Basic information

2005/0129(CNS) CNS - Consultation procedure Decision	Procedure completed
Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013 Amended by 2008/0106(CNS) **Subject** 3.10.01.02 Rural development, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	MCGUINNESS Mairead (PPE-DE)	13/07/2005

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
REGI Regional Development	ATTWOOLL Elspeth (ALDE)	06/10/2005

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Agriculture and Fisheries	2692	2005-11-22
Agriculture and Fisheries	2708	2006-02-20
Agriculture and Fisheries	2676	2005-07-18

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Agriculture and Rural Development	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
05/07/2005	Legislative proposal published	COM(2005)0304	Summary

18/07/2005	Debate in Council		Summary
15/11/2005	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
22/11/2005	Debate in Council		
26/01/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
01/02/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A6-0023/2006	
15/02/2006	Debate in Parliament		
16/02/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0062/2006	Summary
16/02/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/02/2006	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		
20/02/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		
25/02/2006	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2005/0129(CNS)
Procedure type	CNS - Consultation procedure
Procedure subtype	Legislation
Legislative instrument	Decision
Amendments and repeals	Amended by 2008/0106(CNS)
Legal basis	EC Treaty (after Amsterdam) EC 037
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/6/29534

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Amendments tabled in committee		PE364.957	09/12/2005	
Committee opinion	REGI	PE364.667	24/01/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A6-0023/2006	01/02/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T6-0062/2006	16/02/2006	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	COM(2005)0304	05/07/2005	Summary
	SEC(2005)0914		

Document attached to the procedure		05/07/2005	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2006)1012	09/03/2006	
Follow-up document	COM(2011)0450	20/07/2011	Summary
Follow-up document	SEC(2011)0943	20/07/2011	
Follow-up document	COM(2013)0640	19/09/2013	Summary
Follow-up document	SWD(2013)0335	19/09/2013	
Follow-up document	COM(2015)0288	11/06/2015	Summary
Follow-up document	SWD(2015)0114	11/06/2015	

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Decision 2006/0144
OJ L 055 25.02.2006, p. 0020-0029 Summary

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 11/06/2015 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented its third report on the implementation of the national strategy plans and the Community strategic guidelines for rural development (2007-2013). It provides a summary of the main developments, current trends and challenges undertaken for the implementation of the NSP and the Community Strategic Guidelines.

Priorities for rural development for the period 2007-2013: on February 2006 the Council of the European Union adopted Strategic Guidelines for rural development for the period 2007-20132, providing three core thematic priorities:

1) Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector: the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) should contribute to a strong and dynamic European agri-food sector by focusing on the priorities of knowledge transfer, modernisation, innovation and quality in the food chain, and on priority sectors for investment in physical and human capital.

Expected result: to contribute to 575 000 investment projects for the modernisation of agricultural holdings and to support 34 000 enterprises for adding value to agricultural and forestry products.

2) Improving the environment and the countryside: the resources devoted to this priority should contribute to three EU-level priority areas: biodiversity and the preservation and development of high nature value farming and forestry systems and traditional agricultural landscapes; water and climate change.

Expected result: to have 47 million hectares (ha) of agricultural land under agri-environment management, 55 million ha of agricultural land in less favoured and mountainous areas compensated for their handicaps and 1.3 million ha of agricultural land supported to meet NATURA 2000 requirements.

3) Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy: interventions should in particular be used to promote capacity building, skills acquisition and organisation for local strategy development and also help to ensure that rural areas remain attractive for future generations.

Expected result: to contribute to develop or create 73 350 businesses in rural areas and to support 29 000 village renewal projects.

Beyond the thematic priorities, the adopted Strategic Guidelines for rural development also highlight the need for:

- **building local capacity for employment and diversification** while contributing to the thematic priorities. This horizontal axis, also called "Leader Axis" (**Axis 4**) should play an important role in improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas, through Local Development Strategies which contribute to diversification and quality of life;
- **ensuring consistency in programming**: synergies between and within the axes should be maximised. In particular, European and national networks for rural development should be set up as a platform for exchange of best practice and expertise on all aspects of policy design, management and implementation between stakeholders;
- **ensuring complementarity between Community instruments** in order to foster synergy between structural, employment and rural development policies.

