EEO GROUP

Update of the First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE - BULGARIA 2014-2020"

1st Deliverable: **Methodology**

2021
January

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF
DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENTS

Interreg
Greece-Bulgaria
European Regional Development Fund

EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction

This Deliverable is being developed in the context of updating the First Evaluation of the Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE - BULGARIA 2014-2020", in accordance to the relevant assignment between the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and the company EEO GROUP.

The update of the evaluation of Gr/Bg Territorial Cooperation Programme aims to determine the performance of the actions (Projects) implemented, the achievement level of the initial objectives and the effectiveness of the Programme.

Within this context, the update of the 1st evaluation is going to focus on:

- the effectiveness,
- the performance framework,
- the efficiency,
- the logical intervention,
- the Communication Strategy

of the Programme.

This first Deliverable, refers to a comprehensive description of the implementation methodology proposed to be adopted during the implementation of the assignment, describing the objective, the methodological steps and the techniques/evaluation methodologies to be used.

In the *first Section* we briefly describe the main elements of the cross-border cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE - BULGARIA 2014-2020", while in *Section 2*, the objectives, the Key Success Factors and the needed resources and information to be reviewed are being presented. In addition, potential risks and challenges including mitigation actions are being identified.

In *Section 3* we identify the evaluation questions (A to F) as they have been included in the assignment and in the proposal submitted by EEO Group, creating the project implementation framework. Additionally, we have included the approach for both the impact evaluation to be undertaken and the evaluation of the communication strategy, also part of the assignment. Finally, Section 3 includes the evaluation methodologies and techniques that we intent to use during the implementation period for the delivery of the updated evaluation of the TCP (Territorial Cooperation Programme) Gr/Bg.

In *Section 4* we are presenting the deliverables to be conducted and submitted to the MA of the Programme, first as a draft for review and at a second phase in a final status including potential remarks and comments. The detailed milestones of the assignments are subject of *Section 5* of this deliverable.

1. Programme Overview

1.1. The Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020"

European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (ETCs)[1] are a key tool for strengthening the territorial cooperation both in the European context and with third neighboring to the EU countries and constitute one of the main options for the Programing period 2014-2020. The European territorial cooperation at the level of the European Union member states is implemented through cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation Programmes. These Programmes are either bilateral or multilateral.

The bilateral ETC Programmes aim to tackle common challenges that border regions face, to exploit growth potential and to strengthen cooperation in the interests of the harmonious progress of the Union. Greece participates in various European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, which are held in cooperation with the countries bordering Greece. The "GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020" Programme[2] is one of these cross-border cooperation Programmes and was approved by the European Commission CCI 2014TC16RFCB022 /9-9-2015. The total budget of the Programme amounts to € 130,262,835.00 and is co-funded by the EU (through the European Regional Development Fund) and beneficiary Member states (National Resources).

In particular, the contribution to the Gr/Bg 2014-2020 Programme per funding source is as follows:

Financial Source	Resources (€)	Contribution
ERDF	110,723,408.00	85%
National resources	19,539,427.00	15%
Total	**130,262,835.00**	**100%**

Within this context, the Programme’s Vision is to contribute towards the *“Conversion of the cross-border area into a competitive, innovative, sustainable, climate-adaptable, better interconnected area without social exclusion”,* while the ***Programme’s Objectives*** include:

- Further improvement and strengthening of the cross-border cooperation between Greece and Bulgaria.
- Development and promotion of the cultural and natural heritage at the cross-border area.
- Protection of the local population from the risk of natural disasters (i.e. fires, floods).
- Improvement of water resource management in the beneficiary cross-border regions.
- Improvement of the cross-border connectivity (i.e. reducing travel time, improving road safety).

[1] Source: https://www.espa.gr/en/Pages/staticTerritorialCoopOPs.aspx
[2] Source: http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu

- Expansion of social entrepreneurship in the cross-border area, which will increase employment in social enterprises and increase the provision of social services to vulnerable communities.
- Increasing tourism in the border area creating common areas for tourism attraction.
- Creation of Growth and of new jobs through the increase of entrepreneurial activity at the cross-border area, improving the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) to expand their activities beyond local markets with a focus to the cross-border regions.

