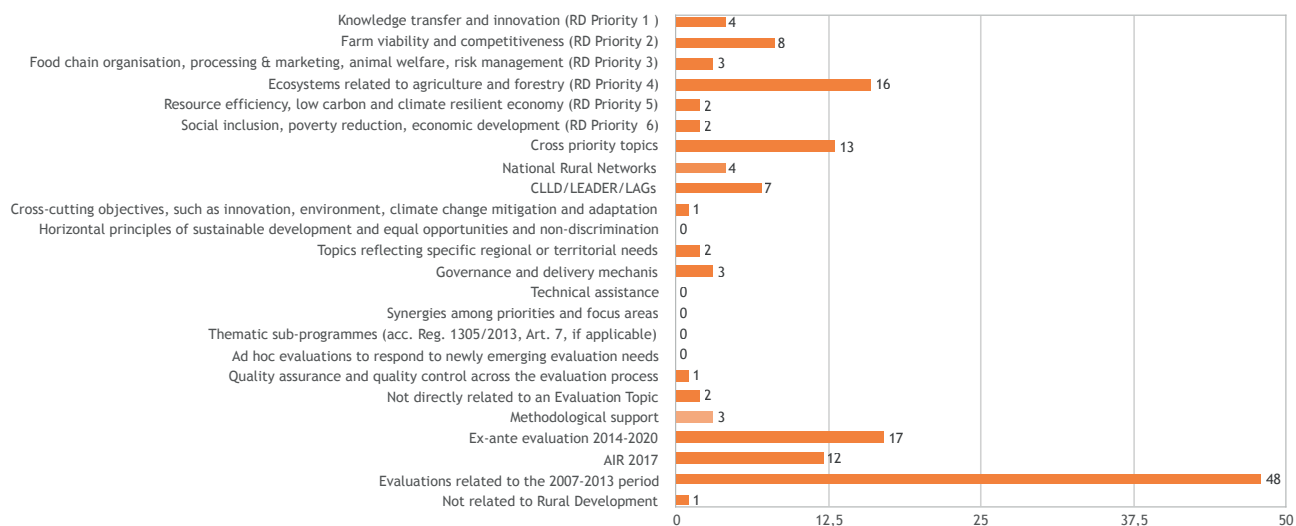
to improve and allow for indicators to be calculated, a general lack of coherent definitions, baseline values, target values and difficulties in the reliability of the calculation of indicators due to the availability of data).

Despite challenges in the areas of monitoring and data management, the number of completed evaluations have increased significantly and indicates major progress in the implementation of the EPs. Topics of evaluation studies primarily concern RD Priority 4, cross priority topics and Priority 2 (Figure 2). One third of the RDPs also reported on the ex-post evaluations of the previous programming period 2007-2013.





Figure 2: Completed evaluations listed in the AIRs submitted in 2017 by topic



Source: Screening of AIRs submitted in 2017 (Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development, 2017)

One of the most impressive findings based on these reports is the astonishing number of evaluation-related communication activities reported, which have tripled in number compared to the previous reporting period and have reached more than 800,000 stakeholders. The main communication channels used were events (e.g. conferences, seminars, workshops, excursions) and websites. Most of these communications activities refer to cross-priority topics and LEADER/CLLD.

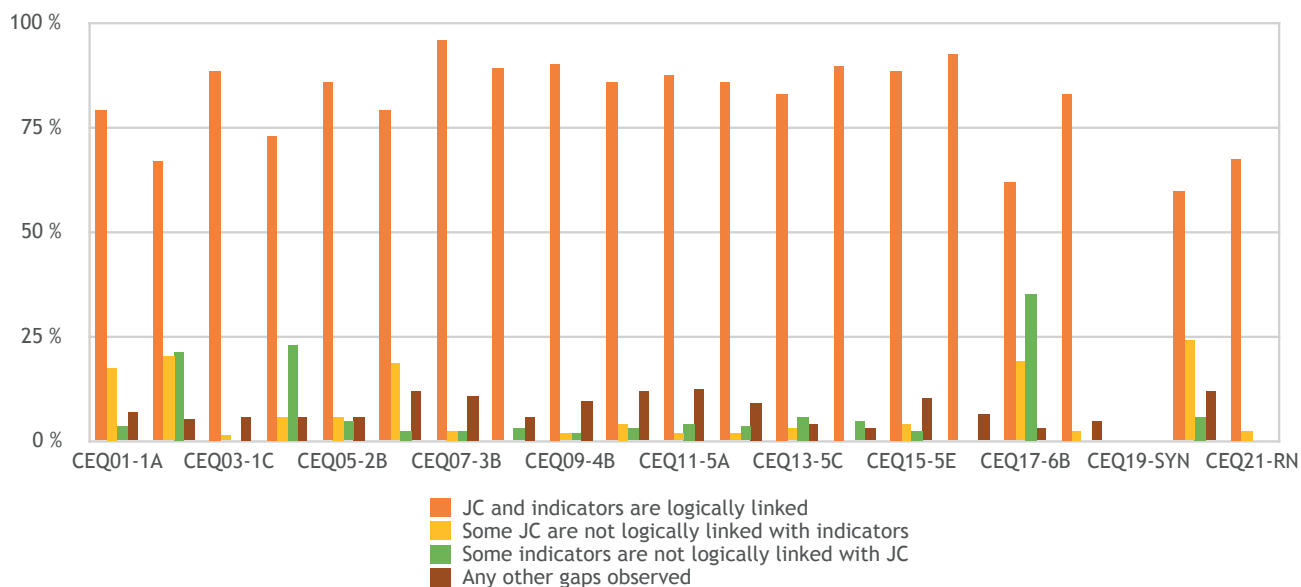
### What's in an assessment?

