

D 8.2. Case-study Synthesis Report

Assessing the impact of rural development policies (incl. LEADER)

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Content:

1. Introduction.....	4
2. First impression of case-studies.....	6
2.1 <i>Devolution in Swedish Västerbotten region.....</i>	6
2.2 <i>Joint Administrative Authority in the German Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</i>	6
2.3 <i>Rural Policy coordination in the Province Grosseto.....</i>	6
2.4 <i>Rural policy coordination in Slovenia</i>	7
2.5 <i>Rural policy coordination through performance contracts in the Netherlands.....</i>	7
2.6 <i>LEADER mainstreaming experiences in Austria.....</i>	8
2.7 <i>LEADER mainstreaming experiences in Ireland.....</i>	8
2.8 <i>LEADER self-evaluation in Baden-Württemberg</i>	9
2.9 <i>A new LEADER evaluation method in Greece</i>	9
2.10 <i>Design and Implementation of Hungarian Agri-Environmental Programme</i>	9
2.11 <i>The integration of agri-environmental programmes in Czech Protected Areas.....</i>	9
2.12 <i>Experimenting with a new agri-environmental delivery system in Finnish Varsinais-Suomi region</i>	10
2.13 <i>The use of LEADER in implementing biodiversity and water resource management in the Italian Po Delta Regional Park.....</i>	10
2.14 <i>Green and blue services in the Netherlands</i>	11
2.15 <i>Sustaining marginalizing rural areas in English Uplands</i>	11
2.16 <i>RDP diversification measures in Czech Vysočina region.....</i>	12
2.17 <i>RDP and sustaining subsistence farming in Romania.....</i>	12
2.18 <i>Selection criteria in targeting of RDP measures in Estonia.....</i>	12
2.19 <i>A new method to assess efficiency of Greek rural policy delivery system.....</i>	13
2.20 <i>Efficiency of Food Quality Schemes in Slovenia</i>	13
3. Case-study methodology.....	14
4. Overall synthesis approach.....	23
5. Rural policy coordination.....	25
5.1 <i>Introduction.....</i>	25
5.2 <i>Policy devolution and coordination in Västerbotten region.....</i>	25
5.3 <i>Rural policy coordination through performances contracts in the Netherlands.....</i>	26
5.4 <i>Rural policy coordination through Integrated Local Development Companies (ILDC's) in Ireland.....</i>	27
5.5 <i>Rural policy coordination in Slovenia</i>	27
5.6 <i>The Joint Administrative Authority in German Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region</i>	28

5.7	<i>Horizontal and vertical policy coordination in the Italian Grosseto Province</i>	29
5.8	<i>Contributions to deeper insights in RDP performances</i>	30
6.	LEADER	31
6.1	<i>Introduction.....</i>	31
6.2	<i>LEADER mainstreaming in Austria.....</i>	31
6.3	<i>Irish mainstreaming experiences</i>	32
6.4	<i>A new method to assess LEADER performances in Greece</i>	33
6.5	<i>LEADER self-evaluation in Baden- Württemberg</i>	34
6.6	<i>Other case-study material on LEADER experiences</i>	34
6.7	<i>Contributions to deeper insights in RDP performances</i>	34
7.	Sustaining marginalizing areas.....	37
7.1	<i>Introduction</i>	37
7.2	<i>Rural marginalization in the English Uplands</i>	37
7.3	<i>Public benefits from subsistence agriculture in Romania</i>	38
7.4	<i>Rural diversification in the Czech Vysocina region</i>	38
7.5	<i>Contributions to deeper insight in RDP performances.....</i>	39
8.	New agri-environmental delivery systems.....	40
8.1	<i>Introduction</i>	40
8.2	<i>Implementation of RDP Axis 2 measures in Hungary</i>	40
8.3	<i>Integrating AEM policy schemes in two Czech Protected Areas.....</i>	41
8.4	<i>Agri-environmental measures in UK Upland Areas.....</i>	42
8.5	<i>Green and Blue Services in the Netherlands</i>	43
8.6	<i>Using LEADER in Finnish agri-environmental delivery systems.....</i>	43
8.7	<i>The use of LEADER in implementing biodiversity and water management resources in Italian Po Delta Regional Park</i>	44
8.8	<i>Contributions to deeper insights in RDP performances</i>	45
9.	Policy Targeting and Efficiency issues.....	47
9.1	<i>Introduction</i>	47
9.2	<i>Better targeting through comprehensive design of selection criteria and stakeholder involvement in Estonia</i>	47
9.3	<i>Efficiency of Food Quality Schemes in Slovenia</i>	49
9.4	<i>New methods to analyze efficiency of rural policy delivery systems in Greece.....</i>	49
9.5	<i>Other case-study findings</i>	50
9.6	<i>Deeper insights in RDP performances</i>	51
10.	Conclusions & Policy recommendations.....	52
10.1	<i>Conclusions.....</i>	52
10.2	<i>Recommendations</i>	55
11.	References.....	58

Figures, Tables and Boxes

Figure 3.1: Overall methodological focus of RuDI	14
Figure 3.2: Position of WP8 within RuDI	15
Figure 3.3: Structuring components of evaluation methods	16
Figure 4.1: RDP performance triangle.....	23
Table 3.1: Summary of case-study research questions and methodologies.....	17
Table 10.1: Thematic summary of extra insights in RDP performances	52
Box 5.1: Relevant institutional learning issues.....	30
Box 6.1: Relevant institutional learning issues.....	36
Box 7.1: Relevant institutional learning issues.....	39
Box 8.1: Relevant institutional learning issues.....	46
Box 9.1: Relevant institutional learning issues.....	51
Box 10.1: Relevant institutional learning issues.....	54

1. Introduction

In RuDI's description of work WP8 overall objectives are formulated as follows:

- Carry out an in-depth impact assessment for the whole spectrum of RD measures, thereby facilitating a deepening and an enhancement of the results obtained in previous work packages.
- Examine how precisely differently RD policy measures influence the development of rural areas.
- Contrast different regional situations and show how this affects RDP policy impacts.
- Discuss the results of the in-depth case-study analysis with key regional actors in RD policy design and delivery /implementation.
- Illustrate of best practice in RD policy design and delivery.
- Derive recommendations for more effective and efficient RDP policy delivery.

It further emphasizes that the 'case studies will adopt a holistic approach in assessing the wider impacts and effects of RD policy. Emphasis will be on a) both institutional and social factors in policy performance, b) seeking to capture the softer, but nonetheless valued, outputs and impacts of policy, such as capacity building, empowerment and innovation (which are not yet reflected in the formal evaluation processes of RD policies), c) nevertheless taking into account the 'hard' outputs and impacts and the difficulties involved in fully capturing the dynamic and sometimes contested nature of these.'

During the case-study preparation and selection procedure (see Dwyer et al, 2009a and 2009b), these initial objectives have been further specified into the following objectives:

- Case studies will illustrate the ways in which RDP *policy process* – that is, the stages of design (including context and history as well as the actual design process), delivery, targeting of funds, and monitoring and evaluation - can affect its performance, and thus to provide more understanding of how these RD policies and programmes actually work;
- Case-studies will illustrate the approaches to Pillar 2 policy evaluation and the assessment of impacts that can capture its *process-effects* as well as reflecting a wider range of types of impact that are currently captured within the CMEF (particularly emphasizing important 'soft' or qualitative impacts).

Together, these objectives aim to help RuDI to identify appropriate methods of establishing and analyzing cause-and-effect relationships between the policy process and the impacts of RD policies, as well as providing some new tools for the assessment of impacts.

In this document we will summarize and synthesize the outcomes of the 20 selected case-studies as presented in detail in RuDI deliverable 8.1. The report starts with a first impression on overall case-study sample. This will be followed by a section on case-study methodological approach and its overall positioning within RuDI. After

some more general reflection on the case-study synthesis analysis, major findings will be structured along four thematic fields of specific interest in relation to RDP process-effects. These thematic fields of interest are subsequently: 1) rural policy coordination; 2) LEADER; 3) sustaining marginalizing rural areas; 4) new agri-environmental delivery systems and 5) policy targeting and efficiency issues. The report finishes with a section conclusions and recommendations.

2. First impression of case-studies

Following introduction of the 20 case-studies gives a first impression of the variety of case-study subjects and the context specific rural policy changes and challenges in which these are embedded.

2.1.RDP and devolution tendencies in Swedish Västerbotten region

Sweden has one national RDP and one overarching strategy to guide the implementation of this RDP. In a search of increased efficiency, and in the wake of a national and European trend towards carrying out development initiatives at regional level, the role of so-called County Administrative Boards has been, however, extended in the design of the current Swedish RDP. As a result of this change regional implementation strategies are being developed at county level and partnerships assigned that consist of representatives from public, private and voluntary sector with strategic roles in carrying out parts of the RDP in the regions. This ongoing devolution process is expected to lead to an RDP better shaped after regional conditions, and to enhance the feeling of responsibility at regional level. Behind the introduction of regional partnerships lay an understanding that a number of actors, not only regional authorities, are needed in the work to find consensus on strengths and challenges of a region. The case-study analyzes how ongoing changes in its design characteristics do affect RDP delivery at county level, regional capacity to strengthen rural development through Axis III measures and raises the question if these are well suited to handle regional specificities of the county Västerbotten.

2.2.Rural policy coordination through a Joint Administrative Authority in the German Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

The German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern struggles with a difficult economic situation characterised by little economic power and competitiveness which is reflected in a high unemployment rate, movement of labour and brain drain. Against this background, in 2005 regional government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany decided to realise a joint strategy for the use of resources from the EU structural funds (ERDF and ESF) as well as the EAFRD. The underlying assumption is that a better coordination between the three funds safeguards a harmonised and integrated approach and supports overall policy objective of achieving sustainable economic growth and securing long-term jobs through sustainable economic growth. The cross-fund strategy is reflected by a corresponding system of implementation aimed at an efficient administration and monitoring of EU support and follows a joint strategy as developed within RDP1 period when there was one operational programme for ERDF, ESF and EAGGF/Guidance. During this period a Joint Administrative Authority had been established for the EU structural funds. The case-study analyzes stakeholder views on ongoing experiences with rural /regional policy coordination through this Joint Administrative Authority and its major success factors.

2.3 Rural Policy coordination in the Italian Province Grosseto

The Province Grosseto in the Italian Tuscany region is one of Italian provinces most affected by the de-industrialisation crisis and is having one of the lowest economic specialization indexes of Italy. The economic crisis that involved the entire Province during the '90s forced the territory into a different development strategy, based on its endogenous pool of resources. Grosseto adopted an integrated and complex strategy over the last fifteen years. The case-study emphasizes that this strategy does not only

encompass RDP objectives, but a wider set of policy goals which are strictly linked to each other. Primarily based on analysis of available secondary material and workshops with representatives of different relevant rural development programmes (RDP, Territorial Pacts, etc.) it shows how this strategy was born, its main drivers and it changes over the years with an illustration of the role of RDP in some specific rural development projects. The case study concludes that the emergence of a co-ordinated strategy for rural areas has been fostered by following combination of factors; 1) the need to respond to the economic crisis of the 90s' and by funds provided by a series of important national and EU programmes in the same period; 2) provincial administrative priority to the use of these available funds according to some strategy of local development, although this strategy wasn't so clear at the beginning and was gradually designed over the time; 3) the presence of an unique department dealing with local development that facilitated co-ordination at province level; 4) the relative provincial political stability; 5) the good interaction between policy makers and technical staff and 6) a strong network of actors at local level, whose focal centre was the Province.

2.4 Rural policy coordination in Slovenia

This case-study highlights that the dimension and scale of Slovenian rural development problems and needs in terms of diversification and quality of life clearly surpasses the 'RDP Axis 3 toolkit'. It is argued that problems, such as inadequate physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, water supply, and broadband access), social services (e.g. health care, child care, schooling, and public transport) and weak entrepreneurship activities cannot be adequately dealt with by RDP alone but require more concerted policy action among institutions involved in rural development. Co-ordination among various institutions involved in rural development takes currently and formally place at the level of national strategic documents as The Development Strategy of Slovenia, National Programme of Development, and in programming documents as the Operational Programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potentials and Rural Development Plan. Case-study material shows that theoretical potential for synergies through these coordination mechanisms are still difficult to realize in practice at territorial level and for individual RDP measures. As argued, the arbitrary exclusion mechanisms regard to rural activities are indicated as serious limitations. Case-study analysis focuses on the critical factors that explain the (lack of) synergies between multi-level and multi-framework rural policy delivery.

2.5 RDP & rural policy coordination through performance contracts in the Netherlands

RDP design and delivery in the Netherlands is embedded in a broader rural policy context characterized by scarce land resources, manifold claims on rural areas, policy devolution tendencies and complex multi-stakeholder negotiation and learning processes. In this broader context the need for a better coordination of multiple policy frameworks is increasingly perceived as a major challenge to come to more integrated and effective rural policies. Since 2006 multiple policy frameworks of different national ministries have been joined in the so-called Investment Budget Rural Areas (IBRA), which joint policy views of the Ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) and Transport, Public Works and Water Management (V&W) on preparing the Dutch rural areas for future changes. These national ministries agreed to merge parts of their policy budgets and to introduce a new system for rural policy delivery, characterized

by a conditional decentralization of rural policy delivery through so-called performance contracts between national and provincial administrations. The case-study focuses on ongoing experiments with performance contracts and the specific role of RDP in this new institutional arrangement for more place based rural policy delivery, with the Province of Gelderland as principle case-study area.

2.6. LEADER mainstreaming experiences in Austria

Local development activities and Leader programming have a long tradition in Austria. They can be seen as long-term initiatives building on local development strategies which are based on the former national pilot programme of endogenous regional development. This long time experience underscores a series of success factors that have been taken up in Leader when it was installed in 1991 as one of the most famous and highly appreciated Community Initiatives of the European Union. At the national level Leader is seen as the main innovative scheme in agricultural policy and the programme providing the most significant links between agriculture and non-agricultural actors. This is one of the strengths of the programme: Local actors are committed, almost in all regions, to the bottom-up approach and, even if there might be administrative obstacles, there is great aspiration for increasing local action. Furthermore, linkages to other activities and local networks have to be intensified and can play a more significant role in the current programme period. The case study addresses in particular issues of mainstreaming through examining the linkages to other RDP measures. The investigation of the new mainstreaming approach within the current RDP is of ongoing interest in terms of the apparently changes in the application of Leader. The exploration of the transition from the original Leader programme towards “mainstreaming” into the RDP and the associated adaptations and challenges is thought to be of particular interest for ongoing learning processes regarding rural development and policies.

2.7 LEADER mainstreaming experiences in Ireland

LEADER has been championed and supported in Ireland since the first programme which started in 1991. The amount of funding and the way LEADER functions in the new, ‘mainstreamed’ 2007-13 programme has changed significantly: the LEADER budget (€425.4m) is almost three times the size of the LEADER + budget for 2000-06 and it accounts for the whole of Axis 3 delivery under the RDP. The current round of LEADER funding in Ireland marks a significant change in policy delivery through the insertion of a “compliance with governance measure” in the selection criteria issued to potential applicants by the Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA). This means that individual Local Action Groups (LAGs) no longer exist. They are instead referred to as “Integrated Local Development Companies” (ILDCs), a ‘cohesed’ governance structure combining LAGs and Local Development Partnerships that deliver various social inclusion programmes. ILDCs are thus responsible for administering LEADER in Ireland. The case study aims to capture how ongoing changes in rural governance structure and delivery, including a split in policy delivery at the macro-delivery level, have worked at the ILDC level. This involves understanding how ILDCs function/manage in this new delivery system, whether these changes are significantly different to previous LEADER programmes in practice, and whether these changes are impacting (positively or negatively) on the LEADER philosophy to deliver innovative bottom-up schemes.