To achieve the abovementioned Objectives, the Gr/Bg Programme focuses on ***four priorities (Priority Axes - PAs),*** plus one covering the Technical Assistance of the Programme, namely***:***

- PA1: A competitive and Innovative Cross-Border area
- PA2: A Sustainable and climate adaptable Cross-Border area
- PA3: A better interconnected Cross-Border area
- PA4: A socially inclusive Cross-Border area
- PA5: Technical Assistance

The expected results of the Programme are summarized:

- Improved business environment
- Better access to key markets and a wider customer base for SMEs achieved
- Increased resilience to cross-border natural disasters (floods)
- Increased tourism in the cross-border area
- Reduced travel time and improved road safety.

The eligible area of the Programme, extends to 40.202 km^2 and has a total population of 2.7 million inhabitants. It comprises of *7 Regional Units in Greece* and *4 districts in Bulgaria* (see the relevant picture[3]) as follows:

Greece:

- Region of Macedonia – Thrace, Regional Units: Evros, Kavala, Xanthi, Rodopi and Drama.
- Region of Central Macedonia, Regional Units: Thessaloniki and Serres.

Bulgaria:

- South-West Region, Districts: Blagoevgrad, Smolyan, Kardjali and Haskovo.

[3] Citizen's Summary of the 2017 Greece-Bulgaria Annual Implementation Report, Interreg V-A Cooperation Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020, CCI 2014TC16RFCB022, 10/05/2018, page 2.

The Programme covers specific ***Thematic Objectives (TOs)*** that meet both the national strategy as expressed in the 2014-2020 Partnership Pact and the European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (Europe 2020 - E2020). In particular, the TOs are:

- TO 3: "Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs"
- TO 5: "Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management."
- TO 6: "Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency."
- TO 7: "Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures."
- TO 9: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination."

Priority axes include specific Thematic Objectives and are specialized in Investment Priorities, Specific Objectives and Indicators (Outputs and Results).

1.2. The first evaluation in the framework of the Programming period 2014-2020

According to the 1st Working Document of the National Coordination Authority "Assessment and Evaluation Plans for the 2014-2020 Programming period", the main guidelines became effective for the evaluations to be carried out in the context of the implementation of the Operational Programmes (OPs) 2014-2020. Based on the regulations for the 2014-2020 Programming period, significant changes are made in relation to the previous Programming period (2007-2013), as emphasis has been given to OP objectives, concerning intervention and the evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of OPs. An evaluation is made to improve design and implementation having as criteria:

- Efficiency: *the evaluation is performed to determine the extent to which intervention has worked cost-effectively.*
- Effectiveness: *the evaluation is performed to determine the extent to which the desired results have been achieved (objectives set), comparing the actual results with the desired.*
- Implications: *the evaluation is performed to determine the extent to which the intervention has contributed to making the changes foreseen to be made.*

To enhance the contribution of evaluations to the effectiveness of interventions, Evaluation Plans were developed at OP level at the beginning of the 2014-2020 Programming Period, under the responsibility of the relevant Managing Authorities. In this context an Evaluation Plan was prepared for the needs of the Greece - Bulgaria Cross Border Programme 2014-2020, which was approved by the 2nd meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the Programme on 31/10/2016. This Plan identified the key evaluations required in the context of the implementation of the Programme and summarized -among other- the Programme's implementation and impact assessments, the evaluation of the Communication Strategy, the evaluation of added value from cross-border cooperation.

1.3. The update of the evaluation in the framework of the Programming Period 2014-2020

The update of the evaluation of the implementation progress of the OP will focus i) on the *efficiency* and ii) *effectiveness* of the interventions of the Programme, iii) on the achievement of its objectives and iv) the *intervention logic* identifying possible needs for its redesign, re-allocation / redistribution of resources within the Programme. In addition, it is focusing v) on the *impact* of the implementation of the Programme in the various areas of intervention in its geographical (cross-border) area and, possibly beyond, while the evaluation of vi) the *communication strategy* (under the perspective of the covid crisis) is also going to be conducted.

The evaluation should provide up-to-date information in relation to the first evaluation, indicatively addressing the following issues: i) *confirmation of the appropriateness of the strategy* in the context and in view of the changing socio-economic conditions (Programme targeting evaluation, data, results, etc.), ii) *the achievement of its objectives,* etc. In this context, the evaluation should iii) provide *updated values for the output and results indicators*, per priority axis of the Programme.