The Strategic Guidelines provide the framework on the basis of which Member States prepared their National Strategy Plans, which translate the EU priorities into national priorities, and serve as a reference for the Rural Development Programmes.

The main conclusions of the report are as follows:

Budget and financial implementation: the total EAFRD expenditure realised by the 27 EU Member States by the end of 2013 amounted to **EUR 71 billion, representing 74% of the overall 2007-2013 budget** of EUR 96.2 billion. The annual expenditure is **globally on track after an initial slow start** during the first years of the programming period 2007-2013. The main difficulties of implementation reported in the previous reports have been largely overcome.

However, **lower uptake persists in some Member States** particularly in relation to Axis 3 (improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy) and Axis 4 (building local capacity for employment and diversification implementation - LEADER).

For these two axes, available data underline **variability among Member States particularly in LEADER execution**. The low levels of execution reported in some RDPs point out a disparity among the rural areas of the Union. In this context a significant role can be provided by networking through the European Network for Rural Development.

Implementation by axis: the monitoring system on rural development policy provides a picture of the main outputs and results for the CAP second pillar. More specifically:

- **in Axis 1**, around 2.4 million of farmers were successfully trained and more than EUR 80 billion of total investment were mobilized in 637 thousands of projects;
- **in axis 2**, measures targeting environmental issues were implemented on 47 million hectares;
- **in axis 3** more than 50 000 projects of basic services for the economy and rural population are completed and 62 000 micro-enterprises were supported or created;
- lastly, 140 000 LEADER projects (**Axis 4**) have been supported so far.

Individual programmes: the report noted that many corrective modifications have been made based on the difficulties encountered in the first years of implementation, taking into account the recommendations from the mid-term evaluations and incorporating additional funds addressing new challenges (Health Check) and the economic crisis (European Economy Recovery Package). Most of the changes observed were budget shift between measures, adaptation of the targeted beneficiaries and/or the eligibility criteria.

This picture will be completed by the ex post evaluation which will assess the overall impacts of the Rural Development Policy. Managing Authorities will submit to the Commission the RDP ex post evaluations for each individual RDP by the end of 2016 and this exercise will be followed by synthesis at EU level.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 19/09/2013 - Follow-up document

This report is the second report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, firstly, of the Community strategic guidelines for rural development (2007-2013) and, secondly, of the National Strategy Plans (NSP). This report, which is based on the analysis and appraisal of the summary reports submitted by Member States in 2012, are aggregates from the beginning of the programming period in 2007 to the end of 2011.

The strategic guidelines, which are based on priorities laid down in Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), are as follows:

- Axis 1: improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors;
- Axis 2: improving the environment and the countryside;
- Axis 3: improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification;
- Axis 4: building local capacity for employment and diversification.

In addition to the thematic priorities, the Strategic Guidelines also highlighted the need for ensuring consistency in programming and complementarity between Community instruments.

The guidelines provide the framework within which Member States prepare their national strategy plans (NSPs) for rural development and translate the EU priorities into national priorities, and serve as a reference for the RDPs.

The total EAFRD expenditure undertaken by the EU27 Member States at the end of 2011 amounted to **EUR 44.5 billion**, representing 46% of the overall 2007-2013 budget of **EUR 96.2 billion**. Given that the timeframe under consideration represents 56% of the payment period (5 years out of 9), annual expenditure has been accelerating after an initial slow start during the first years of the 2007-2013 programming period. The picture is far from homogeneous among the Member States: two had spending levels of around 70%, while four have spent under 40%. It should be noted that payments made for commitments of the previous programming period 2000-2006 as foreseen in the transitional rules had mostly run out.

Axis 1: improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector: the total EAFRD Axis 1 expenditure registered for the 2007-2011 period amounts to 42% of its 2007-2013 overall allocation (EU27 average). The main results for this objective, at the end of 2011, are:

- number of participants who successfully completed a training related to agriculture and/or forestry: 1,353,000 (49% of the 2013 estimated target);
- number of holdings introducing new products or new techniques: 73,600 (29% of the 2013 estimated target).