2.8 LEADER self-evaluation in Baden-Württemberg

The LEADER Group Oberschwaben exists since the LEADER I phase and has, therefore, long term experiences with LEADER implementation during different funding periods, including the current one. It also has outspoken objectives regarding self-evaluation in their Integrated Development Concept, introduced during the LEADER+ implementation as a quasi-compulsory activity to be described in the integrated development concept at the time of application. In addition to a broader impression of LEADER evaluation experiences in the Baden- Württemberg region, the case-study focuses particularly on the role of self-evaluation within LAG Oberschwaben. This specific LAG was selected to analyze ongoing self-evaluation experiences in detail after consultation with the Regional office for development of agriculture and rural areas (LEL). Main selection criteria were its long term experiences with LEADER and self-evaluation, as well its progress in the implementation of the development in terms of budget allocation and number of approved projects.

2.9 A new evaluation method to assess LEADER performances in Greece

LEADER allocates almost 6% of total Greek RDP budget, a percentage comparable to that in RDP programming period 2000-2006. National discussion about LEADER evaluation include, amongst others, the issue of disproportional requirements in relation to funding efforts within a broader debate between policy makers and scientific community regarding the need for more adequate evaluation methods of rural development impacts. Several evaluation methods as well as evaluation practices have been recorded either from national or independent evaluators. Yet, the search for an appropriate evaluation methodology still stands, especially concerning LEADER. The case-study explores a new methodological approach characterized by a combination of Shift - Share Analysis and Quantitative Network analysis to assess LAGs capability of funds absorption in relation to their structures and organizational features.

2.10 Design and Implementation of Hungarian Agri-Environmental Programme

The Hungarian Agri-Environmental Programme (HAEP) operates since the beginning of 2008 but faces serious design and implementation delays. During the case-study period final public announcements of which enterprises would be able to participate was still missing. The case study focuses on these early life cycle problems of Hungarian agri-environmental policy measures with special attention for institutional dynamics and learning processes, the role of interest- and lobby groups and conflicts among them and beneficiaries' attitude on environmental values.

2.11 The integration of agri-environmental programmes in Czech Protected Areas

In Czech Republic there is a long time debate on the targeting of agri-environmental measure (AEM), decrease of transaction costs of the policy, and on integration of this policy with environmental policy governed by the Ministry of Environment. In particular environmental NGOs require an improvement of policy targeting, whereas integration of policies is of interest of both ministries in question, a reduction of transaction costs is beneficial for both farmers and government bodies. At the same time the maintenance of the economic viability of farmers in areas with less production potential (not only LFA) remains an important issue in the policy debate. The debate led to increased efforts in improving the targeting of AEM's governed by the Ministry of Agriculture and its integration with the Czech nature/landscape

protection policy through e.g. a Landscape Management Program governed by the Ministry of Environment. The administration of Protected Areas (under MoE) plays an important role in the implementation of these innovative AEMs. The case study examines the following aspects: 1) delivery and design stage of this new policy scheme, including ongoing redistribution of responsibilities and roles; 2) opportunities and limitations for more integrated rural policy delivery through RDP; 3) alternative approaches for the targeting of RDP instruments and 4) a more active involvement of rural stakeholders in RDP delivery.

2.12 Experimenting with a new agri-environmental delivery system in Finnish Varsinais-Suomi region

Varsinais-Suomi, a region located in the south-western corner of Finland, is a relatively prosperous rural area due to its productive soils and relatively long growth season. Natural circumstances and cultural environment of the region are diversified and multiform comprising the large archipelago and the more traditional rural landscape. Agricultural and water environment are in close interaction with each other, which demands special attention to sustainable landscape and water management. Regional landscape and biodiversity are under threat, notwithstanding the presence of agri-environmental support schemes and increased farmers' willingness to apply agri-environmental measures. In Finland there is a growing societal acceptance that farmers ought to be compensated for providing environmental goods and that sustainable agricultural production requires a broadening of agricultural policy design and delivery through more integrated approaches and a more active involvement of other rural stakeholders than farmers. Although evaluation outcomes conclude that agri-environmental support measures do perform rather satisfying, this results in ongoing policy searches for alternative routes of action, which take all the complexities of an active nature conservation even more seriously into consideration. The case-study focuses in particular on the preliminary outcomes of an ongoing policy experiment in Varsinais-Suomi that aims to incorporate new actors in agri-environmental support schemes through applying the LEADER approach as a way to increase local actors' involvement in and commitment to agri-environmental support schemes.

2.13 The use of LEADER in implementing biodiversity and water resource management in the Italian Po Delta Regional Park

The Po Delta Regional Park has been set up in 1988 by a special regional law. Delta Po is traditionally a rather marginal area but characterised by the presence of one of the most important wetland area in Italy, rich of nature, biodiversity heritage and of numerable potentials (valuable agriculture production, local products, rural tourism, waterways canals, rivers, navigable lagoons, historical and architectural heritage). These territorial assets were not so adequately valorised. The main reason laid in the diffused perception by residents of living in a marginal and disadvantaged area, the scarce consciousness of the value and relevance connected to the wet and Park areas, the loss of traditional know-how related to some local products, the good awareness of the value of only some cultural and environmental assets but, in the same time, the scarce consciousness of other potentials, including the Park itself. Since 1996 the Park has a new instrument at its disposal: the Managing Consortium of Po Delta regional Park, which involves two Provincial (Ferrara and Ravenna) and nine Municipal administrations, the latter partly or entirely situated within the Park territory. This Management Consortium has a specific statute regulating its institutional activities

and operates as a LAG .Since LEADER+ ten new municipalities have been asked to participate in this LAG to upscale its initiatives with respect to integrated natural resource management according to a common environmental vocation. The case-study focuses particularly on the role of LEADER in ongoing policy experiments to stimulate more integrated natural resource management.

2.14 New delivery systems for green and blue services in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a long tradition of agri-environmental measures, as also illustrated by the incorporation of RDP Axis 2 measures in already existing national programs for agri-environmental measures. These programs are increasingly subject of debate among stakeholders. Particularly in last decade a search for new instruments and approaches can be witnessed to overcome the shortcomings of prevailing agri-environmental policy instruments. The case-study illustrates the background, driving forces and characteristics of these new delivery systems for agri-environmental services and the role of RDP in these processes. It concludes that current RDP regulations do offer still little opportunities to support more innovative agri-environmental delivery systems in different terms as; 1) better targeted measures; 2) stimuli for self-regulation through contract relations with new farmers' collectives; 3) trust building through long term contract relations and 4) more market conform remuneration systems. As further argued, also CAP pillar 1 would require a fundamental reform to respond more adequately to farmers' growing willingness and simultaneously differentiating willingness to contribute actively to new societal demands with respect to rural management of natural resources, including landscape values.

2.15 Sustaining marginalizing rural areas in English Uplands

The English uplands are characterised by open landscapes of moorland peaks and pastoral farmed valleys with small woods and a very low proportion of cultivated land. 76% of the uplands in England are designated landscapes: either National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. With steep slopes, poor soils and a short growing season compared to lowland England, these are marginal farming areas, traditionally managed for the extensive, grass-based production of sheep, beef and some dairy farming, and their designation as EU Less Favoured Areas reflects this. They are areas of great significance for biodiversity – most of the higher land is classified as *Natura 2000* sites. A long history of enclosure has left important features in the landscape, notably systems of drystone-walled or hedged field boundaries across the lower slopes and in the valleys. The moorland remains largely undivided and much of it is registered 'common' grazing. Government policy goals for the uplands over the past 3 decades have shifted away from supporting farming towards a greater emphasis upon these areas' high environmental and amenity value. Most uplands are heavily used for recreation and tourism and their management also have a strong influence on river flows and flood risk. The peat soils in the uplands represent a major existing carbon store, and offer important potential for further carbon sequestration. Many also offer significant potential for renewable energy generation from wind and water, in particular. Rural policy changes currently affecting upland farms – notably, Pillar 1 decoupling and modulation - have raised concerns about the future sustainability of traditional, extensive upland farming systems and their management culture. These concerns must also be seen in the wider context of a widely-publicised UK government position on the future CAP which seeks the ending of all direct support under Pillar 1, after 2013. The central question of this case-study

is therefore: is current Pillar 2 policy mix sufficient and appropriately tailored to achieve government goals for the English uplands, alongside the existing reductions, and anticipated further decline after 2013, in Pillar 1 support?

2.16 RDP diversification measures in Czech Vysočina region

The Vysočina Region, situated in the centre of Czech Republic, is characterized by its relatively high altitude and low residential density. Economic performance of the Region in comparison with other regions is relatively poor, the share of employees in agriculture is twice as high than average in the Czech Republic and average household income is about 78% of that of national level. Historically glass works and processing of pale flax have been most important non-agricultural economic activities, but nowadays most of these companies are little competitive and new rural enterprises are not yet established. Ongoing rural marginalization tendencies did result in a growing policy attention for diversification of farm activities and rural economies and explains the relatively high percentage of total RDP budget allocated to Axis 3 measures. The case-study focuses on current implementation of diversification measures, their effectiveness and major limiting and enabling factors to understand their impacts

2.17 RDP and sustaining subsistence farming in Romania

One of the main characteristics of Romanian agriculture which sets it apart from other EU Member States is the highly polarized structure of farming and the huge number of small-scale farmers that fall into the category of “subsistence” or “semi-subsistence”. Agricultural statistics mention a total of over 4.2 million holdings in Romania of which less than 0.5% are large-scale commercial units, whilst the remaining 99.5% are small-scale holdings with an average size of 2.15 ha that occupy in total almost two thirds of national UAA. An estimated 3.8 million small-scale farms are classified as “subsistence farming”, since these are smaller than 2 ESU, and these cover approximately 45% of total UAA. The case study deals in particular with; 1) the public benefits associated with small-scale subsistence farms in Romania; 2) the national RDP’s recognition of these public benefits and attempt to secure these; 3) origins of the current lack of policy support for subsistence farms, and; 4) adaptations in RDP design and implementation that might correct current weaknesses/failings in securing public benefits from subsistence farmers.

2.18 Importance of selection criteria in targeting of RDP measures in Estonia

During its first RDP programming period 2004-2006, support for rural areas in Estonia was divided between Estonian Rural Development Plan 2004-2006 (ERDP) and the Estonian National Development Plan 2004-2006 (ENDP, priority 3 – agriculture, fisheries, rural life). Experiences with the implementation of the measures for rural development in 2004-2006 showed that for most measures the number of applications (and consequently the applied sum) exceeded budgetary limits. Several measures were not opened in 2005 and/or 2006 due to this reason or opened only in certain areas. These shortcomings resulted in the amendment of (additional) selection criteria to improve and fine-tune the targeting of rural policy instruments. The case-study illustrates how ERDP 2007-2013 selection criteria (and partly also eligibility criteria) of Axis 1 and 3 are changed compared to ENDP 2004-2006. Changes are based on the results of ERDP evaluation and implementation experiences, and how selection criteria have been subject of discussions with stakeholders in the preparation of measures for current 2007-2013 period. The case study concentrates on exploring: 1) the role of selection criteria in targeting of ERDP measures, 2) the changes in

ERDP 2007-2013 selection criteria (and partly also eligibility criteria) compared to ENDP 2004 – 2006, 3) the main drivers behind the changes and choice of eligibility and selection criteria and 4) the role of stakeholders in the process of choice of eligibility and selection criteria.

2.19 A new method to assess efficiency of Greek rural policy delivery system

Current RDP measure 121, with the objective to stimulate the modernisation of agricultural holdings, was firstly introduced in Greece during RDP1 period. During that period the implementation of measure 121 was shared by National Ministry of Rural Development and the Special Service of Implementation of Co-financed Actions by EAGGF. This co-management resulted in a rather complicated and little transparent situation for farmers as well actors involved in the implementation process. Since RDP2 measure 121 is part of the first Axis and in Greece the third most important RDP2 measure in terms of monetary allocation, with a total of 9.04% of national RDP funding. In order to overcome the shortcomings of previous programming period, it is suggested to re-centralize implementation of RDP measure 121 to enhance policy transparency and controllability. The fact that so far authorities did not yet take yet a decision on this issue would be explained by policy resistance as well as a limited overall institutional learning capacity. The case-study follows a methodological approach inspired by Quantitative Network Analysis with the purpose to come to more objective information on: 1) stakeholders' views on more centralized versus decentralized rural policy delivery and 2) their design and delivery preferences with respect to measure 121 implementation. The methodology results in the distinction and comparison of three future rural policy scenarios and aims to facilitate ongoing national debate on how to come to more efficient rural policy delivery systems.

2.20 Efficiency of Food Quality Schemes in Slovenia

Slovenia registered 38 food products in the National Quality Schemes (FQS) designed under the EU standards, but so far only half of these food products are also actively being marketed and others are only in rather limited quantities available for consumers. Thus, despite the steady growth of budgetary expenditures for FQS, these would not yet deliver the expected results. The case-study raises the question if the allocation of RDP funds to FQS in Slovenia is well targeted through analyzing major factors that explain the still rather disappointing outcomes of FQS in Slovenia. Through a combination of in-depth interviews with stakeholders and analysis of secondary available material, amongst other a survey amongst consumers, it shows that FQS might go along with different expectations and concerns among policy makers and other stakeholders; that it is rather complex to develop commercially interesting FQS; that FQS are often insufficiently protected against forgery and, consequently, that these hardly generate extra value added for producers. All together this results in the conclusion that FQS are still all but optimally operated and that Slovenian institutional setting as well as producers do not consider the basic conditions that need to be fulfilled for a successful functioning of FQS.

3. Case-study methodology

The introduction of the 20 case-studies learns that these cover a broad set of rural policy subjects, issues and concerns. Obviously this variety of case-study subjects raises methodological questions. For an adequate understanding of applied case-study methodology it is firstly important to recall that RuDI as a whole focuses on the ‘forgotten middle’ of rural policy cycles and that its previous work packages analyzed RDP process-effects in relation to different policy cycle stages as design, implementation, delivery and evaluation in the EU-25. RDP process-effects have been related to (multi-level) institutional dynamics, differentiating rural qualities and needs, RDP evaluation methods, specificities of RDP expenditure patterns, etc. This focus on RDP-process-effects can be illustrated as in figure 1. It shows that RuDI is in particular aiming at identifying and understanding of the process-effects that translate in more or less positive RDP impacts (in terms of contributions to policy goals). Thus, a focus on the reasons why RDP (-components) are more or less successful in terms of contributions to EU rural policy goals as competitiveness of rural areas and quality of rural life.

