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STUDY ON HIGH NATURE VALUE INDICATOR FOR EVALUATIONS

Subject: Quality grid based on the Final Report submitted by IEEP (Institute for European Environmental Policy)

PRELIMINARY REMARK

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

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 study adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?

The study addresses well the information needs of the commissioning body and fits fully the terms of reference. The study provides a broad and well structured overview of the existing concepts for the high nature value indicator and presents clearly and easily understandable common definitions and an operational concept for a high nature value indicator for evaluation.

On the whole, the evaluator delivered fully what was envisaged in the tender dossier and the all tasks listed in the Terms of Reference have been addressed.

Global assessment: **excellent**

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 study examines fully the scope relevant for developing the concept of a high nature value indicator for evaluation. In this respect no rationale of a policy had to be examined.

Nevertheless, the study elaborates clearly on the context of the indicator and the high nature value concept as well as on intended and unintended consequences of the indicator for certain rural development measures and the evaluation of rural development programmes.

Global assessment: **good**

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?

The methodological design for developing the indicator is carefully reasoned and clearly presented. The methodology has been followed by first identifying typologies on which to base the identification of the high nature value indicator.

The study team was flexible in adapting the methodology if needed. The different concepts of high nature value farmland, forestry, features and traditional agricultural landscapes are well embedded in the overall methodology, even though they differ extremely in their concept.

The methodology is clearly explained and appropriate for fulfilling the tasks of the study.

Global assessment: **good**

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

Multiple ways of data collection were effectively targeted. The sampling of the data collection ensures a reliable data basis on which the concept for the indicator was developed. The data sources are clearly identifiable in the report.

One key aspects of the study was to present possible data sources which can be used immediately for the high nature value indicator. The study presents different data sources available and how to use them while leaving the necessary freedom to the Member States for choosing also additional data sources if appropriate.

The data sources presented are limited and not always fully adequate for their intended use, but as no better data sources exist the approach was appropriate and the limits of the data sources are clearly stated in the report.

Global assessment: **good**

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 of the different high nature value concepts and of the information on high nature value was very good. The analysis was extremely difficult to undertake because of the lack of consistent European data and diverging concepts of high nature value which had to be integrated in the work on the indicator.

The quantitative and qualitative information was well used for addressing the tasks and for developing an operational high nature value indicator for evaluation. The different tools used and presented were appropriate, making use of different quantitative and qualitative tools.

Global assessment: **excellent**

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 definitions developed for the high nature value farmland, features, forestry and the traditional agricultural landscapes as well as the concept for the high nature value indicator are based on the analysis and are well justified. The reasoning for the approach chosen is well explained, the assumptions made and the methodological limitations of the indicator are carefully described.

Global assessment: **good**

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

Conclusions, which take in this study the form of the suggested high nature value indicator for evaluation, are laid out in a clearly understandable and detailed manner.

The proposed indicator is based on a sound analysis and credible findings. It is not biased and given the data constraints, the indicator proposes a balanced and prudent approach for measuring the impact of rural development measures.

Global assessment: **good**

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

The indicator as well as the recommendations for its future implementation is fair and unbiased. The recommendations concerning future data needs and possibilities for the development of the indicator are well explained, based on the findings of the report and are useful.

However, the focus of the study was on the development and implementation of the high nature value indicator and not on recommendations for the future.

Global assessment: **good**

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 is well-structured and written in an easily understandable language. The indicator, different ways of its implementation for the Member States and possible effects are well presented. Also the methods used developing the indicator and its difference and/ or similarity to other high nature value concepts are clearly explained.

Global assessment: **good**

The overall quality rating of the report is considered: good

Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is:	Unaccep- table	Poor	Satisfac- tory	Good	Excel- lent
1. Meeting the needs: Does the study 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 study design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for addressing the study tasks?				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 the tasks are addressed 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 study, so that information provided can easily be understood?				X	
The overall quality rating of the report is considered				X	