Axis 2: improving the environment and the countryside: the total EAFRD Axis 2 expenditure for the period 2007-2011 represents 58% of its overall allocation. The main results achieved for this objective at the end of 2011 are:

- 50 million Ha under successful land management contributing to biodiversity;
- 32 million Ha to improve water quality and
- 40 million Ha to improve soil quality.

Axis 3: improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy: the total EAFRD Axis 3 expenditure for the period 2007-2011 represents 31% of its overall allocation 2007-2013 with significant differences between Member States. The main reasons for this slow uptake are the financial crisis (scarcity of private and national/local funds) and some administrative requirements (control obligations, long procedures for applications and selections). Furthermore, in some Member States, implementation of Axis 3 is made exclusively via Leader, and therefore the delays in Leader implementation have also impacted on Axis 3 uptake. The main results achieved for this objective at the end of 2011 are:

- creation of more than 20 000 jobs in a context of growing unemployment in rural areas;
- population in rural areas benefiting from improved services supported by EAFRD: 62 million people;
- an additional 3.5 million households in rural areas have potential access to internet.

Axis 4: building local capacity for employment and diversification: at the end of 2011, the selection of Local Action Groups (LAGs) was completed in 25 Member States. The total number of LAGs is now 2323. Due to the fact that the LAG selection process was completed relatively late, many of the selected LAGs have only started to implement projects linked to their local development strategy. This explains the low EAFRD Axis 4 financial uptake which represents 18% of the overall allocation for this axis for the programming period but a substantial increase in the latest quarterly expenditure was observed.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 18/07/2005

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of its proposal for a Council Decision on Community Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development and gave a mandate to the Special Committee on Agriculture to examine the proposal, in order to prepare a debate at a future meeting of the Council.

The target date for adoption of the Community strategic guidelines is Autumn 2005. The common framework for monitoring and evaluation should be fully elaborated by the end of 2005. On 20 June 2005, the Council unanimously reached political agreement on the Regulation establishing a European Fund for Rural Development for 2007-2013.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 05/07/2005 - Document attached to the procedure

COMMISSION'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Further information concerning the context of this issue may be found in the summary of the Commission's initial proposal COM(2004)0490 of 14 July 2004 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) – 2004/0161(CNS). As a follow-up to that document, the Commission published on 5 July 2005 a proposal – COM(2005)0304 - on Community strategic guidelines for Rural Development (Programming period 2007–2013). The following summary contains an update of the extended impact assessment which had accompanied the initial 2004 proposal.

1- POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPACTS: Three basic options for the implementation of RD policy – the policy delivery system – are proposed.

1.1- Option 1: Improved status quo: Member States design their RD programmes for 2007-2013 by choosing from the current menu of measures grouped according to the three policy axes. MS can choose the geographic level of programming, either one national RD programme for their territory or several regional programmes covering the territory. Each programme includes, in axis 3, a LEADER type measure for which an amount of at least 4% of planned programme expenditure is reserved. The LEADER measure supports the best integrated local development strategies presented by Local Action Groups (LAG). Each programme (and major programme modification) is approved by the Commission.

Member States shall present annual progress reports based on a common set of monitoring indicators. A European Rural Development Observatory is set up by the Commission to follow the implementation of the programmes.

1.2- Option 2: A more strategic approach: One of the messages coming out of the mid-term evaluations of the current generation of RD programmes tends to be that many programmes lack focus and a clear strategy and tend to be a collection of too many measures without much coherence between them. Without clear objectives and a well-defined strategy which links objectives and the means to achieve the objectives programme results are difficult to evaluate. At EU level, it is even more difficult to assess and account for the outcomes of the policy. Under option 2, a first step in the programming phase would be the preparation by the Commission of a strategy document setting out the EU priorities for the three policy axes identifying strengths and weaknesses at EU level and core indicators to measure progress in achieving the EU priorities. The EU strategy would be adopted by the Council after opinion of the European Parliament and would form the basis for the national RD strategies of the MS. The RD programmes would be subject to Commission approval and would articulate the national strategy into a strategy for each of the three axes with quantified objectives and core result indicators and using as building blocks for each of the 3 axes.

