

# Evaluation Plan

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The briefing note should support Interreg programmes while drafting their evaluation plan. It summarizes the relevant legal requirements and guidance documents. It also points out some inspiring examples from 2014-2020.

This document can be changed and adapted to your needs when drafting your evaluation plan.

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## 1. Overview on expected contents of the Evaluation Plan

Part & rationale	Contents
<p><b>Part 1:</b></p> <p>The introduction clarifying the what/where and who. It should also provide an overview of the coordination mechanism and an initial reflection on the intended focus</p>	<p><b>Objectives, coverage, coordination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Introduction to the plan setting out its main objectives;</i></li> <li>• <i>Coverage and rationale: an explanation of which programme/s are covered by the plan and why</i></li> <li>• <i>Analysis of relevant evidence in order to decide where the evaluation efforts should be most concentrated (previous evaluations)</i></li> <li>• <i>Mechanisms between Managing Authorities (MA) for coordination and exchange on evaluations planned, evaluation findings, and methodologies.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Part 2:</b></p> <p>The evaluation function in a programme should have a clearly defined responsibility for designing and delivering the evaluation plan, and coordinating, monitoring, and promoting the quality of evaluation activities throughout the whole evaluation cycle;</p>	<p><b>Evaluation framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Description of the evaluation process led by the MA (responsibilities of involved bodies: evaluation steering group (ESG), technical working groups, scientific or other expert academic input, monitoring committee (MC) etc.);</i></li> <li>• <i>The involvement of other stakeholders within the framework of the MC or in specific working groups established by the MC;</i></li> <li>• <i>The source of evaluation expertise (internal/ external/ mixed) and provisions ensuring the functional independence of evaluators from the authorities responsible for programme implementation;</i></li> <li>• <i>Training programmes for MA and joint secretariat staff (JS) and eventually a wider audience (ESG, MC) dealing with evaluation (for example, seminars, workshops, self-study, and working with other evaluators);</i></li> <li>• <i>A strategy to ensure use and communication of evaluations: how their findings will be followed up; how the evaluations will be made public and published; how they will be transmitted to the European Commission;</i></li> <li>• <i>The overall budget for implementation of the plan subdivided between evaluations (covering the cost of evaluations, data collection, training etc.);</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Part 3:</b></p> <p>It is the centerpiece of the Plan since it should provide an outline of the planned evaluations!</p>	<p><b>Planned evaluations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Subject and rationale, including the background, the coverage, the main approach (process or impact evaluation), and the main guiding evaluation questions.</i></li> <li>• <i>Methods to be used and their data requirements:</i></li> <li>• <i>Data availability:</i></li> <li>• <i>Duration and a tentative date:</i></li> <li>• <i>Estimated budget for each evaluation</i></li> </ul>

Source: Commission Staff Working Document (SWD (2021) 198 final): Performance, monitoring, and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027 (in short: SWD)

## 2. Part 1: Objectives, coverage, coordination

### 2.1. Introduction to the evaluation plan and its main objectives



With the briefing document, we have tried to compile: relevant provisions from the Regulations, guidance documents, and text examples from the previous period we consider still valid.

In the programme period 2021-2027, there is a high degree of continuity with the concepts of performance, evaluation, and monitoring of 2014-2020. Certain evaluation requirements have been simplified and certain requirements can be handled more flexibly:

- There is no more obligation to perform an ex-ante evaluation,
- Timing and sequencing of evaluations is up to the programme except for the impact evaluation which is due in June 2029,
- Choice of the evaluation criteria in individual evaluations is also up to the programme, but it is strongly recommended that at least one evaluation covers the five criteria as mentioned in the Better Regulation Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, i.e. effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value

The obligation to develop, agree and implement an evaluation plan is unchanged!

### 2.2. Objectives and legal basis of the plan

**It is important to have a clear view on the major objectives of the plan as well as on the ultimate objectives of the planned evaluation(s). An agreement on concise objectives might become important at later stages of the evaluation when the initial momentum might have faded.**

**The role of the evaluation plan is central in ensuring implementation of quality evaluations and their effective use by Managing Authorities based on 2014-2020**

The evaluation plan of **the Interreg programme** is a strategic document and includes information on the planned evaluations including the timing and type of evaluation, methodological approach, data needs and availability as well as resources needed. It

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Commission Staff Working Document SWD 2021 (305) Better Regulation Guidelines; p. 26

also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the programme bodies in planning and implementing evaluations and following up on evaluation outcomes.

In operational terms the **evaluation plan** will support the programme implementation by ensuring:

- a smooth evaluation process and providing an evaluation framework during implementation; good quality of evaluations through proper planning;
- timely and relevant evaluations regarding the programme's implementation phase and reporting requirements towards the Commission;
- appropriate financial and personnel resources for evaluation activities;
- follow up and communication of the evaluation findings/results.
- xxx

The ultimate purpose of the **evaluation** is an independent contribution to:

- assessing and – if required – adjusting the delivery system of the programme with a view to efficiency and effectiveness; in order to provide a high quality of services and safeguard customer-orientation throughout all stages of the project life cycle;
- Revisiting the intervention logic, starting to conceptualise the impact with a view to relevance and coherence of the programme; in order to ensure a high quality of project results and check if there is a need for tailored calls;
- Analysing the project results and deriving the aggregate programme impact with a view to relevance, coherence, sustainability, and Union Added Value (with a particular interest in its contribution to lasting improvement of governance structures); in order to ensure and document that the programme delivers visible, sustainable outcomes with high policy relevance)
- xxx

The evaluation plan of **the Interreg Programme x** has been prepared in compliance with Article 35 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (further on briefly 'Interreg').

In addition, the evaluation plan builds on the following relevant European Commission (EC) guidance document:

- Commission Staff Working Document (SWD (2021) 198 final): Performance, monitoring, and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027, Brussels, 8.7.2021,
- Xxx

### 2.3. Coverage and rationale

**Coverage and rationale: an explanation which programmes and which Funds are covered by the plan and why; (SWD, p.17)**

This evaluation plan covers the CBC/TN programme Interreg xxx. The programme is funded from ERDF, xxx and xxx as well as match-funding from the participating countries. The plan covers the entire programme period taking into account that at latest by June 2029 the impact evaluation has to be completed.

The Programme area covers xxx countries. It comprises xxx EU Member States: x,y,z. In addition, xx partner countries outside the EU, x,y, take part in the Programme.

The programme area of the Interreg Programme x overlaps with other transnational as well as with some cross-border programmes. However, a joint evaluation plan or joint evaluations with other programmes are not considered feasible as geographical and thematic overlaps with other programmes are only partial and as intervention logic differs between programmes.

### 2.4. Analysis of relevant evidence



In most programmes a lot of work has been invested in previous evaluations, communication and capitalization activities, thematic studies, and subsequent discussions. When developing the new evaluation plan, it makes sense to stop, take stock, and distill the essence from all previous efforts for forthcoming evaluation ventures!

