



# Rural Evaluation **NEWS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION HELPDESK FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## TOOLS TO SUPPORT THE EX ANTE EVALUATION OF THE CAP STRATEGIC PLANS



### Programming of CAP Strategic Plans

Currently Member States are preparing new CAP Strategic Plans, which will contain programme interventions to be carried out in 2021-2027 under the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). CAP Strategic Plans will serve as a foundation for meeting the needs identified following the Member State's SWOT analysis and needs' assessment, as well as help to ensure a follow up of the implementation of plans and ultimately to contribute to the achievement of the CAP's objectives.<sup>1</sup>

The new delivery model of the CAP post-2020 shifts the policy focus from compliance to performance and attempts to rebalance responsibilities between the EU and the Member State level. Each Member State will establish a performance framework which will allow for the reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the performance of their CAP Strategic Plan during its implementation.



#### NEWS

Study on the CAP and climate change: the case for a stronger Common Agricultural Policy for climate action

PAGE 8



#### GOOD PRACTICES

Tenth Good Practice Workshop Brussels: Getting prepared for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan

PAGE 18



#### BACK TO BASICS

Ex ante evaluation as interactive and participatory process

PAGE 22



#### EVENTS

Upcoming and Past Events Calendar

PAGE 24

## The role of the ex ante evaluation

Programming of the CAP Strategic Plans is a complex exercise, that requires one to consider and to link various aspects. To improve the quality of the design of the CAP Strategic Plan it is essential to carry out the ex ante evaluation<sup>2</sup>. The ex ante evaluation should be carried out by functionally independent experts in close cooperation with the authority responsible for the drafting of the CAP Strategic Plan. The CAP Strategic Plan should serve to contribute to better targeted support through the CAP and to support a common learning process related to monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, the ex ante evaluation is a key element of the performance framework, as it establishes the basis for effective monitoring and evaluation activities during the implementation of the CAP Strategic Plan in 2021-2027.

The ex ante evaluation is strongly linked to the programming of the CAP Strategic Plan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This interlinkage can be organised in various possible ways (e.g. by providing a joint ex ante and SEA feedback in an iterative exchange with the programming authority or by providing input to draft CAP Strategic Plan documents at defined stages). One of the lessons learned from previous experiences of carrying out the ex ante evaluation was to organise it in an ongoing process between evaluators and Managing Authorities. This type of iterative process helps evaluators to be well aware that several updates of the SWOT, intervention strategy and other CAP Strategic Plan elements may become available or are even triggered through the ex ante

evaluation and can be considered as part of the ongoing ex ante appraisal. In each case, it is essential that the ex ante evaluation provides an independent and informed view into the preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan.

The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development in collaboration with DG AGRI has launched its 7<sup>th</sup> Thematic Working Group to support evaluation stakeholders in preparing for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans. Considering the legal proposal and by collecting the lessons learned from the ex ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in the current programming period evaluation experts of this working group are collaboratively developing tools and practical solutions for Member States to prepare and conduct the ex ante evaluation.

The process and outputs of the Thematic Working Group is structured along the phases of a typical ex ante evaluation, which is structurally linked to the programming of the CAP Strategic Plan. The Thematic Working Group consists of four Working Packages:

1. [Preparing the ex ante evaluation](#),
2. Appraisal of the assessment of needs including SWOT,
3. Appraisal of the intervention strategy, targets and milestones of the CAP Strategic Plan,
4. Appraisal of the planned monitoring, data collection and implementation arrangements of the CAP Strategic Plan.





## Preparing the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans (Working Package 1):

### Roadmap for the ex ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment

The indicative roadmap for the ex ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the CAP Strategic Plan provides an example of possible ways of organising the ex ante evaluation and SEA as interlinked exercises to the programming of the CAP Strategic Plan.

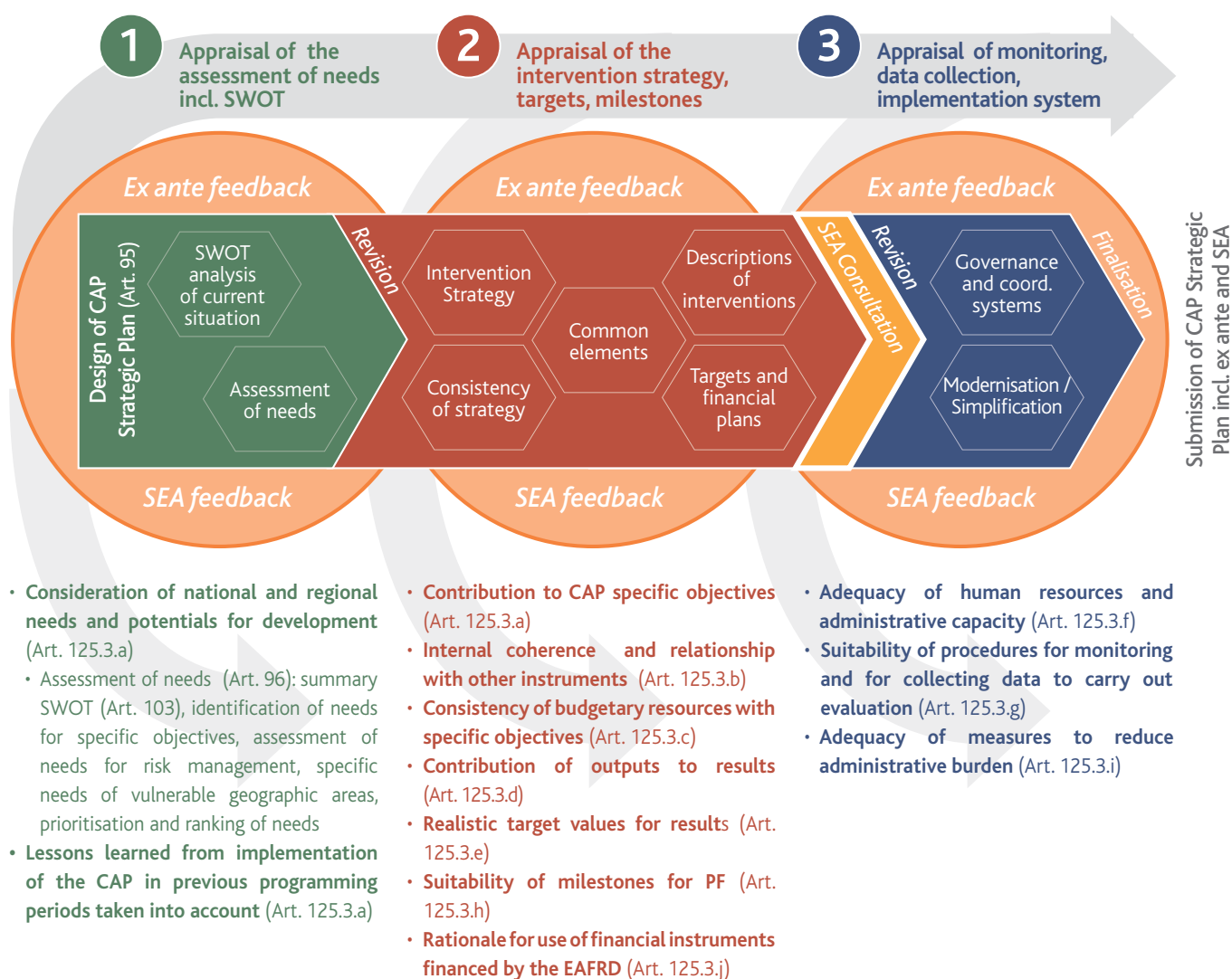
Figure 1 depicts one possible way of organising the ex ante evaluation process. The ex ante evaluation runs along the preparation of the single chapters of the CAP Strategic Plan (hexagons), keeping in mind the consistency and continual updating of the whole CAP Strategic Plan.