1.3- Option 3: A more territorial approach: This option would follow the strategic approach of option 2 but would introduce territorial targeting for all three policy axes. To concentrate on the restructuring needs of the farm sector in poorer regions, axis 1 (competitiveness) would be limited to the two framework measures targeting human resources and the physical endowments of farms in lagging rural areas to be defined by the MS on the basis of objective criteria (e.g. GDP/capita, unemployment, access to services and credit).

*CONCLUSIONS:***The Commission considers that the EU's rural development policy needs to evolve in a more strategic way than that described under Option 2.**

**Update 5 July 2005:* The new version of the extended impact analysis deals with the following issues:

- The data sources have been revised and extended to take into account Romania and Bulgaria where data are available. This analysis and presentation of data reflects more closely the integration of the Göteborg and Lisbon objectives.
- A new section is presented which highlights the key Community objectives that need to be taken into account in the guidelines.
- A new section is presented which describes the reporting system. The principles for a common monitoring and evaluation system as provided for in the RDR are explained. A set of draft baseline indicators for the assessment are presented as well as maps corresponding to draft lead indicators.
- A timetable relating to programming deadlines in (programme implementation as from January 2007).

§ IMPACTS:

The main advantage of option 1 is that, while introducing further simplification by moving to one funding and programming system for RD and adapting the implementation system to multi annual programming, it stays relatively close to the current systems, minimising the need for adaptations in programming and implementation by the MS.

The main advantage of option 2 is that it would allow to focus EU cofinancing of rural development on commonly agreed EU priorities and to monitor more closely the policy outcomes with regard to the priorities.

In addition, option 3 would provide a concentration of resources on lagging rural areas for axis 1 and axis 3 and more emphasis on a 'bottom-up approach' to the socio-economic development of lagging rural areas, but could be to the detriment of the adaptations needed in other rural areas, in particular in relation to axis 1 and the potential restructuring effects of the 2003 CAP reform. The high share of funding for the LEADER approach, the more difficult governance form to implement, could pose absorption problems.

The Commission believes that the time is ripe for the EU's RD policy to evolve towards a more strategic approach as outlined under option 2 which would focus the EU cofinancing available for rural development on commonly agreed EU priorities for the three policy axes, while leaving sufficient flexibility at Member State and regional level to find a balance between the sectoral and territorial dimension. For those Member States and regions capable and willing, the LEADER model could be applied on a wider scale, while for the EU as a whole continuation and consolidation of the LEADER approach would be safeguarded.

2- FOLLOW-UP :

**Update 5 July 2005:* The new rural development regulation foresees strategic monitoring of the Community and national strategies. The basis for reporting on progress will be the common framework for monitoring and evaluation to be established in cooperation with the Member States.

The framework will provide a limited set of common indicators and a common methodology. It will be supplemented by programme-specific indicators to reflect the character of each programme area.

A common set of indicators will allow aggregation of outputs, results and impacts at the EU level and help assess progress in achieving Community priorities. Baseline indicators defined at the start of the programming period will allow assessment of the starting situation and form the basis for the development of the programme strategy.

Evaluation activities will take place on an ongoing basis, comprising at programme level *ex-ante*, mid-term, and *ex-post* evaluation as well as other evaluation activity considered useful for improving programme management and impact. These will be accompanied by thematic studies and synthesis evaluations at Community level, as well as by the activities of the European network for rural development as a platform for exchange and capacity building for evaluation in Member States. Exchange of good practices and the sharing of evaluation results can contribute significantly to the effectiveness of rural development. In this respect, the European network should play a central role in facilitating contacts.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 20/02/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE : the adoption of Community strategic guidelines for Rural Development (Programming period 2007–2013).

LEGISLATIVE ACT : Council Decision2006/144/EC.

CONTENT : the Council unanimously adopted this Decision on the strategic guidelines for rural development for the programming period from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013 to set the priorities for rural development. These strategic guidelines are intended to reflect the multifunctional role farming plays in the richness and diversity of landscapes, food products and cultural and natural heritage throughout the Community.