**An analysis of relevant evidence that would become available in order to decide where the evaluation efforts should be most concentrated. This evidence could be found in evaluations carried out during the preceding periods, EU ex-post evaluations, evaluation literature and preparatory studies for this programming period. When programmes are designed at regional level, it is advised that this collection of evidence is coordinated at a national level as many interventions are similar in different programmes; (SWD, p.17)**

In this chapter, you should analyse all information related to

- previous evaluations
- thematic capitalization
- relevant studies

- territorial analysis
- ex-ante evaluations (if existing)
- the basic rationale for the establishment of baselines for indicators if it provides useful insights for the evaluation approach
- information about data availability and needs

It should not be a summary of the information but a brief analysis. You should highlight the key focus of planned evaluation activities derived from the analysis of relevant evidence.



### Examples of ‘analysis of relevant evidence’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes.

#### **Interreg Central Europe 2014-2020**

The evaluation plan builds on various evidence, gathered both during the implementation of the previous programme and the preparation of the successor Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme.

The ongoing evaluation of the previous programme performed by independent external evaluators and concluded in 2012, focussed on the assessment of the programme relevance, effectiveness and consistency, assessing the progress of project implementation in relation to thematic, territorial and policy-oriented achievements.

Furthermore, it included a specific analysis on the involvement and role of private partners in the programme as well as an analysis of the programme’s contribution to the overarching EU strategy.

Recommendations addressed both the implementation of the outgoing programme and the design of the new Programme. Among others, recommendations for the new programming period consisted in ensuring an optimal match between stakeholders’ needs and programme funding, simplification and harmonisation with other ETC programmes, foreseeing evaluation of project results at an early stage of programme implementation, intensive capacity building for applicants fostering a harmonised understanding of indicators, etc. The implementation of follow up measures by the Managing Authority and JTS was thoroughly monitored by the MC.

In the frame of the thematic capitalisation of the previous programme six thematic studies in the fields of innovation, transport, environment, energy, culture as well as demographic change and knowledge development were prepared with the support of external experts disposing of proven competence in the addressed fields.



These studies gave evidence of the direct contributions to the respective sector policies as well as of the critical mass mobilised at transnational level. Due to the fact, that the studies are clearly linked to the main topics covered by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, the presented thematic achievements of the previous programme serve as a relevant starting point for the evaluation.

During the early stages of preparations for the 2014-2020 period, an internal study highlighting territorial effects of the programme at national/regional as well as at transnational level (including macro-regions), was prepared.

In view of the preparation of the new Programme a comprehensive territorial analysis was conducted by external experts. It aimed at identifying the main challenges, needs and potentials characterising the programme area and at providing strategic contributions for the definition of a programme strategy, supporting the identification of thematic objectives and investment priorities. A detailed SWOT analysis helped to build the rationale for the new Programme. The study was based on the analysis of strategic documents enriched by stakeholder views collected through an online survey with more than 930 respondents and 40 in-depth interviews. The analysis was complemented by a synergy workshop for the prioritisation of needs and definition of cooperation scenarios for the programme.

## 2.5. Coordination and exchange



Everyone can benefit from exchange and coordination with other neighbouring Interreg programmes or with the MAs of mainstream programmes with a strong cooperation context or covering similar intervention fields etc.. In addition, evaluation budgets are often quite tight and you might get out more when using synergies in terms of developing shared approaches across programmes or using economies of scale when tendering jointly for several programmes.

**It would also be good practice to set up mechanisms between Managing Authorities for coordination and exchange on evaluations planned, evaluation findings and methodologies. This would allow for a better coordination of evaluations carried out in certain policy fields and favour exchange of knowledge and practices between managing authorities. (SWD, p.17)**

The section in the plan should help to understand intended / planned coordination and exchange activities with e.g.:

- other overlapping or neighbouring Interreg programmes,
- other national programmes funded from ERDF, ESF+ or EAFRD if relevant,
- MA networks in the frame of macro-regional strategies,
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This could mean highlighting the role of the MC or Interreg coordinators, national authorities and/or national contact points.



### Examples of ‘coordination and exchange’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

#### Interreg Central Europe 2014-2020

Following the principles as laid down in the Cooperation Programme, the Interreg x Programme will seek coordination with the ESI funds and other relevant Union instruments.

Special attention will be given to the possibility of coordination with other Interreg programmes. In this regard the Programme will seek exchanges with the managing authorities of other, geographically overlapping Interreg programmes on the planning and implementation of evaluations as well as on evaluation methodologies and results.

National coordination committees (or other mechanisms/bodies as provided by national rules) supporting the MC members in the execution of their tasks will involve representatives of institutions participating in the implementation of national and regional programmes supported by the ESI funds. Those committees represent relevant platforms for exchange and coordination with other national and/or regional programmes and can therefore contribute to achieve coordination at the different stages of the programme lifetime (including evaluation). This will allow to streamline and provide information on the Interreg x Programme evaluation to national and regional programmes.

### **Interreg Romania-Bulgaria (RO-BG) 2014-2020**

Romania's approach is to design one evaluation plan at the level of the Partnership Agreement and one evaluation plan for each ESI funds co-financed programme, thus continuing the evaluation approach of the previous programming period. While the evaluation plan for the Partnership Agreement includes topics related to macro level effects and horizontal cross-cutting issues, plans referring to each programme focus on specific programme-related issues and the projects financed that contribute to the specific objectives of the programme.

Evaluations carried out for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme benefit from the exchange of knowledge and practice between all Managing Authorities established in Romania. Coordination process is managed by the Evaluation Central Unit set up as part of the General Directorate for Analysis, Programming and Evaluation within the institution in charge with the coordination of ESI funds in Romania, the Ministry of European Funds.

According to Romania's Partnership Agreement, a coordination mechanism is set up with the purpose of ensuring the coherence of interventions, complementarities and synergies in the programming and implementation stages. The coordination mechanism will function in parallel with the institutional framework designed for implementation. The mechanism implies three levels of coordination:

1. Management of Partnership Agreement Steering Committee, which takes place twice a year and involves policy makers at ministry level and social partners.
2. Thematic steering sub-committees, taking place twice a year on different topics and composing decision-makers ministries, responsible MAs, International Financial Institutions, the Ministry of Public Finance, partners of Programmes Monitoring Committees and other socio-economic partners.
3. Functional Working Groups, organized on different topics at each three months (or whenever necessary) and involving experts.

One of the functional working groups, namely the Performance Assessment Functional Working Group is dedicated to evaluation and performance framework and deals, among other things, with the evaluation themes and implementation of evaluation plans of operational programmes, as well as with reporting, statistics and indicators, financial management and forecasting. The representatives of the ETC Evaluation Unit shall participate in this functional working group.

