

ExAnte Evaluation of the 2014-2020 RDF
Report on activities carried out and currently in progress on 30.04.2014 (1st draft)

Executive Summary

The ex ante evaluation of the Rural Development Programme is designed to improve the quality of programming, as confirmed by EU documents which emphasise the interactive nature and the integrated modular approach of the ex ante evaluation process. The ex ante evaluation is aimed at ensuring that the proposals in the programme are justified and that the proposed priorities, objectives, measures and funding are appropriate for meeting the identified and estimated needs. The ex ante evaluation should be the test for checking whether the needs assessment is complete and balanced, whether the objectives are tailored to the needs and whether the strategy, the activities and resources assigned to the programme are appropriate for meeting the set objectives and targets.

The programming can be divided into four main phases during which the ex ante evaluator, using an interactive approach, formulates observations and recommendations which are gradually incorporated into the programme as it is finalised, and in particular:

- Phase 0: preparatory activities – documentary analysis, studies and in-depth analysis;
- Phase 1: evaluation of the strategy – SWOT analysis and needs assessment;
- Phase 2: definition of the intervention logic of the programme, including the appropriateness of the budget allocations, aims and a framework for results, paying particular attention to the key indicator analysis;
- Phase 3 : definition of governance, management and implementation systems and lastly the completion of the programming document with the inclusion of the ex ante evaluation.

Subsequent versions of the draft include the structure of the evaluation procedures which, in this draft, mainly concern Phase 0 and Phase 1 of the ex ante evaluation.

We currently lack a draft programme so the evaluation criteria and the observations in this draft are drawn from a series of documents sent to the programmer regarding the contextual analysis and the SWOT analysis for priorities and context indicators (the last document was sent on 28 April 2014). To complete the evaluation of Phase 1 of the ex ante evaluation, the significant needs and thus all the investment priorities and programme objectives need to be clarified, identifying the expected results and the indicators which have a crucial role for the correct strategic definition of the programmes.

In particular, for Phase 0 “Preliminary activities” of the ex ante evaluation of the RDP, the preliminary activities were set up and concluded. The following activities were involved for the evaluation process:

- ongoing analysis of the EU and Italian documents related to the ex ante evaluation;
- ongoing analysis of the strategic documents of the RDP on which the construction of the logical framework of the RDP should be based. As well as the approved Strategic Regional Document, the analysis also took into account strategic guidelines for rural development in Campania (a document formulated by the Regional Department for Agriculture in association with the Italian Institute of Rural Economics [INEA])¹;
- Analysis of the EU and Italian documents required for the evaluation of the draft of the key indicators plan² and the documents of the monitoring system. To this end, an in-depth analysis was carried out of the ex ante conditions of rural development in the light of new EU guidelines and the ex ante conditions of administrative capacity (especially concerning the running of programmes and monitoring systems) and the conditions regarding indicators (focusing on the adequacy of regional information systems and the reliability of the main statistical sources);
- Ongoing analysis of the EU documents required to define the evaluation plan of the RDP.

With regard to Phase 1 concerning *Evaluation of the Strategy*, work was begun on the preliminary ex ante evaluation activities of the SWOT analysis of the programme and the needs assessment and the logical links between the two.

In order to carry out the activities, the evaluator took part in a series of programming meetings designed to identify the key elements for the SWOT analysis which were organised according to the 6 priorities of the RDP. During these meetings, the evaluator made some initial observations to provide evaluation feedback in real time that could be implemented immediately. The following conclusions were drawn from the meetings with the programmer and the analysis of the documents:

- o given the short amount of time available, the thematic sub-programmes discussed in autumn 2013 with the partnership would appear impossible to be implemented; these sub-programmes were not considered in the current SWOT analysis³;

¹ In conjunction with the Italian Institute for Rural Economics [INEA], the Department of Agriculture in Campania (*Assessorato all'Agricoltura della Campania*) formulated the document compiled in September 2013 "Linee guida di indirizzo strategico per lo sviluppo rurale della Campania" (Strategic guidelines for rural development in Campania). This document represents the contribution of the Department, during the Unitary Programming stage, to the creation of the RDP, which was approved by the Regional Government in December 2013. The RDP acquired the guiding principles of the strategic guidelines for rural development which were sent to, and discussed with, the Economic and Social Partnership (PES) between September and October 2013 with the aim of extending a commonly agreed approach.