Figure 3.1: Overall methodological focus of RuDI

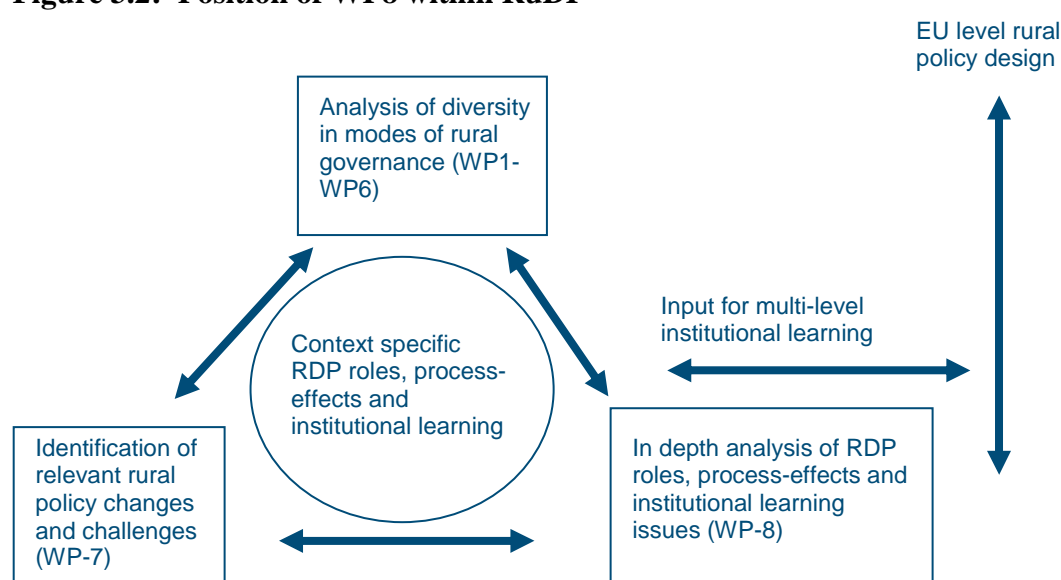
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Within this overall RuDI focus, the WP8 case-study work package aims to deepen insights in the ‘forgotten middle’ through a methodological approach that does not primarily aims for comparability of outcomes but that starts from the premise that RDP-process-effects will be time and again highly context specific. This requires, as underlined by evaluation scholars: *‘mixed evaluation methods in which the choice of objects for evaluation is not an overall policy or programme but a specific set of instance of it. The approach can combine qualitative and quantitative methods, but in essence it aim is to draw out a story which explains (through contrast as well narrative) the interaction of the diverse influences which occurs in each instance’* (Midmore et al, 2003). Same authors underline the complexity that evaluation methods have to deal with and suggest to opt for pragmatic solutions: *‘with complexity proliferating in a number of directions, the ideal evaluation approach would need to focus on the detail of the many divergent contexts in which policies are applied, and base interpretative judgments of impacts on extensive qualitative interviewing complemented by available data on the social, cultural, environmental and agronomic background. In practical terms, however, there are cost considerations (and skill constraints)’*. Together this results in the advice to maximize the potential for uncovering disconfirming evidence: *‘making the approach proportionate thus implies a degree of selectivity in terms of the cases selected for study. However, unlike conventional approaches, where cases should be selected for representativeness, the problem of proliferating case-studies will re-emerge. Thus an appropriate selection strategy should involve a search for at least some cases which are as different as possible to each other, so that the potential for uncovering disconfirming evidence is maximized’*.

RuDI’s overall case-study methodological approach builds in a certain way on this idea of ‘uncovering disconfirming evidence’ by a combination of 1) mixed, more or less complementary or contrasting case-study methods and 2) a broad spectrum of case-study subjects. It is thought to be particularly this combination of mixed methods

and multiple subjects that allow to deepen and complement insights in RDP process-effects as collected by its previous work packages. Figure 2 positions WP8 within overall RuDI methodological approach. It shows that WP1 to WP6 did concentrate primarily on relevant diversity in terms of modes of rural governance and policy-cycle characteristics as design, delivery, implementation, evaluation and budget allocation, whereas WP7 focused particularly on more context specific rural policy changes and challenges to orientate case-study selection procedure.

Figure 3.2: Position of WP8 within RuDI



WP8 aims to deepen insights in the understanding of RDP processes-effects through a methodological approach that more generally is being introduced by Figure 3.3. This Figure highlights the importance to position evaluation methods along different structuring components as underlying steering perceptions, major purposes and specific target groups. Case-study methodologies are predominately oriented at the right side representations of these different structuring components. Thus, underlying steering philosophy builds strongly on the *rural governance* perspective as e.g. outlined in detail in RuDI deliverable 3.3 (see Mantino, 2009). Similar to other RuDI work packages, the methodological approaches focus primarily on *process-effects*, albeit always in relation to content specific aspects of RDPs. The *learning* aspect of evaluation is having a more prominent place in overall case-study approach than the idea to contribute also significantly to policy accountability through the analysis of cause-effect relationships. Finally, overall case-study methods are primarily oriented to external evaluation and the policy community as the most relevant target group.

Figure 3.3: Structuring components of evaluation methods

(Source Boonstra et al, 2009)

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Main features of *individual* case study methodologies are summarized in Table 3.1. It gives an overview of guiding research questions and methodological approaches in terms of (combinations) of qualitative versus more quantitative methods, different data-collection methods, use of feedback instruments to check case-study outcomes, etc. It further demonstrates the variety in levels of case-study analysis in relation to

RDPs (with a range from programme level to individual measures), as well as spatially (ranging from national level to regional/local scale level).

Table 3.1: Summary of case-study research questions and methodologies

Case-study	Principle research questions	Case-study methodological approach
<i>RDP & Devolution tendencies in the Swedish Västerbotten region</i>	<p>To what extent is RDP implementation adjusted to regional conditions and ideas of regional actors in the county of Västerbotten?</p> <p>How does the coordination between the RDP and other development programmes and strategies work?</p> <p>In what ways is the RDP contributing to achieving the regional development goals of Västerbotten?</p>	<p>Review of available secondary material</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with stakeholder representatives from Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, the Board of Agriculture, the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the National Association of the Village Movement, Regionally representatives from the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten, the Region Västerbotten (RV), the Sami Parliament, the Regional Structural Funds Office, the Social Funds Council and two Local Action Groups (with a total of 12 interviews)</p> <p>Presentation of preliminary results at Ministry of agriculture to check case-study findings</p>
<i>The role of the Joint Administrative Authority in rural policy coordination in the German Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region</i>	<p>Does the joint administrative authority provide for a more coherent policy at programme level?</p> <p>What are the main factors that support or hamper coordination?</p> <p>Does the GVB affect the implementation of programmes? What are the effects of coordination on RDP?</p>	<p>Analysis of available secondary data</p> <p>Interviews with representatives from Joint Administrative Authority, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection, ESP (Economic and Social Partners, Womens' Council of the Land Mecklenburg- Vorpommern, Environmental associations, Farmers' association, rural policy evaluator</p>
<i>Rural policy coordination in the Italian Province Grosseto</i>	<p>Which strategies / mechanisms/ rules have been adopted by the Province in order to coordinate different policy funds?</p> <p>Which political support and what main drivers are behind the coordination? Which role has been played by the different stakeholders in the process of design, delivery and targeting towards specific objectives?</p> <p>What impacts have been generated in provincial areas by the coordination process? And what impacts on specific sectors?</p> <p>How has this impact been perceived by different stakeholders? Which concrete results can be measured?</p>	<p>Collection of information upon the different programmes/schemes under the control of the Grosseto Province, both for the 2000-2006 and the 2007-2013 period through desk analysis;</p> <p>First focus group with main officials of the Province, with the aims of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checking main programmes and schemes used by the provincial administration; - Designing the institutional map of design and delivery at the provincial level; - Highlighting the forms of co-ordinating rural policy delivery (both within RDPs, and between RDPs and other relevant policies); - Studying the approaches to the targeting of RDP instruments; - Analyzing how rural stakeholders were involved in delivery and targeting. <p>Second and third focus group with rural stakeholders and provincial officials, with the aims of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring main views of rural stakeholders on the effectiveness of the co-ordination; - Identification of main relations between co-ordination/non-co-ordination and effects of programmes/measures;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of the most relevant types of impacts on institutional learning; - Identification of the most relevant types of impacts on territorial assets
<i>Coordination of policies affecting diversification and quality of life in rural areas in Slovenia</i>	<p>What are the critical factors that enhance synergies and / or prevent overlaps between multi-level and multi-framework rural policy delivery systems?</p>	Semi-structured interviews with stakeholder representatives from Slovenian Governmental Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy, Regional Development Agency for Gorenjska region, Development Agency Ragor for Upper-Gorenjska region and Agricultural Institute Kranj (regional agricultural chamber unite).
<i>RDP & rural policy coordination through performance contracts in the Netherlands</i>	<p>How is RDP being integrated in ongoing transition towards performance based contracts between national and provincial administration?</p> <p>In what ways does RDP strengthen / facilitate / hamper this ongoing transition?</p> <p>What are major critical factors that explain the role of RDP in relation to ongoing transition process?</p>	<p>Analysis of available secondary data</p> <p>11 interviews with policy and other stakeholder representatives at national and provincial level</p> <p>Feedback mechanisms through: participation in Dutch-Flemish CMEF network workshop, national rural parliament and organization of course activities for professionals in rural development</p>
<i>Leader mainstreaming experiences in Austria</i>	<p>To what extent is the innovative approach of Leader threatened by “mainstreaming” the Community Initiative into the RDP?</p> <p>Are the additional administrative requirements hampering the success and the former innovative character of Leader?</p> <p>Has the increased funding for the Leader axis which is now available within the RDP structure a corresponding impact on the outcome and policy performance for regions of Austria?</p>	<p>Literature Review and analysis of expenditure and interim reports of the Leader implementation</p> <p>Face-to-face and telephone interviews with representatives of administration at different level (with a total of 8 national and regional interviewees)</p> <p>Focus groups with local and regional actors in 5 of a total of 86 Leader areas to discuss strategic considerations, changes, potentials and obstacles to innovative action (10 participants)</p> <p>Participation at administrative Leader workshops (2 national workshops with 20 and 40 participants).</p>
<i>New modes of LEADER governance in Ireland</i>	<p>How are Integrated Local Development Companies (ILDC's) dealing with delivery and governance compared to the previous programme?</p> <p>What impact is this new system having on day-to-day administration and also the wider LEADER philosophy?</p> <p>How are ILDCs dealing with the increased funding that they now have to deal with and the new operating rules in this 'mainstreamed' LEADER programme?</p> <p>What are the benefits and disbenefits of this new mode of governance?</p>	<p>Attendance of an Irish National Agricultural Fair to facilitate the preparation of a telephone survey and the selection of case-study groups</p> <p>Telephone surveys with CEO's of (most) ILDC's in Ireland (with a total of how many interviews ?)</p> <p>Deepening of insights through 3 case studies, involving interviews, observations of, and attendance at, project and staff meetings</p>

<p><i>Applying Shift – Share Analysis (SSA) on LEADER Local Action Groups in Greece</i></p>	<p>How to combine Shift Share Analysis and Quantitative Network Analysis as an integrated evaluation method?</p> <p>What is the relation between the absorption capability of LAGs and their power and influence within the politico-administrative system?</p> <p>What is the relation of specific power dimensions (trust, pressure) and the information management with the absorption of financial support in each particular measure?</p> <p>How decisive is the local socio-economic environment for the performance of a LAG?</p>	<p>Quantitative Network Analysis</p> <p>Shift Share Analysis</p> <p>Semi-structure interviews within stakeholders (which, how many?)</p>
<p><i>Exploring the interface of self-evaluation and external evaluation in Baden-Württemberg in Germany</i></p>	<p>How is LEADER evaluated methodologically? Who are the actors? What are changes in the approaches between past and present funding period?</p> <p>Which aspects are covered in the evaluation? How are evaluation results taken up by managing authorities?</p> <p>How has self-evaluation of LAGs evolved? How are the results of evaluation used by LAGs?</p> <p>What is the intersection of external and self evaluation of LEADER? What are added values?</p>	<p>Literature review of LEADER evaluation scientific coverage</p> <p>Review of secondary documents and data: RD programme, LEADER evaluation guidelines from EU; regional and networking facilities; external LEADER+ and RD 2000-06 evaluation reports, RDP annual reports, LEADER+ self-evaluation reports, LEADER self-evaluation concept, media coverage (video, print, online)</p> <p>semi-structured interviews with LAG general manager, LEADER responsible at the Regional office for development of agriculture and rural areas, with external evaluator</p>
<p><i>The Implementation of Hungarian Agri-Environmental Programme (HAEM)</i></p>	<p>Did the social and professional networks and institutions make any progress in terms of planning and execution in the history of the HAEM? Do we experience social learning? What are the main elements influencing it and how?</p> <p>How and by whom was current HAEM developed? What interest groups, partnerships, specialists were involved and what governing techniques were applied in the preparation process?</p> <p>What are key differences compared to previous programmes and what sorts of professional, political and economic arguments and lobby power triggered the observed changes?</p> <p>What problems have emerged in the course of implementation? What is the cause for the delay in getting the programme started? What can we expect in the future?</p>	<p>Literature review of main documents concerning the evolvement of agri-environmental programmes in Hungary.</p> <p>Analysis of the institutional setting of agri-environment policy design and implementation.</p> <p>Structured face-to-face interviews and telephone calls for additional information with stakeholders at national and regional levels (12 interviews)</p>

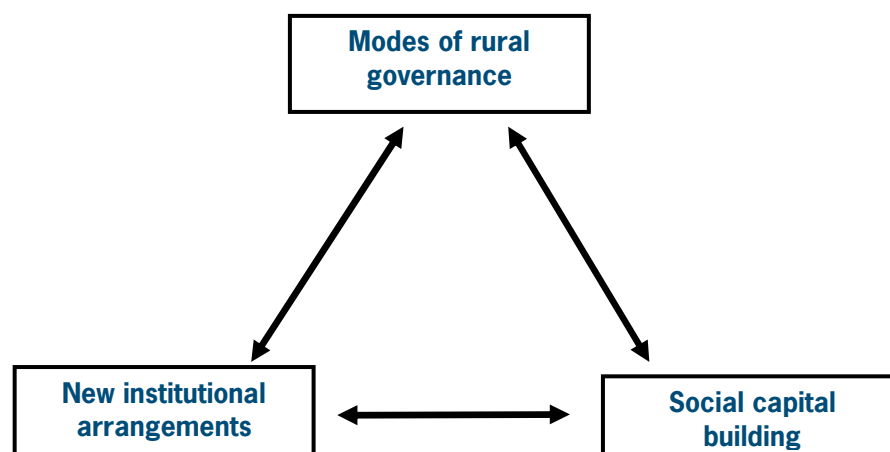
		Feedback meeting to check case-study findings and to refine policy recommendations
<i>Rural diversification measures in the Czech districts Havlickuv Brod and Zdar nad Sazavou</i>	What are the obstacles to the effective implementation of new measures 311, 312 and 313, especially regarding support of farmer's capacity to apply for the support?"	Analysis of available secondary material Interviews with farmers (diversifiers and non-diversifiers) and representatives of national and regional ministry of agriculture, national paying agency, Local Action Groups, Advisory Services, Agricultural Research Community
<i>Securing Public Benefits from Subsistence Agriculture in Romania</i>	What are the public benefits associated with small-scale subsistence farms in Romania? To what extent does Romanian RDP2 Romania recognize these public benefits and attempt to secure them from small-scale subsistence farmers? What are the origins of the current lack of policy support for subsistence farms? What adaptations in rural development policy design and implementation might correct the current weaknesses/failings in securing public benefits from subsistence farmers?	Review of main policy documents concerning the evolution of rural development policy in Romania Review of relevant literature, including research reports, regional studies, published papers etc. Semi-structured interviews with small-holders in two representative communities in Southern Transylvania Analysis of available secondary material
<i>Importance of selection criteria in targeting of RDP measures in Estonia</i>	What role do selection criteria play in targeting of RDP measures? What are the main drivers behind the choice of eligibility and selection criteria? How the choice of eligibility and selection criteria as a process worked?	Desk study of related documents Interviews with main stakeholders, officials, beneficiaries and experts A qualitative analysis and assessment
<i>A new method to assess efficiency of RDP design and delivery in Greece</i>	Which hierarchies (formal and informal ones) are formulated in the politico-administrative system regarding agricultural holdings improvement? What is the role of main power dimensions such as trust, pressure and financial incentives? What is the hierarchy in information flow and what is the role of "scientific" information? What is the status of dogmatism (vs. flexibility and willingness for institutional learning) and susceptibility to conflicts? What is the real situation of hierarchy in the past & the most desirable and probable scenario in the 4 th programming period?	Review of available material Application of Shift Share Analysis as a new methodological approach to assess differences in LAG's budget absorption capacities (?) Survey among which and how many stakeholder representatives (still to be further elaborated in final case-study report

<p><i>Efficiency of Food Quality Schemes (FQS) in Slovenia</i></p>	<p>Which critical elements of policy support for the restructuring of the agri-food sector affect economic viability and durability of supported projects?</p> <p>Do current rural policy instruments that promote FQS adequately take into account the market potentials of such products?</p> <p>Is the importance that RD policy devotes to certified agricultural and food products as defined by the related legislation (510/2006 and 509/2006) overrated?</p>	<p>Analysis of available secondary data, including consumer survey on FQS</p> <p>Interviews with representatives of National Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Association for Promotion and Protection of Delicacy from Prekmurje, FQS producers, Regional Development Agency, Agricultural Expertise System</p>
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4. Overall synthesis approach

As argued, case-study methodology builds primarily on an illustrative and not a comparative approach. There are some additional analytical issues that need some further clarification before going into detail in case-study findings. Firstly there is the relevance to distinguish between a state-of-the-art versus a more evolutionary approach in the analysis of case-study findings. Overall material allows for the identification of a wide variety of limiting factors that explain current absence of more positive RDP outcomes. It is also possible to opt for a more evolutionary approach which starts from the idea that RDP is a still a relatively young EU policy framework and a kind of field laboratory for more integrated and sustainable rural policy delivery through its programmatic attention for the linkages between the physical, social and economic dimensions of rural development. Obviously a choice for a more evolutionary approach does affect the way how case-study findings are being interpreted and presented. In our synthesis analysis we try to find a good balance between a state-of-the-art versus more evolutionary interpretation of case-study findings. This is firstly by analyzing territory specific RDP performances as the outcome of the specific interaction between different components as presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: RDP performance triangle



The figure emphasizes, in the first place, the importance of differentiating modes of rural governance, as e.g. described in detail in previous RuDI publications (see e.g. Mantino, 2010). Secondly, it underlines that these different modes of rural governance represent to different degrees a certain capacity to create new institutional arrangements between public as well as public and private actors, as will be illustrated in many ways in this synthesis report. The third component of the triangle refers to the importance of social capital in relation to RDP performances. It points at the fundamental role of private actors in rural policy delivery capacity and their capacity ‘to make things work’ as the outcome of, amongst others, shared values, norms, visions, etc. In short, the RDP performance triangle emphasizes the need to analyze RDP process-effects as the outcome of time and again territory specific interaction patterns between rural policy delivery systems and the features of rural societies.