A robust evaluation always starts with a strong intervention logic and in RDPs 2014-2020 this can be seen through the strong links

between the judgement criteria and the common or additional result indicators. Nonetheless, inconsistencies are still present (Figure 3) and primarily concern the following two areas:

- additional result indicators defined by the programme authorities are more characteristically similar to output indicators; and
- indicators are not always linked correctly to the judgement criteria or are wrongly paired in the SFC table. Such inconsistencies were more frequent in the Common Evaluation Questions (CEQ) no. 1, 2, 4, 6, 17 and 20.

Figure 3: Links between judgment criteria and indicators by CEQ



Standard evaluation methods were used for most of the EQs in 2017. These methods include the analysis of monitoring data, project and programme documentation or sectoral analysis of statistical data, which in some cases was compared with data on RDP beneficiaries. While monitoring data includes data from completed operations, some AIRs state that in cases of low uptake data on programmed/committed operations was also used.

### Advanced methods coming to an evaluation near you!

Notably, Member States have achieved the use of more advanced quantitative methods, despite challenges in the collection of data, primarily for assessing FA 2A (economic performance, modernisation and restructuring of farms) and FA 3A (improving the competitiveness of primary producers and better integrating them into agri-food chains and adding value to agricultural products) (Figure 4). In some Member States, the use of counterfactual analysis to calculate the common and additional indicators were reported. More in-depth assessments could also be observed under priority 4 (restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems), FA 5D (reducing green-house gas and ammonia emissions) and FA 5E (fostering carbon sequestration and

conservations in agriculture and forestry). For these FAs, in some RDPs, advanced data from GIS and Land-parcel identification systems (LPIS) were used to analyse the interventions.

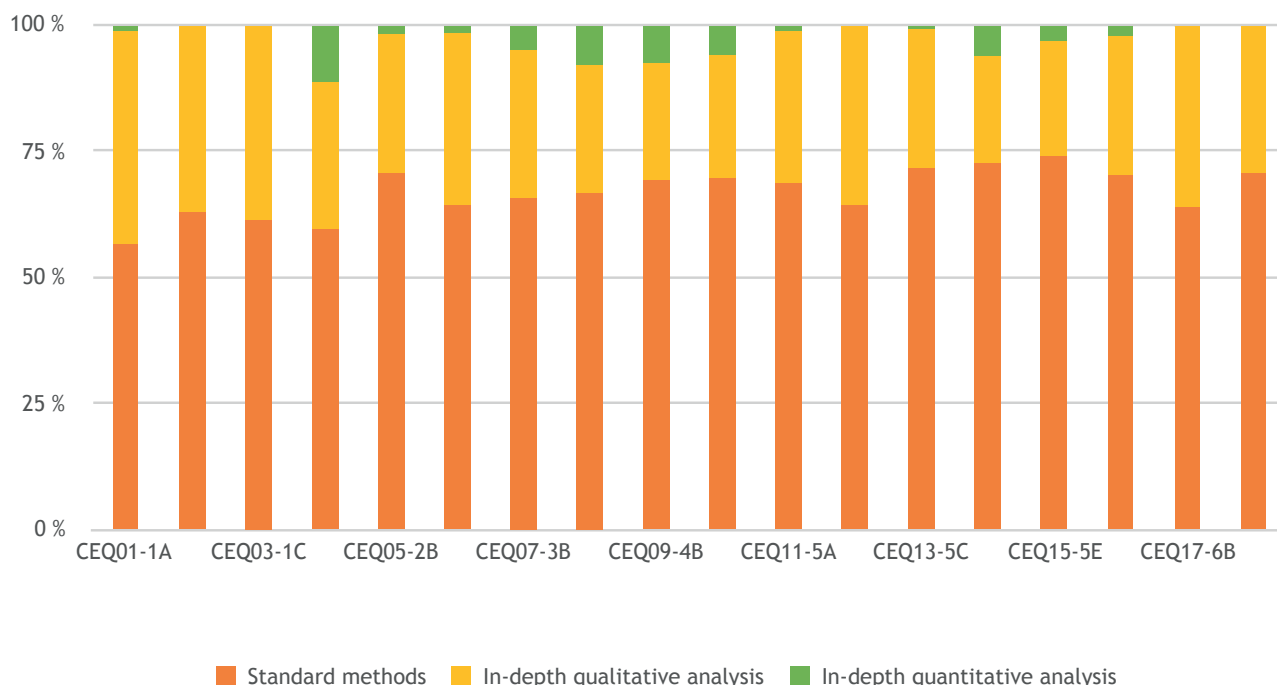
While some Member States have already begun to use advanced methods for some FAs, many more have reported that they will begin using more advanced methods once sufficient programme uptake will allow their application. This was particularly evident for the assessment of FAs linked to complementary result indicators and additional result indicators. The use of counterfactual methods for the FAs was envisaged by Member States not only for socio-economic indicators, but also, for environmental indicators where spatial analysis is the basis for the assessment (using GIS, LPIS, etc.).