² Including the Working document "Rural Development programming and target setting (2014-2020) – Indicator plan tables" (2013).

³ According to the document of the Department of Agriculture in Campania, *Linee Guida di indirizzo strategico per lo sviluppo rurale della Campania* (Strategic guidelines for rural development in Campania), in the version prepared in September 2013, the following thematic sub-programmes were to be implemented:

1. small farms pursuant to article 20, section 2, third paragraph;
2. mountainous areas pursuant to article 33, section 2;
3. short supply chains (agricultural and food supply chains and the agricultural-energy supply chains);

The following sub-programmes were not designed to be implemented:

- young farmers;
- women in rural areas;
- alleviation of climatic changes and changes in biodiversity.

- The role of the RDP in the implementation of the strategy for inland areas should be clarified and the aspects concerning integration with other sources of funding should be described in greater detail. This aspect is particularly significant given that resort to Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), which imposes strong coordinating action and which is required by the European Commission, is obligatory for the RDP;

- further examination is required of the contextual analysis (which underlies needs assessment) in the light of more detailed environmental analyses.

The next step after the definition of a unitary SWOT analysis (no longer divided into 6 priorities) is to identify significant needs, ranking them in terms of priority and organising them according to territorial criteria on the basis of the lessons learnt during the 2007-2013 programming, for the policy guidelines of higher programming and through consultation with the Partnership.

To complete the evaluation of the programming strategy, following the identification of significant needs, it is necessary to define the links and logical connections between needs and the strategic framework defined through selection of each thematic objective of the expected results/actions.

Considering the strategic importance attributed to safety and legality as a key factor in development both by the National Partnership Agreement (involving the National Operational Programme [NOP] Legality and specific policies of active inclusion), and by the Regional Government of Campania (which involves, in particular in the light of the recent Regional Law no. 7 of 16.04.2012 regarding confiscated property, the addition of policies designed to combat crime and support and encourage the adoption of priority criteria in the evaluation of forms of intervention and projects that allow the use of property confiscated from organised crime for socially beneficial purposes), these themes should be considered carefully during the definition of the programme.

This report regards the ex ante evaluation activities of RDP 2014-2020; it should be added that it is also the result of integrated evaluation of the three operational programmes (ERDF, ESF and RDP). Although it is prepared in the form of three separate reports, one for each programme proposal, the NVVIP still retains a uniform approach to the process of integrated, unitary evaluation.

ExAnte Evaluation of the 2014-2020 RDP

Report on activities carried out and currently in progress on 17.07.2014 (2nd draft)

Executive Summary

On 27.5.2013 in its Resolution no 142/2013, the Campania Regional Government entrusted the Ex Ante Evaluation of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020 to the Unit of Public Investments Evaluation (NVVIP), a body that carries out functions in accordance with Law no. 144 of 17 May 1999 and that was identified as a Special Office by Regional Regulation no. 12 of 15 December 2011 containing the *Administrative Regulation of the Campania Regional Government*. The Authority with responsibility for managing the Campania Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 identified and involved the NVVIP from the outset, as required by Article 77 of Regulation (EU) no. 1305/2013, in order to draft the analysis pursuant to Article 8, 1(b) and define the strategy to be adopted.

The NVVIP, in line with the Guidelines for the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development and the National Network for Rural Development (*Guidelines for the ex ante evaluation of 2014-2020 RDP - Draft August, 2012*) outlined three main phases for the Ex Ante Evaluation of the RDP:

Phase 1: SWOT analysis and needs assessment;

Phase 2: definition of the intervention logic of the programme, including budget allocation, aims and a framework for results, paying particular attention to the key indicators analysis;

Phase 3: definition of governance, management and implementation systems and lastly finalising the programming document to include the Ex Ante Evaluation.

The evaluation process, the work carried out and the results obtained to date concern Phase 1 and Phase 2 as for the definition of the logic of intervention.