In this example, the ex ante evaluation is structured in three stages:

- **Stage 1:** Appraisal of the assessment of needs including SWOT analysis of the current situation. In some cases, the analysis of the current situation may be a separate document in some Member States.
- **Stage 2:** Appraisal of the intervention strategy, targets and milestones.
- **Stage 3:** Appraisal of the monitoring, data collection, and implementation system.

The SEA process is closely linked to the ex ante evaluation. It may be contractually integrated into the ex ante evaluation or be run as a separate contract. In the latter case, a strong ongoing coordination ongoing coordination is advised.

Figure 1: Roadmap for the ex ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment



## Terms of Reference template for the ex ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the CAP Strategic Plan

An indicative outline of the Terms of Reference for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan provides a generic template for the tendering out of the ex ante evaluation.

This outline includes:

- the overall purpose, context and specific objectives of the ex ante evaluation,
- the legal basis and documents to be considered,
- the scope of the ex ante evaluation and methods,
- the timing, workplan and reporting requirements,
- the budget, expertise required, and selection procedure.

The template provides practical suggestions to be considered while tendering the evaluation. It also includes an example of a possible structure for the ex ante evaluation report of the CAP Strategic Plan.

The indicative outline of terms of reference for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the CAP Strategic Plan describes the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) to be fulfilled and what needs to be considered to ensure the SEA and ex ante evaluation can be used in concurrence.

## Stakeholder Mapping Checklist

The programming of the CAP Strategic Plan, and the preparation of its ex ante evaluation and SEA, requires the involvement of stakeholders who can provide very important inputs as well as elements of better coordination and governance to the process. The **stakeholder mapping checklist** supports the Managing Authorities and evaluators in planning the involvement of relevant stakeholders by identifying who can be involved and how, as well as why this is vital for the overall process.

This tool focuses on four specific aspects:

- the basics: understanding who is doing what in the ex ante evaluation and SEA;
- the expertise: how to set up an evaluation and SEA team which covers all of the required expertise;
- the process: how to set up an interactive and participatory ex ante evaluation process;
- the planning: how to plan the stakeholder involvement related to the ex ante process.

*Table 1* provides an example of the matrix template, which can help one to plan the involvement of stakeholders, including the phase/stage at which their involvement is required, the nature of their involvement (engagement), how they get involved (engagement methods) and the frequency of their contribution(s).

The matrix can be used with the following objectives:

- To determine stakeholders (groups of stakeholders) (*column A*);
- To assess their involvement by mapping their interests/concerns (*column B*);
- To define the engagement strategy (approach, methods and frequency) (*columns D-F*);
- To measure the effectiveness of the strategy. The evaluator can compare the matrix with the actual involvement of stakeholders to assess whether the engagement strategy worked (i.e. whether stakeholders were involved as planned and to what extent their commitment was);

This matrix can also be adapted to include further elements considered useful by the Managing Authority/evaluators (e.g. costs, expected outputs, gender representation).

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process for evaluating the environmental impacts of a proposed policy, plan or programme.

The overall objective of the SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment. Specifically, the SEA aims to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development (see SEA Directive, Article 1).

The SEA will identify, describe and assess the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the CAP Strategic Plan, which should be taken into account in its preparation. The SEA will provide relevant information to assess the environmental challenges and considerations with regard to the CAP Strategic Plan. This information should help to ensure that environmental concerns are appropriately integrated in the decision-making and implementation processes.



Table 1. Stakeholders matrix – template (filled non-exhaustive example)

A	B	C	D	E	F
Stakeholders	Area of expertise/influence (interests/concerns)	Phase/stage (e.g. CAP Strategic Plan design, SEA, Ex ante, all)	Engagement approach (e.g. inform, consult, collaborate)	Engagement methods (e.g. Steering Group, focus groups, etc.)	Frequency
National Office for Climate Change	Knowledge of environmental issues/challenges	SEA CAP Strategic Plan design (Objectives 4, 5, 6)	Consult in CAP Strategic Plan design Collaborate in SEA	SEA Steering group Consultations	Throughout the ex ante process
The Spanish Network for Rural Development (REDR) and The National Network for Rural Development (REDER)	Representing the 252 LAGs and thus the interests of the local territories Bringing in information on local aspects related to innovation, competitiveness, employment, environment	CAP Strategic Plan design, in particular in the SWOT and needs analysis (all Objectives) CAP Strategic Plan design (design of interventions related to local development)	Inform on the situation analysis and the SWOT Consult on the assessment of needs Consult on the design of interventions related to local development	Thematic working groups in the CAP Strategic Plan design Focus groups in the ex ante Consultations	Thematic working groups meet once a month throughout the design process Two focus groups during the ex ante
The National Institute of Agricultural Research and Technology	Knowledge of research and innovation situation and challenges Bringing in information on regional aspects related to innovation	CAP Strategic Plan design, in particular in the SWOT and needs analysis (in particular the cross-cutting objective) Ex ante assessment of internal coherence of interventions in relation to the cross-cutting objective	Consult in the CAP Strategic Plan design Inform the ex ante evaluators	Thematic working group on research, Innovation and ICTs in the CAP Strategic Plan design Focus groups in the ex ante Consultations	Thematic working groups meet once a month throughout the design process Two focus groups during the ex ante
The Regional Institute for Research and Innovation	Contributing information to the cross-cutting objective of fostering knowledge, innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas				
The National Women's Institute and its 10 regional offices	Knowledge, experience and information on gender issues and gender equality Representing the interests of women in rural areas Knowledge of gender equality policy and related challenges	CAP Strategic Plan design, in particular in the SWOT and needs analysis CAP Strategic Plan design (consideration of gender issues in the design of interventions)	Consult in the CAP Strategic Plan design Inform the ex ante evaluators	Thematic working group on employment, education and social inclusion (members) Other TWGs (observers) Focus groups in the ex ante Consultations	Thematic working groups meet once a month throughout the design process Two focus groups during the ex ante
The National Association of Young farmers	Knowledge on issues related to youth unemployment in rural areas and other youth related issues Representing the interests of young farmers	CAP Strategic Plan design, in particular in the SWOT and needs analysis CAP Strategic Plan design (Objective 7) Ex ante	Consult in CAP Strategic Plan Inform the ex ante evaluators	Thematic working group on employment, education and social inclusion Focus groups in the ex ante Consultations	Thematic working groups meet once a month throughout the design process Two focus groups during the ex ante



## Appraisal of the assessment of needs including SWOT (Working Package 2):

After preparing for the ex ante evaluation the first stage of the ex ante evaluation consists of the appraisal of the assessment of needs including SWOT. The latter becomes in turn the basis for the design of interventions and the whole intervention strategy of the CAP Strategic Plan. It is therefore important to ensure already at an early stage that the basis for the later preparation of the intervention strategy is clear, logical and based on evidence.