According to the Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Commission, a coordination mechanism is set up to ensure that the complementarity principle is met at the stage of Programmes' management, monitoring, evaluation and control.

### 3. Part 2. Evaluation framework

#### 3.1. Evaluation function



The responsibilities and functions for evaluation are clearly set out in Article 35 of the Interreg Regulation. A major point for the quality and effect of the evaluation process is the commitment of the MC. The MC is the bi- or multi-lateral supervisory board of the programme; It decides on projects and hence it has core responsibility for the programme outcomes.

**‘The evaluation function in a programme should have a clearly defined responsibility for designing and delivering the evaluation plan, and coordinating, monitoring and promoting the quality of evaluation activities throughout the whole evaluation cycle;’ (SWD, p.17)**

The MA/JS and the MC have the main functions in the evaluation process. The regulation mentions the MA as the main responsible actor and the MC in a supervising function. Depending on the structures for programme management, the MA quite often relies on the JS for the operational work related to evaluation. See further details below:

#### Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat

In accordance with Article 35/5 and Article 35/6 (Interreg), the MA has the responsibility to draw up an evaluation plan and submit it to the MC no later than one year after the adoption of the programme. The MA has to submit the evaluation plan, and any of its amendments approved by the MC, to the EC for information.

In accordance with Article 35/4 (Interreg) the MA shall ensure the necessary procedures to produce and collect the data necessary for evaluations.

In accordance with Article 35/1( Interreg) the Member State or the MA shall carry out evaluations of the programmes related to one or more of the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and Union added value, with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes. Evaluations may also cover other relevant criteria, such as inclusiveness, non-discrimination, and visibility, and may cover more than one programme.

In accordance with Article 35/7 (Interreg) the MA shall publish all evaluations on the website referred to in Article 36(2).

#### Monitoring Committee

In accordance with Articles 30/2(b) (Interreg) the MC shall approve the evaluation plan and any amendment thereto;

In accordance with Articles 30/1(d) (Interreg) the MC shall examine the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations, and any follow-up given to findings;

Based on the experience of the 2014-2020 programme period the MC will closely accompany and steer the evaluation process. If considered by the MC as necessary a separate Evaluation Task Force or Steering Group might be set up.

### 3.2. Description of the evaluation process



Previous experience has shown that setting up an evaluation steering group (ESG) is a valuable tool/way to ensure sound implementation of the evaluation plan. The ESG should be a discussion forum and think-tank managed by MA/JS with the support of an evaluator and representing the participating countries and if required also including thematic experts. Ideally, it should blend practical evaluation experience with diverse opinions and viewpoints to support a lively exchange. However, the existence of the ESG should not replace the commitment of the MC.

**‘Description of the evaluation process led by the managing authority (responsibilities of involved bodies: evaluation steering group, technical working groups, scientific or other expert academic input, monitoring committee etc.), (SWD, p.17)**

In practice, most programmes will set up an evaluation steering group (ESG) working on basis of a mandate from the MC. It might be interesting to learn about the composition of the ESG. The ESG should support in particular:

- Development of the EP
- Subsequent elaboration of terms of References (ToRs) for services of external evaluators
- Selection of external evaluators
- Elaboration and/or fine-tuning of evaluation questions
- Discussion and approval of drafts evaluation reports
- Proposing and implementing follow-up activities based on evaluation findings
- Reporting to the MC

The Group could benefit from Rules of Procedures to have a common understanding of the approach to decision-making from the beginning. Usually, the major challenge for

MA/JS is to keep the momentum in the group and to engage people in discussions on strategic and overarching issues.



### Examples of ‘description of the evaluation process’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

#### Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) 2014-2020

As outlined in the Regulation the Managing Authority is responsible for delivering an evaluation plan to the Programme’s Monitoring Committee (MC) no later than a year after the adoption of the Programme. The regulation also outlines the responsibilities of the MC, namely, for examining and approving the evaluation plan and its updates as well as for reviewing progress made in the implementation of the plan and ensuring appropriate follow-up to evaluation findings. It is recommended that the MC reviews the implementation of the plan annually.

This evaluation plan has been developed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region’s Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) and the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG). The ESG consists of nine MC members – one member from each participating country. Rules of the ESG are outlined in Annex 2 of the Plan. The MA/JS and the ESG will be jointly responsible for all further activities related to evaluation, including but not limited to:

- updating the evaluation plan,
- preparing impact evaluations,
- developing ToRs for impact evaluations,
- assessing proposals by external experts,
- managing external evaluations, ensuring a close dialogue with external evaluators,
- planning communication of evaluation outcomes to third parties,
- proposing and implementing follow-up activities based on evaluation findings.

The MA/JS has the main coordination responsibility on activities related to external evaluation whereas the ESG will be providing input, feedback and advice.

Decision-making on evaluation-related matters, such as approval of updates to the evaluation plan, selection of external evaluators and approval of final evaluation reports, resides with the Monitoring Committee.

### 3.3. Involvement of other stakeholders



It is a challenge to make the wider partnership work in Interreg programmes. The major anchor points for the partnership principle are the MC and hence also the ESG. If the ESG represents diverse opinions and viewpoints, it might support a lively exchange. Please do not forget: So-called 'other stakeholders' might bring in important thematic expertise for example related to evaluation criteria such as non-discrimination or inclusiveness or they might cover important aspects of environmental protection.

**'The involvement of other stakeholders within the framework of the monitoring committees or in specific working groups established by the monitoring committees;' (SWD, p.17)**

The partnership principle is a cross-cutting principle. The first major point is the wider partnership in the MC. This is one of the levers ensuring also involvement in the evaluation activities. Recital 14 of the CPR stipulates that Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 [Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the ESIF] should continue to apply.

Article 16 of the Code is on the involvement of partners in the evaluation of programmes:

*1. Managing authorities shall involve the relevant partners in the evaluation of programmes within the framework of the monitoring committees and, where appropriate, specific working groups established by the monitoring committees for this purpose.*

It also states that MAs shall consult the partners on the reports summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period. The major anchor point is the role of partners in the MC – the minimum requirements are set out in Article 8 of the CPR. Article 30/1(d) of the Interreg Regulation confirms the role of the MC in evaluation: The MC shall examine the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations, and any follow-up given to findings.



## Examples of ‘involvement of other stakeholders’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

### **Interreg Romania-Bulgaria (RO-BG) 2014-2020**

Relevant partners shall be involved in the evaluation of programmes within the framework of the Monitoring Committee (MC) meetings and in the specific working group for evaluation, in case a dedicated one is established by the MC. Therefore, the involved partners shall examine the progress made in the implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations.

### **Interreg Central Europe 2014-2020**

Due to the large area covered by the programme, the participation of competent partners in the programme evaluation will be organised through national coordination committees preparing and supporting the MC members in the execution of MC tasks including the monitoring and evaluation of the programme. In accordance with the required multi-level governance approach national coordination committees represent the platforms in which relevant national partners can voice their positions on strategic matters concerning the implementation of the programme. In this way relevant institutions will be consulted or involved to provide specific inputs to the programme evaluation, its findings and follow up measures.