The Community strategic guidelines for rural development will help to:

- identify and agree the areas where the use of EU support for rural development creates the most value added at EU level;

- make the link with the main EU priorities (Lisbon, Göteborg) and translate them into rural development policy;

- ensure consistency with other EU policies, in particular in the fields of cohesion and environment;

- accompany the implementation of the new market-oriented common agricultural policy (CAP) and the necessary restructuring it will entail in the old and new Member States.

The future rural development policy focuses on three key areas: the agrifood economy, the environment and the broader rural economy and population. The new generation of rural development strategies and programmes will be built around four axes, namely: axis 1, on improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; axis 2, on improving the environment and the countryside; axis 3, on the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy; and axis 4, on Leader.

Under axis 1, a range of measures will target human and physical capital in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors (promoting knowledge transfer and innovation) and quality production. Axis 2 provides measures to protect and enhance natural resources, as well as preserving value farming and forestry systems and cultural landscapes in Europe’s rural areas. Axis 3 helps to develop local infrastructure and human capital in rural areas to improve the conditions for growth and job creation in all sectors and the diversification of economic activities. Axis 4, based on the Leader experience, introduces possibilities for innovative governance through locally based approaches to rural development.

The strategic guidelines set out below identify priorities for the Community. For each set of priorities, illustrative key actions are presented. On the basis of these strategic guidelines, each Member State will prepare its national strategy plan as the reference framework for the preparation of rural development programmes.

The guidelines are as follows:

Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector: Europe’s agricultural, forestry and food-processing sectors have great potential to further develop high-quality products that meet the growing demand of Europe’s consumers and world markets. The resources devoted to axis 1 will focus on the priorities of knowledge transfer, modernisation, innovation and quality in the food chain, and on priority sectors for investment in physical and human capital. Key actions include restructuring and modernisation of the agriculture sector, and improving integration in the agrifood chain.

Improving the environment and the countryside: the resources devoted to axis 2 should contribute to three EU-level priority areas: biodiversity and the preservation and development of high nature value farming and forestry systems and traditional agricultural landscapes; water; and climate change.

The measures available under axis 2 should be used to integrate these environmental objectives and contribute to the implementation of the agricultural and forestry Natura 2000 network, to the Göteborg commitment to reverse biodiversity decline by 2010, to the objectives laid down in Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, and to the Kyoto Protocol targets for climate change mitigation. Key actions could include promoting environmental services and animal-friendly farming practices, preserving the farmed landscape and forests, and combating climate change.

Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of the rural economy: The resources devoted to the fields of diversification of the rural economy and quality of life in rural areas under axis 3 should contribute to the overarching priority of the creation of employment opportunities. The range of measures available under axis 3 should in particular be used to promote capacity building, skills acquisition and organisation for local strategy development and also help ensure that rural areas remain attractive for future generations. In promoting training, information and

entrepreneurship, the particular needs of women, young people and older workers should be considered. Key actions include raising economic activity and employment rates in the wider rural economy, encouraging the entry of women into the labour market, developing micro-business and crafts, and training young people in skills needed for the diversification of the local economy.

Building local capacity for employment and diversification: the resources devoted to axis 4 (Leader) should contribute to the priorities of axes 1 and 2, and in particular of axis 3, but also play an important role in the horizontal priority of improving governance and mobilising the endogenous development potential of rural areas. Key actions could include building local partnership capacity, promoting private-public partnership, promoting cooperation and innovation, and improving local governance.

Ensuring consistency in programming: in working out their national strategies, Member States should ensure that synergies between and within the axes are maximised and potential contradictions avoided. Where appropriate, they may develop integrated approaches. They will also wish to reflect on how to take into account other EU-level strategies, such as the Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming, the commitment to increased use of renewable energy resources, the need to develop an EU strategy to combat climate change, and the need to anticipate the likely effects on farming and forestry, the EU Forestry Strategy and Action Plan (which can help deliver on both the growth and employment and the sustainability objectives) and the priorities set out in the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme laid down by Decision 1600/2002/EC), particularly those priorities identified as requiring thematic environmental strategies.