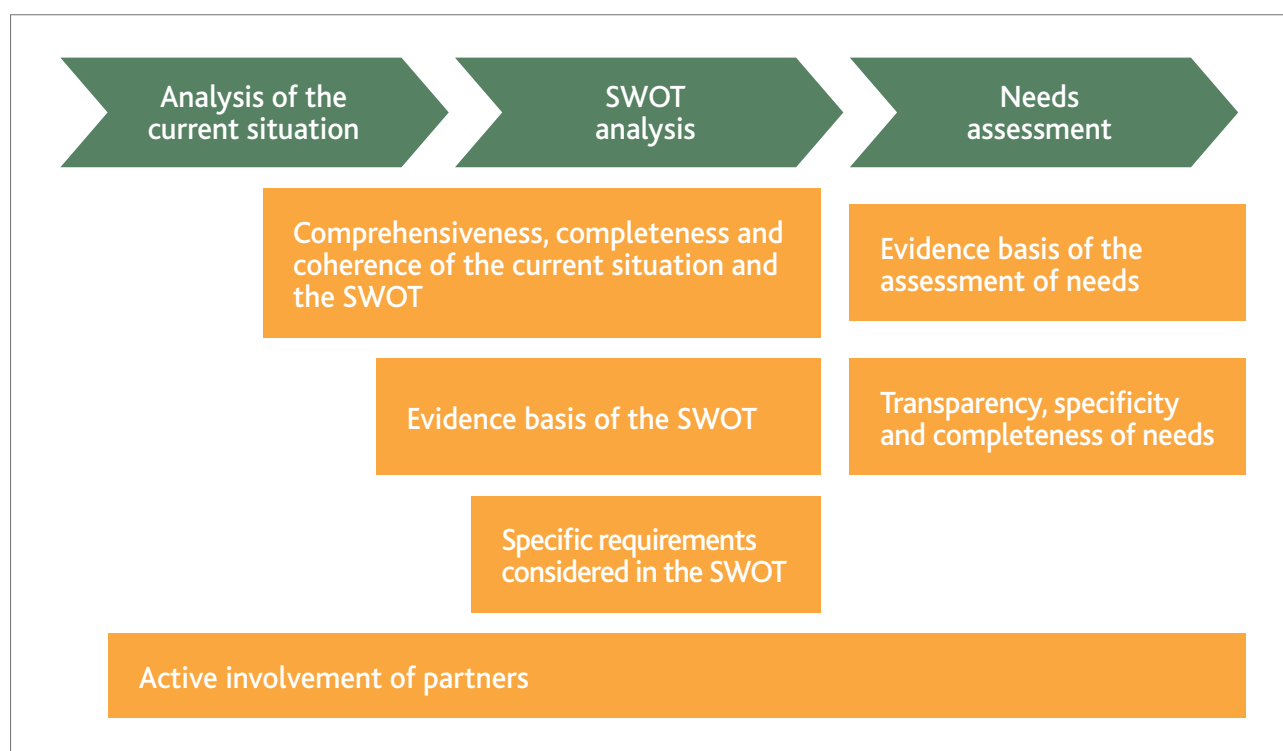
The Thematic Working Group has developed tools that contain examples of analytical tables showing how to record and structure relevant information needed for the ex ante assessment

along the logical path from the analysis of the current situation to the SWOT analysis and to the assessment of needs.

These tables support the assessment of (see Figure 2):

- completeness,
- the extent to which the assessment of needs and SWOT is based on evidence,
- evidence basis,
- specific requirements for certain objectives are taken into account, needs are specific in their content description,
- transparency and involvement of partners.

Figure 2: The logical path of the first stage of the ex ante evaluation



These tables can be used as mapping tools to be followed by the actual analysis of the information by the evaluator in order to draw conclusions and develop recommendations for the SWOT and assessment of needs.

### Guiding questions for a more focused ex ante

To further focus the ex ante evaluation on specific evaluation needs, the Managing Authority may develop specific ex ante evaluation questions alone or in cooperation with the evaluator. To support this work, examples of guiding questions and criteria

have been recommended to aid the ex ante evaluators of the CAP Strategic Plans in their task to appraise the assessment of needs including SWOT. Guiding questions can help to check if the assessment of needs and SWOT are comprehensive, complete and coherent and based on evidence specific to the territory concerned, while at the same time considering the lessons learned as well as the considerations of the SEA. *The guiding questions suggested are not mandatory and only serve as a source of inspiration to Managing Authorities and evaluators.*



### Appraisal of the intervention strategy, targets and milestones (Working Package 3):

In parallel to the abovementioned working packages, a toolbox is being developed that will focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the ex ante evaluation, appraisal of the intervention strategy, targets and milestones of the CAP Strategic Plan.

This toolbox will contain an additional set of examples of guiding questions (including criteria) supporting the appraisal of the intervention strategy, targets and milestones. Additional tools will also include examples of analytical tables to provide support to evaluators in various ex ante tasks (e.g. appraisal of the CAP Strategic Plan's contributions to CAP Specific Objectives and the assessment of results and impacts).

Draft tools of the Working Package 3 (like all abovementioned tools) will be consulted with a **Sounding Board**. The Sounding Board consists of more than 70 members, who are volunteers of the Expert Group on Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP, members

of the Rural Networks' Steering Group and other evaluation stakeholders representing Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, evaluators, researchers, network organisations, and the European Commission.

The suggestions and comments of the evaluation stakeholders are collected through a written procedure and are used to refine documents. Ongoing interaction with evaluation stakeholders in the Member States and at the EU level through the Sounding Board helps to improve outputs of the Thematic Working Group and better tailor tools to the needs of the Member States. ■

1. The current legislations are still in the proposal stage for the CAP Strategic Plan regulation (COM (2018) 392 final).
2. The scope and tasks of the ex ante evaluation are specified in Article 125 of the legal proposal for the CAP Strategic Plan regulation (COM (2018) 392 final).
3. The content of this Working Package may be subject to modification at a later stage.

A further set of draft tools will be sent to the Sounding Board for consultation in August 2019.

Participation in the Sounding Board is open to anyone who is interested in the preparation and implementation of the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan. If you want to participate in providing feedback on draft tools developed in the Thematic Working Group No.7, 'Preparing for the ex ante evaluation of CAP Strategic Plans', please express your interest by sending a email to the Evaluation Helpdesk at [info@ruralevaluation.eu](mailto:info@ruralevaluation.eu) or register [online](#).



