

Environment: assessment of effects of certain plans and programmes

1996/0304(COD) - 27/10/2006 - Follow-up document

Article 12(4) of Directive 2001/42/EC requires the Commission to ‘report on the relationship between this Directive and Regulations 1260/1999/EC and 1257/1999/EC well ahead of the expiry of the programming periods provided for in those Regulations, with a view to ensuring a coherent approach with regard to this Directive and subsequent Community Regulations.’ This report is intended to meet that obligation.

According to the report, the ex ante environmental evaluations carried out for the current period to 2006 appear to have had a beneficial influence on the design of SF programmes thanks to a more developed approach when compared with the preceding period (up to 2000). In particular, evaluations have considered more than simply the level at which particular targets should be set but also the rationale for them (whether they are the right targets) and what is the best way of achieving them. It is very important for the ex ante evaluation to establish a clear connection between results, outputs and impacts and the causal relationships between them. It is clear that the evaluation requirements of Regulation 1260/1999 have helped to promote an evaluation culture and capacity in the Member States. In some cases very little evaluation was carried out prior to the advent of significant SF applications.

The overall lesson from past experience is that a well-organised and adequately resourced evaluation system, underpinned by appropriate structures and a clear sense of purpose or focus, is an important instrument in maximising the benefits of Community co-funding. Evaluations carried out at an early stage in planning, by experienced evaluators, focused on appropriate questions and with the commitment of key stakeholders, can deliver a rounded approach to sustainable development which takes account of the interest of different stakeholders and enables environmental opportunities to be developed. There is no clear evidence of whether the decision taken to exempt the programming period 2000-2006 of SEA had harmful consequences on the environment since a separate ex ante environmental evaluation was required. During the 2007-2013 programming period, this separate evaluation will be effectively superseded by the SEA, which will be an important tool in promoting sustainable development, and will benefit in turn from the evaluation expertise developed during the programming period 2000-2006.