### Challenges and setbacks

The major methodological challenges faced were as follows:

- The short time for conducting the evaluation was a considerable concern in many AIRs. Evaluators and MAs did not feel that there was sufficient time allocated for them to make an adequate analysis.
- The lack of data for the evaluation was a challenge not

Figure 4: Evaluation methods used in the assessment of RDP results in 2017 by CEQ



only for beneficiaries but also non-beneficiaries and was primarily caused by low programme uptake. This was further contributed to by the lack of use of operations databases for the collection of data for complementary result indicators and by the late availability of statistical data for the evaluation (e.g. FADN data).

- The low number of participants (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) to respond to the surveys or to participate in focus groups and consequently problems of representativeness of the results. The design of surveys and interviews was also reported as a challenge.

### Solutions and a view towards the future

Due to the scarcity of data, qualitative evaluation methods (e.g. interviews, focus groups, surveys with RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, online questionnaires with RDP measure managers and case studies on selected projects (mainly priority 4 and 5)) have been employed by Member States to overcome these deficits. Additionally, theory of change has also been applied in cases where there has been no or a very low level of uptake.

Overall, based on these reports it is clear that Member States are making progress towards establishing better monitoring and data management systems, which are allowing them to apply more advanced methods, ultimately facilitating more robust evaluations. The next major evaluation milestone will come with the submission of AIRs in 2019, providing even more valuable knowledge to assess the development of RDPs 2014- 2020. ■

### Findings on the achievements of RDPs

The findings on the achievements of RDPs gathered from the AIRs submitted in 2017 are currently being summarised by the Evaluation Helpdesk and will feed into the European commission's [Strategic Reports](#): the Commission Staff Working Document "Synthesis of Evaluation Results and Plans under the ESIF Programmes 2014-2020".



# **PREPARE FOR IMPACT!!**

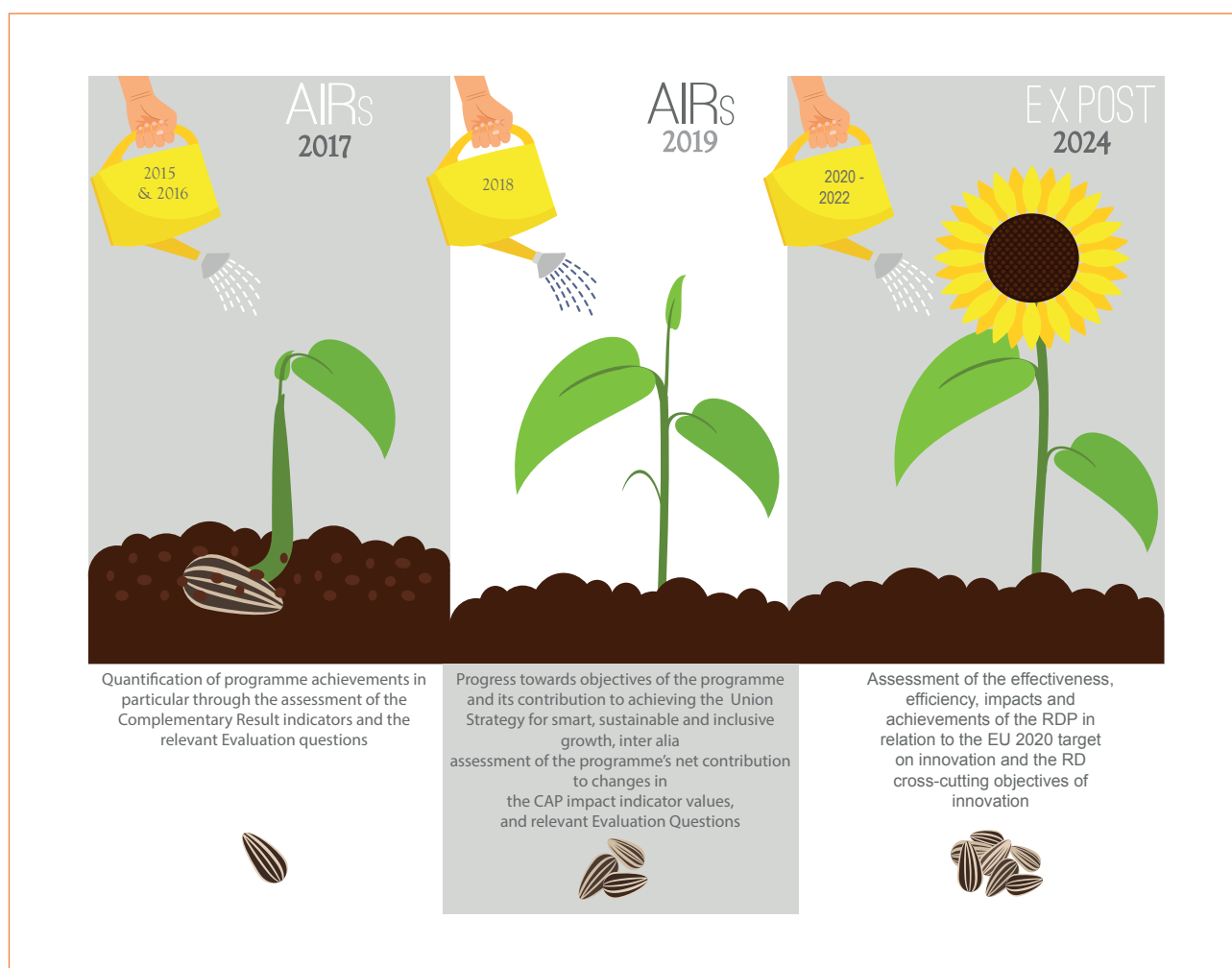
## LAUNCH OF THE NEW THEMATIC WORKING GROUP: “REPORTING ON RDP ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS IN 2019”