# **STUDY ON THE CAP AND CLIMATE CHANGE: THE CASE FOR A STRONGER COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY FOR CLIMATE ACTION**



The European Commission has published on 27 May 2019 an external study to analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and EU added value of the climate action of 24 key CAP measures required or made available under the direct payments, Rural Development and Horizontal regulations. The CAP introduced climate action as one of its general objectives in 2013 involving 30% of the budget, and this study is an important element of the evaluation carried out by the European Commission to assess the impact of the CAP.



Climate action includes both mitigation in order to contribute to internationally agreed targets, and adaptation to climate change. Further linkages between the bio economy and CAP were also examined, as well as external factors that have had an effect on the CAP's overall contributions to climate action.

## Methodology

The starting point for the evaluation was the development of an intervention logic through which the potential impact of each measure on climate action could be assessed. For the 24 measures which were considered, despite the absence of a climate-related motivation for some in their design, the study found that all 24 measures had the potential of having impacts on climate action and the theoretical relationships were tested.

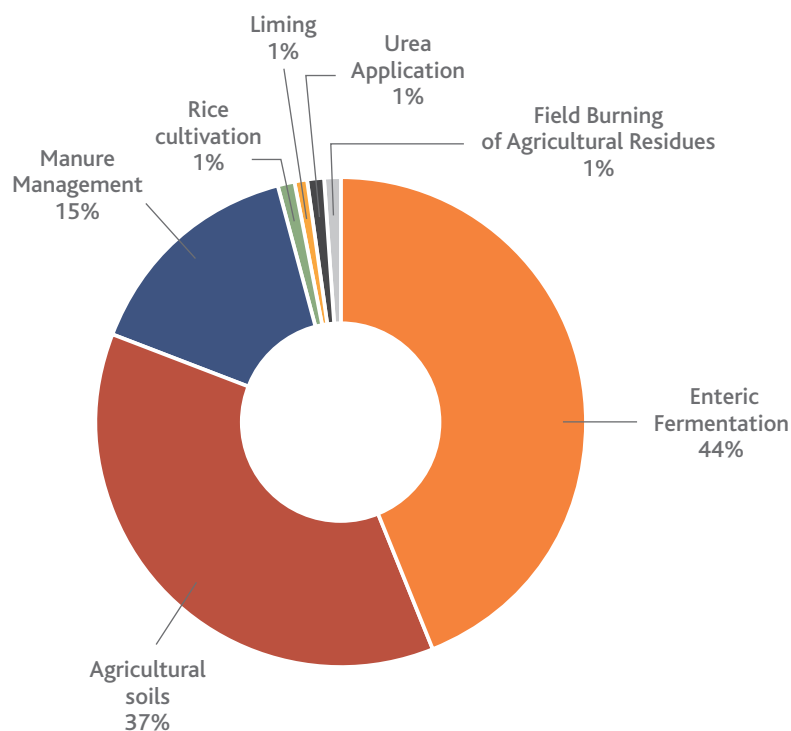
Answers to the Evaluation Study Questions (ESQs) were, apart from desk research and ten in-depth national case studies, based on an assortment of sources including:

- Official data from Member States' notifications systems on their implementation to the Commission;
- Annual Implementation Reports;
- Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN);
- Expenditure data derived from the EU outturn budget and Member States' financing plans;

- Emissions factors used for the simulation model of CAP impacts on GHG emissions were taken from a recent study done by DG CLIMA;
- Furthermore, a survey of farmers and farm advisors, as well as, case studies were carried out in ten Member States and were used to provide information on exposure to climate stresses and knowledge of uptake of CAP measures associated with relevant management practices.

Several methods were implemented to answer the ESQs. A quantitative model was built and used to simulate the emissions reductions associated with individual CAP measures. The simulation model was used to answer the ESQs on the effectiveness of the CAP measures for GHG mitigation and their efficiency. For the other ESQs a combination of literature review, statistical analysis and case studies were used to answer them.

Breakdown of agricultural emissions by inventory category





## Conclusions and results

The study's conclusions provide an overview and assessment of the impact of several CAP measures on climate change and greenhouse emissions:

- Among measures that have a positive impact on emissions, the study found that [greening](#) measures under income support have particularly contributed to a reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions thanks to the maintenance of permanent grassland and areas beneficial for biodiversity (ecological focus areas). By using a simulation model, the study concluded that these measures decreased agricultural emissions by 2% on an annual basis.
- [Rural Development](#) Programmes have also shown to contribute to a reduction of emissions for quantifiable measures. The study concluded that they have reduced emissions by 1.5% on an annual basis. In addition, organic farming, [supported by the CAP](#), has also helped reduce agricultural emissions according to the study.
- As for [voluntary coupled support](#) (VCS), income support linked to production for a sector undergoing difficulties, shows more contrasted results depending on the sector. The study found that for the livestock sector, this scheme leads to a net increase in GHG emissions, while not being able to quantify it. It is recommended to link this support to emissions related conditions in the future. For protein crops, VCS support reduces emissions but is for the moment only used on a small scale.
- As not all CAP measures' effect on climate and GHG emissions is quantifiable, the study also highlighted indirect influences. For example, income support for farmers contributes to sustaining a diversity of farms across Europe, leading to benefits for the environment. Finally, the study also recognised the EU added-value of the CAP, which has raised the level of climate ambition in Member States. It is recommended that Member States transform these ambitions into objectives in the future CAP Plans.





*'The agriculture sector and rural areas are among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It is our duty to ensure that our farmers get rewarded for the work they do and to offer them the right tools to face the effects of climate change. As highlighted by this study, more needs to be done and fast. This is why our proposals for the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy set higher environmental and climate ambitions, necessary to respond to this challenge'*

*Phil Hogan,  
Agriculture and rural development Commissioner*



Read the full study here:

[https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/content/evaluation-cap-climate-change-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/content/evaluation-cap-climate-change-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions_en)

The publication of the evaluation Staff Working Document, which is the formal end of the evaluation is envisaged for Q4/2019.







## EvaluationWORKS! 2018

In 2018, the two thematic topics of the Evaluation Helpdesk's yearly capacity building events, EvaluationWORKS! were 'Assessing RDP achievements and impacts in 2019' and 'Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD'. Twenty-five events took place from May 2018 to February 2019, involving 26 Member States.

**T**he Evaluation Helpdesk provides the overall methods and material for the EvaluationWORKS! trainings, however, each event is adapted to the individual needs and requests of the Member States and carried out by the Helpdesk's network of Geographic Experts. Participants to the capacity building events have the opportunity to have structured discussions with evaluation stakeholders to exchange on what has worked well and what potentially needs to be improved at the RDP level.

The EvaluationWORKS! 2018 events aimed to:

- **Achieve a common understanding** on the process of answering CEQs to be reported in the AIR 2019.
- **Discuss suitable evaluation approaches** for assessing RDP impacts by using tools proposed in the Guidelines 'Assessing RDP achievements and impacts in 2019'.
- **Link outcomes of discussions** with the Evaluation Plan (of the RDP and any internal EP, if existing) and identify needs for support in view of the AIR 2019.