In addition, a broad range of relevant stakeholders including programme beneficiaries and experts will be addressed via surveys and interviews in order to collect data serving as an input for the operational and impact evaluation. Evaluation results will also be shared with relevant partners through various communication channels.



### 3.4. Source of evaluation expertise



A major point for a good evaluation result is the independence of the evaluator. This is one of the ingredients for an evaluation to draw unbiased conclusions and develop evaluation findings. Next to the independence of the evaluator, the governance of the evaluation process and the attitudes of all persons involved are decisive. If there is no backing from MA/JS and no commitment from the MC any intervention from an evaluator acting as a critical friend will fail.

**In accordance with Article 35(3) of the Interreg Regulation evaluations shall be entrusted to internal or external experts who are functionally independent. The plan should indicate source of evaluation expertise (internal/ external/ mixed) and provisions ensuring the functional independence of evaluators from the authorities responsible for programme implementation. [...] Independence is essential for a good evaluation where the evaluators will constructively judge and give expert opinions on the different elements of the programme. The level of independence should be such that there is no doubt that the work is carried out impartially and that the evaluation judgments are unbiased and not subordinated to an agreement of the services responsible for design of the programme. It is also necessary to organise evaluations in a way that ensures that evaluators are sufficiently familiar with the interventions they will assess. Equally, it is necessary that the organisation of evaluations facilitates the consideration of findings by the authorities responsible for programming and implementation. (SWD, p.13)**

In practice, it might be useful to combine external evaluation expertise with internal approaches, e.g.

- An external expert might be contracted to develop the approach to the operational evaluation, such as the tools and surveys. The MA/JS might use then the tools for regular review of their operational processes.
- As part of the evaluation process the assessment of a new approach to the application might be done by the JS and evaluation might be done in the framework of a focus group guided by an external evaluation expert having also the capacity to act as a facilitator.



## Examples of ‘source of evaluation expertise’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

### **Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) 2014-2020**

Evaluation expertise will be mixed, i.e., combining external and internal expertise. Impact evaluations will be solely carried out by external evaluators based on terms of reference designed by the relevant Programme bodies. In addition, the Programme will do an operational evaluation internally. The operational evaluation aims at measuring, assessing and analysing the progress in Programme implementation and contributing to ensuring the good and appropriate functioning of the Programme bodies. Lastly, the Programme bodies (MA/JS) are subject to independent checks on their efficient and effective functioning carried out by the internal audit department (Internal Audit) of the MA.

### **Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2020**

Regulation states that evaluations are to be carried out by experts (internal or external) that are functionally independent from the authorities responsible for programme implementation. The structure of the MA and JS does not foresee separate departments/units dealing with evaluation matters and therefore such functional independency cannot be ensured. Still, the programme intends to guarantee an efficient use of the human and financial resources allocated to evaluation activities as well as to ensure ownership of such activities from the programme. Therefore, a mixed approach of internal and external expertise will be used.

As a general rule, evaluations will be carried out by external experts especially when complex issues such as impact evaluations are concerned and when complex methodologies or data collection have to be applied and carried out. The JS will provide them with information and input from the monitoring of the approved projects, programme developments and ongoing discussions. Data collection will be completed by the experts whenever necessary (e.g. through surveys).

For the evaluation of effectiveness, efficiency and the communication strategy, MA/JS will provide the main data and reference analysis and then external experts will review them.

### 3.5. Training programmes for staff dealing with evaluation



Training and sharing experiences and expertise is a major building block for common understanding. Common understanding and a shared view on the purpose and objectives of evaluation is a pre-requirement for its success. Investing into common understanding at an early stage will pay off later!

We from Interact will continue our series of trainings and information events on evaluation.

**‘Training programmes for managing authority staff dealing with evaluation (for example, seminars, workshops, self-study and working with other evaluators);’ (SWD, p.17)**

For Interreg programmes next to the MA also the JS should have evaluation expertise. In many programmes the implementation of the evaluation plan is mainly in the hands of the JS. With the MC having a supervisory function it also makes sense to include MC or Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) members in training activities.

Training on evaluation is particularly useful at an early stage of programme implementation. It could support various purposes:

- Professional planning and implementation of the evaluation activities for MA/JS
- Increased knowledge about methods and approaches to prepare better sets of evaluation questions, better Terms of References (ToRs) with a deeper and more founded knowledge
- Raising awareness for the evaluation as a shared learning exercise with a wider audience including MC members and eventually even project beneficiaries

It does not have to be a huge and sophisticated exercise. For obvious reasons evaluation expertise is required: It could come from your team, evaluation units, colleagues in charge of other or neighboring programmes, or external experts, A dedicated team can achieve a lot with very pragmatic approaches. For example, one of the initial meetings of the Evaluation Steering Group could be used to do a facilitated round on open and informal feedback to support the common understanding and commitment of the Group.

It would be perfect if tentative dates could be fixed in the plan (not in full detail but at least the quarter and year should be stated – otherwise there is the obvious risk that nothing is going to happen.



## Examples of ‘training programmes for staff dealing with evaluation’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

### **Interreg Romania-Bulgaria (RO-BG) 2014-2020**

Training activities that assist a qualitative evaluation process for the Managing Authority, National Authority, Evaluation Unit, Monitoring Committee representatives shall be taken into account if deemed necessary. Such training activities may refer to:

- Planning and managing evaluations, making quality control of evaluation reports;
- Qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and methods for impact assessment;
- Coaching for Evaluation Unit staff.

The budget for these activities shall be ensured under the technical assistance budget of the contracting institution.

### **Interreg Central Europe 2014-2020**

In order to ensure a good quality of data including a harmonised understanding of result-orientation and indicator definitions, the JS is carrying out intensive capacity building and training of applicants and beneficiaries. Comprehensive guidance to applicants and beneficiaries is provided in the programme manuals (application manual, implementation manual) as well as through several workshops and trainings. This is of particular importance since indicator targets and reported progress will serve as relevant input to the programme evaluation.

An interactive exchange between the evaluation team and the JS is foreseen in order to provide the evaluators with practical insights into programme implementation and the progress of projects identified during the monitoring process.

The JS is closely following the guidance and trainings on evaluation provided by the EC and INTERACT. JS members have already participated in various seminars organised by INTERACT on programme evaluation, evaluation plan and impact evaluation. If considered necessary, also other relevant trainings will be attended in order to maintain and increase the MA/JS expertise on evaluation.

In addition, exchange with other transnational programmes on the evaluation approaches and process will be continued.

### 3.6. Use and communication of evaluations



Evaluation is pointless if the results are not used: Commitment to make use of evaluation findings to improve programme delivery or to show-case remarkable achievements is essential. We strongly encourage you to establish cross-links between evaluation, communication, and capitalization.

