Under the guidance of DG AGRI – Unit L4, the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

Good Practice Workshop
Targeted data management for evidence-based evaluation in RD

Main focus >>>

Bringing data providers and data users together

- To identify what **types of data and systems of targeted data management** are required for evidence-based evaluation in the context of the Rural Development Programmes.

- To develop **a checklist for more targeted data management** on the basis of case studies from the current programming period and an expert input on data management.

- To provide a useful **input to the *ex ante* evaluations** and the **evaluation plans**.

Insight>>>

Evidence-based evaluations and data management

Also in rural development policy there is an increasing call for accountability. In this context evaluation is asked to provide a reliable judgement on the utility of public interventions. The assessment of the policy's impact however needs to be based on empirical evidence, otherwise the judgement would become questionable. At the same time the cost and effort to create empirical evidence must be proportionate to the expected benefits.

What is empirical evidence?

A main characteristic of "empirical evidence" is that it can be verified or disproved by observation or experiment, such as direct observation to measure the impact of the intervention. Still, one cannot directly observe impacts of all interventions.

While in specific cases a counterfactual analysis (comparison with a control-group of non-treated beneficiaries/areas) may provide empirical evidence this approach may become too costly if the quality and availability of data turns out to be insufficient or if there is an unavoidable selection bias in the samples. Other quantitative methods such as multivariate analyses, OLS regression analysis, stochastic cost/risk estimation, input-output analysis or qualitative analysis like systematic case studies tracing the policy transmission of an impact are potential alternatives for evidence-based evaluation.

How to target data management to provide evidence-based evaluation?

Since future evaluation efforts and costs will depend on the availability of adequate data, monitoring systems should be systematically prepared for later evaluation purposes right from the beginning.

- Data requirements should be structured according to the type of intervention and the suggested evaluation method;
- The Managing Authority should provide access to anonymous micro data;
- Monitoring should be standardised and linked to the application and reporting systems;
- Application forms should include data characterising the applicant;
- Application forms should contain a section for forecasting results with and without funding;
- Beneficiaries should be asked to report on progress by correcting forecasts.

To read Rolf Bergs' full presentation, click **here**

New regulatory evaluation requirements and data management

Leo Maier and Petr Lapka from DG for Agriculture and Rural Development outlined the main differences in evaluation requirements for 2014-2020, highlighted what did not change compared to the current programming period and gave an overview of the different proposals for data collection and management.

What will change in 2014-2020?

- o M&E system now covers the whole CAP;
- o Impact indicators cover both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2;
- o At least one result indicator has to be defined per Focus Area (except Priority 1) captured through monitoring data / standard coefficients/ surveys;
- o Each approved operation has to be included in operations database;
- o Quantifiable target indicator(s) required for each Focus Area captured through monitoring data;
- o Evaluation Plan is a new element;
- o No Mid Term Evaluation but enhanced Annual Implementation Reports;
- o RDP beneficiaries required to provide data needed for M&E;
- o Better integration of operations databases (SFC2014 + e-Governance).

What will remain the same?

- o Common M&E system for all RDPs;
- o Common indicators;
- o Methodological guidance;
- o *Ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations (incl. net impacts) ;
- o EU level syntheses of RDP evaluations.

How will data be input and processed for monitoring and evaluation in 2014-2020?

Operations databases

- o Key information on operations completed or selected for funding shall be recorded electronically (RD Art. 77);
- o Appropriate IT system to record information and progress towards defined objectives and priorities (RD Art. 73);
- o Partnership Agreement: contribution of CSF Funds to the strategy (targets, milestones) (CPR Art. 13-15);
- o Contrbution of the financial instruments to the achievement of the programme indicators: contribution to the Union level instruments (CPR Art. 40).
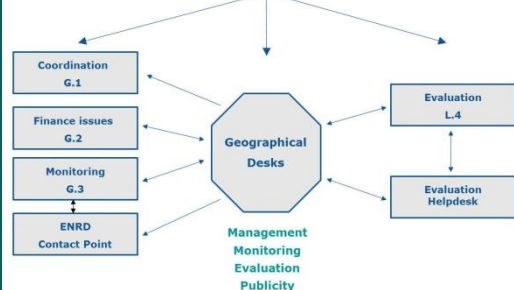
SFC 2014

