

# Q&A: Evaluation Plan

This document summarises the discussions of the Interact Evaluation Plan event of 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

## Content

1. General questions to evaluation 2021-2027 .....	2
2. Evaluation 2014-2020 .....	3
3. Reporting .....	3
4. Indicators corner .....	4

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## 1. General questions to evaluation 2021-2027

**Q: How should we understand Article 35.1 and the reference to the evaluation criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added-value). Should all five evaluation criteria be considered for the evaluations or is it ok if just one is used, e.g. effectiveness?**

A: These five criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value), which are described in the Staff Working Document (SWD) come from the Better Regulation Guidelines. All criteria should be covered in the evaluation plan: the evaluation plan should ensure that the implemented evaluations cover these five criteria. Interreg programmes should have the least problems with the EU added-value.

**Q: As to Art 35.1 and 35.22. Does it mean that Interreg programmes need to do two evaluations as a minimum? How many and what type of evaluations are expected in 21-27?**

A: To consider the minimum requirements for evaluation is not the right way to approach the topic. The amount of evaluations required will vary from case to case. Your desk officer who is member of your monitoring committee will definitely have comments if the only evaluation in your evaluation plan is one evaluation at the end of the programming period. Evaluations have a purpose and a meaning and the number of evaluations is not a decisive criterion. An evaluation can be a one pager synthesising results or it can be a comprehensive and research based analysis. The number of evaluation reports is not a substantial unit of analysis. This would be a bit like defining your programme performance by the number of projects funded in a programming period.

You should do an evaluation on implementation during the programming period, and you have to do an impact evaluation at the end of the programming period, an impact evaluation covering the whole programme.

- At the beginning of the programming period evaluations focusing on how the calls are functioning and other operational aspects of the implementations could be interesting.
- At the end of the programming period an evaluation taking into account what has been achieved during the programming period is required.
- In the middle of the programming period it could be interesting to look at long-term effects of the interventions from the previous programming period.

It is very important to ensure that you do not have this silo view of the programming periods. In evaluations you can take a broader look, especially if there is an intervention, which is happening in more than one programming period. It is important to understand how these interventions really function in a longer term.

You should be interested how your interventions are working. We do not prescribe any more that you have to do an evaluation on every specific objective, because we recognised that for some programmes, it was not really a feasible and meaningful requirement. Especially in cases where the priority axis or the specific objective was very small, or not implemented at all, or there were changes during the programming period. We offer more flexibility encouraging you to identify the most interesting topics for an evaluation. In case of a very limited budget for TA and hence also tight financial limits for evaluation you could focus on most strategic and important interventions from a budgetary point of view. In addition, you might decide to look into interventions that are

problematic and/or those you plan to continue in the future: These could be the ones to focus on.

**Q: Are we allowed to use budget from 21-27 to evaluate long-term effects of some interventions?**

A: Yes, of course you can find out how some interventions are functioning if these interventions have been funded for a longer time in your programming area. You can take certain examples or certain project examples from previous programming periods, especially if you look into questions dealing with long-term impacts, sustainability of the results or the sustainability of operations themselves.

**Q: Which exactly horizontal principles are expected to be evaluated?**

A: There is no legislation, which addresses the evaluation of the horizontal principles. It is your own judgment how and which ones you actually pick up in the evaluation.

**Q: Do all provisions fully apply to NEXT programmes?**

A: Yes, all provisions apply also to the NEXT programmes.

**Q: What is meant by “independence” of the evaluations?**

A: What is meant is here that a good balance has to be understood between having an independent view of the implementation and having the knowledge of the implementation: whoever manages the evaluation process should have a good understanding on how the programme is working. However, that person has to be independent from the implementation and functionally. It can be in the same unit. Some of the programmes had raised issues that they cannot find people in the organisation, especially in small organisations. They do not want to create a separate evaluation unit, and this is not necessary. It is just enough to have a reasonably functionally independent person who manages the process. By externalising, outsourcing the evaluation work, already some type of independence at least from analytical point of view is assured.

## **2. Evaluation 2014-2020**

**Q: Timing of the impact evaluation and of our current evaluations. Because of the pandemic not all projects could be implemented as planned and they had to be extended. Some of the projects which were considered for our impact evaluation are not finished. Will the deadlines from the commission for reporting will be extended?**

A: NO, there are no intents to change the existing legislation; timelines set in the CPR will not be changed.

## **3. Reporting**

**Q: Please explain once again the reporting requirements for 2022 and 2023?**

A: By the end of 2022 you need to do the reporting based on the template Art. 114 (the proposed template will be published as a follow up of the event under the EP event

25.01.2022 ). The use of this template is not mandatory according to the legislation, but since many of you and also mainstream programmes asked, the Evaluation Unit developed a minimalist template in order to help you with the reporting. This is what you have to do by the end of 2022.

By the end of 2023, you have to deliver your impact evaluation.

**Q: Art. 32(2)(b) on the transmission of data: Do the projects have to be completed or is it enough that first effects are shown?**

A: For the transmission of data, the values for output indicators should come from finalised operations. That is a major difference between the Interreg and the mainstream programmes: **for Interreg programmes, the operations have to be finalised**, while in the mainstream programmes the output has to be finalised but the operation may still be on going.

**Q: This is also the principle when setting the milestone target, right? We should consider only finalised project to contribute to the milestone in 2024 milestones.**

A: Very correct.

#### **4. Indicators corner**

**Q: Indicators RCO 87 (organisations cooperating across borders) and RCR 84 (organisations cooperating across borders after project completion):**

**How to understand the definition in the fiche under 'aggregation issues': 'At programme level, double counting should be avoided at the level of project partners and associated organisations'?**

A: The programme should report all organisations only once at programme level, even if one organisation participates in two or more different projects. It is up to the programme to select in which project the organisation should be reported. As mentioned in the fiche the organisations counted in this indicator are legal entities including project partners and associated organisations, as mentioned in the financial agreement of the application. The Regulation requires bi-annual reporting of output and result indicators.

To sum it up: The provision has the purpose that the indicator counts the exact number of organisations cooperating in operations. That is why double counting on the programme level should be avoided.

Evidently, it would be very practical if the programme could filter the organisation using a unique identifier, i.e. a unique code for each organisation applying in the programme.

The team developing JeMS is currently considering the options to install such a function. What can be granted, is that JeMS will be able to generate overviews on all beneficiaries but in the short-term sorting out double entries will remain manual work.

**Please note:**

**You can exchange with other Interreg programmes in the '[Results and Evaluation](#)' Network and discuss the interpretation of the definition of (common) indicators.**