Complementarity between Community instruments: The synergy between structural, employment and rural development policies needs to be encouraged. In this context, Member States should ensure complementarity and coherence between actions to be financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Fisheries Fund and the EAFRD on a given territory and in a given field of activity. The main guiding principles as regards the demarcation line and the coordination mechanisms between actions supported by the different funds should be defined in the national strategic reference framework and the national strategy plan.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 16/02/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Mairead **MCGUINNESS** (EPP-ED, IE) and made a number of amendments to the Commission's proposal. The resolution was adopted by 455 votes in favour 16 against with 10 abstentions. The resolution suggested a stronger focus on young farmers, the modernisation of agriculture, and the protection of the rural cultural heritage as key strategic guidelines for rural development. Parliament also emphasised the importance of the provision of essential funding to the new Member States in order to reduce the gap between them and the EU 15. The new Member States were characterised by the significant under funding of the agricultural sector and huge disparities in income levels in comparison with the other Member States. The cohesion principle must therefore also be implemented in rural areas.

The amendments focused on the following matters:

- the importance of crafts in the countryside to enable job creation, training of young people through apprenticeships, the transmission of traditional skills and the creation of social ties in the most remote areas;

- the resources devoted to Axis 1 should contribute to promoting the use of ICT and responding to the specific needs of young farmers;

- local and regional products should be promoted;

- encouragement should also be given to organic farming and production by means of traditional methods relating to regional specialities.

Resources must also support:

- improving the transfer between generations; promoting renewable energies in order to combat climate change;

- supporting research into energy crops and the process of producing biofuels;

- maintaining and developing services aimed at maintaining populations and welcoming new dwellers. -- encouraging village renewal and development and safeguarding of the rural cultural heritage help to counter rural depopulation;

- prioritising traditional rural skills and quality-oriented measures such as charters or labels, and training young people in these matters;

- preserving rural culture. The culture of rural communities can provide economic added value, notably for tourism. Crafts, food and drink, agricultural specialities and the related traditional production techniques, folklore and rural architecture are among the elements that need to be protected and, in some cases, revived. These traditions, despite the added value that they offer, are in danger of extinction because of rural depopulation, the ageing of rural populations and the lack of interest of the young, especially in the most depressed regions.

- promoting the Local Agenda 21 in the countryside and adapting to the strengths and drawbacks of each locality in the light of the diversity of the countryside, with the participation of local agents and supporting full-scale local endogenous development projects. A culture of local participation needs to be developed on the basis of strategic development plans based on the Local Agenda 21.

- the transfer between generations needs to be a priority objective for all the rural development axes. If the humanised landscape is to be preserved, it is necessary to promote traditional techniques of agricultural production and the entire rural culture associated with them. Special assistance should be provided to prevent disasters such as floods, droughts, scarcity and forest fires, which often occur in neglected areas, as well as to prevent desertification.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 20/07/2011 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents its first report on the implementation of the national strategy plans and the Community strategic guidelines (CSG)for rural development (2007-2013).

The report provides a summary of the main current developments, trends and challenges relating to the implementation of the national strategy plans and the CSG. It is important to note that the data used in the 2010 summary reports by Member States are aggregates from the beginning of the programming period in 2007 to the end of 2009. The adjustments of the NSP and the related Rural Development Programmes (RDP) which followed the CAP-Health Check (HC) and the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP) are not taken into consideration in this current report. The modifications were only finalised at the beginning of 2010

Implementation of the Communities priorities: the Strategic Guidelines for rural development for the period 2007-2013 are based on the three core thematic priorities laid down in the Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The total EAFRD payment realized by the EU27 for the 2007-2009 programming period amounts to EUR 19.4 billion, representing 21.3% of the overall 2007-2013 budget of 90.98 billion EUR. Given that the timeframe under consideration represents 33% of the payment period (3 years out of 9), this number indicates a slightly late uptake. However, programme implementation normally needs more time in the first years before it reaches normal speed, especially given that many Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) were approved near the end of 2007 and 41 RDP (out of 94) were only approved in 2008. The picture is far from homogeneous among Member States: only 2 have spending levels above 40%, while 3 have spent less than 10%. It is noted that that in several cases payments have been made for commitments of the previous programming period 2000-2006 as provided in the transitional rules, which might lead to a slight distortion of the picture regarding the level of uptake for certain Member States and measures.

