



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
AGRICULTURE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate G. Economic analyses and evaluation  
**G.4. Evaluation of measures applicable to agriculture**

Brussels,

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN VIEW OF POST-2006 RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

**Subject: Quality grid based on the Final Report submitted by EPEC on 4  
October 2004**

### **PRELIMINARY REMARK**

The following text and grid provides a global assessment of the above-mentioned evaluation work. The Commission steering group in charge prepared it at the end of the evaluation process.

If the report is to be published on the Internet, the present grid, with the comments of the steering group, will complement the final report.

The judgement is made on the methodological approach followed to answer the evaluation questions, not on the results, conclusions or recommendations reached by the contractor. It has to be pointed out that it is neither the opinion of the evaluators nor the content of their conclusions that are judged here, but only the methods used for obtaining them.

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

The evaluation fully fits the Terms of Reference and sufficiently meets the information needs of the Commission with regard to the lessons that one can draw at this stage from the practical experiences of the implementation of the Rural Development programmes 2000-2003, as evidenced in the national/regional mid-term evaluation reports. However, where the outlook on future challenges and options for Rural Development policy is concerned, putting the national/regional evaluation reports at the centre of the analysis was not enough. They should have been supplemented to a larger extent than has been the case with information from other sources in order to underpin answers given or to fill gaps where the reports did not allow for an answer to certain (sub-)questions. On the whole, however, the evaluator delivered what was envisaged in the tender, and the evaluation questions listed in the Terms of Reference have been addressed.

Global 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 evaluation has fully examined the rationale and results of Rural Development policy as it is currently conceived, even though the analysis was constrained by the limited size of the sample of reports and the incompleteness of their answers to the Common Evaluation Questions set out in the Commission guidelines for the mid-term evaluations. Data on output and spending could be supplemented. The evaluation attempted to identify interactions, interdependencies, and possibly discrepancies between Rural Development measures or between Rural Development programmes and other regional policies, even if the LEADER experience seems to not have been assessed in its full relevance. There are also incidences where the evaluator attempted to ‘think outside the box’ and assess alternative approaches to Rural Development. However, in those cases more rigour and, where different approaches are actually presented, more detail would have been helpful.

Global assessment:   satisfactory

**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?**

The composition of the team of reviewers and the methodology for synthesising the national/regional evaluation reports with regard to the ‘Common Evaluation Questions’ presented in the Commission guidelines was adequate. However, a framework of analysis which would have allowed exploiting the experiences from the national/regional programmes also with a view to the ‘Wider Evaluation Questions’ was not sufficiently developed. The organisation of the interaction between the national reviewers and the core team could have been better (cf. also point 5 below). Particularly for the Wider

Evaluation Questions the evaluation was handicapped by the limited exploitation of further documentation or the absence of own efforts for fact-finding.

Global assessment: satisfactory

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

The data to be used were largely pre-defined by the Terms of Reference. The sample of reports to be assessed seems to have been sufficiently representative to allow for reliable overall statements. However, the quality in terms of robustness of findings and hence the reliability of the national/regional evaluation reports varied greatly and negatively affected the extent to which robust findings could be presented in this evaluation. As stated above, further documentation was not used to the extent possible. The data sources are clearly identifiable throughout the report.

Global assessment: satisfactory

**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?**

The analysis of the information presented in the national/regional evaluation reports was carried out in a systematic manner as far as it followed the structure of the Commission guidelines. However, especially for the more forward-looking 'Wider Evaluation Questions' the analysis was to a certain extent impaired by shortcomings regarding methodology or organisation of work (see also point 3 above). For example guidelines for the reviewers of the national/regional reports were not equally detailed for all questions and lacked clear judgement criteria. Also, inconclusive findings from national/regional reports are at times repeated in a too uncritical manner and for some important transversal and/or wider evaluation questions, answers are limited to a comprehensive listing of results from national/regional reports. In both instances more efforts for own fact-finding or analysis by the evaluator would have allowed for more conclusive answers to the evaluation questions and could have improved the overall quality of the report.

Global 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?**

The evaluators were very conscientious of those instances where the information basis for answering some of the evaluation questions was not robust enough, and tried to avoid any judgements which were not sufficiently founded by the sources exploited. The findings are generally well-justified and follow the analysis logically. However, the link

between conclusions and recommendations presented and the underlying analysis of data is not always immediately evident.

Global assessment:   satisfactory

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

The evaluators put much effort into formulating clear and useful conclusions. The structure of their presentation testifies to a solid and problem-oriented understanding of the evaluation task. With the slight reservation mentioned in point 6, conclusions are credible within the limits of data availability and evaluation methodology.

Global assessment:   satisfactory

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

Recommendations point towards directions to follow, but are rather general in character. Detailed advice which could immediately be put into practice is not given. The conclusions are fair and unbiased.

Global 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 evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?**

The report is well-structured, written in a very clear language and therefore easily understandable

Overall judgement:   good

**Taking into account the contextual constraints on the evaluation, the overall quality rating of the evaluation work is considered**

**satisfactory**

<b>Concerning these criteria, the evaluation work is:</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>1. Meeting the needs:</b> Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?			<b>X</b>		

<b>2. Relevant scope:</b> 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		
<b>3. Defensible design:</b> 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		
<b>4. Reliable data:</b> To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?			X		
<b>5. Sound analysis:</b> 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		
<b>6. Credible findings:</b> Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?			X		
<b>7. Validity of the conclusions:</b> Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?			X		
<b>8. Usefulness of the recommendations:</b> Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personal or stakeholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?			X		
<b>9. Clearly reported:</b> 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	
<b>Taking into account the contextual constraints on the evaluation, the overall quality rating of the report is considered</b>			X		