In June 2017, the Managing Authorities of rural development programmes have submitted the first enhanced Annual Implementation Reports to the European Commission. In addition to monitoring information this enhanced AIR includes for the first time the quantification of programme achievements through the assessment of the result indicators (including complementary result indicators), and answers to relevant evaluation questions. In 2019, the second **enhanced AIR** will

**build on this information further by providing** the progress towards the programme objectives and on the achievements of the Union's Strategy towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Figure 1). This will be achieved through the **assessment of programme net contributions to changes in the CAP impact indicator values**, and answering the relevant **evaluation questions**<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 1: Enhanced AIRs and reporting on evaluation



## Providing support for the evaluation of impacts

Against this background, the Evaluation Helpdesk in collaboration with selected experts and DG AGRI has launched its 5<sup>th</sup> Thematic Working Group in October 2017, which will support evaluation stakeholders by providing a guidance document on how to answer CEQs related to impacts and structure their evaluation activities for the AIRs to be submitted in 2019.

The objectives of the thematic working group are to:

- **Examine the challenges** related to the evaluation activities to be carried out in the context of the AIR to be submitted in 2019;
- **Present practical approaches** to assess the RDP's net contributions to the common CAP impact and assess the progress towards achieving the EU level objectives and answering the relevant evaluation questions;
- **Provide support for assessing the achievements of the EU level objectives** and for reporting on findings in 2019.

The guidelines will serve to address, among other topics, the following challenges linked to the evaluation of RDPs and reporting on these findings:

- How to attribute changes observed in rural areas to the RDP's effects?
- How to assess the RDP's contributions towards achieving the three CAP objectives?
- How to assess the RDP's contributions towards achieving the EU 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?
- How to ensure high quality data is obtained for a sound assessment of the RDP's impacts?
- How to coordinate various data providers to get data suitable for the RDP evaluation?
- How to report on the assessment of RDPs' achievements in the AIR in 2019? ■

Find more information on the Evaluation Helpdesk's Thematic Working Groups and Guidelines on our [website](#)

[1. Commission implementation Regulation \(EU\) No 808/2014, Annex I, Point 9, and Annex VII, Point 7](#)

# HNV FARMING INDICATOR: WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE EAFRD?

**H**NV farming is the only CAP impact indicator for which there is no common methodology explicitly provided at the EU level. Each Member State uses data and methodologies appropriate to their specific situation. In order to understand and gain a better picture of these various approaches the Evaluation Helpdesk has developed in 2017, a Methodological Factsheet, which was distributed to all Managing Authorities with the goal of taking stock of the state of play of how Member States are monitoring and assessing their HNV farmland<sup>1</sup>. The Methodological Factsheet has been conceptualised as a tool for the European Commission and the Member States to collect the approaches taken towards HNV farming indicators in a comparable format.

## The state of play of HNV farming approaches in the Member States

Based on the analysis of the information provided, the Evaluation Helpdesk and a group of experts involved were able to distinguish five categories of the completeness of the approaches taken in the Member States:

1. Fully established approach for monitoring and assessing Context Indicator (CI37): when the information provided demonstrates a robust approach based on sound data sources, regular monitoring of both the quality and extent of HNV farming and a reasonable methodology for assessment is applied.
2. Established approach which needs further development: when the information provided demonstrates an approach which recognises its limits and possibly foresees improvements in the near future regarding regular monitoring of the extent and/or quality of HNV farming, the use and availability of data, and the method for assessment.
3. Limited approach which needs major adjustments: when the information provided demonstrates that the approach lacks substantial clarity or shows major gaps regarding

the robustness/clarity of the data used, capability of monitoring the extent and/or quality of HNV farming, and/or a sound method for assessing CI37 is not applied.

4. Approach under development: when the approach is too premature to be assessed.
5. None or insufficient information provided: when there is too little information to otherwise classify the approach.

Of the 52 RDPs that have provided a reply to the survey, 23 have developed a fully established approach<sup>2</sup>. Among those, some Member States have provided information on particularly original elements of their approaches and are therefore worthy to be highlighted in more detail as to serve as a stimulus to other Member States.

### Typifying HNV Farming

Andersen et al. (2003) has defined three types of HNV farming, which have become broadly recognised by researchers and the larger policy community as<sup>3</sup>:

**Type 1:** Farmland with a high proportion of semi-natural vegetation.

**Type 2:** Farmland with a mosaic of low intensity agriculture and natural and structural elements (field margins, hedgerows, stone walls, patches of woodland or scrubs, small rivers, etc.)

**Type 3:** Farmland supporting rare species or a high proportion of European or world populations.



## A Snapshot from the Member States



Germany takes a centralized approach, which is based on Andersen et al. (Type 1, 2 and 3). This method primarily uses secondary data for identifying HNV areas and primary source data<sup>4</sup> for the monitoring of changes in land cover, farming practices and the number of species, which is collected annually until 2024. **Data is generated through a robust survey method, which is based on an agreement between the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Federal Ministry for Environment and the Federal States and implemented by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation.** This survey has been further improved and made more robust by increasing the sample size in the federal states. The method is further reliable for assessing CI37, though it has been reported that the statistical quality and the representativeness of the data will be further improved.

