

Guidance note M – The Rural Development Evaluation network

This guidance note presents a short description the evaluation network in the framework of the European network for Rural Development.

The purpose of this guidance note is:

- To provide information about the role and the tasks of the evaluation network
- To explain the organisation of the evaluation network

1. THE LEGAL BACKGROUND

The new Council Regulation on Rural Development 1698/2005 foresees in Art. 67, as a part of technical assistance for Rural Development Policies, a Rural Development Network to be established at Community level.

This Article the European Rural Development Network stipulates, among others, to “*set up and run expert networks with a view to facilitating an exchange of expertise and supporting implementation and evaluation of the rural development policy*” (Art 67,e).

The Commission intends to set up, as a part of the European Rural Development Network, an Evaluation Network to fulfil these functions.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the evaluation network is to help establishing good practice and capacity building in evaluation, thereby increasing the utility of monitoring and evaluation as tools for program management. In this respect, the evaluation network should:

- Organise regular meetings for evaluation actors at national and EU level
- Establish good evaluation practice on evaluation
- Run a helpdesk for evaluation
- Provide support on indicators and evaluation questions
- Support the creation of data bases and other information sources,
- Disseminate evaluation-related information to relevant actors
- Improve data collection at programme level
- Identify needs and help to establish thematic studies
- Advise programming authorities and rural actors in rendering annual reports and evaluation reports
- Support the Commission in carrying out the mid-term evaluation synthesis

3. ORGANISATION

The evaluation network will work under the responsibility of the evaluation function of the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, in close co-operation with the geographical units and the unit responsible for consistency of rural development.

The technical task of the evaluation network will be carried out by an external contractors with a contract established by an open call for tender. The contractor will act in close co-operation with and under the supervision of the Commission, but will operate independently in its daily management of technical tasks.

Actors at level of Member States (administrations, evaluators, academics, stakeholders) will be involved via regular seminars, discussion of thematic studies, and the dissemination of a newsletter.