The Communication Strategy evaluation has been assigned as an ad-hoc special evaluation, which will reassess whether the implementation of the Programme Communication Strategy activities have been efficient in outreaching the target audiences, taking into consideration the covid crisis and the limitations that it brought to physical / face2face engagement. Within this context, the evaluation is going to assess whether the information provided was clear, if the outreach channels (website, manuals, help-desks, etc.) have been user-friendly and easy to access/use, as well as whether there was sufficient information about the Programme to the general public.

The evaluation process is further going to focus on the Specific Objectives of the Programme identifying the impact / contribution of the interventions to the results, highlighted by the relevant indicators and on the other hand, if and to what extent the results would change if these interventions had not been implemented. In the above context, the support of the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programme Gr/Bg for the integration of the evaluation elements in the Annual Implementation Report for the year 2020 is included, as well as the support during the ongoing process of revision of the Programme will be provided. The progress of the Programme towards the achievement of the objectives set in the framework of the EUROPE 2020 Strategy are also going to be taken into consideration and will be reviewed.

In order to achieve the above, the Evaluator is going to request all necessary primary and secondary information from the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programme Gr/Bg, including queries from the MIS (Management Information System). Should it be needed additional information from other authorities and services in Greece and / or abroad that will be indicated by the MA, are going to be contacted. For this purpose, the Evaluator will continuously cooperate with Units B1, A and D of the MA of the Programme and the JS of the OP.

2. Rationale

2.1. Objective

The Project objective is to provide evaluation services to the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programme Gr/Bg 2014-2020, regarding the update of the Evaluation of the implementation process of the Programme and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy including an Impact Assessment of the Programme "INTERREG VA GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020".

More specifically, and regarding the updating of the Evaluation of the implementation process, it is deemed appropriate to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme interventions, both in achieving its objectives and in identifying the need or not to update the form of intervention and any distribution new resources or redistribution of existing resources in the Programme. The Communication Strategy update will evaluate the implementation of the Programme Communication Strategy actions, in terms of the effectiveness of the target audience approach, information on Programme clarity, usability and effectiveness of media exchange media, and whether there was sufficient information about the Programme to the general public. All these are going to be implemented within the limitations arisen during the covid crisis, while the Evaluator is going to identify the impact of the crisis to the communication strategy and the efficiency of the mitigation measures undertaken. In the context of the impact assessment, the expected and non-expected results of the implementation of the Programme in the cross-border area are going to be calculated, mainly regarding the regional and cross-border development.

To implement the evaluation, we are going to undertake the following Actions:

- Facilitation of coordination of consultations between the stakeholders of the Programme.
- Provision of services from the date of notification of the Award Decision / Assignment with availability until 30/9/2021 for any relevant task that may arise, under the guidance of the Managing Authority, the Evaluation Monitoring Committee and the Joint Steering Group if established.
- Composition of deliverables in English and with the executive summaries in Greek and Bulgarian, which will be submitted to the Contracting Authority.
- During the provision of services, the Evaluator will have direct cooperation with the involved bodies of the Programme, as well as with anyone else nominated by the MA.
- Obligation to participate in technical or other meetings, related to the preparation of the evaluation of the Programme, which take place at the headquarters of the Managing

Authority or elsewhere after timely notification by the MA. During covid crisis and during the limitations of physical meetings, virtual meetings are going to be held.

- Obligation to create a 3-member project team, to ensure the effectiveness of the support, where one of the members of the project team will be appointed as Project Manager.

2.2. Key Success Factors of the Evaluation

The success of the evaluation will be grounded on the ability to respond to the diverse requirements of the evaluation by providing timely and with valid information the evaluation reports, as set in the Tender and indicated in the next section of this Deliverable. The characteristics of the project that the Evaluator is asked to perform determine the key factors for the success of the Evaluation project, which are as follows:

- **The development of an efficient collaboration with all involved stakeholders, not only within the MA and JS team but also with third parties.** This requires the establishment of an effective system of communication and cooperation between all involved actors.

- **Need for an efficient data collection system.** For the needs of the evaluation, data sets from the MIS and other sources are being required (i.e. economic, project implementation etc.) and will have to be extracted and processed on time and at the beginning of the evaluation process, to ensure timely delivery of the second (and next) deliverables. Within this context, the Evaluator will categorize the information needed (i.e. financial data, indicators, etc.) and the entity from which it will receive it, preparing a request to the MA at the beginning of the project.