Denmark has developed an innovative HNV approach based on the use of a mapping system that has a clear rules-based system, which is well understood by farmers. This system uses **a variety of data sources including both primary and secondary data as well as incorporating data from volunteers in the field** allowing it to be able to gauge all changes in HNV farming. A major added benefit of the HNV map is its transparency in rules, which easily allows for the increase in awareness of the importance of biodiversity. This approach succinctly allows for the assessment of the HNV farming indicator, and will be monitored annually until 2020.



Estonia's approach to HNV farming uses parts of Andersen et al. (Type 1) and uses secondary data to identify it. **The monitoring covers changes in the number of species and is updated annually, which is of great benefit to the National Monitoring Programme.** Generally, the approach can be assessed as being well balanced and cost effective. Future planned improvements on data availability and the use of new sources will lead to further improvements.

In Italy, the National Rural Network has developed a common approach, which is used by most of the RDPs. Among those who have established their own specific method, Emilia Romagna, has adopted a full Andersen et al. approach, **using primary source data for identification and supplementing this with data from the REFRESH project.** Both approaches have been proved to be effective for the assessment of CI37. Nonetheless improvements are always important, in this case, especially regarding the use of new data sources and data management resources.



Sweden's approach is based on Andersen et al. (Type 1 and 2) and has developed its approach using primary and secondary data both for the identification and monitoring of HNV farming. The latter covers changes in land cover, farming practices and the number of species. Of particular interest in the Swedish approach are the **combination of secondary data sources with surveys to assess the quality of changes**, as well as how it proposes to address data gaps of valuable areas in intensively farmed areas.



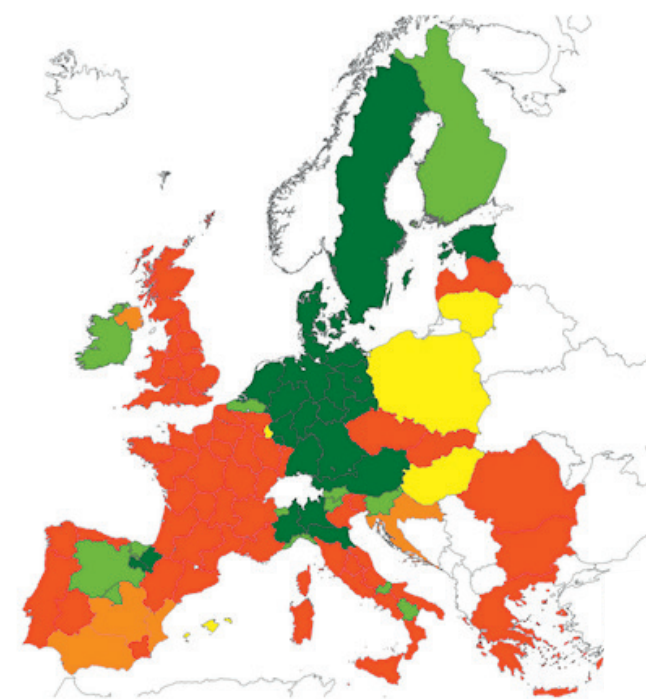


Apart from those that have developed a fully established approach for the monitoring and assessment of CI37, the rest of RDPs who responded to the Methodological Factsheet display a wide diversity of approaches:

- 14 RDPs have established a good approach which needs further developments;
- 5 RDPs need major adjustments to their approaches;

Overall, the analysis finds that there is a general lack of robust and available data, which has often been reported as a bottleneck towards the implementation of a sound methodology. This can profoundly affect the definition of the approach used to identify and monitor HNV farming. ■

#### State of play of HNV farming approaches in RDPs 2014 - 2020



- (1) = fully established approach for monitoring and assessing CI37
- (2) = established approach which needs further developments
- (3) = approach which needs major improvements
- (4) = approach under development
- (5) = no or insufficient info provided

- 5 RDPs have their approaches under development, and
- 6 Member States (including all RDPs from France and UK England and Wales) have provided no or insufficient info to classify their approaches.

The map above illustrates the complete situation in the EU 28 at RDP level (including RDPs which have not provided any info):



#### Key recommendations for the future

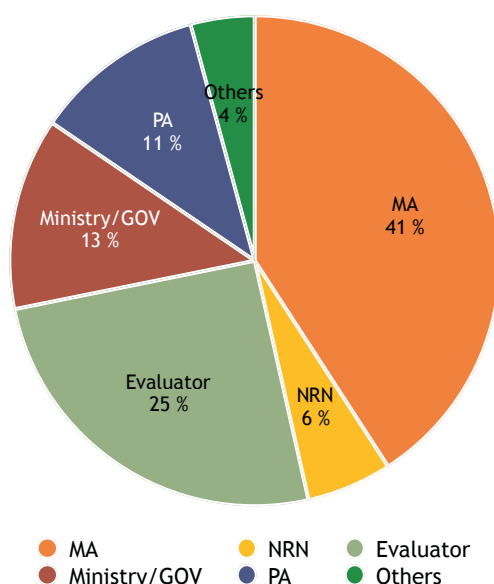
In order to foster more developed and advanced approaches in the Member States two recommendations are provided:

- Data collection should be improved from an ad hoc basis towards a long term, sustainable, cost effective approach. A good approach could be an agreement between different bodies involved in the monitoring of biodiversity (e.g. as used in Germany) or using other means of financing (e.g. Life + TEN in Trento).
- The use of counterfactual methods could enhance the assessment of impacts of RDPs on HNV farming and is therefore highly recommendable.