The EvaluationWORKS! 2018 events were attended by 486 participants. The primary participant groups were Managing Authorities (41%), evaluators (20%), LAGs (11%), Paying Agencies (9%), National Rural Networks (4%) and researchers (2%). ■

Figure 1: Total participants by role

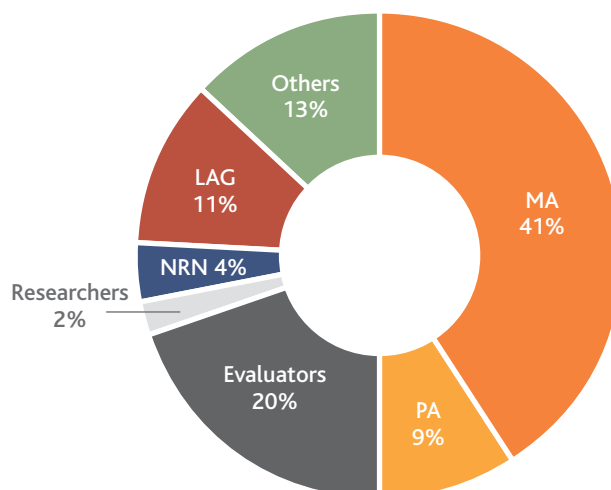
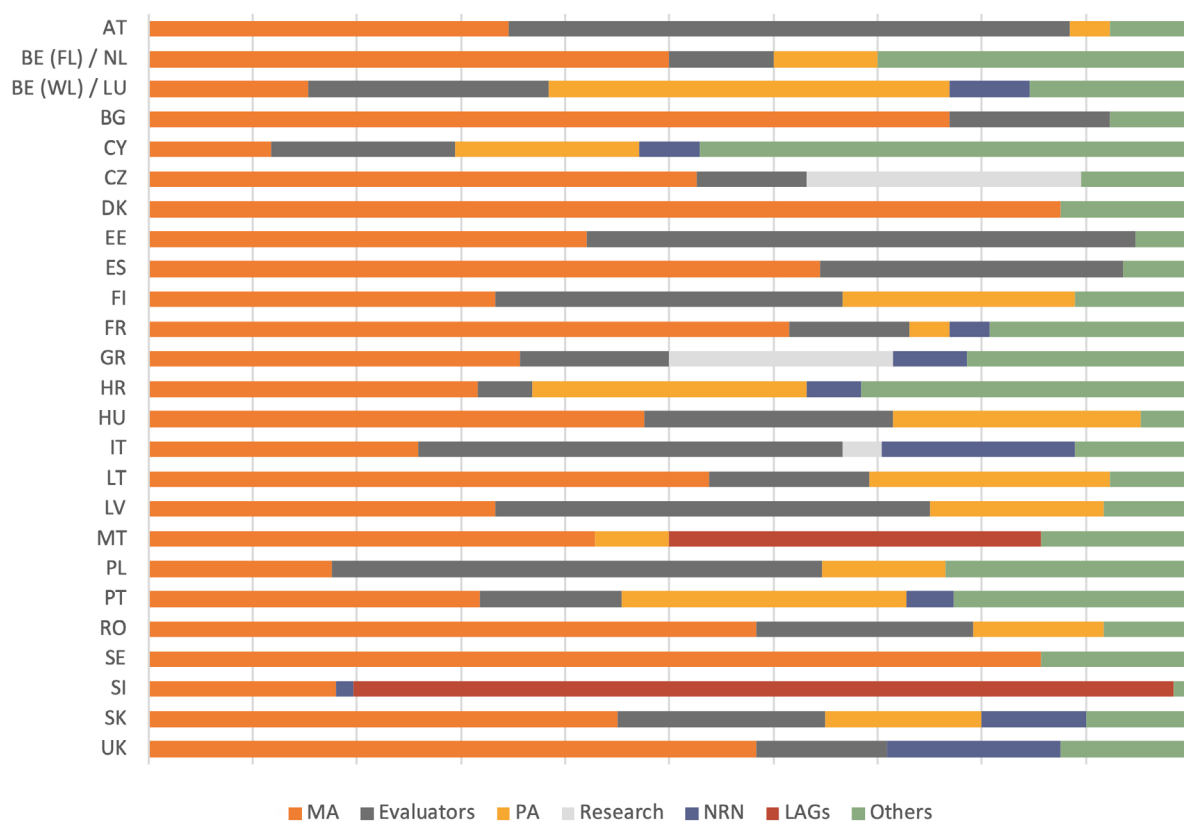






Figure 2: Participants by event and role





'The participants in the training were enthusiastic and motivated to learn more about the intervention logic and the logical models for the selection of evaluation methods. The most interesting part was the practical exercise with data from the Bulgarian rural development programme'

VYARA STEFANOVA,  
HELPPDESK GEOGRAPHIC EXPERT



DATE OF WORKSHOP:  
18 December 2018

LOCATION:  
Sofia, Bulgaria



Assessing RDP  
achievements  
and impacts  
in 2019



Overall RDP  
uptake by  
22/02/2018  
15%



Focus Areas with highest uptake

• FA 2A (49,79 %)	• FA 5D (21,62 %)
• FA 2B (27,69 %)	• FA 3A (2,95 %)
• P4 (24,92 %)	

#### MAIN CHALLENGES identified for the AIR in 2019

- The delay in contracting external evaluators;
- The lack of data for answering the CEQs.

#### MAIN SOLUTIONS identified for the AIR in 2019

- Contract the external evaluator as soon as possible;
- Review the fiches for the CEQ and try to gather the needed data;
- Send the letters for collecting the data as soon as possible;
- Use qualitative approaches for answering the CEQs when needed.
- Actions/activities for the evaluation of environmental impacts of the implementation of the RDP should be included in the evaluation plan;

#### Support needed at the EU level:

- Capacity building events in Bulgaria must be organised more frequently;
- It is recommended that the full guidelines and its annexes are translated in Bulgarian language.

'The training provided a step-by-step guidance for the necessary evaluation tasks that were very helpful for the MA participants for understanding its logic. The exercises made them think in practical terms and identify specific questions and actions.'

YANKA KAZAKOVA, EVALUATOR

'I finally understood the logic of the different indicators and how we can measure and monitor them! It feels much better now. If we want to do it properly we need to prepare the letters for information from other institutions as soon as possible.'

LIDIA CHAKRAKCHIEVA, MANAGING AUTHORITY







'The wide representation of stakeholders including the Managing Authority, evaluators and Paying Agencies, allowed us to identify and discuss several technical issues that will improve the assessment of RDP achievements and impacts in 2019 and ex post.'