- **Effective and flexible organization of the Evaluation Project Team.** An essential element for success is the clear division of the work that each member is called upon to accomplish. It is likely, although there will be distinct responsibilities, that there is a need for additional resources involving two or more of the project team members in a specific task. In this context, the members of the Evaluation Project Team have the experience and know-how in the field of evaluation and management of Operational Programmes and Projects and can meet at any time all project requirements. Additionally, the Evaluation Project Team has previous experience in the conduction of the mid-term evaluation of the OP and therefore has previous experience on the content of the OP and the funded Projects.

- **Proficiency in evaluation methodologies and techniques.** While the methodologies, tools and techniques that the Evaluator intends to use, are being presented in Section 3, Evaluation Project Team members have a strong knowledge basis and experience on the use and application of these tools during the implementation of the evaluation.

2.3. Needed information and sources

Based on previous experience also from the implementation of the on-going mid-term evaluation, the Evaluation Project Team has identified sources and information that will be needed and is going to be used for the conduction of the update of the evaluation of the OP. Within this context, the information and sources needed -per category- include:

Category	Sources (indicative)
Key references for defining the development strategy of the Cross-border Programme	• Greece - Bulgaria Cross Border Programme 2014-2020 • Ex-ante evaluation of the Programme • Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Regulatory Framework / Methodological Guidelines	• Council Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 (General Regulation), with an emphasis on Articles 30, 50, 54, 56 and 114 • Council Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 (laying down specific provisions to support the European territorial cooperation objective of the European Regional Development Fund), with emphasis on Article 14 • Council Regulation (EU) 1301/2014 (on the European Regional Development Fund and laying down specific provisions on the 'Investment for growth and jobs' objective) • Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 215/2014 laying down implementing rules for Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 • Commission Authorization Regulation (EU) 480/2014 supplementing Regulation 1303/2013 • Law 4314/2014 on the management, control and implementation of development interventions for the Programming period 2014-2020 (Government Gazette 265 / A / 23.12.2014), as amended and in force. • European Commission Guidelines, such as the "EU Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation (ERDF and Cohesion Fund) - Concepts and recommendations" (March 2014), EU Guidelines "Guidance Document on Assessment Plans: Guidelines for Quality Management of External Evaluations", (February 2015), etc. • Working Documents of the National Coordination Authority (NCA), as well as its document entitled "Guidelines and Instructions for the Activation of Evaluation Plans and the Call for Proposals for the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Operational Programmes 2014-2020" • MCS: Management & Control System 2014-2020 • Communication Strategy of the Programme • Approved Programme Evaluation Plan
Information - support material	• EU texts such as: Commission Communication "Europe 2020". A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth • Thematic studies / evaluations • Statistics of ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistical Authority) etc. • Annual reports on the implementation of the Programme • Information from the Monitoring Information System (M.I.S.) on the progress of implementation (physical and financial scope) of the Programme interventions. • Open Data Platform of the European Commission, which are available on the website: https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/ • Interviews / communication with MA executives, as Managing Authority (MA) and members of the Joint Secretariat (JS) of the Programme, as well as with other services to be designated.

2.4. Challenges – Mitigation

Below are listed challenges that may emerge during the update of the 1st evaluation of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020” and proposed mitigation actions.

From experience, the main challenges identified in such projects are summarized in the following:

- Inability to collect and edit data in a timely and valid way;
- Adequacy and quality of data;
- Lack of coordination and good cooperation between stakeholders and possible communication breakdowns.

Mitigation measures to the above challenges include:

- Immediate mobilization of the Evaluation Project Team to finalize the type and volume of information required and its sources, preparing an early request for Data / Information, maximizing the data processing period.
- Close and continuous cooperation with the MA and JS to develop a favorable climate of cooperation and exchange of information, as well as the organization of the work of the project.
- Increased communication between the Evaluator with other stakeholders involved in the Programme to collect data and resolve issues that may arise.
- Utilization of the MIS and other databases available for data mining.

3. Evaluation questions

The update of the 1st evaluation of the Cross-Border Territorial Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA 2014-2020" includes the approach of specific evaluation modules, each of which is specialized in evaluation questions.

The evaluation modules are as follows:

A. Effectiveness of the Programme
B. Performance Framework of the Programme
C. Efficiency of the Programme
D. Timeliness of intervention logic in the framework of the Programme's Strategy
E. Revision of the Programme
F. Preparation for impact evaluations
G. Special Issue: Communication Strategy

In specific, the evaluation modules and the evaluation questions are presented below.