1. As a continuation of the work performed in 2016 See [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/practices-identify-monitor-and-assess-hnv-farming-rdps-2014-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/practices-identify-monitor-and-assess-hnv-farming-rdps-2014-2020_en).
2. see map above for a comprehensive overview.
3. For a comprehensive definition of Andersen et al. See [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/practices-identify-monitor-and-assess-hnv-farming-rdps-2014-2020\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/publications/practices-identify-monitor-and-assess-hnv-farming-rdps-2014-2020_en).
4. A primary source provides direct or first-hand evidence about an event and/or an object: primary sources can be e.g. statistical data and results of a survey. On the contrary, secondary sources describe, discuss, interpret, comment upon, analyse, evaluate, summarize, and process primary sources. They can be e.g. scientific articles and/or studies.

# FIFTH GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP: 19-20 SEPTEMBER RIGA, LATVIA

With the submission of the enhanced Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) in 2017, the evaluation of RDPs 2014-2020 has reached its first major milestone. The fifth Good Practice Workshop, 'How to report on evaluation in AIRs: experiences and outlook', was hosted by the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture on 19-20 September 2017 in Riga (Latvia).



This workshop was organized to provide a forum for RDP evaluation stakeholders to share their experiences with the AIRs 2017. The meeting was attended by 70 participants from 25 different Member States, including representatives of the European Commission.

**'The workshop allowed me to further build up my knowledge of RDP evaluations and keep in touch with previous contacts. It provided me the opportunity to check our RDP findings against other's experiences, as well as to understand how to improve for the evaluation in the AIR 2019.'**

Evaluator from Latvia

The working sessions were oriented towards the improvement of the AIRs, beginning with the sharing of challenges faced and solutions taken in the AIRs 2017.

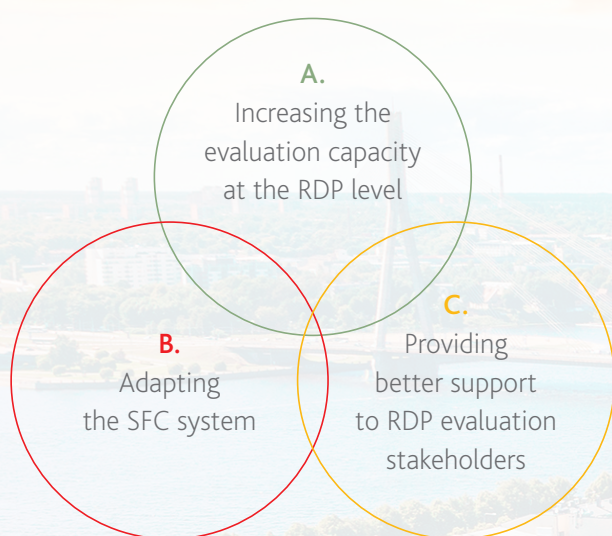
The discussions touched on numerous challenges and situations, some of them were new (e.g. those concerning the SFC template), while others were quite known in the context of the RDP evaluation (e.g. problems in data provision, limited resources, and time constraints).

## Main Outcomes

The main outcomes of the workshop can be clustered in three domains (Figure 1). These three domains capture the predominant experiences collected from the participants and provide three core pathways for improving the evaluations in the AIRs 2019.



Figure 1: Pathways for improving the evaluations in the AIRs 2019



**A.** Increasing the evaluation capacity at the RDP level: participants discussed the challenges related to 1.) contracting the independent evaluator, in situations where the public procurement processes are delayed and financial and human resources are lacking 2.) coordinating activities among several actors, potentially by establishing data agreements between Paying Agency, Managing Authority, evaluator, and data providers 3.) assessing the quality of evaluations by defining quality standards in the Terms of Reference, selecting advanced or simple methods and estimating the costs for undertaking robust evaluations.

**B.** Adapting the SFC system: participants proposed several recommendations on how to tackle the technical and content-related problems emerging from their first experiences with the SFC. Participants proposed to: 1.) better align the SFC template to the EU regulations and guidelines 2.) include additional functions for the SFC template, for example exporting/importing values from Excel files, activating automatic saving and extending space/words limitations 3.) increase user-friendliness of the final report by avoiding repetitions, allowing for the insertion of graphs and other visual display items.

**C.** Providing better support to RDP evaluation stakeholders: participants discussed three main areas of support:

1. Data: providing new data on environmental aspects, filtering of useful data from a large source of data, developing capacity on data collection, speeding up the delivery of updated data, and accessing FADN data;
2. Evaluation methodologies: clear instructions concerning the calculation of Common Result Indicators;
3. Reporting: how to use the SFC system and report findings from the CEQs.