VALDIS KUDINŠ,  
HELPDESK GEOGRAPHIC EXPERT



**DATE OF WORKSHOP:**

4 December 2018

**LOCATION:**

Riga, Latvia



Assessing RDP achievements and impacts in 2019



Overall RDP uptake by 05/01/2018 37%



**Focus Areas with highest uptake**

- FA 2B 59%
- FA 3B 45%
- P 4 45%
- FA 5B 40%
- FA 5E 39%

**MAIN CHALLENGES identified for the AIR in 2019**

- Should evaluators use results of completed or on-going operations for the calculation of the complementary result indicators?
- The monitoring data from the operations database is not always useful for evaluation purposes as data is filled by beneficiaries and quality control is limited.

**MAIN SOLUTIONS identified for the AIR in 2019**

- According to the amendment to Article 5(3) of Regulation (EU) No 215/2014, evaluators can also use the information on non-completed operations in the calculation of the complementary result indicators. However, evaluators have to indicate if non-completed operations have been used for the calculation of the indicator values.
- In order to improve the reliability of the information provided by the operation database further discussions between Managing Authority, Paying Agency and evaluators will be organised.

**Support needed at the EU level:**

- There is a need to exchange experiences among evaluators on how evaluation findings are developed and disseminated in other Member States.
- Evaluators are interested in finding out more about qualitative methods that can be used in the assessment, particularly, on how to organise interviews (e.g. developing questions) and on how to interpret experts' opinions).

'An extensive amount of information was provided, which is undoubtedly useful for all evaluation stakeholders. It was possible to discuss many issues in a timely manner.'

ZANE VILLERE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE



## 🌐 NETWORKING FOR EVALUATION STRAND HIGHLIGHTS

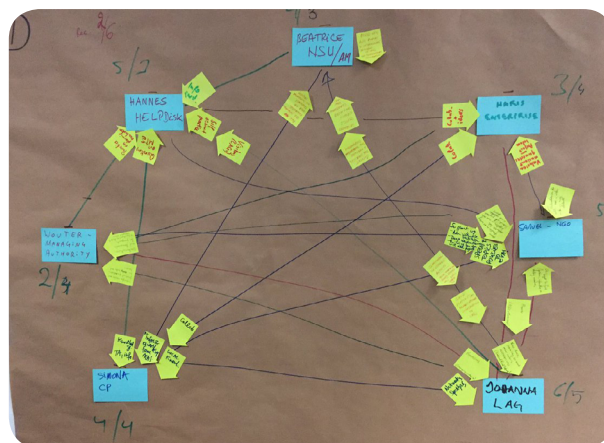
The European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development facilitated the 'Networking for Evaluation' strand of the 'networkX: Inspiring Rural Europe' event. The 'Networking for Evaluation' strand consisted of two working sessions, which looked at the interplay of how evaluation can support networks in their activities by helping them to reach their objectives and goals, as well as how networks can support evaluation through building capacity, dissemination of finding and other activities. The main objectives of these sessions were to:

- Show how evaluation can play a fundamental role in feeding back into the assessment of results and impacts of networks;
- Highlight how networks support the transfer of evaluation knowledge from one programming period to another;
- Showcase examples, practical solutions and instruments for networking on evaluation;
- To serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas and practices of Member States.

### Session 1 - 'How Evaluation Can Support Networks: A Social Network Analysis Approach'

One of the ultimate goals of a network is to connect actors towards common interests and objectives. In this session, the Evaluation Helpdesk asked how evaluation can play a supportive role in improving the quality and performance of networks. Ms Elena Pisani (Senior Researcher, University of Padua) presented the experience of an evaluation of a local network, the Local Action Group Prealpi & Dolomiti (IT). Participants were then invited to put into practice the basic concepts of a Social Network Analysis to develop recommendations for improving the exchange of practices among actors. The session ended with raising overall reflections on how evaluation can support networks.

The added value of evaluating networks lays largely on the ability to identify and address the specific needs of the involved actors. For instance, Ms Elena Pisani explained how the assessment of the social capital generated by the Local Action Group Prealpi & Dolomiti was able to show the added value generated by LEADER/CLLD at the local level, as well as to suggest concrete actions to achieve better results from the CLLD strategy. 'LEADER/CLLD can increase the social capital among local actors, and finally evaluation can measure it in terms of better decision-making process, trust and reciprocity among actors', highlighted Ms Elena Pisani during her presentation. Different methods can be applied for evaluating networks and Social Network Analysis is just one example. Its application allowed participants to visualise and analyse simulated networks and propose recommendations to facilitate the exchange of practices among actors. Story telling was also suggested by participants as a powerful method to study and communicate the effects of networks.





## Session 2 - 'Feeding Forward: How Can Networks Support Evaluation?'

In the current programming period, National Rural Networks have supported the evaluation of RDPs in various forms (e.g. organising thematic and analytical exchanges, collecting information for evaluations, organising trainings and other capacity building activities on evaluation and collecting and disseminating results of evaluations). In 2021-2027, CAP Networks will also have a notable role in supporting the evaluation of CAP Strategic Plans in the Member States. For this reason, the Evaluation Helpdesk facilitated the exchange of current experiences among participants of the conference and collected collaboratively with participants ideas on how networks can support evaluation in the future. Additionally, this session aimed to achieve a better understanding of the role of networks in transferring evaluation knowledge between programming periods.

At the beginning of the session, participants learned about five selected examples (Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia and Poland) of how NRNs have supported evaluation in the current programming period. During the interactive exercise 'Talking Wall' participants shared experiences and added more examples: (e.g. development of guidelines for self-evaluation of LAGs (ES-Catalunia), the development of a toolkit for evaluation (Belgium), organising trainings on evaluation for administrations (UK), organising regular meetings on specific evaluation issues (Italy), and sharing examples by using an internet platform (Lithuania))

In view of networks supporting evaluation in the next programming period, participants identified some ideas by addressing evaluation related challenges of the imaginary Member State 'EvaluLand' (e.g.

improving the evaluation capacity of the relevant stakeholders, identifying the evaluation needs, and understanding the new Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework). Proposed ideas confirmed that CAP Networks can play a significant role in supporting evaluation in the next programming period by, for example, organising capacity building activities (seminars and webinars) for stakeholders to raise awareness on evaluation, creating and facilitating expert groups on selected evaluation topics, collecting evaluation related data through various means (e.g. surveys, focus groups, exhibitions, contests) and disseminating evaluation findings with the help of social media, road trips, infographics, and citizen juries. ■

*We need to know how the networks are doing their evaluations. And to share good examples and how they are looking at outcomes. Let's learn from EvaluationWORKS!*

**Teemu Hauhia (Finnish Rural Network)**



Find all the reports from the 'networkX' thematic strands on the ENRD website:  
[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/network-inspiring-rural-europe\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/network-inspiring-rural-europe_en)







# TENTH GOOD PRACTICE WORKSHOP BRUSSELS: **GETTING PREPARED FOR THE EX ANTE EVALUATION OF THE CAP STRATEGIC PLAN**

The tenth Good Practice Workshop, 'Getting prepared for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan', took place in Brussels on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2019. This good practice workshop brought together 84 participants from 26 Member States, including RDP Managing Authorities, evaluators, EU level representatives (e.g. European Commission, ENRD Evaluation Helpdesk), researchers, National Rural Networks, and other actors. It focused specifically on the key issues and lessons from carrying out the ex ante evaluation in 2014-2020 and preparing for the ex ante post-2020.