- o Member States → SFC 2014:
  - Data exchange (legally binding)
  - Annexes
    - Obligatory (*ex ante* evaluation, etc.)
    - For information (pdf, doc, zip, etc.)
- o Requirements:
  - No duplication of data
  - Better reporting for users of the MS
  - Same structure for all programmes
  - Export all data into PDF

e-Governance

- o Follow up of the implementation
- o Encourage the implementation as a matter of urgency
- o Dual tracks at Member State/ regional level should be avoided
- o Further discussion / exchange of experience
  - RD / AGRI Funds Committees
  - Simplification Experts' group
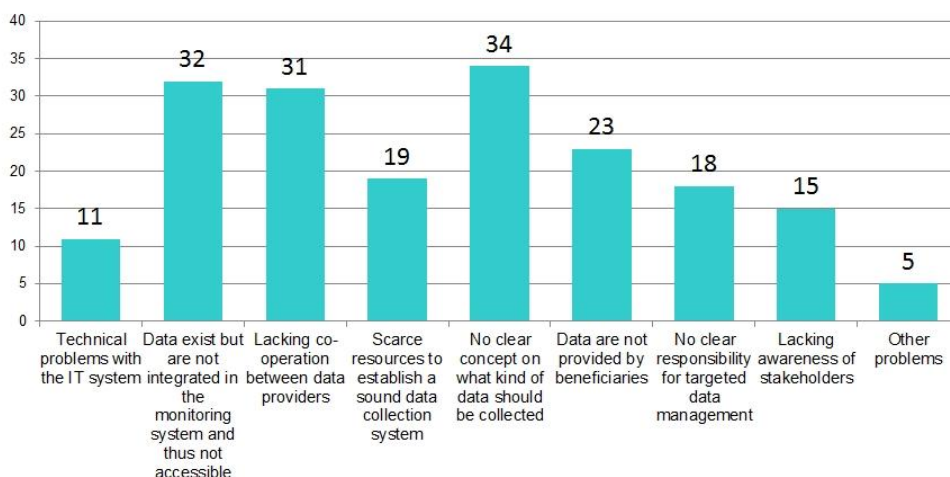 - Panta Rhei group

...and after SFC: who uses the data?

To read the full presentation, click **here**

During the registration process, the participants were asked to reply to a short questionnaire on the main difficulties encountered in providing relevant data for the assessment of impacts in the current period. Here are the results of the poll:

What are the major bottlenecks in providing sound data for the assessment of impact in 2007-2013?

Category	Value
Technical problems with the IT system	11
Data exist but are not integrated in the monitoring system and thus not accessible	32
Lacking co-operation between data providers	31
Scarce resources to establish a sound data collection system	19
No clear concept on what kind of data should be collected	34
Data are not provided by beneficiaries	23
No clear responsibility for targeted data management	18
Lacking awareness of stakeholders	15
Other problems	5

Four case studies on the challenges in data management were presented from the point of view of data providers (the blue left box) and data users (the green right box). Representatives of the following RDPs illustrated their cases: Hungary, Slovenia, France and Italy–Emilia Romagna.

To read the case studies presentations, click **here**

What are key insights in data management?

HUNGARY

Data Providers

- Strengthening human capacity
- Setting up a separate monitoring unit
- Clear definition of rules and responsibilities

Data Users

- MTE had a stronger focus on implementation issues rather than on impacts. Novelty of the method of counterfactual impact assessment

SLOVENIA

- A huge amount of data exists: how to make them more operational?
- A lot of manual work still remains for final analysis on aggregate level

- RDP data is of right quality, but sometimes not in the right format
- Integration and coordination of data on environment and agriculture is strongly recommended

FRANCE

- Creating an independent platform gathering data for evaluation purposes a good way to address the multiple needs of evaluation

- Quantitative estimation of the impacts does not seem to be a usable tool within range of the public administration but more a field for research work

ITALY – EMILIA ROMAGNA

- The strengths of a regional system is its closeness to local specificities and reduced costs for system management

