



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Directorate F. Horizontal aspects of rural development
F.3. Consistency of rural development

Brussels, 11 December 2007
NN/ D(2007)

EVALUATION OF THE STUDY
"AVAILABILITY OF ACCESS TO COMPUTER NETWORKS IN RURAL AREAS"

Subject: Quality assessment of the evaluation of the study "Availability of access to computer networks in rural areas" Contract No: 30-CE-0099278/00-78

1. GLOBAL REMARK

The following text and grid provides a global assessment of the above-mentioned evaluation. The assessment has been prepared at the end of the evaluation process.

The judgement is made on the methodological approach followed to answer the evaluation questions, but also to some extent on the created databases, results, conclusions or recommendations reached by the contractor.

1. Meeting the needs: Does the study adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?

Overall the evaluation report addresses well the requirements of the terms of reference.

The first part is well structured and provides a detailed analysis of success factors and what drives and enables the ICT take-up in rural areas, including a clear overview of possible benefits, impacts, problems and barriers. The description and the analysis in this part are based on real project applications (established in a separate database) which add value to the study. The developed Guide could be useful for future project applications and managers as well as for policy makers, but is a bit weak in describing its possible impact on existing projects. The different project types are sufficiently described, but some analytical weaknesses prevent the clear impact on, and linkage with, several economic indicators and impacts (such as employment, growth, finance, etc.) as well as comparison between different territories.

The study's questions in the second part are answered with a varying degree of quality and details. The assessment of the structure and evolution of rural demand for ICT could have been elaborated further with more detailed conclusions and proposals on how could be solved existing problems encountered during the analysis. Similar assessment difficulties could be observed for the part on the EU policy contribution, including the EU rural development policy. Much better is described the section on factors influencing the demand for ICT in rural areas where the analysis is based on sound arguments streaming from the created database of best ICT projects.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

2. Relevant scope: Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?

The context and purpose of the study are clearly described. The rationale of the policy is correctly interpreted and the set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts of the policy are well examined. Different aspects (positive and negative) of the policy are taken into account in the Guide as well as in the descriptive part of the Review.

Policy interactions and consequences at Community level are, however, described to a limited extent.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

3. Defensible design: Is the study design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for addressing the tasks?

Overall, the study design allowed the evaluators to gear the different tasks to a good extent and the database created by the contractor has generally permitted to address the study questions adequately, despite certain analytical limitations.

The case studies have significantly contributed to underpin the findings and to overcome methodological limitations. Precise data on certain economic indicators in the case-

studies has been limited due to the lack of statistical data collection, methodology used or private information that could not be shared.

The approach could have been elaborated if it has incorporated a territorial analysis based on the collected case-studies.

Final assessment: Good

4. Reliable data: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?

Adequate efforts have been completed by the consultant for complementing available primary and case-study data with reliable secondary data. The access to, and use of secondary data as well as the assessment of the sources has been, however, limited especially within the analytical part of the Review.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

5. Sound analysis: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that the study tasks are addressed in a valid way?

The analysis is considered good especially when it comes to the factors affecting ICT demand in rural areas. The analysis has a clear structure and the methodology followed allows the study tasks to be correctly addressed.

The assessment of the EU policy instruments, however, remains general. This relates especially to the synergies between the different policy instruments delivering ICT in rural areas. The contribution of the rural development policy and its demarcation with the regional policy is presented to a satisfactory level.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

6. Credible findings: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?

Findings do generally follow logically from the analysis and their justification is stemming from the developed database of case-studies and experience of the contractor. Most findings are driven by the analysis of the information in the case-studies.

Final assessment: Good

7. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results? Are they unbiased?

The conclusions provided in the report are clear and are based not only on observation of general trends, but also on specific empirical data, cases and experience. They address different levels of the policy-making and provide clear linkage with the analytical sections.

Final assessment: Good

8. Usefulness of the recommendations: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?

The recommendations do stem from the analysis and the conclusions, but do not target explicitly EU or national/regional levels and do not provide solution for better integration/synergy of the different EU policy instruments. A good proportion of expert judgment is included, which however results in satisfactory and useful recommendations.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

9. Clear report: Does the report clearly describe the policy evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the study, so that information provided can easily be understood?

The report, in particular the descriptive part, sufficiently describes the context and purpose of the policy. However, the outcomes of the evaluation part could have been presented in a more reader friendly way. As mentioned above, in some cases the presentation of the EU policy instruments makes it difficult to link certain conclusions with their respective analytical basis.

Final assessment: Satisfactory

The overall assessment of the evaluation: Satisfactory

Nivelin Noev

Technical manager

Cc: Mr L. Maier (AGRI/G4), Mr Th. Lesaffer (AGRI/G4)

Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is:	Unacceptable	Poor¹	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
1. Meeting the needs: Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?			X		
2. Relevant scope: Is the rationale of the policy examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?			X		
3. Defensible design: Is the evaluation design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for answering the main evaluation questions?				X	
4. Reliable data: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?			X		
5. Sound analysis: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way?			X		
6. Credible findings: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?				X	
7. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?				X	
8. Usefulness of the recommendations: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?			X		
9. Clearly reported: Does the report clearly describe the policy being evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?			X		
The overall quality rating of the report is considered			X		

¹ The foundation "Poor" should be considered as weak as the contractual obligations are considered to be fulfilled.