A second central element in the case-study synthesis analysis, the identification of institutional learning issues, reflects a more evolutionary perspective on RDP performances in the sense that it draws the attention more specifically to the time dimension of multi-level rural policy delivery changes and allows approaching RDP performances as time and place specific transition processes. It is important to realize that the concept of institutional learning does not exclusively refers to formal but also informal learning settings: *Institutions are formal and informal rules and their enforcement mechanisms that shape objectives. Organizations and individuals pursue their interests within institutional structures defined by formal (constitutions, laws, regulations, contracts) and informal rules (ethics, trust, religious precepts and other implicit codes of conduct* (Horton and Mackay, 2003). The concept further emphasizes that learning *‘involves collective and collaborative reflection on experience, and requires a positive attitude to learning and improving capabilities. Institutional learning is fundamentally concerned with seeking out knowledge on what has worked and what has not worked* (ibid.: 130). Thus, the concept of institutional learning allows analyzing and evaluating RDP performances in a more dynamic way as multi-stakeholder and multi-level learning processes.

These two central elements, the performance triangle and the institutional learning issues, have been combined with a more thematic presentation of case-study findings. Following themes have been selected as being of specific importance for a further deepening of RuDI insights in RDP performances; 1) rural policy coordination issues; 2) LEADER; 3) sustaining marginalizing rural areas; 4) agri-environmental delivery systems and 5) Targeting and Efficiency issues. The selection of these themes builds strongly on initial attempts to cluster case-studies with the objectives to facilitate and fine-tune further elaboration of case-study methodologies. For different reasons it turned out little fruitful to opt for such a cluster based approach, such as the problem of overlapping themes within case-studies. Nevertheless, the cluster themes do provide a useful tool to structure case-study findings along relevant thematic lines as defined within the case-study selection procedure.

5. Policy coordination

5.1 Introduction

After previous general reflections on the case-study synthesis analysis, we will start to go more into detail in case-study findings. A first theme that was explicitly subject of study in Italy, Sweden, Ireland, Germany, Slovenia and the Netherlands, but also pops up more or less explicitly in other cases, concerns the role of RDPs in ongoing attempts to improve territory based rural policy coordination. Following case-study material illustrates the time and again specific expressions of the growing institutional concerns about and attention for place based policy coordination within multi-level and multi-framework policy delivery systems.

5.2 Policy devolution and coordination in the Västerbotten region

The Swedish *Västerbotten* case illustrates stakeholder views, expectations and concerns with respect to ongoing devolution tendency in rural policy delivery through transfer of decision making power to regional and county level administrations (Hedstrom, 2010). In a search of increased efficiency, and in the wake of a national and European trend towards carrying out development initiatives at regional level, the role of the County Administrative Boards (CAB's) has been extended in the design of the current Swedish RDP. The case analyzes how these changes do affect the delivery of the programme and if these makes national RDP better suitable to handle regional specificities and rural actors' priorities and needs. Its outcomes give detailed insights in ongoing policy attempts to integrate policy frameworks from multiple administrative levels (EU, national, regional) through, amongst others, the founding of a regional multi-stakeholder partnership (*samsynsgrupp*) to discuss applications regarding support for regional development and to guarantee that the priorities of the Regional Development Programme (RUP) are guiding the coordination process. Interviewed stakeholders do agree in general that ongoing policy devolution does contribute positively to regional decision making power, a better shaping of RDP after regional conditions and a more efficient implementation of rural policies and more coherence between co-existing regional/rural policy programmes. The role of RDP in relation to these processes, however, would be rather modest, primarily due to its overall limited financial significance in comparison to other available policy funds. Moreover, complexity of RDP procedures and rules in comparison to other programmes, would translate in a certain RDP 'project fatigue' among rural stakeholders and –therefore- problems to generate sufficient interesting and innovative project proposals. It is further emphasized that the manifold institutions currently involved in the design and implementation of regional/rural policy supports systems make the overall policy processes little transparent for most rural stakeholders. As argued, 'one administration for different development supports handled by fewer actors could be easier to follow and might attract more interest'. As a whole this results in the conclusion that rural policy dynamics in *Västerbotten* illustrate particularly; 1) the complexity to improve the coordination of multi-framework and multi-level regional/rural policy frameworks; 2) the potential benefits as new challenges of more devolved rural policy design and implementation and 3) the significance to assess RDP's interrelations with broader regional/rural policy context.

5.3 Rural policy coordination through performances contracts in the Netherlands

A Dutch case describes ongoing national experiment to transfer traditionally strongly sector based policy-frameworks into a more placed based rural policy coordination through the introduction of performance contract based relationships between national and provincial administrations (Oostindie & Van Broekhuizen, 2010). The case-study learns firstly that rural policy makers and rural stakeholders, in particular those that did succeed to get the privileged status of sub-contract partner, do have rather high expectations of this new rural policy coordination mechanism. Through the introduction of 7 years contract periods that coincide with RDP2 2007-2013 period to facilitate the matching with EU policy frameworks, and performance indicators for different policy fields as nature and landscape values, water management, rural leisure infrastructure, it is expected that performance contracts will bring multiple benefits as more integrated and performance oriented rural policies, less bureaucratic, more flexible and tailor made rural policy delivery systems, etc. The recent introduction of performance contracts makes it premature to draw conclusion on overall fulfilment of these expectations, but there are certainly also stakeholders that do express doubts and concerns. Some point e.g. at the emergence of new types of exclusion mechanisms through the exclusion of rural stakeholders with less co-financing opportunities from a sub-contractor status that brings benefits as less transaction costs to get access to rural policy funds, more long term relationships with public administrations and less dependencies on short term project based support systems. There are stakeholders that express their concerns about ongoing tendency among provincial administration to reduce the influence of socio-culturally strongly embedded territory based multi-stakeholder platforms, as the outcome of previous pilot experiences around more territory based rural policy frameworks. Something which is formally motivated by provincial administration by pointing at the lack of formal democratic legitimacy of these multi-stakeholder platforms.

Regarding the specific contribution of RDP to these rural policy processes it is concluded that its financial role is rather marginal in relation to overall transfer of rural policy budgets to provincial administrations. The fact that RDP policy instruments have been strongly incorporated in already existing national and provincial policy instruments makes these furthermore little visible. Most noticeable impact of national RDP would be, therefore, its positive contribute to a better mutual understanding of national and provincial rural policy makers and more trust based relationships between rural policy makers at different levels, as crucial prerequisites for the introduction of performance contracts. This as the outcome of the need for more intensive policy contacts between national and provincial administration in the design and delivery processes of the national RDP programs. Thus, RDP is thought to function primarily as a kind catalyst that did support ongoing policy experiments with performance contracts in a more indirect way. In short, also this second case illustrates the need to contextualize RDP impacts in ongoing rural policy dynamics and transition processes. With its long history of active agricultural and rural policies, the Netherlands is currently experimenting with new territory based coordination mechanisms to support more tailor made and integrated rural policy delivery. Analysis of ongoing experiences with performance contracts points at positive expectations that these will be able to contribute to their principle objectives as well as the emergence of new types of concerns among (specific groups of) stakeholders.

5.4 Rural policy coordination through Integrated Local Development Companies (ILDC's) in Ireland

Another illustration of institutional attention for more place based policy coordination concerns the Irish merger of a policy framework for social inclusion and rural policy delivery through LEADER (Maye, 2010). The case-study gives a detailed picture of this merging (cohesion') process, which may involve the merging of two or more previously existing social inclusion companies with a LAG, who themselves may well have been divided and/or realigned geographically. In general, the intention has been for each ILDC to be based at a county level, and to have a remit of social and economic advancement across the county/community. In many instances, the social inclusion element has been expanded considerably in terms of geographical coverage, from relatively small urban areas to now include the whole area covered by the ILDC. Thus, social inclusion was extended to rural areas, as well as incorporating a much larger population. Case-study material points at different types of merging problems, varying from differences in institutional, organizational and programme culture's, procedures and regulations, fears for budget cuts due to current financial and economic crises that will go along with changing balances between program budgets and an often still largely absence of an indeed more integrated rural development strategy. In particular employees of ILDC's that merged relatively early do point also at the benefits. It is e.g. emphasized that the integration of both programs does allow for the provision of a 'one stop shop' for community support, with clearer information and a single point of contact for the public. It also means that social inclusion provisions can now be delivered across the whole county, including to disadvantaged rural groups, who are likely to be more dispersed than their urban counterparts. In this sense, rural development projects would be better able to address social inclusion issues than when delivered in isolation by LEADER. Other advantages are partly related to organizational and management issues as a better use of staff expertise, save costs, minimize administration and a better use of office space. Staff that tends to be specialized in either rural development or social inclusion needs to work also more closely together, allowing for overlaps between social inclusion and LEADER aspects that facilitate the potential for synergy. Part of the underlying rationale for cohesion was indeed the idea that this would enable *synergies*. Or as argued, 'when working with unemployed people, staff can suggest that they apply to LEADER for funding in order to set up their own business; likewise, staff can progress people from one project to another'. Although some respondents are hopeful that this kind of synergy indeed will be achieved, there is also the recognition that it takes time for the new integrated companies to gel and that it is still early to draw conclusions on synergy potentials. Within the companies that have genuinely integrated strategies for delivering a range of programmes, there are clear signs that synergies are possible; ultimately improving the sustainability of the areas concerned. Time, energy and training are mentioned as most fundamental enabling factors.

5.5 Rural policy coordination in Slovenia

A Slovenian case shows that it might be, notwithstanding formal policy attention for multi-programme coordination in national policy and programming documents, difficult to realize assumed synergies policy programs in practice (Cernic Istenic, 2010). This is illustrated more in detail by ongoing dynamics in the Gorenjska region, a relatively prosperous rural region in Slovenia but simultaneously facing serious socio-economic development challenges. According to regional policy makers prevailing EU regulations, particularly with respect to the avoidance of double

funding from different Funds, do entail unnecessary barriers for more innovative rural project funding. They argue that when EU policy was introduced in Slovenia, both regional and rural development policies were coordinated by the Governmental Office for Local-Self Government and Regional Policy (GOLSRP). DG-Agri demands for more strict definitions of the agricultural part of regional policy, however, made it impossible to continue with this rather successful territory based policy coordination and would have resulted in more isolated and agricultural biased rural policy delivery. Additionally to these coordination problems in relation to EU procedures and regulations, case-study material identifies a variety of national and regional limiting factors that hamper more adequate rural policy delivery systems in Slovenia. This varies from ill management and functioning of LAGs, absence of private capital to co-finance public funding opportunities, lack of transparency of policy procedures, to bureaucracy and inaccessibility of project funds. At the same time case-study material points at more positive RDP process-effects such as a growing awareness among farmers that public support requires also efforts from their side, a growing regional attention for cultural heritage and more attention for bottom up rural policy approaches. Nevertheless, as a whole it emphasizes particularly the manifold, partly early life cycle, problems and challenges of multi-level and multi-framework rural policy delivery in a Slovenian context.

5.6 The Joint Administrative Authority in German Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region

This German case-study shows how rural policy coordination is positively affected by the introduction of a new institutional arrangement. During RDP1 period Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a (former) objective 1 and now convergence region in Germany, decided to create a so-called Joint Administrative Authority (Gemeinsame Verwaltungsbehörde, GVB). This with the objective to establish; 1) an internal coordinator and contact partner for the administrations of the ERDF, ESF and EAGGF/Guidance funds as well as regional departments and 2) an external contact for the EU Commission and the national government. The Joint Authority harmonizes the three fund administrations' interests and functions as consulting body for the departments in the fields of EU law, feasibility of measures, and coordination with the monitoring committee. In order to assure continuation of collaboration between funds, EAFRD was added to its scope of responsibility in RDP 2 programming period, making use of the opportunity of appointing a single authority to be in charge of several operational programmes as pointed out in Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. A transfer from the Ministry of Economics to the State Chancellery served the objectives to overcome suspicion that GVB would act mostly in favour of the Ministry of Economics and to avoid the problem of 'steering inertia' due to initial choice for equal say of all the Managing Authorities of different funds. This upgrading of its competencies and steering power by the transfer from the Ministry of Economics to the State Chancellery would have been of great importance in relation to overall capacity to contribute positively to territory based rural policy coordination. Since then a single Managing Authority is responsible for the coordination of all EU funds and its different co-financing sources, while administration and implementation of funds remains within different ministries and departments (in the case of EAFRD the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection). It is illustrated that the Joint Authority is particularly of importance for the process of programme design. Once the programme has been set up, it assures a regular contact between the fund administrating agencies and provides a learning arena between involved ministries. Implementation of the programmes is influenced indirectly through the

strategic approach to designing the programme: Having a joint strategy focusing on the needs of the region was the starting point for development of the programmes. Which fund is the best for implementation of certain measures, became the guiding question, which prevented a mere fund orientation in planning. As concludes, continuity and coherence of rural development has been ensured by the intensive coordination by the Joint Authority.

An intensive involvement of economic and social partners (ESP) in rural policy design and monitoring and evaluation activities is identified as another important success factor. ESP are acting within a Common Monitoring Committee, which is responsible for all funds. The rather long but also highly valuable consultation process in Rural Development programming would have resulted in a programme which has been agreed upon by a broad variety of stakeholders. Moreover, ESP would show a clear commitment to the Monitoring Committee and feel a great responsibility in the whole programming process, also due to their positive experiences in the former funding period. The existence of the Joint Administrative Authority as well as the Common Monitoring Committee would have both actively supported integrated thinking among ESP, as e.g. expressed in their preference for a common monitoring committee for all three EU Funds and critically observation of current work between ministries, which would require a further intensification of coordination. According to ESP perceptions, ministries still tend to have a sectoral focus which leads to inefficiencies and internal friction losses. Officials of these ministries emphasize that they did meet on a regular basis in RDP2 preparation period and that such regular meetings are being continued in the ongoing funding period with the objective to exchange experiences and to learn from one another. Case-study material further concludes that the active participation did translate in a growing self-confidence among ESP that these have the right to address certain issues, also when the Joint Authority is not legally bound to consult its economic and social partners. That this active ESP involvement is really appreciated by the Joint Authority is also expressed in its suggestion to use RDP funds for technical assistance or capacity-building of ESP. This has been, however, opposed by DG Agri, which argued that it is not the EU's role to ensure this type of capacity-building.