However, it is noted that in addition to the above evaluation modules and the evaluation questions (data based on the instructions of the National Coordination Authority see "Guidelines and Instructions for Activating the Evaluation Plans and the Call for Proposals for the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Operational Programmes 2014- 2020"), the evaluation of the Programme will also take into **account the questions raised in the approved Evaluation Plan of the Cooperation Programme "Greece – Bulgaria 2014-2020"**.

3.1. Evaluation Module A - Programme Effectiveness

A.1: Evaluation of the Programme implementation progress in terms of effectiveness

Q.1: What is the assessment of the implementation progress of the Programme in terms of efficiency per Priority Axis and investment priority with reference point on 31/12/2020? Is it considered satisfactory or not?

An analysis is made on the basis of the relevant Efficiency Evaluation Methods and estimates are made based on the implementation figures of the Programme as entered into the MIS by the above date. If the timeline is required to change, this is going to be suggested in cooperation with the MA and the relevant stakeholders, taking into consideration the limitations of the MFF 2014-2020.

A.2: Assessment of the implementation progress of the Programme's Output Indicators

Q. 2: To what extent have the objectives of Programme's output indicators been achieved? Are there significant delays in the implementation of the Programme? What are the reasons for these delays?

To answer this question, the analysis will focus on operational output indicators and additional output indicators that may have been used in the context of Calls for Projects issued by the Managing Authority. It is noted that this analysis does not include the Key Implementation Steps and Financial Indicators included in the Performance Framework.

Q. 3: Based on the above findings, is it intended to achieve or not achieve the targets set for output indicators for 2023?

The Evaluator, based on the results of the above analysis, will make observations on the feasibility of the output indicators set for 2023.

A.3: Conclusions - Proposals

Q. 4. What are the conclusions and proposals from the Analysis of Effectiveness?

In this context, all the findings of the previous analysis are summarized by Evaluator and proposal and conclusions are made concerning the effectiveness of Territorial Cooperation Programme "Greece – Bulgaria 2014-2020" within the reference period.

3.2. Evaluation Module B - Performance Framework of the Programme

B.1: Assessment of the progress of meeting the objectives of the indicators' Performance Framework

Q. 1. The progress is satisfying, concerning the accomplishment of targets of Performance Framework's indicators by Priority Axis regarding the milestones of 2020 (Output Indicators, KIS and Financial Indicators)? Are delays detected and to what factors are these delays due? Are the assumptions used per indicator in the design of the Performance Framework still relevant? If not, where changes are detected and why are these changes due?

Additionally, a detailed description of the factors causing delays is provided to approximate this question, substantiating whether they are due to a change in the economic environment, labor market, environmental factors, changes related to the implementation and management of the Programme. It also analyzes possible changes in the assumptions made during the formulation of the Programme's Performance Framework and documented the causes that have evoked them.

Q. 2. Based on the above findings and what was mentioned in the Efficiency Module, is it envisaged to achieve or not to achieve the benchmarks for the Performance Framework for 2020 and 2023?

The answer to this question will be an analysis by indicator and an estimate if this ratio will be reached at 100%, at> 85%, at> 75% or not. The assessment of the achievement of the objectives will be done at the level of the Priority Axis and will be based on the progress of the operations contributing to the Performance Framework as documented in the relevant documents for the implementation of the operations providing the required information (eg, verification of transaction ratios, transaction verification documents, application forms, application for funding (project documentation), project completion decisions, etc.).

B.2: Conclusions - Proposals

Q. 3. What are the conclusions and suggestions from the Performance Framework analysis?

Based on the above analysis, the Evaluator makes conclusions and suggestions on the progress of the implementation of the Performance Framework and the feasibility of the objectives set.

3.3. Evaluation Module C - Programme Efficiency

C.1: Programme Implementation progress efficiency evaluation

Q. 1. Assessment of the progress of the implementation of the OP in terms of efficiency per Priority Axis and investment priority. Is it considered efficient or not with reference to 31/12/2020?

An analysis is made based on the relevant efficiency evaluation methods and estimates are made for the Programme based on the implementation data up to the date specified above as introduced in the MIS. In case the timeline will be required to change, the Managing Authority will be informed of the new time point on which to evaluate the effectiveness of the Programme.

