



ENVIEVAL

Development and application of new methodological frameworks for the evaluation of environmental impacts of rural development programmes in the EU

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About the project

The EU rural development regulation ((EC) 1698/2005) obliges all Member States to establish a system of ex-ante, mid-term, ongoing and ex post evaluations, for each rural development programme. The ‘Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework’ (CMEF) defines the requirements of monitoring and evaluation, and specifies a number of quantitative common indicators applicable to each programme. Member States and programme partnerships can define additional indicators in a flexible manner, but in accordance with the general principles of the CMEF. This approach is more consistent than earlier evaluation approaches, but significant issues remain: (i) the linkages between the different levels of indicators; (ii) the linkages between indicators and different rural development measures; (iii) the complexity and data requirements of impact indicators; (iv) counterfactual development for measures implemented across large areas, and (v) the quantification of net impacts of the programmes at the macro-level and establishing causal-effects relationships.

Environmental impacts of rural development measures are strongly influenced by site-specific circumstances, may take a long time to emerge and often depend on a range of other intervening factors. Recent methodological developments, for example in relation to environmental farm planning and modelling, environmental impact assessments, life cycle assessments, spatial econometrics, regional modelling of farming, and mixed method case studies have improved the understanding and capacity of analysing the impacts of farming and forestry on the provision of public goods in different rural environments. Recent advances in the development of indicators, data availability and geographic analysis provide new opportunities to address existing key challenges of the CMEF.

Against this background, **the main aim of ENVIEVAL is to develop and test improved tools for the evaluation of environmental impacts of rural development measures and programmes in EU Member States.** In order to achieve this main aim, the project has five objectives:

- To review implemented rural development programmes, existing monitoring and indicator systems, and new methodological developments in environmental policy evaluation
- To develop new methodological frameworks for the evaluation of net environmental effects of rural development programmes against their counterfactual
- To test and validate the selected evaluation methods through public good case study applications in the partner countries and close collaboration with the European Evaluation Network, national and regional evaluators and managing authorities
- To assess the cost-effectiveness of the tested indicators and evaluation methods
- To provide a methodological handbook for the evaluation of environmental impacts of rural development programmes.

The main innovative aspects of the new methodological frameworks are that they enable the integration of micro- and macro-level evaluations (and their results) and provide guidance on the selection and application of cost-effective evaluation methods to estimate net effects of rural development programmes on the different main public goods from farming and forestry.

ENVIEVAL will cover a set of EU Member States of Germany, UK, Greece, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, and Hungary. The state and extent of the provision of different public goods from agriculture such as biodiversity, water quality, landscapes and animal welfare vary greatly across the different rural





environments in the partner countries, as do the priorities in the rural development programmes, so providing a menu of different key rural development measures across all axes. Agricultural systems vary from intensive farming with fertile soils and favourable climatic conditions, to extensive livestock systems in some of the most marginal and remote areas in the EU which also suffer from unfavourable natural conditions and isolation from markets. Agricultural sectors in the Baltic States and Hungary are going through a process of significant structural change affecting the quality and quantity of public goods they provide. The differences in the provision of public goods, rural development programmes and agricultural structures provide a diverse setting for the testing of improved tools to evaluate the environmental impacts of rural development programmes in a set of case studies which will also take account of different data requirements and availability.

The methodological frameworks and evaluation tools will be tested through the application of public good case studies in selected study areas in the partner countries. The public good case study approach allows the development, testing and integration of evaluation methods according to their suitability for specific environmental objectives, and reflects the central aim of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to deliver public goods from farming and forestry. The selection of the public goods case studies builds on their relevance to farming and forestry, with respect to the environmental objectives of CAP and the structure of the CMEF. The cost of developing and applying the different indicators, monitoring requirements and evaluation methods and their impacts on the quality of the evaluation results will be compared and tested in the public good case studies, considering the robustness of the results, the level of details and the ability to draw generic conclusions.

ENVIEVAL will provide valuable information for evaluators and policy-makers on the suitability and selection of different evaluation methods in future evaluations taking into account differences in data availability between Member States, environmental aspects, skills of the evaluators and existing financial resources. A user-friendly methodological handbook will synthesise fact sheets on the development and application of the different evaluation tools and provide guidance to evaluators and policy-makers for future evaluations of EU rural development programmes.

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