General implementation difficulties and solutions: beyond the time gap needed to approve the RDPs, the most frequent issue raised by Member States is the **economic crisis.** This led to difficulties in the uptake of investment measures due to beneficiaries' lack of own resources, difficulties in obtaining loans by the applicants and to budgetary constraints restricting public initiatives. The private sector has been in general less keen on taking risks, and some investments may have been shifted to less ambitious projects, or simply postponed. The difficult situation in the dairy sector in 2009 also had a negative effect on the implementation of RDPs.

High administrative costs and procedural complexity are underlined by some Member States as impediments to smooth implementation. Moreover, some RDPs experienced a lack of sufficient capacity in the management and control authorities, some difficulties in the setting up of the monitoring system and legal uncertainties. In particular, some Member States pointed out gaps in implementation at Member States level of environmental legislation (such as the Water Framework Directive, NATURA 2000) relevant to certain measures and the need to obtain interpretation of the state aid rules (notably for renewable energy production projects).

Lack of awareness and experience by potential beneficiaries can also result in slow uptake notably in some EU-12 Member States (i.e. slow progress on human capital measures, or inadequate applications), or in the overall EU-27 when new measures are introduced.

Some Member States envisage offering a sufficiently critical mass of training/Farm Advisory Services activities to overcome these issues. Solutions are being introduced in the programmes through modifications. In the face of the financial crisis, Member States introduced different programme adaptations such as change in the state aids coverage, the level of grants, the intervention rates for less attractive measures, adjustment of selection criteria, increase in the EU co-financing rate and/or re-allocation of the funds. As regards the initial administrative and legal difficulties, most of them have now been dealt with.

The Common Monitoring and Evaluation framework has provided useful information for reporting and for following the progress of the programme implementation and achievement on an ongoing basis. Preliminary figures for 2010 indicate that a majority of programmes has reached cruising speed. The synthesis of the mid-term evaluations of the RDPs to be available in 2012 will provide more information as to what extent the programmes are on track to achieve their objectives and to respond to the Community priorities.

Rural development: Community strategic guidelines, support by the EAFRD, programming period 2007–2013

2005/0129(CNS) - 05/07/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: the adoption of Community strategic guidelines for Rural Development (Programming period 2007–2013).

PROPOSED ACT: Proposal for a Council Decision.

CONTENT: On 5 July 2005, the European Commission adopted EU strategic guidelines for rural development. Following political agreement by the Agriculture Council on the new Rural Development Regulation on 20 June, the guidelines set out a strategic approach and a range of options which Member States could use in their national Rural Development programmes.

Since the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, Rural Development is playing an increasingly important role in helping rural areas to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Rural areas make up 90% of the territory of the enlarged EU and the new Regulation broadens the possibilities to use Rural Development funding to boost growth and create jobs in rural areas – in line with the Lisbon Strategy – and to improve sustainability, in line with the Göteborg sustainability goals.

The future Rural Development policy 2007-2013 will focus on three areas in line with the “three axes” of measures laid down in the new Rural Development Regulation: improving competitiveness for farming and forestry; environment and countryside; improving quality of life and diversification of the rural economy. A fourth axis based on experience with the Leader programme introduces possibilities for locally based bottom-up approaches to rural development.

The new programming period provides a unique opportunity to refocus support from the new rural development fund on growth, jobs and sustainability. The target date for the adoption of the EU strategic guidelines is autumn 2005. Member States can finalise the detailed programming of their national strategy plans in the first half of 2006.

For each set of priorities, key actions are suggested. Member States shall prepare their national rural development strategies on the basis of six community strategic guidelines, which will help to:

- identify the areas where the use of EU support for rural development creates the most value added at EU level;

- make the link with the main EU priorities (Lisbon, Göteborg)

- ensure consistency with other EU policies, in particular cohesion and environment;

- accompany the implementation of the new market orientated CAP and the necessary restructuring it will entail in the old and new Member States.

Guidelines

1. Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors

2. Improving the environment and countryside

3.Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification

4. Building Local Capacity for Employment and Diversification

5. Translating priorities into programmes

6. Complementarity between Community Instruments.