- The use of GIS allows overlaying different measures on the same physical area (i.e. measures 211 and 214)
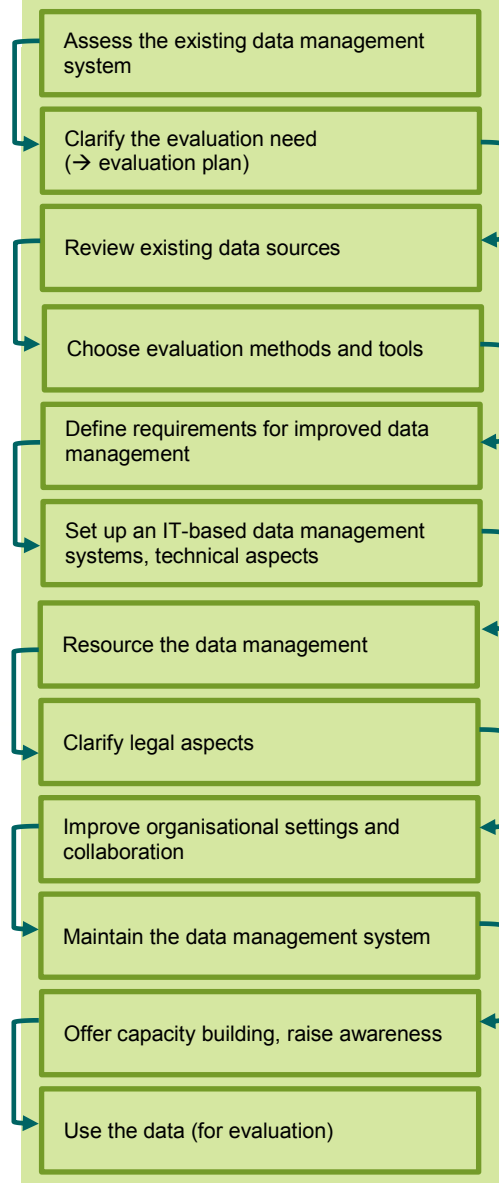
The Managing Authority of the Hungarian RDP - Ministry of Rural Development hosted the workshop with about 70 participants from 20 Member States and European Commission representatives.

Indicative roadmap >>>

Adapt your RDP data management system to the new evaluation requirements

In order to reduce the efforts and costs for data gathering and validation in the context of evaluation it is necessary to strengthen the information basis from monitoring right from the beginning. In this way future programme evaluators can more easily make use of evidence-based evaluation methods.

Already in 2012 some RDPs have started (with external support of an ex ante evaluator or expert) to thoroughly assess their monitoring systems and to prepare them for adaptation to the programming period 2014-2020.

- Assess the existing data management system
- Clarify the evaluation need (→ evaluation plan)
- Review existing data sources
- Choose evaluation methods and tools
- Define requirements for improved data management
- Set up an IT-based data management systems, technical aspects
- Resource the data management
- Clarify legal aspects
- Improve organisational settings and collaboration
- Maintain the data management system
- Offer capacity building, raise awareness
- Use the data (for evaluation)

Recommendations for setting up a targeted data management system >>>

In working groups the participants identified the main challenges of targeted data management. These challenges were then clustered and the participants clarified requirements and developed recommendations for the selected challenges. Seven key aspects were identified and recommendations formulated respectively addressed to the EC (green box), the Managing Authorities (blue box) and the beneficiaries (grey box).

		Addressees
1. Framework conditions & EU requirements	• Clarify performance framework • Clarify multi-fund approach for CLLD • Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for rural development • Monitoring & Evaluation for the whole Common Agricultural Policy • Enhanced AIR 2017	EC
2. Responsibilities & cooperation in data management	• Set up an integrated data platform • Set up an evaluation unit	MA
3. Human resource development & availability	• Provide appropriate guidance at EU level • Provide a written handbook • Establish a platform for cooperation and knowledge sharing • Organise training dedicated to RD evaluation • Establish quality control to ensure good evaluation practice • Dedicate TA-resources to the establishment of an integrated evaluation system • Establish a team of experts to ensure data-quality • Ensure continuity of staff	Benef.
4. Proportionality	• Communicate on the use of evaluation results to MA, PA, beneficiaries • Focus on priorities, ensure flex bility • Compare results of evaluations; clarify the level of detail needed • Reflect on electronic transfer of data • Define priorities of evaluation in the evaluation plan • Identify relevant data for evaluation & monitoring • Adapt the IT-system including the applications for beneficiaries • Ensure visibility of results; ensure sufficient resources; keep it flexible • Clarify the level of detail needed • Focus on the quality of data • Explain use and results • Ensure visibility of results	
5. Data needs & evaluation plan	• Define minimum requirements for the Evaluation Plan • Test *ex ante* alternative evaluation plans through creative thinking workshops • Keep Evaluation Plan flexible in order to react to new RDP preconditions • Test measure-specific evaluation. • Be aware that the devil is in the detail	
6. (Re) design of IT systems	• Maximize electronic data and minimize manual data • Find the best existing data for integration in the system (application forms) • Clarify data-collection at closing-stage of the project (either from evaluator or from monitoring system) • Improve quality of reported data (establish control system within the database) → introduce quality checks of reported data (consider proportionality of control) • Elaborate shared, clear and common definitions for data collection • Manage all data within the system (in particular for area-based measures) • Take data from existing databases rather than from beneficiaries • Ensure compat bility of different data in the system • Manage reporting: Define different reports for different users	
7. Calculating impacts at RDP level	• Provide guidance on impact indicators • Organise Good Practice Workshops / know-how exchange • Give flexibility to focus on relevant impact indicators for the RDP	

"Good Practice *targeted data management*" webpage, click **here**