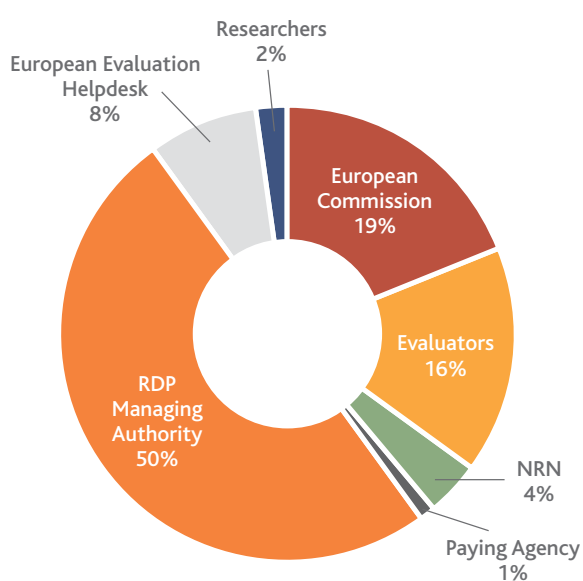
**T**he workshop had the overarching objective to raise awareness for evidence-based policy making by identifying and discussing good practices of ex ante evaluations. More specifically it aimed to provide a forum to discuss and learn from the ex ante evaluation experiences gained in the current programming period 2014–2020 and to exchange good practices on experiences and evaluation results for the preparation of the next programming period. Additionally, it aimed to identify challenges and needs for preparing the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan and develop suggestions and advice to help Managing Authorities and evaluators in their ex ante evaluation activities.

Presentations from the European Commission set the frame in relation to the legislative context and the new policy elements that will determine the scope and content of the ex ante evaluations of the CAP Strategic Plans. Case studies from seven Member States (Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Spain, and Sweden) offered insights into the preparation of the ex ante evaluations from both the current and the new programming period. ■





Participants by role and Member State



### Past and current experiences

*'The most important result of ex ante evaluation is not the final evaluation report, but the process itself. A clear definition of the final objectives is a key factor for the successful execution of this process.'*  
**Maria Coto, Evaluator, Spain**

*'One of the main challenges for the next programming period is to provide a single SWOT analysis and assessment of needs that balances the level of abstraction required at national level with concrete references to regional specificities.'*  
**Dirk Schubert, MEN-D, Germany**



**The discussion of the case studies identified a number of key messages for the evaluation stakeholders.**

**The objectives of the ex ante evaluation should be clarified and shared from the beginning and resources planned accordingly to achieve these goals.**

The objectives of the ex ante evaluation are defined by the MA in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and are the foundation for the whole process.

They need to be understood and shared between the programming and evaluation teams through a targeted dialogue.

Adequate resources should be dedicated to the ex ante evaluation and foresee mixed teams (internal/external, evaluators/MA, thematic/policy expertise) including, if necessary, capacity building for the MA/PA/policy makers.

**Continuous interaction and coordination between evaluators, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders throughout the ex ante evaluation process is a key success factor.**

When the ex ante evaluation is organised as an iterative process from the beginning, it can achieve better results.

At the tendering stage, ensure cooperation between relevant departments and ministries.

At the SWOT analysis stage, ensure coordination between those who develop the SWOT and those who draft the ToR for the ex ante.

Throughout the evaluation process, ensure close cooperation between ex ante evaluation/SEA and programming teams.

**Robust preparation of the ex ante evaluation requires the involvement of knowledgeable and experienced evaluation teams from the start.**

The programming activities benefit from the institutional memory that is fed in from the ex ante evaluation (and from past evaluations) to inform evidence-based policy making.

From the evaluation perspective, a flexible approach is needed to adapt to new and changing circumstances (legislative and procedural), while good knowledge of EU and national policy making complements the evaluation and thematic (e.g. environmental) expertise.

This knowledge and expertise should be available from the early stages (appraisal of SWOT, needs assessment).

**The appraisal of the SWOT is a critical stage of the ex ante evaluation as it builds a solid basis for the CAP Strategic Plan.**

The SWOT is the starting point for the participation of stakeholders in the development of the CAP Strategic Plan, for instance through establishing multi-stakeholder Steering Groups.

Organisational and methodological support can be beneficial for establishing common elements/ approaches to facilitate the elaboration and subsequent appraisal of the SWOT and needs assessment taking into account regional specificities as well as Pillar I and Pillar II specificities.





## Good Practice Workshop Brussels

### Preparing the ex ante evaluation

- Define clear and precise objectives and targets of the ex ante evaluation and include them in the tender specifications.
- Define coordination mechanisms between the MA, the PA, relevant Ministries, evaluators and other relevant stakeholders.
- Define the resources and foresee joint evaluation teams covering both Pillars with skilled evaluators that have knowledge on all relevant themes.
- Define a timeline for producing a coordinated ex ante evaluation report covering both Pillars in a thorough manner.

### Methodological approach of the ex ante evaluation

- Focus on appraising clear and logical links between specific objectives, interventions and indicators and between interventions, results and impacts.
- Develop evaluation questions if necessary for the ex ante evaluation at an early stage.
- Ensure a robust evidence basis for the indicators, including data from common databases to fill data gaps.

### Developing ToR for a robust ex ante evaluation

- Build on past experiences as there is a breadth of tendering experiences from previous periods and incorporate similar experiences from Pillar 1.
- A good balance between selection criteria, budget and timeline is important.
- Incorporate the SEA into the ex ante evaluation and specify the overarching role of the ex ante to include also SEA results.
- Ensure relevant skills and working methods, including expertise in all aspects covered by the ex ante evaluation (inter alia evaluation skills, knowledge of policy and Pillar 1, financial instruments and environmental expertise).
- Keep flexibility in terms of planning the evaluation process and deliverables in well-defined parts.

### Linking the ex ante evaluation and SEA to the programming process

- Establish a single steering committee including all aspects (SEA, ex ante) and all relevant stakeholders.
- Establish a common and prompt timing, allowing to continuously include ex ante and SEA recommendations into the CAP Strategic Plan (rather than at the end).
- Clearly define the most relevant data to be used in the SWOT to facilitate the ex ante and SEA processes.

### Case Study Outcomes

The outcomes of the case studies, discussions and group work brought together the issues and challenges of Member States for preparing the ex ante evaluation and culminated in a set of practical suggestions for addressing these issues.

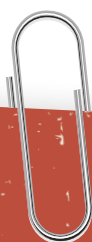
### The appraisal of the SWOT and needs assessment

- The appraisal of the SWOT and needs assessment to focus on the question if regional and sectoral specificities have been taken into account.
- The ex ante appraisal of the prioritisation or ranking of needs to look at the methods used (e.g. use of matrixes crossing multiple elements).
- The ex ante appraisal to seek an evidence-based ranking of needs.
- The appraisal of the SWOT is an iterative process and for this purpose a checklist of guiding questions could be of help for the evaluators and MAs.