5.7 Horizontal and vertical policy coordination in the Italian Grosseto Province.

Grosseto is a relatively poor province of the Italian Tuscany region. The case-study deals with the question how provincial administration did succeed to reduce in the last decades the economic disparities with richer adjacent provinces as Florence, Prato and Pisa. It illustrates in detail how Provincial administration adopted an integrated and complex rural development strategy over the last fifteen years. It highlights that this strategy covers more than RDP objectives, encompasses a wider set of policy goals which are strictly linked to each other and that it is -therefore- little fruitful to isolate RDP effects from other relevant policy framework. Case-study material shows that the construction of an integrated strategy for rural development involved a continuous and complex process, in which the provincial administration actively seeks for synergy between multiple frameworks. The latter is being described as a process of continuous «learning by doing», adjusting policy strategies to the needs of local stakeholders and the evolution of provincial socio-economic context and the creation of new relations and networks between institutions and private actors. Provincial operational choices in this process would reflect particularly following rationales: 1) maximum mobilization of external policy funds (Region, Ministry of Economy,

Ministry of Agriculture) in order to compensate for the lack of autonomous financial resources; 2) active responses to the support needs of critical sectors/areas; 3) to exploit the opportunities for synergy between locally available resources. As further concluded, RDP measures are a relatively small component within broader provincial “institutional filter” through which multiple policy programmes are being delivered. This is being illustrated by pointing at the relevance of other policy frameworks from different administrative levels with explicit references to Social Fund, Regional Development Fund, Territorial Pact, Agricultural Pact and the Programme Contract for agro-food industry. At the same time it is noticed that ongoing decentralisation tendency in RDP design and delivery from the regional to the provincial administrative level did have a positive impact on provincial institutional management capacity with respect to the rural development measures. This devolution process fostered a gradual technical and political learning process in provincial administration and contributed positively to rural policy coordination at meso-level. More in general this issue of how to ensure policy co-ordination at lower scale levels is being identified as one of the most crucial learning challenge in relation to multi-level rural policy delivery. It is also emphasized that the design and co-ordination of integrated development strategies require specific expertise and depend upon the creation of new networks which have to be promoted by public policies through training, technical assistance and continuous, longer term support provided by e.g. specialised national expertise networks. This kind of policy interventions, however, would still get little attention in available menu of EU measures.

5.8. Contribution to deeper insights in RDP impacts

Overall case-study material on rural policy coordination deepens insights in RDP process-effects in following ways:

- It highlights the importance to evaluate RDP process-effects in relation to broader regional /rural policy coordination issues.
- It illustrates the differences in backgrounds and driving forces of different types of new institutional arrangements for more place based rural policy coordination
- It gives an impression of the potentials as well as limitations of these new institutional arrangements in their specific contexts.
- It shows that RDPs contribute to different degrees positively to more place-based rural policy delivery.
- It allows to identify some important institutional learning issues for future improvement of RDP performances (see Box 5.1).

Box 5.1: Relevant institutional learning issues

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pros and cons of different types of new institutional arrangements for more place based rural policy delivery • Transferability of new institutional arrangements for place based rural policy delivery to other rural contexts • Place based rural policy coordination that succeeds to interlink to specific social contexts |
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6. LEADER

6.1 Introduction

LEADER is frequently characterized as one of the most innovative parts of EU rural policy due to its focus on participatory and integrated rural policy delivery. Together with ongoing attempts to mainstream through its integration in EAFRD this explains why LEADER has been chosen as a second field of central interest for case-study analysis. As earlier introduced, case-study material analyzes LEADER from multiple perspectives. This section will start with an impression of mainstreaming experiences in Austria and Ireland to illustrate some of the contextual specificities regarding its consequences and outcomes as well the new problems and challenges that LEADER mainstreaming is facing. This will be followed by LEADER self-evaluation experiences in relation to the strengthening of bottom-up rural policy delivery, which was central subject of study in a German case. A Greek case concentrates particularly on the need for more appropriate and scientific methodologies to assess and compare LAG performances in terms of budget absorption capacity. In combination with more indirect references to LEADER experiences in other case-studies, this will be –again– translated in some more general conclusions in terms of extra insights in RDP performances and important institutional learning issues.

6.2 LEADER mainstreaming in Austria

The Austrian case highlights particularly that in a MS with a long lasting LEADER tradition mainstreaming might go along with growing tensions between administration and innovativeness (Strahl & Dax, 2010). Austrian administration would seek primarily an effective implementation and transparent use of resources of the programme. Consequently, there is little room for innovation or the pursuit of “unpaved pathways” connected to qualitative aspects as experiences and the disposition to take risks. All this is in sharp contrast with formal implementation regulations. Also in view of any stimulus to an innovative organizational structure the Leader method as a strong political administrative networking institution, has definite limits. As argued, administration and innovation should not be merged, a balance between the two is imperative to preserve the effectiveness of the Leader programme.

Secondly it is concluded that more innovative rural project proposals are increasingly passed on to other regional funding institutions and that these parallel regional policy structures and competences result increasingly in overlaps with regard to project/measure implementation at regional and provincial level. These co-existing policy structures would complicate LEADER management and make that the attribution of projects to the correct programmes gets often more attention than project content and degree of innovativeness. It is furthermore concluded that continuing success of LEADER depends above all on the engagement of local and regional inhabitants, as the only way to overcome the emerging internal doubts on the LEADER future. That currently LEADER no longer follows a clear bottom-up approach would be also illustrated by the top-down selection of LAGs by provincial administrations. Overall target to cover all “potential” rural areas often went along with a spatial extension. Consequently, some LAGs had to include new areas or split up, which affected socio-cultural identity- and longer-term territorial network building negatively. This also resulted in more variable rural policy strategies since it turned out to be impossible to follow a common regional outline due to the lack of

homogeneity of LEADER regions. Thus, regional identity, as a particular strength of LEADER, has become clearly less important than in previous programme periods. Furthermore it is noticed that a comprehensive understanding of monitoring and evaluation tasks, particularly at lower levels, still is missing. An excellent Quality Assessment System in line with CMEF requirements has been prepared, but so far only few provinces use this detailed system for collecting monitoring data of LEADER projects and self-assessment of LAGs and it has been agreed that only five common mandatory indicators will be provided for all LAGs. Current lack of enthusiasm for the CMEF and other evaluation requirements would be explained mostly by factors as lack of direct visible benefits to local or regional administrative levels, required time investments and the absence of compensation mechanism through e.g. extra staff. All together this results in the conclusion that LEADER mainstreaming experiences demonstrate the need for a fundamental change in understanding their relevance in relation to rural needs and rural inhabitants. As argued, to maintain the original LEADER philosophy more transparent and participatory rural policy strategy building is needed and a more open discussion on current weaker LEADER performances. At the same time, however, it is noticed that stakeholders' views on the role of LEADER in rural development clearly differentiate between policy levels.

6.3 Irish mainstreaming experiences

The Irish case on LEADER mainstreaming has been introduced before in relation to the issue of rural policy coordination, which showed that LEADER mainstreaming in Ireland has been merged with a policy programme for social inclusion within so-called Integrated Local Development Companies (ILDC's). Also the Irish case makes explicit references to a loss of original LEADER ethos, even though it may be generally accepted that the tripling of the Irish LEADER budget warrants a stronger inspection regime. Simultaneously, however, it is highlighted that there is a need to rebalance LEADER's ability to deliver more flexible, location-specific projects that exhibit innovation and perhaps higher levels of economic risk. Many LAGs would feel more constrained in the current LEADER programme, will clearly less freedom to act at a local level. Ongoing discussion about operating rules include also the question whether it is the rules themselves as decided in Brussels, or the national interpretation as major causes for current problems. Representatives of the Irish Ministry of Agriculture claim that they are simply interpreting the rules; whereas others feel that the department is being overly rigorous in its interpretation of operational rules. Either way, it would be clear that for most the new operating rules are much more restrictive and bureaucratic than in previous Irish iterations of LEADER, which results in a markedly increased administrative burden. Attendant with this, there has been a change in the inspection regime, which has gone from being advice-based to one that is audit-based and looking to find fault. It is clear that this is hampering the ability of companies to deliver their budget allocations and to engage with potential beneficiaries on the ground, as a significantly higher percentage of their time is spent on administration.

It is further concluded that underlying cause of many of these problems seems to be fear: fear at the department level that they will be pulled up by Brussels if they are seen to be failing to implement these more stringent operating rules; and fear at the ILDC level that they might fail a departmental audit and face having to pay back funds that they have already committed to projects. As consequence ILDCs would

have become more risk averse and less prepared to fund innovative projects, the initial hallmark of the LEADER approach. As argued, this makes it more difficult to be flexible and to respond to the particular needs of local areas, or to be a test bed for the development of endogenous rural development that may not always be certain to succeed, but that hitherto have been considered worth trying. It would also have resulted in serious loss of autonomy of ILDC to make decisions on the basis of their local knowledge.

Other identified mainstreaming problems refer to the ‘diminimis’ rule, which would complicate particularly support for community projects; the retrospective system of payments that requires partners to fund development costs upfront; and the tripling of the LEADER budget, with no extra staff being funded to deliver it. Additionally it is noticed that the Irish banking crisis makes it difficult for LEADER applicants to find match-funding, especially on the enterprise side. The economic downturn has put very considerable strain on the Irish exchequer, struggling to find the funding necessary to match EC funding. As a result ILDCs did receive so far considerably less budget than originally expected. This situation has been exacerbated by the delays to the cohesion process, which meant that most recently created ILDCs were unable to receive LEADER funding until the start of 2009. The combination of these two events means that many ILDCs still have over €10 million to allocate over a four year period until the end of the programme. There are clear concerns that it may be difficult to allocate this level of funds over the next four years. As argued, this might also lead to institutional pressure to focus on larger projects, not always in the best interests of areas involved, or chime that what historically is associated with the LEADER programme.

6.4 LEADER self-evaluation in Baden- Württemberg

This German case analyzes the benefits and limitations of LEADER self-evaluation requirements as formulated in the LEADER+ funding period. These are in particular illustrated for the LAG Oberschwaben, characterized by a relatively long term LEADER experience that cover multiple funding periods and a good budget allocation capacity. The case-study shows that so far self evaluation activities dealt mostly with the analysis of communication and networking structures, which in general is regarded useful by interviewed stakeholders. Also the self-evaluation training courses organized by the German Network for Rural Development did receive positive feedback, as they facilitate exchange and mutual learning between LAGs. In ongoing LEADER period, the focus of self-evaluation has become more objective led in relation to the tackling of the set objectives in the integrated development plan. For the current funding period a self-evaluation plan has been outlined in the Local Development Concept which entails a combination of qualitative and quantitative indicators. This plan has been presented to the Local Action Group and was accepted without much discussion. So far only the LEADER agency and the self-evaluation consultant are involved in the self-evaluation process. As a first step, the existing documents; project data and evaluation sheets that link to development strategies and objectives, are processed by the LEADER agency. In a second step the evaluation consultant will do a first analysis of the data, which will be used as a basis for identifying evaluation questions. These will be put forward to members of the Local Action Group, to the project executing bodies and to communes in form of a questionnaire. The result will then, in a last step, be presented during a balancing workshop. The invitees to this workshop depend on the results and the identified

problems and recommendations for improvement. During the workshop, the problems will be used to define solutions and to determine a plan of action. Previous self evaluation experiences within LEADER+ would have learned that it is important to focus these kind of workshop on issues within the scope of action of the Local Action Group and not to get lost in external contextual factors that may be of relevance but too much outside own scope of action. In the ongoing period, the focus of self-evaluation has become more objective led; analyzing in how far the LAG has tackled set objectives in the integrated development plan. Case-study findings conclude more in general that it is difficult to identify the positive effects of self-evaluation and that it is extremely important to set a clear and delimited objective of self evaluation, which should be discussed beforehand. Or as argued by one of the interviewees, 'it is 'nice' to analyze these and that processes, but that may require a lot of capital and time and does not make sense if at the end there is no time to actually do the work'. Altogether this results in the recommendations to keep external and internal evaluation requirements as limited as possible, to improve the use of (external) evaluation results through a more active involvement of all stakeholders and better communications of these results to e.g. LAG.

6.5 A new method to assess LEADER performances in Greece

A Greek case applies a new methodological approach to assess LG performances, particularly in terms of their budget allocation capability. The methodological approach finds its inspiration in Quantitative Network Analysis and Shift Share Analysis (Papadopolou, 2010a). The case study focuses on the financial instruments that LAGs used during the programming period 2000-2006 and claims to offer a more integrated and objective approach to evaluate the functionality of politico-administrative hierarchies through the analysis of the economic and institutional aspects of rural development processes. It makes a distinction between formal institutional power and institutional trust that builds primarily on informal hierarchies and relationships. The specific features of these formal and informal power relationships and information flows at different levels (national, local) are subsequently related to the financial absorption capability of 41 LAGs. Case-study outcomes illustrates, firstly, that Greek LAGs are more or less successful in terms of planning of different RDP measures. As concluded, measures 1.1 and 1.4 are most accurately planned, which is less the case for the measures 1.2, 1.3, 2.1 and 2.2. It is further mainly quantitatively illustrated that LAGs financial absorption capacity is influenced by external as well as internal factors. An external factor of particular importance is national LEADER+ framework that to different degrees favors LAGs. Staffing, educational levels, number of members, general assemblies, as well as more abstract features as trust based relationships, uniqueness, and dogmatism have been identified as important internal explanatory factors.

6.6 Other case-study material on LEADER experiences

Without being principle subject of study, also other cases do refer sometimes to the relevance of LEADER experiences. In the Dutch case on performance contracts, e.g., it is concluded that provincial administrations succeed in different degrees to safeguard the LEADER philosophy in ongoing transition towards performance contract based relationships with national administration. In other words, this specific form of more de-centralized rural policy delivery is not always favorable for more bottom-up approaches. Another issue of importance in relation to LEADER as well as

RDP more in general, concerns the references to a growing ‘project fatigue’ among rural stakeholders. Swedish, Austrian as well Dutch case-study material points at this problem of a loss of interest among rural stakeholders due to multiple reasons as relatively high transaction costs compared to alternative project funding opportunities or too little institutional attention for the facilitation of the creation of new networks and forms of cooperation required for more innovative projects.

6.7 Contributions to deeper insights in RDP impacts

The contribution of case-study material on LEADER to deeper insights in RDP performances could be summarized as follows:

- It demonstrates that LEADER mainstreaming not only creates new opportunities but also new problems and challenges for more participatory and integrated rural policy delivery.
- It suggests that mainstreaming of LEADER through an integration in the operational framework of EAFRD did seriously undermine its flexibility and innovativeness in comparison to previous programme periods.
- It shows that expected benefits of the up scaling and mainstreaming of LEADER, as a symbol of a new multi-level institutional arrangement, are difficult to realize without lower level institutional innovation and /or social capital building.
- It points at the relevance of the time dimension in relation to RDP performance capacity. Innovative rural project development often require new territory based networks and partnerships which mostly need time to develop and mature as well as an active process facilitation. It learns that LEADER serves currently more innovative as well as more standard (agricultural) project development.
- It suggests that loss of innovative character of LEADER might be mitigated by a stronger focus on axis 3 measures or perhaps even the merging of LEADER with Axis 3.
- It learns that also when the whole set of RDP measures is open for LEADER implementation that linkages to non-agricultural sectors, actors and projects might be still limited
- It shows that minimal thresholds for RDP budget allocation among Axes do prohibit a free selection of LEADER projects.
- It illustrates that mainstreaming is sometimes understood as comprising “new” objectives for LEADER in the sense of an extension of activities to the “standard” RDP programme and that perception of appropriate LEADER implementation might differentiate between administrations.
- It emphasizes that the value added of LEADER is above all in the integration of different RDP measures and that this builds strongly on local management capacity to serve as development agency, implying appropriate local governance and taking up the new challenges.
- It highlights that enhancing self-regulation capacity of civil society is difficult to realize without more policy room for experiments and a more active policy facilitation of innovative and –thus- relatively high risk project development
- It shows how (combinations of) qualitative and quantitative case-study methods make it possible to asses LEADER performances in different ways and from multiple perspectives. It makes it possible to identify some institutional learning issues of specific relevance for future EU rural policy performances (see Box 6.1.).