**‘A strategy to ensure use and communication of evaluations: how their findings will be followed up; how the evaluations will be made public and published; how they will be transmitted to the Commission;’ (SWD, p.17)**

Technical points are rather clear: it is state of the art to publish evaluation reports on the programme website and final reports (at least for the mandatory impact evaluation due in June 2029) should be sent via SFC to Commission. Obviously, there should be more elements in the approach to the use and communication of evaluations.

In Interact we have tried to raise awareness for increased links and coordination between evaluation, communication, and capitalization activities. We strongly recommend considering these fields of expertise with a view to mutual learning and synergies. For example:

- capitalization activities might benefit from the results of the analysis of projects or project clusters in the framework of the impact evaluation,
- evaluation might learn from or even use capitalization activities to better understand policy perspectives.

Another major point raised is the commitment to follow-up on the findings of the evaluation: In practice, a significant part of the responsibility lies with the MA. Most likely, the MA/JS will be the ones to initiate, agree and coordinate adequate responses and follow up to evaluation findings. It is a process reaching from the ESG over to the MC. The involvement of the MC is essential and backed up by the provisions in Article 30/1(d) (Interreg): *the MC shall examine the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations, and any follow-up given to findings.*



## Examples of ‘use and communication of evaluations’ from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

### **Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2020**

Information on the evaluation plan as well as the evaluation reports will be published on the programme website. In addition, the programme will actively promote the findings of evaluations through different communication and dissemination activities (e.g. through thematic workshops for beneficiaries, policy makers and other stakeholders; the use of social media and community development, whenever relevant) as they are foreseen in the communication strategy, also in order to strengthen the evaluation capacity among the relevant stakeholders.

### **Interreg Central Europe 2014-2020**

The evaluation reports will be published on the programme website. The final evaluation reports will be transmitted through the SFC system as well. In addition, the programme will actively promote the findings of evaluations through different communication and dissemination activities (e.g. through thematic workshops for beneficiaries, policy makers and other stakeholders; through social media and community development, whenever relevant) as they are foreseen in the communication strategy.

Besides the regulatory requirements, the Interreg Europe intends to use the evaluation outcomes as a tool to improve the implementation of the programme and to inform the development of the next programme post 2020.

### 3.7. Overall budget for implementation of the evaluation plan



Allocating money for evaluation purposes is one of the crucial steps in planning. In practice, budget planning is often an approximation exercise between mandatory requirements, desired additional steps, and the budget available. Looking into the previous evaluation plan for the 14-20 period, its budget and considering an indexation is an obvious point of departure for the discussion about the budget in the period 2021-27.

**‘The overall budget for implementation of the plan subdivided between evaluations (covering the cost of evaluations, data collection, training etc.);’ (SWD, p.17)**

A couple of practical considerations for your approach to budget planning:

Fee rates for external experts might differ significantly between countries. To ensure mixed teams with broad expertise it might be good to work with mixed fee rates. The Terms of References (ToRs) and the offers from previous evaluation exercises might help to do guestimates on person-days required for evaluation steps.

An obvious lever for cost-savings is the active involvement of MA/JS staff in support of evaluations. This might be particularly interesting in the case of operational (process) evaluations.

One of the building blocks of the budget is the impact evaluation. It is mandatory requiring ample evaluation expertise and findings should be based on independent judgement. However, MA/JS may provide a lot of support in terms of running surveys and providing monitoring data in proper formats allowing external experts quick and concise data analysis.

Do not forget about your own, internal cost or capacity for evaluation. Peaks in work are usually the phases when drafting and agreeing on the ToRs and the phasing-in of external evaluations as well as the end of external evaluations when it comes to preparing and taking decisions on follow-up actions.



## Examples of 'budget allocations' from the EP 2014-2020 of Interreg programmes

### **Interreg Alpine Space 2021-2020 (total programme budget: 139 MEUR)**

The head of the MA and one staff member of the JS are engaged in the preparation and implementation of the plan. Additional staff members of MA and JS will be involved in the evaluations on demand. The JS communication officer will contribute to the evaluation of the communication strategy and will also ensure the communication of the outcomes of programme evaluations.

To ensure good knowledge of qualitative, quantitative evaluation methodologies and sound planning and managing of evaluations MA/JS staff will regularly take part in trainings offered, especially by INTERACT, carry out self-studies and exchange with other Interreg programmes.

Based on the estimated evaluation needs and the overall budget available from the technical assistance budget (TA) for external expertise, a maximum amount of EUR 250,000 is reserved for evaluations in the period 2014-2020.

### **Interreg URBACT 2021-2020 (total programme budget: 96 MEUR)**

The overall budget foreseen in Technical Assistance amounts to 90.000 €. This budget will be used for the modules 1, 2 and 3 of the impact evaluation.

For module 4 (on capitalisation & dissemination) of the impact evaluation and for the second and third part of the implementation evaluation external expertise will be mobilised financed outside of the limited Technical Assistance budget (communication, capitalisation or capacity building budgets). Based on previous experience such studies/evaluations cost on average 50.000€ and two or three will be planned over the programme lifetime to complement and feed into the monitoring of programme result indicators.



**Interreg Upper Rhine 2014-2020 (total programme budget: 103 MEUR)**

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Amount in EUR (net)</b>
<b>Operational evaluation</b>	<b>50.000</b>
<b>Evaluation of the communication plan</b>	<b>25.000</b>
<b>Evaluation of Technical Assistance</b>	<b>10.000</b>
<b>Impact evaluation and revisiting the intervention logic</b>	<b>140.000</b>
<b>Add-on to the impact evaluation (final evaluation)</b>	<b>80.000</b>
<b>Internal cost for coordination (MA/JS)</b>	<b>116.700</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>421.700</b>

**Interreg Central Europe 2014-2020**

**(total programme budget: 246 MEUR)**

The overall resources devoted for the implementation of the evaluation plan can be differentiated as follows:

- External resources: A budget of approximately EUR 200.000 from the technical assistance of the programme is devoted to the contracting of external evaluators for the implementation of the programme evaluations as defined in this evaluation plan. It is further broken down to separate indicative budgets for each of the planned evaluations. In addition, about EUR 20.000 are foreseen for expert fees with regard to the collection of data for result indicator baselines and their progress monitoring in 2018, 2020 and 2022/2023 serving as input for the impact evaluation.
- Programme-internal resources: Internal resources of the programme bodies are required for the coordination of the evaluations, collection of necessary data, decision making and follow up measures as well as communication of results. Those necessary (mainly staff) resources are covered by the technical assistance budget of the programme and are linked to programme implementation tasks.

**Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) 2014-2020**  
**(total programme budget: 282 MEUR)**

A total budget of approximately € 270.000 is indicatively allocated to external evaluations from the technical assistance of the Programme. It is based on the budgets of external evaluations carried out during the predecessor programme. The two evaluation contracts planned are expected to be somewhat larger than those in the previous programme. This is due to the evaluation contracts including the update of the Programme’s result indicator values three times during the Programme.<sup>6</sup> The internal evaluations planned as well as any evaluation-related training of MA/JS colleagues will be covered from the Technical Assistance of the Programme, mainly in the form of staff costs. As during the predecessor programme, the regular tasks of the MA/JS colleagues also include activities related to evaluation such as data gathering and support to external evaluators. Annex 1 shows when individual evaluations are planned to be carried out and how they feed into the reporting requirements of the Programme towards the European Commission. The table includes a timeline for the procurement of external evaluators as well as an indicative budget for each of the external evaluations.

Year	Reporting of programme implementation	Evaluations feeding into the report		Indicative budget <sup>6</sup>
		Operational evaluation	Impact evaluation	
2016	Annual implementation report 2016 ("light report")			
2017	Annual implementation report 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational evaluation I focussing on the programme management structure, project application and selection processes as well as the communication strategy and applicant-focused communication activities</li> </ul>		EUR 100.000
2018	Annual implementation report 2018 ("light report")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational evaluation II focusing on management processes, partnership structures, first thematic achievements, contribution to EU 2020 strategy, macro-regional strategies, horizontal principles, partner involvement, performance framework milestone 2018 etc.</li> </ul>		
2019	Annual implementation report 2019			
2020	Annual implementation report 2020 ("light report")		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact evaluation for Priority axis 1-4 (based on progress of result indicators measured in 2018 and 2020)</li> </ul>	EUR 100.000
2021	Annual implementation report 2021 ("light report")			
2022	Annual implementation report 2022 ("light report") Report summarising the findings of evaluations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact evaluation (update) for Priority axis 1-4 (based on progress of result indicators measured in 2022/2023)</li> </ul>	
2023	Final implementation report			
<b>Total indicative budget</b>				<b>EUR 200.000</b>

#### 4. Part 3. Planned evaluations



The centerpiece of the evaluation plan is an outline of the planned evaluations. We recommend presenting it in a way that allows for a quick and concise overview. The evaluation plan is a working document and the list is an indicative list. It can be quite useful to have a concise summary of all initial thoughts on evaluation at the beginning of the programming period!

**The plan should contain a list and timetable of the evaluations to be carried out throughout the period (until 30 June 2029), including an explanation for the selection of the themes covered. [...] New evaluation needs may emerge in the course of the programme life cycle. The MC or ESG should regularly review the list.**

**It is important to plan the impact evaluations required by the regulation at an early stage in sufficient detail. This would set out the practical arrangements for the organisation of impact evaluations (number of contracts, timing and coverage) and ensure that appropriate data will be available. For example, if several programmes fund the same specific objectives and have similar actions and interventions, it could make sense to plan one common evaluation to evaluate the impact of these specific objectives. The planning may also imply the design of the operations themselves with a view to evaluability. Well coordinated joint evaluations tend to generate stronger evidence and lessons learned as a result of combined data across interventions, programmes and Members States. An evaluation plan is not restrictive: Managing Authorities may also conduct ad hoc evaluations if needed during the course of the programme life cycle. In addition to the theme or topic, the evaluation plan should specify for each evaluation:**

- **Subject and rationale, including the background, the coverage, the main approach (process or impact evaluation) and the main guiding evaluation questions. These can be adapted and further specified later in the Terms of Reference of the evaluations.**
- **Methods to be used and their data requirements: according to the evaluation subject, different methods may apply. A process evaluation may use data analysis, interviews, surveys while an evaluation on the effects of the programme may involve other methods such as literature review, focus groups, case studies etc. Evaluations capturing the impacts of priorities, whatever the methodological approach selected, requires data on supported entities. The evaluations should also build on the information collected through the indicator system especially on outcomes for beneficiaries through direct result indicators.**

- **Data availability:** Arrangements to be made to ensure that particular data sets required for certain evaluations (e.g. when applying counterfactual methods) will be available or will be collected and the timeframe. Experience shows that the lack of systematic collection of evaluation data significantly increases the cost of collecting them retrospectively (the evaluator has to reconstruct ex post a set of data) or leads to using less rigorous methods (where collecting these data is not feasible).
- **Duration and a tentative date:** These are linked with the evaluation subject and coverage and the methods selected, e.g. an impact evaluation can only be carried out once results are achieved, while some methods, where the necessary data have to be collected, are more time consuming than others.
- **Estimated budget for each evaluation:** the cost is linked to the selected methods and the duration of the contract. (SWD, p.18)

A couple of practical remarks:

- ✓ The table is indicative! Do it as precisely as possible for the moment but do not waste your energy on micro-details. It should guide your work and serve as institutional memory and a repository for shared understanding. **Consider the evaluation plan as a living document** – it does no harm to bring it back to the MC once per year!
- ✓ **Timing and setting the timetable** is always a challenge: It is recommended to build-in buffers - things may take longer and internal capacity constraints might occur and there is always a lot to do towards the end of the programming period!
- ✓ Coming back to the **value of existing evidence**: Next to results and reports from previous evaluations or studies done in the framework of the programme there is a substantial body of policy evidence on most themes. It is good to mention important sources in the overview not to forget about them when drafting ToRs at later stages. This could be studies launched by the Commission, use of the evaluation library (DG Regio), or studies done by academia and international organisations (EIB, World Bank, OECD, UN etc.).
- ✓ **The focus of evaluations and evaluation criteria**: It might be good to establish a couple of evaluations since splitting it into smaller exercises allows for better focus and more flexibility as regards timing. This does not necessarily mean going for several procurement procedures (and all the inherent risks) but it could be one procurement with several dedicated lots or a framework contract. It is recommended that at least one evaluation should provide a comprehensive picture of the programme, i.e. covering most of the five criteria.

- ✓ **Procurement:** There is an international market for evaluation and there are many national markets. It is obvious that bigger procurements attract more interest and that hence a larger number of offers might come in. To some extent, the chosen tender procedure pre-determines the outcome. It might be good to have continuity, i.e. to work with experts you know already in case you have been satisfied in the past or there might be the wish to attract new ones to gain new perspectives.



One major point which is often forgotten is the own resources required to run a proper evaluation cycle!

Key work steps – work peaks	Estimated duration (months)
Preparing the evaluation plan	2
Preparing ToRs, tendering, decision (depending on the length of procedures according to national procurement rules)	2+3 (tendering)
Start-up phase of evaluations (clarification of data requirements, final agreement on methodology and approach, data preparation)	3
Hot phase of the analysis, definition / discussion of findings	3
Communication of results	1

It is not easy to provide any general statements about the capacity requirements. It is always good if at least two persons in the MA/JS are in charge of evaluation activities. During peaks of work taking care of evaluation might consume on average up to 30% of the working time of the persons in charge of the evaluation.