These three main areas of support can be achieved potentially through various tools and guidance provided by the Evaluation Helpdesk and European Commission. Good practices should also be highlighted and feedback should be more specific, consistent, and transparent. ■

**'The workshop was useful to understand different approaches used by Member States to answer the Common Evaluation Questions in the AIR submitted**

**in 2017. The exchange of ideas helped to position ourselves against the situations from other Member States. This is crucial to improve our practices in the AIR 2019.'**

Managing Authority from France

**For more outcomes of this workshop and information on the AIRs 2017 read the [full report](#) from the Good Practice Workshop.**

# How Can NRNs Support Evaluation Activities: A CONVERSATION WITH VIJA VEISA FROM THE LATVIAN NRN

National Rural Networks (NRNs) can support the evaluation of RDPs through a wide variety of activities. One of the more commonly known tasks of NRNs is to support the sharing and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation findings<sup>1</sup>, which reflects the increased emphasis on NRNs' support for the evaluation of RDPs in the programming period 2014-2020. However, NRNs can also support evaluation in many more ways, including, developing trainings, assisting in the collection of data related to RDP indicators, establishing evaluation related thematic groups and conducting studies. In practice evaluation-related practices vary significantly across the Member States.

In order to take a deeper look at some of the additional activities NRNs can carry out, the Evaluation Helpdesk sat down with Vija Veisa, the project coordinator of the Latvian Rural Network, to discuss her NRN's unique role as a data provider to support the evaluation of the Latvian RDP.

## How is your network organised?

The running of the NRN is executed by the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (LRATC), which aims to provide counselling and training services to rural entrepreneurs, data collection activities and research.

The NRN implements its activities with the help of 26 local offices. In each local office, there are rural development experts that provide information, education and networking activities. An advantage of such a system is its ability to provide the services that are best tailored to the needs of the population. This opportunity facilitates the gathering of qualitative information about the needs of the population as well as how rural people, entrepreneurs, and farmers use support and how it affects the economic activities of rural areas.



Vija Veisa

## How does this information and data get used?

This helps us measure the impact of our activities. We also share this kind of information with the ongoing evaluator (Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (IARE)).

## What role does the NRN play in the RDP evaluation?

The network of rural development experts and LRATC specialists are used to collect various types of data from the population for statistical purposes. This means that both the LRATC and the NRN can

accumulate an extensive amount of information, which can be extremely useful for the evaluation of the RDP.

Through these activities a database has been created to support the self-assessment of NRNs and provide data for evaluations in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Furthermore, by linking the accumulated data on farm economic performance indicators with the data collected by the NRN, it is possible to trace how stakeholders have used the available information and educational support and how this has affected the economic performance of the holding.

1. The Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, art. 54(3), Point b(v)





## Do you see your role in the RDP evaluation as a collector of quantitative and qualitative data?

Yes, to a certain extent this is one of our functions...we can offer data that can complement existing datasets and provide other qualitative information. However, at the start of the programming period, we should have agreed with the Managing Authority and evaluators on what kind of data would be most useful for us to collect...and here we face the evaluation challenge that is identified in many countries, the CMES was not fully developed at the beginning of the planning period, and it does not help to evaluate certain aspects of the RDP.

## What are specific examples of how your NRN supports evaluation?

For example, we are currently tracking how many young people who have participated in the info days have attended trainings in developing business plans. We then note how many young people have successfully completed their training and developed business plans. Information is also gathered on how many young people have managed to attract funding for the implementation of their business plan, how many companies have been created and what the state of these enterprises is after 2 years of operations. This is just one example, but our accumulated data can be used in many different areas.

In terms of obtaining qualitative information, I would like to mention another activity that is being implemented by the NRN. In the summer of 2017, the NRN organised a discussion on the topic 'development of small rural farms in Latvia', which resulted in the establishment of a working group and the formulation of tasks related to different areas of activities for the support of small and medium farms in Latvia. We are now currently conducting a study that will help to provide us with further information on small and medium sized farms. The results which focus more on

qualitative information, will be transferred to the evaluator, who will then use this information when they carry out their EAFRD impact assessment on the development of small and medium sized farms.

I think that analysing qualitative and quantitative information will give us deeper insights into the problems of small and medium sized farms and will help us to find the most appropriate solutions for improving economic activity.

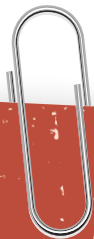
## How else can the NRN support RDP evaluation?

There is another area where the role and capacity of the NRN could be more used and this is in the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD. In co-operation with the Latvian Rural Forum (an informal LAG network) the NRN can support LAGs in the evaluation of the LEADER approach, for example, by helping them to structure their self-assessment and evaluation related information in a way that helps to identify and store comparable data...and identifying ways and means of developing indicators and collecting further information.

## Do you currently disseminate evaluation results and findings?

Yes, significant resources are invested in the evaluation of the RDP and the issue of who else besides the Managing Authority and RDP Monitoring Committee uses this information is always relevant.

We are currently preparing a conference, which will be held at the end of this year. The focus of the conference is to build a vision for rural development stakeholders on the future of rural development after 2020. However, to look at the future, we need to be aware of how effective we were at using existing opportunities and the extent to which we have used EU support to meet our goals and needs, and for that, the results and conclusions of the evaluators will be very important for us in order to have a meaningful discussion. ■



# BACK TO BASICS : MEASURING IMPACTS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

**P**rogramme impacts are **medium and/or long term causal effects** of an intervention on the programme area. The assessment of these impacts by evaluators will play a vital part of the evaluations to be submitted in the AIRs in 2019 and ex post evaluation in 2024.

**Programme impacts are linked to the wider programme/policy objectives.** In the case of RDPs, impacts relate specifically to the three common CAP objectives: viable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and balanced territorial development.