Box 6.1: Relevant institutional learning issues

- Safeguarding LEADER philosophy / ethos
- Safeguarding policy room for innovative experiments
- More flexible operational rules and procedures for LEADER
- LEADER balance between project-versus process-led support systems
- Management of LEADER expectations

7. Sustaining marginalizing rural areas

7.1 Introduction

Europe faces strongly differentiating rural needs, qualities and policy challenges, as also underlined and described more in detail in other RuDI deliverables. Several case-studies draw explicitly attention to rural areas that are facing serious socio-economic and /or environmental marginalization tendencies. As a whole this case-study material provides in particular extra insights in the broad variety of factors that explain (lack of) positive RDP process-effects in these most difficult and challenging rural policy settings. Similar to the other sections we will start with a summary of relevant case-study material, which will be followed by a synthesis in terms of major conclusions and institutional learning challenges.

7.2 Rural marginalization in the English Uplands

The English Upland case highlights that hill farming in England entails a delicate management system in which agricultural practice is a prerequisite to maintain and reproduce specific territorial qualities in terms of biodiversity, landscape, provision of drinking water, carbon store capacity, etc. These qualities, in its turn, are prerequisites for recreation and tourism. Crucial in this system is the relation between agricultural management of the moorland (uphill), the lower 'in-bye' land and the lowland. In the recent past then environmental quality of this system was threatened by intensification of agriculture through a.o. overgrazing of the moorland. Nowadays under-grazing of the moors in combination with further intensification of the in-bye land and uncoupling of the management of the different types of land (moors, in-bye land and lowland) endangers environmental qualities of the uplands.

It is further emphasized that in current situation the average farm income would be negative without the Single Farm Payments (P1) and the Agri Environmental Payments (P2) and that public support –therefore- is more than crucial for survival of upland hill farming. Some of the policy changes currently affecting upland farms – notably, Pillar 1 decoupling and modulation - have raised concerns about the future sustainability of traditional, extensive upland farming systems and their management culture. These concerns must also be seen in the context of a publicised UK government position on the future CAP which seeks the ending of all direct support under Pillar 1, after 2013. The question therefore arises as to whether the Pillar 2 policy mix is sufficient and appropriately tailored to achieve government goals for the English uplands, alongside the existing reductions, and anticipated further decline after 2013, in Pillar 1 support. In the current RDP the AEM (Pillar 2) are targeted more strongly towards clear environmental outputs. Agri-environment payments are intended only to compensate farmers for their 'income foregone'. They do not address the underlying viability of farming. Thus, if the commercial activity on which agri-environment schemes are based can no longer provide a reasonable return to the producer, it could be at risk of disappearing, regardless of these schemes. The risk is that now that policies are so narrowly focused upon environmental outcomes that they are encouraging farm system changes that are not beneficial to environmental sustainability in the longer term.

This results in the conclusion that RDP is incapable to counterbalance ongoing rural and agricultural marginalization tendencies in Upland areas and is facing the following challenges:

- Develop a more territorially-focused and multipurpose model of policy (design and) delivery) for rural development in the English uplands, ideally enabling the full range of Pillar 2 measures to be applied in a more co-ordinated and accessible way, as appropriate to the characteristics of each distinctive upland area. RDP instruments should be targeted explicitly at long-term sustainable provision of ecosystem services, through a mechanism that is not linked to the ‘income forgone’ model of agri-environment provision. It is suggested to provide this kind of support through a shift in the targeting of Pillar 1 decoupled aid.
- Future rural policy should be more locally-based and more open to the involvement and influence of the farming population as well as those other sectors and service providers with whom they interact most closely. It should be developed and steered in a much more transparent and responsive way and pinpoint the importance of building capacity, institutional trust and social capital in order to ensure effective policies. As suggested, a locally based ‘one-stop-shop’ advisory service could be useful in this respect.

7.3 Public benefits from subsistence agriculture in Romania

Agriculture in the southern Transylvania region of Romania is characterized by two inter-related farming systems: traditional pastoralism and subsistence small-holdings. It is highlighted that the prevailing agricultural systems have many, albeit not always well recognized and articulated, positive ‘by-products’ or public benefits. These are: a) environmental benefits (conserving biodiversity, maintaining cultural landscapes and cultural history, mitigation of climate change), b) socio-economic benefits (buffer function of subsistence agriculture, household food security, contribution to poverty alleviation, community welfare, food networks) and c) other public benefits (notably the economic potential of rural and cultural tourism). It is also observed that the benefits associated with subsistence agriculture have largely been overlooked by policy-makers in Romania and relatively little attention has been given to targeting rural development support at the very large numbers of small-scale farmers in the country. Consequently it is noted that due to the very marginal social conditions (poor communications, lack of basic services and infrastructure etc.) experienced by these farming communities it is likely that their traditional farming systems will continue to break-down and the valuable public benefits associated with them will be lost. It is argued that RDP measures could a) be much better targeted at the needs of subsistence farmers and b) be much more flexible in terms of eligibility criteria etc. and therefore more appropriate to the situation of subsistence small-holdings. It is concluded that rural development policy in Romania could be much better matched to the needs of subsistence and semi-subsistence farmers by focusing more on the processes of bottom-up “mutual adaptation” according to local context rather than the previous tendency towards the top-down “emulation” of policy measures from other Member States.

7.4 Rural diversification in the Czech Vysocina region

This Czech case study focuses on RDP Axis 3 measures that aim to promote the diversification of rural economies through non-agricultural activities and farmers’ differentiating capacity to apply for these measures in the Vysocina region. Case-study outcomes point in the first place at clearly differentiating views on RDP performances at different policy levels. Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and National Paying Agency are rather satisfied with current implementation practice and don’t see major obstacles. Regional policy makers, advisors and experts,

however, point at the importance of administrative obstacles (bureaucracy) and a broad range of regional limiting factors as lack of purchasing power, insufficient farmers' support, and a limited availability of social and human capital. As a consequence, Axis 3 measures would mobilize primarily farmers with a "business mind" and –therefore- often already diversified business activities. Other farmers, characterized by more "traditionally thinking" would mostly still lack willingness and capacity to start new farm activities, notwithstanding regional diversification potential, also due to the lack of more adequate regional support systems. As argued, more intensive and tailor made support approaches are needed to encourage this group of farmers to start diversification initiatives. This would depend strongly on better accessible advisory- and extension services, but these would, however, currently show little interest in the support of rural businesses diversification opportunities. This results in the conclusion that overall impact of Axis 3 measures for rural diversification is still rather marginal in the Vysocina region and the recommendation to invest in advisory services' competences to support the diversification of farmer's business more actively. More in general improvement of communication and cooperation between national and regional policy actors is being identified as an important prerequisite to improve regional rural policy delivery capacity.

7.5 Contributions to deeper insight in RDP impacts

Case study material on RDP performance in marginalizing rural areas could be summarized as follows:

- It confirms the significance of the RDP-performance triangle (see section 3) in the sense that it is often the combination of limiting factors that cover all its three components that explain current disappointing RDP performances in marginalizing rural areas.
- It illustrates the importance of more integrated evaluation approaches to get an adequate understanding of RDP performances in marginalizing rural areas.
- It shows how RDP performances in marginalizing rural areas are to be positioned within broader CAP budget allocation mechanisms.
- It shows how RDPs in marginalizing rural areas may be unable to understand and build upon rural business logics and socio-cultural drivers and motivations in order to achieve rural policy goals and to reduce current social exclusion mechanisms
- It points at the relevance and potential value of policies explicitly incorporating 'active learning', involving beneficiaries and policy delivery agents, to achieve more effective outcomes.
- It points towards greater scope to increase policy effectiveness by seeking synergies between beneficiary and rural policy goals at the design stage.
- It allows to identify some theme specific institutional learning issues to improve future RDP performances (see Box 7.1.)

Box 7.1. Relevant institutional learning issues

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More integrative / holistic rural policy support systems that are better capable to valorize rural capital assets in a broad sense (human, social, cultural, natural, etc.) • Re-allocation of CAP Funds to the benefit of marginalizing rural areas • More social inclusive rural policy support systems • More business oriented support systems |
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8. New delivery systems for agri-environmental measures

8.1 Introduction

A fourth focal point of the case-study analysis reflects the growing societal and - therefore- policy attention for delivery systems for agri-environmental measures as well as the significance of RDP Axis2 budget allocation at MS and EU level (reference to WP4+5 to be included). Available case-study material from Hungary, Czech Republic, UK, Finland and the Netherlands covers rather differentiating rural contexts in terms of experiences with agri-environmental measures (AEM) and ongoing ideas and discussions about potential improvement of agri-environmental delivery capacity. Again, we will start with a summary of empirical material, which will be followed by some more general conclusions with respect to extra insights in RDP performances and the identification of relevant institutional learning issues to improve its future performances.

8.2 Implementation of RDP Axis 2 measures in Hungary

Hungarian agri-environmental measures do have relatively little history. This starts in the middle of the nineties of last century, when ministries, research institutions, and NGO specialists joined forces to study how to adopt EU's agri-environmental policy (Nemes, 2010). In 2002 the *National Agri-Environmental Protection Programme (NAKP)* is being launched with the objective to prepare local farmers and institution system for future larger scale EU funded agri-environmental measures (AEM). Since opportunities within SAPARD to grant extra support to agri-environmental measures were not used by Hungarian administration, the next generation of AEM came only to stage after formal accession to the EU. For the period from 2004 to 2006 the implementation of Hungarian Agri-Environmental Measure (HAEP) officially delegated to a Paying Agency, as established within CAP framework. HAEP does attract right from its start a large interest from farmers, as expressed by the more than threefold oversubscription in 2004 in terms of number of applications, land area, and overall budget. Case-study material makes references to a wide variety of other implementation problems such as the short period between acceptance and launch of national RDP, ill prepared institutions, difficulties in relation to establishing the definition of Good Farming Practices. As argued, together these problems did result in a permanent uncertainty among beneficiaries and executing staff and a situation in which farmers often participate without due consultation, preparation, and information. Often only in later control phases farmers would have realized the requirements they should have complied with. This lack of information and communication would have also caused serious problems with respect to Land Registration issues and (misplaced) automatic disbursements expectations and explain why total number of persons as well as overall land area in HAEP dropped significantly by 2006, in particular for the conservation of areas with highest nature values.

Planning phase of HAEP under RDP 2006-2013 starts with the idea to introduce a module-structured system, in which farmers are able to choose from a menu that entails some compulsory elements and a range of facultative blocks with increased focused on environmental restrictions and corresponding grants specific to geographical-natural zones. Thus a system that gives participants the opportunity to create customized mini-programmes to themselves. However, The Ministry comes to the conclusion that such an approach is unfeasible under current Hungarian

conditions by arguing that neither farmers, consultants or the administrative and control system are sophisticated enough to manage such a complex system. Instead it opted for a simple scheme-based system where farmers have to supply only following information: registration number, name of scheme(s) applied for, area and location(s) (physical blocks) of area(s) to be involved in the application. Most fundamental changes with previous programme period are: 1) more severe conditions for integrated arable land cultivation 2) an expansion of the areas eligible for high nature values (almost doubled) 4) the merging with some former nature conservation schemes (some ended finally) and 5) improved controllability and measurability of requirements. It is concluded that farmers do show again a large interest in this new programme, but also that current HAEP faces many problems that need to be resolved to assure that the programme will contribute positively to its underlying goals with explicit references to: the absence of adequate monitoring systems; minor progress in environmental-consciousness among farmers; political powers that impede a more socially and environmentally optimal allocation of AEM budgets.

8.3 *Integrating AEM policy schemes in two Czech Protected Areas*

This Czech case study covers different issues as national targeting of agri-environmental measures (AEM), transaction costs of AEM and the way how these are being integrated with a national environmental policy scheme in protected areas (Prazan et al, 2010). It illustrates that a better targeting of AEM is mostly addressed by environmental NGOs, that the integration of different policy frameworks touches particularly the interests of different national ministries, whereas a decrease of transaction costs would be of direct importance for both farmers as well as governmental institutions. The latter translates, amongst others, in increased efforts to integrate AEM governed by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) with Nature & Landscape policies managed by the Ministry of Environment (MoE). Case-study material focuses on this integration in two protected landscape areas, describes its institutional design and delivery characteristics and presents the views of different types of beneficiaries. In general this learns that the two AEM delivery systems have their specific strong and weak points and that beneficiaries use both programs in a strategic ways that best fits their conditions. The role of the administration of protected areas (APA) in these processes is rather crucial. Farmers can apply for a wide menu of AEM financed by RDP2 with a more marginal influence of APA on farmers' choices. APA's do further manage their own schemes, so-called Plan for Landscape Management, financed by national funds and governed by the MoE. This flexible scheme allows for more tailor made constructions with farmers but has a more limited budget, is more vulnerable for short term policy changes and -therefore- goes along with more financial uncertainties for beneficiaries. Since RDP2 it is agreed that regional APAs develop their own proposals for the management of valuable nature sites, which includes new responsibilities with respect to; 1) the approval of AEM applied for by farmers; 2) opportunities to change existing AEM of farmers and 3) the exclusion of farmers plots from AEM, eventually compensated by participation in the national AEM framework. APA is further responsible for the control of environmental management by farmers and provides regional MoA with necessary information in this respect.

Case study material identifies all kinds of administrative and technical problems in ongoing implementation of these new regulations, including serious shortcomings in the communication trajectory with farmers. It also points at the problem of sufficient

agricultural expertise within APAs to execute their new role appropriately which may result sometimes in APA proposals for environmental management that would be little sustainable from an economic perspective. Also for that reason implementation of the new scheme would result to different degrees in the strengthening of trust based partnership between farmers and APAs in protected areas.

8.4 *Agri-environmental measures in UK Upland Areas*

Within the broader picture of rural marginalizing tendencies in UK Upland Areas, as described in section 5, farmers do express a number of positive and negative opinions concerning current Axis 2 policy mix (Dwyer et al, 2010). In respect of agri-environment schemes, the balance of opinion is sympathetic and many farmers appear to be happy that the schemes '*are working, for us*'. Most say that their main reasons for joining these schemes are financial – to maintain incomes and to recoup some of the money that is now being taken from the SPS by modulation. Nevertheless, there is a concern that the prescribed management is in some ways too restricted: several interviewees' opinion e.g. that stock reductions on the moor had gone too far and that land is suffering in quality, as a result.

Since the Environmental Stewardship scheme launched in 2005, capital grants are only available to farmers willing and able to enter the 'higher level' scheme (HLS), which is targeted and generally more demanding of farmers than the 'entry-level' ELS. When LFA support ends and is replaced by the new Upland Entry Level Scheme (UELS) in 2010, this scheme offers field boundary maintenance and limited restoration as management options which farmers can choose, but the method of payment will no longer be a capital sum – it will be one condition of the scheme's standard annual payment. As argued, for farms which do not enter HLS, the lack of separate capital funding for field boundary management and restoration in UELS could lead to a decline in the level of activity undertaken.

In workshops and interviews, farmers expressed a wish to have greater contact and feedback from Natural England (NE) advisors, the delivery agents for agri-environment schemes, to be reassured about what they are doing and how they can best deliver the schemes' goals. Many farmers professed to be not entirely clear about why certain land has to be managed according to certain prescriptions, although most recognised the overall benefits that the schemes were seeking for landscapes and wildlife, especially birds. There is an interest in being better able to understand exactly what the schemes are aiming to achieve in management terms, and to discuss, learn and then maybe negotiate more tailored management that, farmers suggest, could either achieve more or enable a better 'fit' with farm business goals or opportunities, without diminishing its environmental performance.