On the following page you see the mock example for an outline of planned evaluations.

January 2022

**Exemplary overview table on planned evaluations**

Please note that this is a mock example!!

Title	Subject & rationale	Methods & data requirements	Data availability	Timing (start, duration)	Budget (EUR, net/gross)
<b>Operational evaluation</b>	<p><b>Process evaluation</b> to ensure proper functioning of programme management at an early stage in the cycle</p> <p><b>Key criteria:</b> Effectiveness and efficiency</p> <p><b>Key questions:</b> Timeliness and customer-orientation of services Attraction of new applicants and beneficiaries via small-scale projects</p>	<p>Mixed approach blending external and internal expertise</p> <p>Data related to key performance indicators (KPI) available in-house</p> <p>Data on client satisfaction: Survey among beneficiaries</p> <p>In-depth open (narrative) interviews with MA/JS plus a sample of MC members</p>	<p>Data on applications and projects ensured by the monitoring system and documentation of MC meetings</p> <p>Survey among beneficiaries – targeting coverage of min. 50% of beneficiaries (including questions on communication! – see below)</p> <p>About 15 in-depth interviews</p>	<p>June 2024 (start) 12 months</p>	<p>45.000</p>
<b>Evaluation of communication</b>	<p><b>Specific elements of the operational evaluation;</b> basis for eventual update of communication strategy</p> <p><b>Key criteria:</b> Effectiveness and efficiency</p> <p><b>Key questions:</b> Client satisfaction Uptake of new information platform by applicants and beneficiaries Best way to present projects</p>	<p>External expert (Interreg expertise preferred!)</p> <p>Analysis of data on outreach</p> <p>Survey among beneficiaries</p> <p>Focus group including communication officers, MA, and three MC representatives to agree on eventual need to amend the communication strategy</p>	<p>Cf. also the findings of the evaluation for 14-20 on outreach!</p> <p>Data on communication activities available in-house</p> <p>Survey among beneficiaries – see above</p>	<p>June 2024 (start) 6 months</p>	<p>15.000</p>
<b>Use it!</b>	<p>Summary of major findings</p>	<p>MC meeting to discuss findings!</p>	<p>Evaluation reports, documentation of ESG meetings</p>	<p>June 2025</p>	

**Evaluation Plan** – Briefing Note  
**January 2022**

<p><b>Thematic focus on P05</b></p>	<p>Mid-term performance evaluation of P05 to make sure that implementation of P05 is on track; positive result is the pre-condition to release second installment for strategy implementation</p> <p><b>Key criteria:</b>  Relevance, coherence, effectiveness</p> <p><b>Key questions:</b>  Performance check  Governance check (i.a. actual empowerment of local and regional actors, commitment)</p>	<p>Mixed approach blending internal and external expertise  Revisit KPI for the two strategies implemented under P05</p> <p>Check key projects according to priority list in strategy  Round tables with strategy stakeholders</p>	<p>Data on applications and projects ensured by the monitoring system and documentation of MC meetings</p> <p>Check if studies on implementation of CLLD in regions of the programme area exist</p>	<p>January 25 (start)  6 months</p>	<p>25.000</p>
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<b>Title</b>	<b>Subject &amp; rationale</b>	<b>Methods &amp; data requirements</b>	<b>Data availability</b>	<b>Timing (start, duration)</b>	<b>Budget (EUR, net/gross)</b>
<b>Impact evaluation</b>	<p>Impact evaluation to show-case major achievements and provide evidence-based lessons learned for the forthcoming period; mandatory element (due date June 2029!)</p> <p><b>Key criteria:</b>  Relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness</p> <p><b>Key (overarching) questions:</b>  Major impacts and achievements (with a focus on PO2 (biggest), PO5 (new!) and ISO1 (governance))  Contributions to improved cross-border governance (cornerstone of EU added value)</p>	<p>Two phases proposed:  Phase 1: Modelling the impact Long-term effects of strategic projects in 14-20  Conceptualization of impacts for 21-27 and revisiting the intervention logic  Phase 2: Impact evaluation 21-27  In depth-analysis of sample including detailed result check &amp; interviews  Comprehensive analysis of outcomes focusing on relevance and EU added value (working with impact models developed in phase 1)</p>	<p>Data on indicators, projects, project reports available in the monitoring system  Use of impact models done for 14-20!</p>	<p>Phase 1:  January 2026  12 months</p> <p>Phase 2:  January 2028  12 months</p>	150.000
<b>Use it!</b>	Summary of major achievements	<p>Elaboration of story-lines from phase 1 (internally with communication and capitalisation team)  Communicating major achievements – targeted messages for groups of stakeholders</p>	Evaluation report	<p>January 2027</p> <p>Spring 2029</p>	<p>n/a</p> <p>n/a</p>
<b>Total</b>					235.000



## 5. Quality management strategy

It is recommended to consider basic elements of a quality management strategy for all steps in the evaluation cycle. It is good that at least one person in the team takes over the function of a quality manager (though it should be understood as a shared commitment!).

Evaluation is a process leading to reports and findings as major outcomes and products. In theory, a sound process should lead to good products. Since the overarching objective of evaluation is shared learning we consider process and products equally important. An obvious and basic ingredient for quality management is the four-eyes-principle (if not considered as a hierarchy but as open, mutual exchange).

The following table lists major elements of the evaluation cycle where quality management and assurance are decisive:

Exemplary elements to achieve good quality in evaluation	Considerations for quality assurance in the process
<b>Planning</b>	
Evaluation expertise	Briefing or training of all internal actors (MA/JS team, ESG) depending on the level of expertise
Timing	Due consideration, regular discussion, and eventual amendment of the evaluation plan
Scope and relevance of evaluation	Well drawn ToRs
Defensible design and methods	Sound tender selection
<b>Implementation</b>	
Open and transparent process	Use of internal information platforms with open access, regular information to MC
Reliable data used	Effective dialogue and feedback throughout the evaluation process
Sound analysis	Comprehensive and shared stock-taking at the start, use of adequate sources, transparent methods
Credible results that relate to analysis and data	Good management and coordination by the team, timely briefing of external evaluators on scope and meaning of monitoring data, regular feedback loops
Impartial conclusions showing no bias and demonstrating sound judgement	Effective dissemination and discussion in the ESG and transparent reporting to MC; based on sound preparation of meetings (planning, rules of procedures (RoPs), adequate formats allowing for open discussion, experienced leadership in the process

Clear report with executive summaries	Dissemination to all stakeholders;
Commitment to follow-up	Effective preparation of meetings with the MC; information showing crisp and clear pathways from finding to proposed remedial action
Communication	Regular involvement of communication experts in the process; due consideration of different target groups

*Source: Evalesd, The Source for Evaluation of Socio-Economic Development, 2013, pp. 49-56, authors' considerations*

## 6. Annexes.

### 6.1. Annex 1: Points for reflection planning evaluation



Elliot Stern, an evaluation expert has put together a nice outline of issues for consideration when planning evaluations. We think it is a nice food-for-thought since it firstly sets out the purpose, secondly proposes activities to support it, and thirdly raises awareness for pre-conditions to make the evaluation cycle work same as for for barriers, i.e. obstacles impeding a proper learning helix.