Phase 1 concerned the “Context Analysis Evaluation, SWOT Analysis and Needs Assessment” on the basis of the contents of the document “Chapter 1, 2, and 4”, carried out by the Planning Group of the 2014-2020 RDP Managing Authority and whose final version, shared with the Partnership, was sent to the NVVIP with memo prot. no. 2014.0486422 dated 11 July 2014. The evaluation Report, completed on 17 July 2014, was organized on the basis of the priorities and focus area, verifying the completeness and exhaustiveness of the SWOT analysis for each area; relevance and consistency of the definition of the needs; links between needs – SWOT – context analysis and partnership contributions. Furthermore, the evaluation analysed the context indicators system – both general and specific, as well as the extent to which the lessons learnt during the previous planning period had been understood. Recommendations and proposals were formulated for each subject.

In terms of the evaluation of Phase 2, we currently lack “central” and “relevant” elements such as objectives, expected results and the system of indicators linked to intermediate and final targets. We therefore restricted ourselves to checking the consistency of the programming choices with reference to the framework of needs identified in Phase 1 and with reference to the higher level objectives at which the implementation of RDP is aimed, providing our own ongoing feedback to the Managing Authority.

This draft is work in progress and will remain so until negotiations are complete. Further assessment-type contributions will be available in line with changes to the programming and until the final Ex Ante Evaluation is prepared.

This document concerns Ex Ante Evaluation of the OP RDP 2014-2020 but is part of a unitary and integrated evaluation of the three existing Operational Programmes (RDF, EFRD, ESF) run by the NVVIP.

ExAnte Evaluation of the 2014-2020 RDP

Report on activities carried out and currently in progress on 29.09.2014 (3rd draft)

Executive Summary

The Ex Ante Evaluation of the RDP is required by article 55 of Regulation (EU) no.1303/2013, as well as articles 77 and 62 of Regulation (EU) no.1305/2013. In accordance with resolution no. 142 of 27 May 2013, the Unit of Public Investments Evaluation (NVVIP) was entrusted by the Regional Government with carrying out the Ex Ante Evaluation of RDP 2014-2020. In accordance with the resolution of the Regional Government no. 1605 of 31 July 2013, five specialist figures were identified to provide support to the NVVIP. In compliance with EU documents, the report of the Ex Ante Evaluation of the RDP involved close interaction between the NVVIP and the programmer to ensure improvement of the programme itself.

With regard to objectives, the Ex Ante Evaluation of the RDP is aimed at improving the quality of the programme so that the proposals contained within it are justified and that the priorities, objectives, measures and allocated funding are appropriate for meeting estimated and focused needs.

With regard to the evaluation, the following categories have been identified:

- meaningfulness of the programme objectives and relevance of the strategy in relation to the needs that emerged from the SWOT analysis;
- check that the needs assessment and the quantification of the indicators have been carried out on the basis of complete data (completeness);
- check of the internal consistency of the programme with regard to the existence of a clear intervention logic which shows the potential causal link between the contents of the measures/support actions/operational objectives/specific objectives of the programme;
- check of external consistency;
- analysis of governance and management of the processes and the programme;
- check of procedures for fitness of supervision;
- check of the compliance of the horizontal objectives.

This Evaluation Report refers to the RDP proposal dated 11 September 2014 which was sent, together with attachments, to the Evaluator on 12 September 2014 via e-mail and registered by the offices of the NVVIP on 29 September 2014 with no.712.

The interaction process, requested between the ex ante evaluator and the programmer during the various stages of the formulation planning and drafting of the programme, suggests, as set out in the guidelines, that the evaluation process be organised into phases. The first evaluation phase regarded the preparatory analysis of the document. The second evaluation analysis considered the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment carried out by the programmer. The two phases produced evaluation feedback which was provided both during programming-evaluation interaction meetings and through intermediate evaluation drafts which represent preliminary versions of the definitive Ex Ante Evaluation report.

Phase 2 then came into operation. This phase concerned the evaluation of the intervention logic and the check of the internal and external consistency of the programme, as well as respect of horizontal

principles. Lastly, during phase 3, the systems of governance, management and implementation were analysed.

The main results of the assessment are summarised below.