At present, most NE support is devoted to securing agreements at the start of the ten-year period. There is very little person-to-person support for farmers once they are in a scheme. Without exception, the interviewed farmers expressed a wish for more ongoing contact and discussion with NE advisors. Some also said that it would be useful to have more of a collaborative approach to agri-environment management in the area, so that farmers could exchange management experience with each other, as well as with the scheme advisors. These are all calls for building up new forms of social capital among farmers, landowners and government agency officers, in the joint pursuit of sustainable land management.

8.5 Green and Blue services in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a long tradition of agri-environmental measures, which goes back to the late seventies of last century (Van Broekhuizen & Oostindie, 2010). This is one of the reasons why RDP Axis 2 measures have been predominantly incorporated in already existing agri-environmental measures (AEM). These AEM are increasingly subject of debate among stakeholders with respect to multiple issues as their efficacy and efficiency, remuneration basis, etc. In addition there is a rather vivid ongoing national debate on the need and opportunities for extra funding for AEM, are more broadly defined as Green and Blue Services through the public and private sector. In particular in last decade an intensive search can be witnessed for new instruments and approaches to overcome the limitations and shortcomings of prevailing agri-environmental policy instruments. In this search current set of RDP Axis regulations, as well EU policy more in general, are thought to entail important barriers, notwithstanding the EU approval of a National Catalogue of Green and Blue Services, a toolbox with alternative policy instruments and state-aid control checks to facilitate stakeholders in search for better, more tailor made and more stimulating agricultural agri-environmental measures. As concluded, RDP regulations do provide few opportunities to co-finance more innovative agri-environmental delivery systems. Length of contract periods (too short), income foregone principle as remuneration basis (little stimulating) and the highly limited opportunities to establish contract relationships with collectives such as e.g. agri-environmental cooperatives, nowadays almost every where present in Dutch rural areas, are mentioned as some of the most fundamental limitations of prevailing Axis 2 regulations. Also the CAP more in general would show little capacity to actively support and strengthen farmers' growing willingness to respond actively to changing societal demands with respect to management of natural resources, including landscape values.

8.6 Using LEADER in Finnish agri-environmental delivery systems

RDP is the principle instrument for agri-environmental measures in Finland and the largest item in the state expenditure of environmental protection. The case-study focuses on ongoing policy attempts to use the LEADER approach in the delivery of agri-environmental services with the objective to adjust agri-environmental support schemes closer to wider rural development approaches and to strengthen the image of environmental projects in rural development. It shows that particularly national level policy makers laid great emphasis on the modification of the RDP for the Commission to allow LEADER action groups to implement Axis 2 measures. They expect that this will improve the administrative process and facilitate the realisation of agri-environmental objectives. Analysis of ongoing experiences, however, learns that there are different types of barriers to realize such potential benefits. Farmers are certainly not always in favour of extending the LEADER approach to Axis 2 measures, since this is thought to undermine their current position in agri-environmental delivery systems. It is further underlined that there exists a collision of different life worlds in the sense that officials in the paying agency lack experiences with the LEADER approach and, on the other hand, LEADER action groups do not have experiences with the logic of area based AEM payments. Also this seriously complicates the acceptance and implementation of the LEADER approach in relation to AEM. A more open application process would be necessary to widen stakeholder participation in agri-environmental schemes to be facilitated through a more intensive information supply at different levels. Moreover, the ex-ante evaluation of Finnish RDP2 learns that LEADER action groups do refer in their development plans still rather marginally to

agri-environmental issues. Only every fifth LEADER action group in Finland makes in their development plans explicit references to agri-environmental objectives as e.g. the management of traditional biotopes and /or the management of multifunctional wetlands, clearing and fencing of valuable traditional biotopes etc. As a consequence, majority of local development plans does not include directly to environmental protection related objectives. This would also relate to the fact that regional authorities have not yet been able to diffuse sufficient information to LEADER actors on scheme conditions, partly also due to inadequate information from the national level about how to proceed in applying the new approach. Meanwhile LEADER action groups would be spokesperson for the development of living countryside that stress that agri-environmental schemes have to be used for diversifying livelihood in rural areas and securing the conditions for sustainable agriculture, but also often with rather suspicious attitudes towards agri-environmental support schemes and the opinion that the administration of the subsidy system is too devastating to handle. Altogether this results in the conclusions that LEADER involvement in the application of Axis 2 measures currently functions mainly as a kind of “rubber stamp”, that is to say as an official statement that a project is in accordance with local development plans, but still strongly based on a coalition between agricultural and environmental interests without much local influence. As argued, the rigidity of this dominant policy network is only slowly changing although the new policy approach has the potentiality to come up.

8.7 The use of LEADER in implementing biodiversity and water management resources in Italian Po Delta Regional Park

An Italian case-study shows how the LEADER approach is being used to stimulate integrated and sustainable natural resource management. Mainly based on different types of secondary data resources, this role has been analyzed in terms of network dynamics and capacity building in terms of consistency and coherency of a regional development strategy for integrated natural resource management in the Delta Po Regional Park. One of the central conclusion of the case-study is that is particularly through the LAG that it became possible to develop a participative process functional to define the territorial strategy. As further concluded, its participatory approach made it possible to implement an integrated method of policy design by giving particular attention to territorial aspects, sectors and multi-policy framework co-financing opportunities through an active involvement of both public and private actors in the planning and implementation of local actions.

The positive role of the LAG in this territorial process has been identified as manifold. Firstly it carried out animation activities to enlarge territorial awareness of the importance of a sustainable development. Secondly, at institutional level it developed and strengthened network relationships among local actors with the purpose to promote strategies for sustainable development. This could be also realized through the creation of specific governance structures supporting the design and implementation of LAG interventions, such as the inter-provincial coordination committee (ICC,) with representatives of the Po Delta Regional Park, Ferrara and Ravenna Provinces and Chambers of Commerce. Also LAG representatives do participate in this new place based institutional arrangement, which are in charge of strategic programming and implementing Local Development Plan activities.

A second example of a new place based institutional arrangement is the Steering Committee (SC), with –again- representatives of the Provinces Park Administration,

Chambers of Commerce and Municipalities. This Steering Committee is having a more operational function to support the coordination and integration among actors at inter-provincial level and coordinates the so-called Participatory Working Groups (PWG), consisting of local technicians with specific expertise to facilitate project development integrated natural resource management (?). Project application' eligibility and assessment is being carried out by two committees. The Technical and Scientific Committee (TSC) consists of experts in different fields (tourism, environment etc) and is responsible for the technical and qualitative assessment of single initiatives directly implemented by the LAG. The Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) consists of external experts that support the definition of project calls and the assessment of projects submitted by beneficiaries. It is emphasized that this organizational structure, although perhaps with relatively high costs and time consuming procedures, does contribute positively to territorial consensus building with respect to integrated natural resource management. This would be also illustrated by the more recent decision to maintain this structure for the RDP2 period, with only minor adaptations. It is further concluded that particularly since Leader+ public and private stakeholder cooperation increasingly translates in a real systematic approach of policy making orientated to valorising a marginal wetland area and its multiple components (environment, biodiversity, culture, history, traditions, economic activities, etc.) with a crucial role for the LAG in catalysing the action of local actors toward the Delta “resource pool”.

8.8 Contributions to deeper insights in RDP performances

Overall case-study material on new agri-environmental delivery systems deepens insights in RDP performances in following ways:

- It points –again- at the significance of the time dimension in relation to RDP performances, as e.g. exemplified by differentiating experience with agri-environmental measures within MS, their early-life-cycle design and implementation problems in some MS.
- It illustrates the context specific opportunities and limitations of agri-environmental delivery systems and the variety of factors that explain their – to different degrees convincing- performances.
- It indicates that farmers are increasingly willing to integrate environmental measures, especially if these are adjusted to and made suitable for specific local conditions and farming systems.
- It suggests that RDP regulations may provide little room for manoeuvre for alternative policy instruments that – in specific contexts and under specific conditions- may strengthen AEM performances.
- It points at the need for alternative, more stimulating and long-term financial remuneration systems to overcome different types of shortcomings of prevailing income-foregone principle.
- It points again at the relevance to assess RDP performances in interrelation with pillar 1 dynamics
- It confirms again
- It enables to distinguish some institutional learning issues of specific importance for future improvement of RDP performances (see box 8.1)

Box 8.1: Relevant institutional learning issues

- More eco-system- and rural business specific agri-environmental delivery systems
- More tailor made & farmers' knowledge led agri-environmental delivery systems
- Alternative agri-environmental delivery systems than enable to reduce policy transaction costs
- More adequate monitoring and evaluation of agri-environmental performances
- 'Greening ' of Single Payment Schemes of pillar 1

9. Policy Targeting and Efficiency issues

9.1 Introduction

Policy targeting and efficiency issues have been selected as a 5th focal point in the case-study synthesis analysis. At EU level RDP could be seen as the outcome of a transition process from a historically sector based policy framework into an increasingly *rural* policy framework which entails a set of policy instruments that are relatively strongly targeted in comparison with e.g. CAP pillar 1. Policy targeting and efficiency issues at EU level may be also related to the capacity to allocate CAP and other EU funds according to territorial needs and e.g. broader EU cohesion objectives. At national/ regional level it may include the selection of most adequate and appropriate instruments from different available policy frameworks and place based coordination of multi-framework and multi-level policies. Previous section on agri-environmental delivery systems already illustrated that targeting and efficiency issues do also refer to cause-effect relationships between individual policy instruments and their specific underlying objectives, including well known evaluation problems as deadweight, substitution effects, etc. In short, policy targeting and efficiency issues may be approached from different perspectives and levels and do overlap to different degrees with previous central theme of interest in this case-study synthesis analysis.

Here we will present the findings of the case-studies with a specific attention for targeting and efficiency issues. An Estonian case study will illustrate, firstly, how an active organization of stakeholder learning processes can contribute to better targeted RDP instruments in terms of responsiveness to differentiating rural needs and inclusion of potential beneficiaries. Secondly, a Greek case will deal more specifically with applying new methods to analyze the efficiency of multi-level rural policy delivery systems based on stakeholders' views on the pros and cons of more centralization versus de-centralized delivery systems. A Slovenian case-study analyzes policy targeting in relation to its ongoing experiences with RDP measures for food quality schemes. Together with a synthesis of available material on targeting and efficiency issues from other case-studies this will result– again– in a concluding section which summarizes extra insights in RDP process-effects.

9.2 *Better targeting through comprehensive design of selection criteria and stakeholder involvement in Estonia*

An Estonian case-study concentrates on the changes in RDP 2007-2013 selection criteria (and partly also eligibility criteria) compared to the 2004 – 2006 period (Mikk & Peepson, 2010). The case study explores in particular the changes in RDP 2007-2013 selection criteria for Axis 1 and 3 measures and comes to following major conclusions:

- Selection criteria during the 2004-2006 period consisted primarily of economic (financial) criteria which primarily allowed for targeting to (financially) bigger enterprises. For ERDP 2007-2013 Axis 1 and Axis 3 the role of the selection criteria was increased for more efficient use of limited financial resources and for maximizing the positive impact of the measures.
- The broadening (and in some cases introduction) of the selection criteria (compared to the previous programme) allowed for a more efficient use of limited

financial resources and did contribute to better targeting of the measures through the wider inclusion of other criteria than only economic (e.g. social, sectoral and regional).

- The role of stakeholder consultation in choosing eligibility and selection criteria (and through this targeting of the measures) has increased over the time. Many more (and a wider range of) stakeholders have been actively involved in RDP 2007-2013 design and continuing development process. Even the first proposals are prepared by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture based on the results of the RDP monitoring and evaluation and the experiences of the previous period, the details of different criteria as well as several amendments were introduced by the Monitoring Committee and other consulted stakeholders. Responsible ministry (MoA) seems to appreciate their involvement in discussion. Selection criteria reflect the growing influence of selected stakeholders.
- Stakeholders are in general positive about the selection criteria of RDP 2007-2013 and do agree that these improved the targeting of RDP measures in comparison to 2004-2006 period. Particularly the prioritization of marginal rural areas and young farmers are broadly accepted as relevant criteria. Nevertheless, there also differentiating views on specific criteria.
- *Regional* targeting has got much wider attention than previously. In addition to eligibility and selection criteria, a better targeting of measures is also achieved through differentiating public sector contribution rates, which take into account *regional* aspects such as urban-rural proximity.
- The new selection criteria do allow to target support more specifically to e.g. applicants that did received little or none support from previous programmes, to more *social* (e.g. gender preferences), *cultural* aspects (e.g. preference for applications connected to traditional products, services or the preservation of cultural heritage) and *sectoral* (e.g. organic farming and processing).
- Eligibility and selection criteria for ERDP measures have been continuously amended. During almost each application round some changes are being introduced based on the results of RDP monitoring and evaluation and the experiences of previous application rounds.
- It is expected that in close future the role of ongoing RDP evaluation will become an important base for discussions of the details of the measures. The use of the (ongoing) evaluation results and research performed together with active involvement of the stakeholders contributes for the best agreement on the needs of the rural areas and again to better targeting of the measures.
- Stakeholders' involvement should remain active and open. Further development of institutional capacity is required for some of the stakeholder groups. This will better guarantee fair representation.
- Design and fine tuning of eligibility and selection criteria should continue taking into account the changing needs of rural areas, ongoing RDP evaluation results, experiences of previous implementation of the measures, results of research performed and discussions with stakeholders.

9.3 New methods to analyze efficiency of rural policy delivery systems in Greece

A Greek case-study entails a new method to analyze stakeholder views and to support decision making on centralized versus more decentralized rural policy delivery systems (Papadopoulou et al, 2010b). Again, the basis of this approach consists of Quantitative Network Analysis which is being used to characterize rural policy network configurations in terms of:

- Trust relations (as an important indicator for informal influence),
- Institutional pressure (as an indicator of formal power),
- Dependence on financial incentives (another dimension of power),
- Emergence of conflicts,
- Use of general versus scientific information flows
- Dogmatism versus flexibility

The methodology allows analyzing stakeholder's different positions, views, expectations and preferences in a more quantitative way, with a specific focus on ongoing delays in the implementation of RDP measure 121, in budgetary terms one of most important RDP measures in Greece. In a context of serious RDP2 implementation delays, the methodology distinguishes and compares following three scenarios; 1) Continuation of the RDP1 configuration; 2) Most Optimal RDP2 configuration and 3) Most Probable RDP2 configuration. It concludes that within current dominance of top-down rural policy approaches, centralized rural policy design and delivery and inflexibility and highly bureaucratic procedures and requirements, rural policymakers have to prepare themselves for noticeable decentralization pressures and demands for more trust based institutional relationships. Simultaneously it is concluded that stakeholders prefer a more centralized rural policy decision making with respect to issues as security of procedures and transparency in rural policy delivery. Lack of vision and attention for longer term investments would be another important weakness of more decentralized rural policy delivery models. As further argued, most probable scenario might go along with a loss of influence of public actors and growing public-private tensions and conflicts, although stakeholders would also show some realism regarding the opportunities to simplify RDP procedures. Their past experience would guarantee a certain realism and prevent too much optimism.

9.4 Efficiency of Food Quality Schemes in Slovenia

A Slovenian case focuses on national RDP measures that stimulate Food Quality Schemes (FQS). It analyzes the efficiency of FQS in relation to expected outcomes and identifies a set of –often interrelated- problems that would explain the often still disappointing FQS outcomes:

- complex and very slowly running administrative procedures,
- application calls that are rather demanding in terms of their extensiveness and complexity, when projects are approved a flexibility of activities is not allowed,
- the costs of control of FQS standards is only partially covered by the state resources (costs of internal control that can significantly vary from one FQS product to the other are challenging issue of producers' associations and individual producers),
- insufficiently implemented control and sanctions against the violators of FQS,

- feedbacks of producers and consumers on administrative proceedings are not taken into account by policy makers on a regular basis,
- different perception of problems related to FQS by producers and their associations on one hand and policy makers on the other hand.
- a lack of trust and loyalty among members of producers' group,
- prevailing individualistic and passive behaviour among producers and farmers,
- a prevalence of 'unpretentious' consumers, trustful to not certified farm food products and not attentive to marks and labels pertaining to FQS
- unwillingness of larger retailers to include FQS products in their sell offer and their competitive dealing with small producers by lowering prices of similar products,
- a lack of institutional framework to enable farmers' cooperation,
- poor coordination and organisational skills of farmers for joint actions,
- a lack of entrepreneurial attitude among farmers.