<b>Purposes</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Pre-conditions and Barriers</b>
<p>Ensuring implementation of quality evaluations and their effective use by Managing Authorities</p> <p>Inform policy and decision making at the EU, national and territorial level</p> <p>Integrate the priorities of EU, national and territorial stakeholders</p> <p>Ensure that ‘horizontal’ principles are integrated, e.g. gender equality; energy efficiency; climate change adaptation</p> <p>Delineate the scope of the plan, what is to be covered</p> <p>Build on <i>all</i> available evidence</p> <p>Prioritise and focus so as to allocate funds proportionately</p> <p>Ensure evaluation resources are used to maximal benefit and evaluations are well managed</p> <p>Ensure that evaluations are of appropriate quality –</p>	<p>Align reporting with known policy/decision cycles including annual implementation and progress reports</p> <p>Align Programmes with related EU and national and priorities/policies including sectoral and territorial strategies and National Energy and Climate Plans</p> <p>Set objective at strategic and programme level – balancing themes and coverage</p> <p>Conduct/commission an evidence review drawing on past evaluations and relevant studies (partly a national planning task)</p> <p>Distinguish between what we already know and areas of uncertainty and risk in order to decide budget/methodological parameters</p> <p>Outline a preliminary plan for ‘impact evaluations’ including which</p>	<p>Effective coordination across MAs <i>and</i> with national/regional government and agencies</p> <p>Effective coordination arrangements at MA level – e.g. with planning and senior management steering group, monitoring committee</p> <p>Liaison arrangements with domain experts including academic departments and specialist consultants</p> <p>Engagement &amp; dialogue with stakeholders, partners, and beneficiaries</p> <p>An effective, qualified, and adequately resourced evaluation function</p> <p>Data availability and data cleaning to support evaluations and performance indicators</p> <p>Knowledge of evaluation design and methodological approaches</p> <p>Evaluation capacity able &amp; willing to bid for evaluations when announced</p>

<p>in terms of their relevance, methods &amp; usefulness</p> <p>Put in place the elements that will allow synthesis across evaluations (e.g. at thematic, sectoral &amp; thematic level)</p> <p>Build in flexibility and a contribution to mid-term reviews and reprogramming if required</p>	<p>approaches match which measures</p> <p>Identify a provisional list of required evaluations – including preparatory studies - to be kept under review</p> <p>Specify broad methodological approach including unit of analysis (cross OP? cross MA?) and High Level Questions for individual evaluations</p> <p>Clarify meta-level questions about methods used</p>	<p>Procurement and contracting that is fit-for-purpose i.e. adapted to evaluation market</p> <p>QA systems incorporated into all evaluations and at portfolio level including assuring evaluation independence</p> <p>A communication system to encourage evaluation use and awareness nationally &amp; across EU</p>
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Source: Elliot Stern: Evaluation Planning, DG Regio; Evaluation Summer School 2021

## 6.2. Annex 2: Overview on legal requirements

<p><b>Interreg Regulation</b>  <b>Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the ERDF and external financing instruments</b></p>	
<p><b>Article 30</b>  <b>Functions of the monitoring committee</b></p>	<p>1. The monitoring committee shall examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the progress in programme implementation and in achieving the milestones and targets of the Interreg programme;</li> <li>b) any issues that affect the performance of the Interreg programme and the measures taken to address these issues;</li> <li>c) the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations, and any follow-up given to findings;</li> <li>d) the implementation of communication and visibility actions;</li> </ul>

	<p>2. In addition to its tasks concerning the selection of operations listed in Article 22, the monitoring committee shall approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the evaluation plan and any amendment thereto;</li> <li>b) the final performance report.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Article 35 Evaluation during the programming period</b></p> <p>[NB: According to Article 1.5 of the CPR the Article 44 on evaluation does not apply to Interreg programmes!]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Member State or the managing authority shall carry out evaluations of the programmes related to one or more of the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and Union added value, with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes. Evaluations may also cover other relevant criteria, such as inclusiveness, non-discrimination, and visibility, and may cover more than one programme.</li> <li>2. In addition to the evaluations referred to in paragraph 1, an evaluation for each programme to assess its impact shall be carried out by 30 June 2029.</li> <li>3. Evaluations shall be entrusted to internal or external experts who are functionally independent.</li> <li>4. The managing authority shall ensure the necessary procedures to produce and collect the data necessary for evaluations.</li> <li>5. The managing authority shall draw up an evaluation plan that may cover more than one Interreg programme.</li> <li>6. The managing authority shall submit the evaluation plan to the monitoring committee not later than one year after the approval of the Interreg programme.</li> <li>7. The managing authority shall publish all evaluations on the website referred to in Article 36(2).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) Regulation (EU) 2021/1060</b></p>	
<p><b>Article 72 Functions of the managing authority</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The managing authority shall be responsible for managing the programme with a view to delivering the objectives of the programme. In particular, it shall have the following functions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) [not applying to Interreg since Article 73 does not apply]</li> <li>b) carry out programme management tasks in accordance with Article 74;</li> <li>c) support the work of the monitoring committee in accordance with Art. 75;</li> <li>d) supervise intermediate bodies;</li> <li>e) record and store electronically the data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verifications and audits in accordance with Annex XVII, and ensure the security, integrity and confidentiality of data and the authentication of users.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## 7. Further reading

In Interact, we try to support your work on evaluation, intervention logic, and indicators with events, online courses, briefing documents, and platforms. The platform on results and evaluation covers the topics of monitoring and evaluation, intervention logic, indicators, and reporting.

You can also search our online library or presentations and briefing documents on our website.

In case you have further questions or you want to join the platform on results and evaluation do not hesitate to contact us:

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### **Briefing documents and further guidance documents**

[COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027, Brussels, 8.7.2021, SWD\(2021\) 198 final](#)

Commission Staff Working Document, Better Regulation Guidance, 3.11.2021, SWD(2021)(305) Brussels

Evalsed, The Source for Evaluation of Socio-Economic Development, 2013

[Evaluation Helpdesk, Summer School, Online event, October 2021:](#)

### **Interact Online course:**

- Evaluation made easy, Module 3, especially lesson [3.2. programme experience](#) (covering period 2014-2020)
- Evaluation: what to consider for a good start to 2020+, module [3.2. Evaluation plan](#)

**Examples of Evaluation Plan 2014-2020** of various Interreg Programmes saved in the [Results and Evaluation Network](#).