### Successful ex ante evaluation in a multi-actor and multi-level context

- Start the ex ante evaluation as early as possible as it takes time to organise multiple actors' involvement.
- Involve stakeholders on one hand through a national/central steering group to obtain input from the regions in multi-region countries (bottom-up approach) and, on the other hand, by CAP specific objectives.





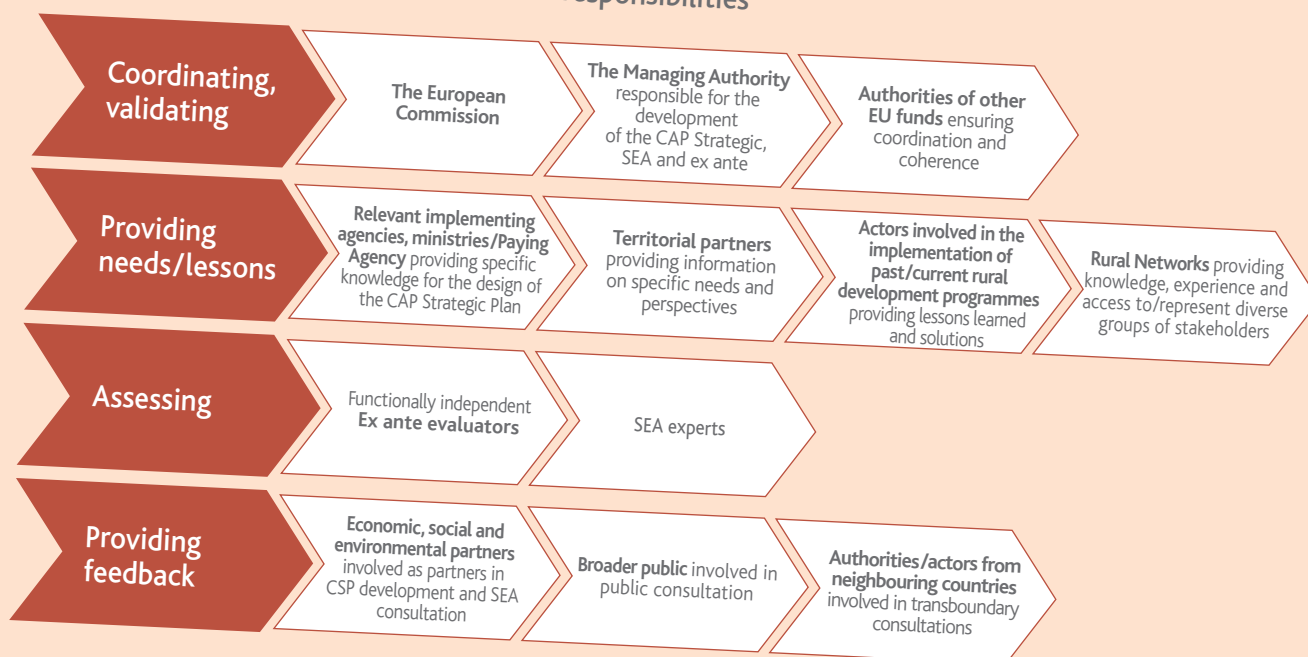
# BACK TO BASICS: THE EX ANTE EVALUATION AS AN INTERACTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

Experience has shown that a participatory ex ante evaluation process increases the ownership and the acceptance of the results by relevant stakeholders and helps to improve evaluation capacities. This can be realised through the integration of expertise and views of all relevant stakeholders, ensuring interaction and mutual learning at all stages of the ex ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

## Understanding who is doing what during the process of the ex ante and SEA

The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the ex ante evaluation and SEA process should be clearly defined and discussed. All parties should be aware of their roles and responsibilities from the beginning of the process.






Figure 1: Stakeholder checklist - roles and responsibilities





## Points to keep in mind

### SUGGESTED TIPS

 <p>Start the ex ante and SEA process as early as possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It takes time to organise the involvement of multiple stakeholders.</li> <li>• SEA actors are required to be involved from the scoping stage.</li> </ul>	Why
 <p>Establish a national/central Steering Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To obtain input from different regions/actors per CAP specific objective.</li> </ul>	
 <p>Make sure the ex ante evaluation is an iterative and cooperative process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation between relevant departments and ministries during tendering.</li> <li>• Interaction between the Managing Authority and the evaluators/SEA-experts to understand objectives, needs and share findings.</li> </ul>	
 <p>A participatory evaluation approach is adopted with all stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To better integrate the CAP Strategic Plan with the views of environmental, economic and social partners.</li> </ul>	
 <p>The ex ante evaluation adopts an empowerment approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the capacity of stakeholders to plan, implement and evaluate the CAP Strategic Plan.</li> </ul>	

### Plan stakeholder involvement in the ex ante and SEA process

It is essential to plan the involvement of stakeholders, including the phase/stage at which their involvement is required, the nature of their involvement (engagement), how they get involved (engagement methods) and the frequency of their contribution(s).

Read more about how to plan stakeholder involvement:

[TOOL 1.4 - STAKEHOLDER MAPPING CHECKLIST](#)





# UPCOMING AND PAST EVENTS CALENDAR

- **BE – 21 March 2019 – Getting prepared for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan:**  
Organised by the Evaluation Helpdesk. This Good Practice Workshop provided a forum for Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies, data providers and evaluators to discuss different approaches, challenges, and solutions related to preparing for the ex ante evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plan.  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 11-12 April 2019 – NetworX - Inspiring Rural Europe:**  
'NetworX' aims to recognise the value of networking for rural development, demonstrate the results of the past ten years of rural networking and proactively look at its future.  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **DE – 11-13 September 2019 – Evaluation and Sustainability:**  
This event is organised by the German Evaluation Society DeGeval.  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **CZ – 30 September – 4 October 2019 – Evaluation for Transformative Change: bringing experiences of the Global South to the Global North:** This event is organised by IDEAS.  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **SE – 2-4 October 2019 – SVUF:**  
This event is organised by the Swedish Evaluation Association.  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 03 October 2019 – 18<sup>th</sup> Group of Experts for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP:**  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **IT – 15-16 October 2019 – Good Practice Workshop, 'Appraising the Intervention Strategy':**  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 21 October 2019 – 12<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks Steering Group:**  
[Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – TBD 2019 – 19<sup>th</sup> Group of Experts for Monitoring and Evaluating the CAP:** [Read more >>>](#)
- **BE – 16 December 2019 – 6<sup>th</sup> Rural Networks Assembly:**  
[Read more >>>](#)

## What's Going on in YOUR Member State?

Share evaluation related events by emailing [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:** Giulia Bekk, Joanna Kiszko, Valdis Kudins, Marili Parissaki, Myles O. Stiffler, Hannes Wimmer

EUROPEAN  
EVALUATION  
HELPEDESK

FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