All together these limiting factors would demonstrate that current policy support for FQS primarily reflects a 'top down' approach with only few exemptions of successful initiatives primarily driven by producers or other food chain actors. Nevertheless, interviewed stakeholders do believe that FQS support remains for different reasons of importance, particularly in initial stages of development and promotion. This could, e.g., stimulate farmers' entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking and diffuse higher quality standards to other spheres of agricultural and rural activities. In other words, it is being emphasized that an appropriate assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of current support for FQS requires a broader and longer term perspective. As argued, more successful future FQS entail important institutional learning challenges with respect to e.g. their economic and social aspects.

9.5 Other case-study findings

Other case-study material deals more indirectly with targeting and efficiency issues. As a whole also this material highlights that it is little meaningful to approach the targeting and efficiency of RDP measures in isolation from specific rural (policy) settings. E.g. in the Netherlands, characterized by a long tradition of an active rural policy, RDP measures are almost without exception incorporated in already existing national and/or provincial rural policy frameworks. This implies that RDP budget targeting is less guided by rural policy priorities than policy concerns regarding administrative cost of multi-level rural policy delivery. A similar conclusion can be drawn for the UK, where the prominent role of Axis 2 in overall RDP budget allocation is also primarily to be explained by an instrumental use of RDP budgets. Both examples show the importance to approach RDP targeting and efficiency issues from a multi-level and multi-framework policy coordination perspective. Particularly in MS with a history of rural policy frameworks with similar and/or overlapping objectives, current targeting of RDP instruments will be often perceived as too detailed and too prescriptive and –therefore- too bureaucratic. In MS with fewer experiences with broader *rural* policy approaches same set of RDP measures may be much more a positive driving force for broader rural policy delivery conform rural needs. To be further developed?

9.6 Deeper insights in RDP performances

- Case-study material shows how targeting and efficiency issues are in multiple ways and at different scale levels related to RDP performances.
- It learns that RDP policy targeting and efficiency is not just about ‘instrumental-technical’ but primarily a matter of translating, adjusting and steering to local conditions (social, cultural, in relation to other policies, etc.)
- It underlines the importance to assess targeting and efficiency issues of RDPs always in relation to time and place specific rural policy delivery capacity.
- It learns how individual RDP instruments might contribute in some rural settings positively to a better targeting of rural policies, whereas in others, in particular those with longer experiences with place based rural policy design and delivery, the menu of RDP instruments offers little added value or is even perceived as an hindrance for more efficient multi-level rural policy delivery.
- It shows how a better targeting of individual RDP policy instruments in terms of responsiveness to differentiating rural needs and inclusion of potential beneficiaries can be actively facilitated through multi-stakeholder learning processes
- It illustrates how targeting and efficiency of *individual* RDP measures can be approached by mixed methods with their specific strength and weaknesses.
- It allows to identify some important institutional learning issues of relevance for future improvement of RDP performances (see Box 9.1)

Box 9.1: Relevant institutional learning issues

- RDP design & delivery systems (incl. active stakeholder involvement) that acknowledge differences in rural policy delivery capacity
- Extension of evaluation methods (incl. territory based) to assess rural policy targeting and efficiency issues
- More territory specific approaches for rural policy targeting

10: Conclusions and Policy recommendations

10.1 Conclusions

Previous outcomes of the case-study analysis deepen in multiple ways available insights in RDP impacts and process-effects. Particularly the combination of a broad scope of case-study subjects with mixed case-study methods results in a more detailed and profound understanding of the ‘why’ of RDP performances. As a whole, case-study material illustrates, firstly, that RDP process-effects are highly context dependent and the outcome of the time and again specific interaction with available rural capital assets (institutional, economic, social, human, cultural, natural, etc.) In these interaction processes RDP (-components) may play rather differentiating roles that vary from an innovative force and driver of rural change, mainly a catalyst or co-financer of ongoing rural policy transition processes, towards a hindrance or barrier for more place based and better targeted rural policy delivery systems. These and other extra insights in RDP performances are being summarized for the different thematic fields that have been distinguished within this case-study synthesis analysis (see Table 10.1.).

Table 10.1: Thematic summary of extra insights in RDP performances

Case-study themes	
Policy Coordination	Differentiating roles of RDPs in rural policy delivery systems; the relevance to analyze RDP impacts in terms of multi-framework and multi-level policy coordination challenges; the pros and cons of ongoing experiments with new institutional arrangements for more place based rural policy delivery
LEADER	Current territory specific (in-) capacity to safeguard flexibility & innovativeness of LEADER in ongoing mainstreaming process, to involve new stakeholders more actively in rural policy design and delivery and to stimulate synergies between LEADER , RDP and/or other relevant policy frameworks
Sustaining marginalizing rural areas	Overall mostly still limited RDP delivery capacity in marginalizing rural areas, the need for more holistic rural policy approaches that succeed to mobilize and valorize territorial capital assets in a broad sense, the importance to re-allocate current CAP expenditure pattern in favor of marginalizing rural areas. Since many marginal rural areas are found in the new Member States, greater emphasis should be put upon encouraging processes of “mutual adaptation” of RDP measures according to local context rather than the prevailing tendency towards the top-down “emulation” of policy measures from older Member States
Agri-environmental delivery systems	The need for more eco-system-, rural business- and output sensitive agri-environmental delivery systems, the need fore more adequate monitoring systems, the importance of more longer term public-private contracts and support systems.
Targeting & Efficiency issues	The differentiating contributions of RDPs to better targeted and more efficient rural policy instruments; major territorial differences in rural policy delivery capacity

Secondly, case-study material shows that the value added of RDP, its explicit and unique attention for the integration of the physical, economic and social dimensions of *rural* development and –thus- interlinking *quality of rural life* and *competitiveness of rural areas*, may be difficult to realize without following success factors:

- Further devolution of rural policy delivery systems;
- Active place based rural /regional policy coordination;
- Active role of agricultural and other rural stakeholders;
- Better targeted / more tailor made rural policy instruments
- Simplification of administrative procedures and operational frameworks.

A-state-of-the-art-analysis of overall case-study material will emphasize that RDP performance are often still rather disappointing due to the absence of these – interrelated- success factors, as in many ways illustrated by the outcomes around principle fields of interests, *rural policy coordination*, *LEADER*, *sustaining marginalizing rural areas*, *agri-environmental delivery systems* and *targeting and efficiency issues*. A more evolutionary perspective on these outcomes highlights the crucial importance of the time dimension in relation to multi-level rural policy delivery systems and underlines that RDP performances, notwithstanding all the limitations, often entail a stimulus to broader rural policy approaches, including the development of new linkages between rural functions, sectors, networks, etc. An evolutionary approach will also emphasize that the positive effects of institutional and social capacity building manifest themselves in time and these are difficult to assess within evaluation methods that mainly cover shorter time periods. In line with the RDP performance triangle as introduced in section 4, it underpins that it requires time to develop the mutually positive interactions between 1) new modes of rural governance; 2) new institutional arrangements and 3) social capital building that translate in RDP performances.

A more evolutionary perspective on case-study material makes it possible to identify a set of important institutional learning issues to improve future RDP performances (see Box 10.1). The list does not pretend to be comprehensive, but shows that further improvement of RDP performances covers manifold, albeit always place and time specific, learning challenges for multi-level rural policy delivery. It allows also deriving following more general learning issues of specific importance at EU level:

- *How to respond to diversity?*

In line with previous RuDI outcomes, also case-study material points again at diversity as a major challenge for future EU rural policy. In addition to the significant diversity in terms of rural policy design, - delivery and implementation systems as identified in previous Work Packages, case-study material gives a more detailed impression of relevant diversity in terms of available rural capital assets. Together this learns again that the EU has to deal with highly context specific rural policy needs, challenges, as well as rural policy delivery capacity.

- *How to actively involve rural stakeholders?*

Overall case-study material underlines, in the second place, the importance of more bottom up and participatory rural policy delivery approaches. Simultaneously it identifies a wide variety of problems to come to such approaches. At EU level this relates in particularly to the threat of a loss of flexibility in LEADER operational rules and procedures, the emergence of a certain ‘project fatigue’ among potential beneficiaries and different types of social exclusion problems of lower level rural

policy delivery systems. Developing new responses to these kinds of problems will be of major importance for more adequate and innovative future EU rural policy delivery, as well as an intensification of capacity building and training activities that enable stakeholders to actively participate.

- *How to better integrate RDP programme structures and its financial procedures / rules?*

Pillar 2 could be perceived as symbol of an ongoing EU transition towards more integrated and place-based rural policy delivery. This transition, however, as in many ways illustrated by case-study material goes along with increasingly stringent and rigid financial procedures and rules. As a consequence, assumed programmatic flexibility is seriously threatened by the combination of rigidity of procedures and risk avoiding behaviour among national and regional policy bodies. This growing discrepancy between programmatic flexibility on the one hand and rigidity of financial procedures, on the other, seems to be one of the major threats for more flexible and rural need driven multi-level rural policy delivery systems.

Box 10.1: Institutional learning issues of relevance for future RDP performances

Rural Policy coordination

- More adequate multi-level and multi-framework policy coordination
- Pros and cons of different types of new institutional arrangements for more place based rural policy delivery
- Transferability of new institutional arrangements for place based rural policy delivery to other rural contexts

LEADER

- Safeguarding LEADER philosophy / ethos
- More flexible operational rules and procedures for LEADER
- LEADER balance between project-versus process-led support systems
- Management of LEADER expectations

Sustaining marginalizing rural areas

- More integrative / holistic rural policy support systems that are better capable to valorize rural capital assets in broader sense
- Re-allocation of CAP Funds to the benefit of marginalizing rural areas
- More social inclusive rural policy support systems
- More business oriented support systems
- Better targeting of measures and delivery mechanisms at the needs and context of smaller-scale farmers, including vulnerable communities of small-farmers rather than individual farmers

Agri-environmental delivery systems

- More eco-system- and rural business specific delivery systems
- More tailor made & farmers' knowledge led delivery systems
- Alternative delivery systems that enable to reduce policy transaction costs
- More long term monitoring and evaluation of methods
- 'Greening' of Single Payment Schemes of pillar 1

Policy targeting and efficiency issues

- More flexible RDP design & delivery (incl. stakeholder involvement) that acknowledge differences in rural policy delivery capacity
- Extension of evaluation methods (incl. territory based) to assess rural policy targeting and efficiency issues
- More territory specific approaches for rural policy targeting

- *How to come to more adequate policy cycle feedback mechanisms?*

A fourth key issue that deserves specific attention at EU level concerns the role of monitoring and evaluation in relation to future rural policy design. Case-study material confirms –again- the limitations of evaluation approaches that tend to isolate RDP process-effects / outcomes / impacts from their relevant contextual factors. It also suggests that this might go along with a rather limited trust in the positive impact of EU evaluation on future rural policy cycles and / or a loss of genuine interest to contribute actively to EU rural policy evaluation at lower policy levels. More adequate and meaningful policy cycle feedback mechanisms, including the multi-level organization of the responsibility for ‘lessons learned’, therefore, reflects another crucial challenge for future EU rural policy delivery.

10.2 Policy recommendations

Case-study outcomes provide rich empirical evidences for policy recommendations that address different territorial (EU, National, Regional) and RDP levels (Programme, Axes, Instruments). Particularly the set of institutional learning issues around the specific fields of interests as summarized in Box 10.1 entail all kinds of policy recommendations for different scale levels. In this synthesis report we will address the policy recommendations primarily at the EU policy level.

- *Harmonize management rules and procedures of EAFRD with those of other EU funds to facilitate place-based rural policy delivery*

The *one-fund-one programme* principle for different EU Funds of importance for rural/regional development delegates the responsibility for place-based policy coordination to lower administrative levels. Simultaneously it brought EU program specific rules, regulations and procedures that make place-based rural policy coordination rather complex management challenges for these lower administrative levels. Further harmonization of procedures and regulations of EU funds (EAFRD, EFS, ERD) is important first step to facilitate place-based rural policy delivery.

- *Differentiate operational rules and procedures according to institutional performances*

The ‘RDP performance triangle’ had been introduced to highlight the importance of positive interaction patterns between institutional settings and civil society in relation to RDP performance potentials. Additionally to current policy experiences with penalization mechanisms in operational systems of EU programmes, it could be an interesting line of thinking to experiment also with operational systems that aim to actively reward positive institutional performances with additional policy room for manoeuvre within EU operational procedures. Thus, transparency of and trust in rural policy delivery capacity becomes a guiding component for a differentiation of regulations and procedures. Such an approach does explicitly recognize existing differences in rural policy delivery capacity, allows to stimulate good performances more actively and may facilitate multi-level institutional learning as well as more trust based institutional relationships .

- *Extra space for place based rural policy delivery*

As illustrated time and again by case-study material, rural diversity in a broad sense demands for flexible and tailor made multi-level rural policy delivery systems. EU's responses to this demand for more place specific rural policy delivery could be approached in combination with foregoing recommendation. Thus, institutional performances in terms of e.g. financial transparency, stakeholder involvement capacity, available monitoring and evaluation material, etc. become part of combined learning and negotiation processes between EU- and lower level administration with respect to extra room for manoeuvre for policy experiments. This may include e.g. experiments with collective contract partners for agri-environmental measures in the Netherlands, more rural business and community based support systems in UK's Upland Farming areas, the merging of LEADER with other RDP Axis in Austria, etc.

- *Actively support a re-allocation of CAP funds*

EU faces important challenges regarding the distribution of available rural policy funds. This relates to different debates as the need for a re-distribution of policy budgets in favor of marginalizing rural areas, to farmers that are most capable to provide agri-environmental services and to newly emerging rural policy fields as Energy & Climate that require a more active EU policy with respect to e.g. carbon stores, flood and drought adaptation, sustainable energy production, etc. These driving forces to re-distribute rural policy budget allocation can be supported in different ways. Additionally to an active re-allocation of pillar 2 and / or CAP funding among MS, also extra experimental room for lower level (national, regional) policy initiatives that claim to target rural policy budgets more conform *rural* and *societal* needs and agricultural delivery capacity to respond to these needs might be helpful.

- *Actively use the results of complementary RDP evaluation methods*

It has been concluded that the CMEF approach lacks sensitivity for differentiating rural needs, qualities, challenges and RDP roles within broader rural / regional policy delivery systems. Case-study analysis, together with the specific methodological approach of previous RuDI Work Packages, provides a set of building blocks for alternative evaluation methods that allow for a better understanding of the 'why' of differentiating RDP process-effects as well as the relevant learning issues to improve future RDP performances. An active EU response to the results and extra insights of these complementary evaluation approaches may contribute positively to policy makers' as well as more in general rural stakeholders' trust in the role of evaluation results with respect to better future rural policy design and delivery.

- *Deepen institutional learning through complementary evaluation methods*

The RuDI project provides additional insights in RDP process-effects through applying an evaluation method that is complementary to the CMEF approach. Major components of this complementary method are: 1) policy cycle analysis; 2) mixed case-study methodologies and 3) thematic fields of interests. Altogether this makes it possible to contextualize RDP process-effects, to deepen insights in most crucial limiting and enabling factors and to identify meaningful institutional learning issues to

improve future EU rural policy delivery. At EU level relevant institutional learning may be actively stimulated through evaluation methods that are better capable to deal with differentiating rural and policy settings. As demonstrated by the RuDI project, this may require more place-based and thematic evaluation methods

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