Evaluators assess the programme's impacts (both intended and unintended) as expressed in 'net' terms, which is achieved by excluding all those effects which cannot be attributed to the programme's intervention. Net impacts include:

- a. **The programme's direct effects on those beneficiaries** who are affected by an intervention (e.g. income, labour productivity);

- b. **Indirect effects on the programme's beneficiaries** (e.g. leverage effect and deadweight loss);

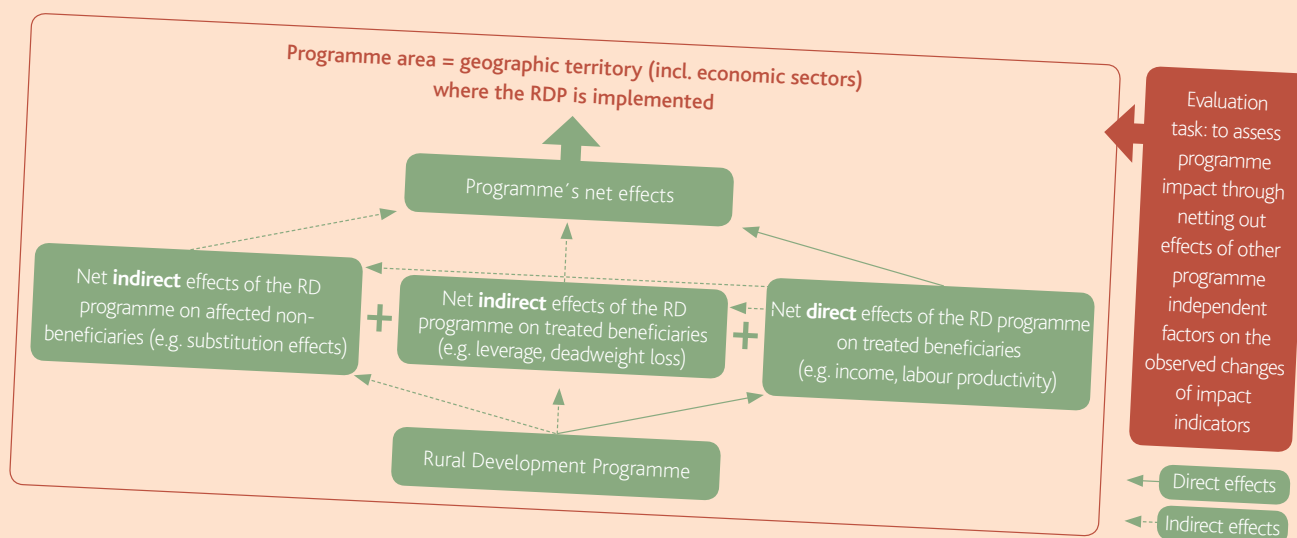
- c. **Other indirect effects, which go beyond the direct beneficiaries** of the public intervention (i.e. which spread throughout the economy, society or environment on non-beneficiaries and other stakeholders, which have not been defined as the programme's primary beneficiaries, such as households, retailers, and consumers).

Total net impacts are usually wider than direct net effects, which only include the direct effects on the beneficiaries.

The common CAP impact indicators provide the basis on which to assess the impacts of RDPs<sup>1</sup>. In case of programme specific overall objectives, programme specific impact indicators can also be used. ■

<sup>1</sup> Annex of Regulation (EU) No 834/2014

Figure 1: Net impacts of RDPs



# CALENDAR - WHAT'S ON?

## PAST EVENTS

- **LV – 19-20 September 2017 – Good Practice Workshop on Annual Implementation Reports:** Organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk and the Ministry of Agriculture in Latvia, this event brought together evaluation stakeholders to discuss their challenges and the solutions they found for answering the relevant evaluation questions and reporting on them in the AIR submitted in 2017 [Read more >>>](#)



- **HU – 8-10 November 2017 – Capitalising on CLLD Experiences – Building Resilient Local Communities:** [Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 13 October 2017 – 9<sup>th</sup> Innovation Sub-group:** [Read more >>>](#)

- **EL – 30 November-1 December 2017– Good Practice Workshop “National Rural Networks’ support to the evaluation of RDPs”:** Organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk, the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food and the Greek National Rural Network and Publicity Unit. This workshop explored how NRNs could support the evaluation of RDPs [Read more >>>](#)

- **BE – October 2017 – 8<sup>th</sup> Rural Network’s Steering Group Meeting:** The Helpdesk presents its upcoming activities including the Good Practice Workshop “National Rural Networks’ support to the evaluation of RDPs”, its Thematic Working Group 4 ‘evaluation of innovation in RDPs 2014-2020’ and the recently published Guidelines on the evaluation of LEADER/CLLD. [Read more >>>](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **BE – 14 December 2017 – 4<sup>th</sup> Rural Network’s Assembly**
- **EL – 1-5 October 2018 – 13<sup>th</sup> EES Biennial Conference: Evaluation for more resilient societies**



Send your questions to:

[info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu)



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

*The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily express the official views of the European Commission.*

## European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

BE-1040 Brussels, Boulevard Saint Michel 77-79 (Métro Montgomery/Thieffry) E-mail: [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu) • Website: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/evaluation/> • Tel. +32 2 737 51 30 • Newsletter Editorial Team: Valérie Dumont, Myles O. Stiffler, Hannes Wimmer • Graphic design: Karott’ SA • Contributors: Vincenzo Angrisani, Valdis Kudins, Teresa Marques, Matteo Metta, Andreas Resch, Myles O. Stiffler, Jela Tvrdonova, Vija Veisa, Hannes Wimmer