

Experience of the evaluation of rural development measures in Estonia



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General overview of M&E system of the Estonian RDP

- **Monitoring indicators** are collected by **Paying Agency** (Agricultural Registers and Information Board - ARIB)
- **Annual monitoring report** that has to submit to EC by 30th June is done by **Managing Authority** (Ministry of Agriculture)
- **On-going evaluation** is done by two different evaluators:
 - Estonian University of Life Sciences – Axis 1, 3 and 4
 - Estonian Agricultural Research Centre – Axis 2
- **Mid-term evaluator** was found through public procurement and was done by **Ernst&Young Baltic AS** by 31th of December 2010
- **Ex-post evaluator** will be also found through public procurement and will be done by 31 of December 2015

General overview of the mid-term evaluation of Estonian RDP

- Mid-term evaluation of Estonian Rural Development Plan (ERDP) was performed by Ernst & Young Baltic AS **between 17/03/2010 and 31/12/2010** on request of the MA
- The mid-term evaluation covered the period between 01/01/2007 and 30/04/2010
- Mid-term evaluation is available in Estonian and in English on the webpage of Ministry of Agriculture - <http://www.agri.ee/vahearuanDED> (Ca 300 pages + appendixes)

Implementation of the ERDP

... has been satisfactory so far:

- **level of the achievement** of the objectives of the programme generally meets the expectations
- **The funds have been utilised as expected:** the amount of the granted aid forms 49%, and the amount of the paid aid, 32% of the budget for the programming period
 - In case of some measures, the number of applicants has not reached the estimated one, but at the same time with some measures the application has been very active
 - But there are problems with the payment of aid for some investment measures - the share of the payments has been lower than expected due to economic situation

Overall effect of the ERDP aid

- ... has not yet completely become visible owing to the shortness of the implementation period. It will start to become evident in the second half of the programme when the investments approved in the first calls for applications will have been implemented.

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Evaluators thoughts...

- Methods of collecting qualified data play important role in evaluation
- Novelty of the system of on-going evaluation
- Difficult to evaluate effects in such an early stage of implementing
- Evaluation of Axis 4

Qualitative methods (1)

Methods of collecting qualified data play important role in evaluation:

- **The evaluation was mainly based** on the monitoring indicators collected and analyses made **by the ongoing evaluators** which, in their turn, collected the data from the ARIB, the commercial register, Statistics Estonia and other sources. **Additionally**, in order to collect qualitative information, the mid-term evaluator performed **two surveys, 70 interviews, five focus group discussions and five panel discussions.**

Qualitative methods (2)

- Qualitative methods played important role in mid-term evaluation, especially evaluating Axis 3 and 4, where expected effects are more soft and monitoring data does not describe the results so clearly
- For evaluating Axis 3 and 4 more interviews and focus group discussions were organised

Novelty of the system of on-going evaluation (1)

- It is the **first period** where on-going evaluation has been implemented
- Process and distribution of exercises between on-going evaluator and mid-term evaluator was not very clear at the beginning despite of big amount of different methodological materials. In the terms of reference of mid-term evaluation input for monitoring indicators came from on-going evaluators.
- Although the timetable for on-going evaluators to make studies and collect monitoring indicators was well-planned, was still hard to get input for mid-term evaluation in right time

Novelty of the system of on-going evaluation (2)

- During mid-term evaluation lot of questions rose up concerning the method of collecting monitoring indicators (for example discussion whether to build up the analyses on beneficiaries of aid granted or amount paid by PA; can we base on prognoses while evaluating effects?)

Difficult to evaluate effects in such an early stage of implementing

- It was difficult to evaluate measure impacts by the moment of the mid-term evaluation (for example mid-term evaluation of Fisheries Fund do not even try to evaluate effects)
- If we look measures that are directed at the improvement of the quality of life, then there were important impacts related with improvement of employment and life quality. During the period of mid-term evaluation it was too early to assess the impact on improvement of employment and quality of life as many projects were not finished yet. Therefore for example employment indicators based on the prognoses of beneficiary's himself (it means they assessed potential impact)

Evaluation of Axis 4:

- Qualitative methods played important role in mid-term evaluation of Axis 4. In cooperation with rural network unit on-going evaluator worked out monitoring indicators to assess the success of Leader measure
- Good example of the general performance of method: on the basis of the same logic of the assessment, but implementing analyses separately, on-going evaluator and mid-term evaluator reached to the same results

Mid-term evaluation report about Estonian NRN

- NRN activities are not very deeply evaluated, these are covered under paragraphs about Leader measure:
 - NRN has contributed for unofficial co-operation between LAGs
 - Evaluator recommends to strength publicity work and promotion of Leader measure within LAGs and on level of NRN, especially in the private sector. For this there should be well-weight and coherent publicity plan, rather than increase of resources channelled to publicity work.
- and also under ERDP horizontal evaluation questionnaire – question 17: To what extent has the Estonian Network for Rural Development contributed to establishing good rural development practice?

To what extent has the European Network for Rural Development contributed to establishing good rural development practice? (1)

There is mainly description about the NRN work. Only two short sections gave some evaluation that came out from the interviews conducted among government authorities and umbrella organisations, in focus groups and panel discussions that touched on the **general performance of the Rural Network which received positive feedback**. With NRN activities were most often associated:

- dissemination of best practices
- Leader action groups
- Videos about Leader best practises shown on public television were mentioned as examples

To what extent has the European Network for Rural Development contributed to establishing good rural development practice? (2)

In conclusion, it can be said that Rural Network has been functioning successfully. The employees of the Rural Network consider the swift launch of the Leader-measure and the initiating the work on new important topics to be the most successful activities.



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