



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Brussels, 25 February 2014
(OR. en)**

6987/14

**AGRIFIN 25
FIN 159
AGRI 151
AGRISTR 10**

"I/A" ITEM NOTE

From: Working Party on Financial Agricultural Questions (AGRIFIN)
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council
On: 24 February 2014

No. prev. doc.: 6168/14

Subject: Special Report No 12/2013 from the European Court of Auditors entitled "Can the Commission and Member States show that the EU budget allocated to the rural development policy is well spent?"
- Adoption of Council conclusions

1. At its meeting on 5 December 2013, the Working Party on Financial Agricultural Questions (AGRIFIN) examined Special Report No 12/2013 from the European Court of Auditors entitled "Can the Commission and Member States show that the EU budget allocated to the rural development policy is well spent?".
2. At its meeting on 24 February 2014, the Working Party on Financial Agricultural Questions (AGRIFIN) reached agreement on draft Council conclusions on the above report.

3. In accordance with the conclusions adopted by the Council on 8 May 2000 on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors, the Working Party on Financial Agricultural Questions (AGRIFIN) invites the Permanent Representatives Committee to suggest to the Council that it adopt the draft Council conclusions as set out in the Annex to this note as an "A" item at a forthcoming session.
-

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
on Special Report No 12/2013 from the European Court of Auditors entitled
"Can the Commission and Member States show that the EU budget allocated to the rural
development policy is well spent?"

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- (1) WELCOMES Special Report No 12/2013 from the European Court of Auditors entitled "Can the Commission and Member States show that the EU budget allocated to the rural development policy is well spent?".
- (2) SHARES the Court's view that an appropriate evaluation of the rural development policy is key to accountability.
- (3) EMPHASISES, however, that it is only once the rural development programmes have been fully implemented, Member States have carried out *ex post* evaluations (in 2015) and a synthesis of those *ex post* evaluations has been produced (in 2016) that it will be possible to fully assess whether the EU budget allocated to the rural development policy in the programming period 2007-2013 was well spent.
- (4) WELCOMES in this regard that in the context of the Evaluation Expert Network, the Commission is working on guidelines for the *ex-post* evaluation of 2007-2013 rural development programmes.

- (5) RECALLS that it is rarely a single measure that contributes to the achievement of an objective but that more often, multiple measures contribute together, and that equally, an individual measure may contribute to multiple objectives.
- (6) NOTES that, for the 2007-2013 programming period, the common monitoring and evaluation framework was a new feature and that for both the Commission and the Member States, there was a learning curve regarding the methodology of data collection and processing, and the use of the evaluation results in rural development.
- (7) RECALLS that, for the 2014-2020 period, the Commission and the Member States are elaborating a common monitoring and evaluation framework for the common agricultural policy as a whole¹, including the monitoring and evaluation system for the rural development programmes². In this context, a number of compulsory common indicators have been defined, with a requirement for additional indicators where needed to address programme specificities.
- (8) RECALLS that Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council³ sets targets at EU level (EU 2020) and provides that rural development programmes need to contain an *ex ante* evaluation, an analysis of the situation in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats ("the SWOT"), and an identification of the needs that have to be addressed in the geographical area covered by the programme, as well as, for each focus area, quantified targets consistent with the targets at EU level (EU 2020).

¹ As provided for in Article 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 352/78, (EC) No 165/94, (EC) No 2799/98, (EC) No 814/2000, (EC) No 1290/2005 and (EC) No 485/2008.

² As provided for in Article 67 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.

³ Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005.

- (9) NOTES that, with a view to allowing the quicker and smoother exchange of information between the Commission and the Member States, Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council provides for an electronic information system and gives the Managing Authority responsibility for providing the Commission, on a half-yearly basis, with relevant indicator data on operations selected for funding, including information on output and financial indicators.
- (10) UNDERLINES the need to find a balance, making the greatest possible use of existing indicators and data sources, between the benefits of monitoring and evaluation and the costs and administrative burden related to it.
-