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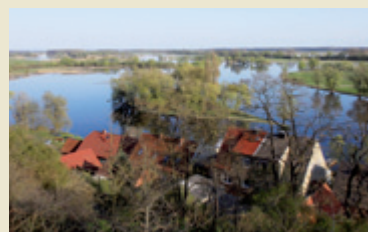
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SPARD is a Collaborative Project in the 7th Framework Research Programme of the European Commission. 9 research institutions from 8 countries develop new knowledge on causal and spatial relationships between Rural Development (RD) Measures and territorial characteristics and support targeting of the Second Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policies (CAP) for the EU-27 with new tools.

The aim of the SPARD project is to develop a modelling tool that will help policy-makers to understand the causal relationships between rural development measures and their results in a spatial dimension. Based on spatial econometric analysis it will include ex-post evaluation options and the possible extension to ex-ante assessment with the purpose of giving support to the planning of targeted RD policies, programmes and measures. The project will compile a well-structured database, to organise both indicators from the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF), distinguishing input, output, result, impact and baseline indicators, and other data specifically used by the RD management authorities in the Member States (MS), and extrapolate missing indicator values. This requires a procedure to standardize the utilisation of results amongst users at different levels.

The main objectives of SPARD are

- to provide a framework for organising the collection and the use of regional key baseline data and evaluation results of Rural Development Programmes (RDP) and other statistical and economic information in a systematic, clear and concise way
- to explain the causal relationships between regional characteristics and needs, on the one hand, and the Rural Development Programmes implementation and success in their spatial dimension, on the other
- to develop and apply a spatial econometric modelling approach
- to build a tool that will help policymakers, both at EU and Member States or regional level, to design better targeted Rural Development Programmes

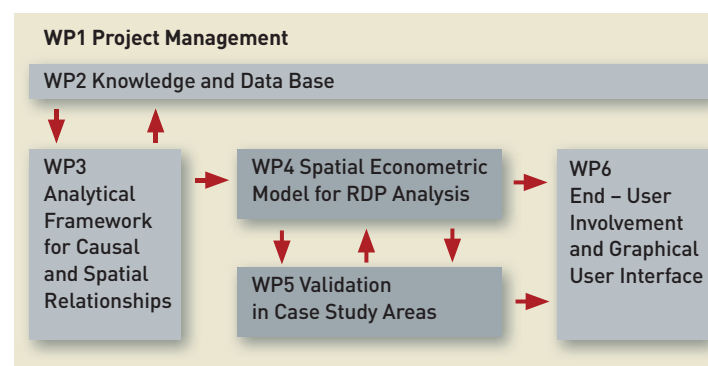
The baseline situation for SPARD can be described by the following characteristics

- there are knowledge gaps on causal relationships between regional characteristics and needs and RDP implementation and its impacts
- there is no framework for the collection of regional key baseline and data evaluation results of RD Measures
- there is no tool for the evaluation of RDP that allows to assess spatial targeting
- there are stronger accountability requirements and EU budget constraints and increasing pressure towards policies targeted on specific objectives such as the provision of public benefits



The emphasis of the project will be the development of an analytical framework that considers characteristics and needs of target areas and target groups. The key task of the project is to develop a quantitative model, using spatial econometric modelling. This will allow the identification of causal relationships of RD policy implementation. In this manner the cost-effectiveness of RDPs can be analysed in their spatial dimension. Evaluations and assessments of selected policies and measures and their impacts will be made at the EU-27 scale. Furthermore it shall be demonstrated that the methodology is feasible at different scales of application and levels of data aggregation. Validation of the modelling framework will be carried out in 5 case study regions: Brandenburg (DE), North Holland (NL), Emilia Romagna (IT), Midi Pyrénées (FR) and Eastern Slovenia (SI).

SPARD is organised in six thematic work packages



The expected impact of SPARD is to provide new knowledge and to contribute to

- simplification and better targeting of the CAP
- integrative processing of monitoring, evaluation and geodata with models and tools as well as fast dissemination for policy action
- more flexible funding distribution mechanisms taking regional diversity stronger into account
- help farmers with specific produce in disadvantaged regions or vulnerable types of farming
- developing risk management measures (for natural disasters, animal diseases)
- more cost-effective implementation of RDP
- linking CAP policies to the Cohesion policy strategy at European level
- levelling disparities between regions and hence to achieve progress in territorial cohesion
- support the public acceptance of the CAP

The end product of SPARD will be a multiple-option and variable-scale decision support system tool capable for use in horizontal and vertical evaluations. As a collaborative project, SPARD will make efforts to broaden the proved expertise of the consortium by integration of stakeholders, external experts and end-users in the overall process.