With regard to the contextual analysis, the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment evaluated according to criteria of completeness significance and internal and external consistency, the assessment made it possible to:

- evaluate positively the level of involvement of the partnership;
- evaluate positively the level of integration between programming and assessment;
- identify any missing information in the contextual analysis, especially with regard to the need of highlighting the territorial differences that are significant for the development of the strategy of the Regional Development Programme (RDP);
- highlight weak points of the SWOT analysis, linked to the degree of completeness of the contextual analysis; therefore, although it is extremely detailed, the SWOT analysis is not a useful tool for defining specific needs of local territories;
- highlight weak points in the logical link between SWOT analysis and needs assessment; for the latter, it is necessary to define the priorities related to different requirements and combine them through the analysis of cross-cutting themes of the RDP 2014-2020 planning ;
- highlight the need for further environmental analysis, partly related to Strategic Environmental Assessment which is currently underway, and analysis on the consistency and complementary nature of the RDP with other programmes currently being formulated.

The assessment of the significance and of the internal and external consistency of the programme took account of the following factors: the contribution of RDP to the strategy of the Europe 2020 framework programme; the external consistency of the thematic objectives of the priorities and objectives of the programme selected by the Common Strategic Framework, Partnership Agreement, Common Agricultural Policy and the specific EU recommendations; the internal consistency of the programme, also with regard to the intervention logic and the indicator plan; the consistency of budget resources with programme objectives; the integration of horizontal principles. This assessment made it possible to:

- check that the criterion of external consistency of the programme, with regard to the priority objectives of the Europe 2020 framework programme, and the programming underway is met;
- check the general internal consistency of the programme, noting any weak points in the intervention logic and the budget resources with regard to the objectives;
- check any weak points with regard to horizontal objectives.

With regard to the governance of the RDP, the assessment has made it possible to check the adequacy of the staff and the administrative capacity for running the programme and the monitoring and data gathering procedures, including the Assessment Plan, also taking into account bottlenecks and weak points that emerged in the previous programming cycles.

In terms of the above assessment, the following recommendations are provided:

- with reference to the contextual analysis it would be useful to have several in-depth analyses, especially in relation to important themes such as innovation, food supply chain

and forestry product chain. etc, highlighting the territorial differences which have a substantial significance for the development of the RDP strategy;

- an additional in-depth analysis of the contextual analysis should ensure a better interpretation of the territory in terms of the SWOT analysis and the needs assessment, leading to a greater focus on strategy which does not necessarily coincide with the restrictions of applicability of the measures to specific areas;
- as a consequence of the greater focus of the investment priorities that emerged from the framework of the needs assessment and in line with the financial framework defined by the Partnership Agreement, a revision of the allocated funding is recommended;
- the integration with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) should be analysed in greater depth in relation to the gradual definition of the aforesaid SEA;
- the pursuit of the cross-cutting objectives, which is satisfactory in terms of the involvement of the partnership, should be further clarified in relation to the principle of non-discrimination and equal opportunities;
- greater precision is needed about how coordination between the Evaluation of the RDP and the Evaluation of other regional programmes will be ensured;
- specify the links between regional management of the programme and its implementation at local level, also clarifying the role of the partnership;
- reassess the evaluation plan in the light of EU guidelines, in particular ensuring uniformity of approach with respect to the overall regional programming framework.

The Evaluation process, the activities undertaken and the results achieved thus far concern the whole of the formulated, updated programme.

This Report which follows the two previous Ex Ante Evaluation reports of the RDP, sent to the Managing Authority on 6 May 2014 with memorandum ref. no.278 and on 18 July 2014 with memo ref. no. 597 respectively, represents a work in progress and will continue until the end of the negotiations.

Further contributions to the evaluation procedure will be available with the progress of the programming until the Programme is approved.

The third Ex Ante Evaluation report of the RDP should be set within the context of a uniform evaluation process supplemented by the three operational programmes (RDP, ERDF [European Regional Development Fund], ESF [European Social Fund]) run by the NVVIP. With regard to the evaluation procedures related to the other programmes (Operational Programme of the ESF and Operational Programme of the ERDF) two reports have been produced for each of them and sent to the respective Managing Authorities on the following dates:

- 30 April 2014 with memo ref. no.254 and on 18 July with memo ref. no.596 for the Operational Programme of the ERDF
- 8 May 2014 with memo ref. no.291 and on 18 July 2014 with memo ref. no.595 for the Operational Programme of the ESF.