C.2: Adequacy of Programme Resources

Q. 2. Is the budget available sufficient to implement the Programme's interventions?

In this context, the evaluator focuses on possible budget shortages and inadequacies, identifying the efficiency and diversification of the implementation unit costs at an intervention level in relation to the foreseen costs during the planning period of the Programme. Shortages and gaps are going to be further analyzed with an identification of triggers and other related causes Based on the Programme Calls, the interventions and the distributed budget are going to be analyzed in relation to the corresponding Programme amounts.

Finally, if budget and unit cost overruns / gaps are identified, an analysis will be made as to whether and how they affect the objectives of the Performance Framework indicators in relation to those mentioned in B.1 (see above).

C.3: Conclusions - Proposals

Q.3. What are the conclusions and proposals from the efficiency analysis?

Based on the above analysis, the Evaluator makes conclusions and proposals regarding the efficiency of the Programme.

3.4. Evaluation Module D - Intervention logic

D.1: Programme Intervention Logic

Q. 1. To what extent are the intervention logic and the specific objectives of the Programme still relevant?

In this context, we will examine (in summary):

- The timeliness of the Programme's intervention logic
- How the intervention logic does influence potential changes in the distribution of existing resources among the investment priorities, as indicated in the Programme
- If new needs have been identified that affect the Programme's intervention logic, considering the wider macroeconomic, social and environmental context.
- To what extent the specific objectives of the Programme and their link to Result and Output Indicators are still relevant.
- If there is a need to create new specific targets and / or new result or output indicators. It should be noted that the new indicators proposed should cover the requirements and conditions that will ensure their statistical validation and be accompanied by appropriately completed Indicator Fiche.

D.2: Programme Result Indicators

Q.2. How is the progress estimated in achieving the result indicators as indicated in the relevant Programme Indicator Fiche? Based on these findings, is the achievement of the targeted result indicators for 2023 still valid?

The course of implementation of all result indicators is examined and the reasons for achieving them are documented, considering the wider macroeconomic, social and environmental context.

D.3: Contribution of output and result indicators to the Programme intervention logic

Q.3. Do the output and result indicators contribute to the Programme's intervention logic?

For the needs of this question:

- All operational output and result indicators of are going to be analyzed, and documented proposals will be submitted regarding their suitability and the need for or not to be replaced with new indicators. The suitability is analyzed based on how much they contribute to the expected results described in the Programme's specific objectives based on the intervention logic. The suitability of the use of each result indicator is analyzed based on whether it is clearly linked to the logic of the intervention, the expected results outlined in the specific objectives of the Programme and whether it is linked to the appropriate output indicator.

- Priority will be given to the use of common indicators. Otherwise, for each proposed specific indicator, a clear definition, a unit of measurement and a source of origin of the primary data will be given including an estimated baseline value (for result indicators only), while the target value is going to be identified.
- Lastly, we are going to take into account the definitions of common indicators integrated in the latest version of the 2014-2020 Single System Indicators (May 2017 edition), as well as the updated version of the "Guidelines and Directions for the Monitoring of Indicators" (July 2018). Moreover, those indicators referred to in the Guidelines for the Development of the Single Indicator System 2014-2020 prepared by the National Coordination Authority are going to be included in the analysis.

D.4: Conclusions - Proposals

Q.4. What are the conclusions and proposals from the analysis of the timeliness of intervention logic?

Based on the previous analysis conclusions and proposals are made regarding the timeliness of the Programme intervention logic.

3.5. Evaluation Module E - Revision of the Programme

E.1: Ongoing Programme review

The conclusions of the above sections are going to take into consideration the ongoing revision of the OP. In particular, the Evaluator is going to take into consideration:

- The incorporation of any new resources and / or the redistribution of resources
- The possible modification of the logical intervention of the Programme and the effect on specific objectives and output and result indicators, as well as the possible addition of new intervention codes per Priority Axis, in order to achieve better results and the Performance Framework for 2023, in the context of the restrictions set by the Regulations in relation to the co-financing of the OPs.
- Contingent commitments, i.e. sustainable urban development activities and climate change objectives, as well as horizontal principles governing the Programme (equality between men and women, principle of non-discrimination and possibly opportunities for all and in particular accessibility for people with disabilities).

E.2: Contracting Authority Support

In the context of this action, the Contracting Authority is deemed necessary to support the Evaluator in matters of documentation, from the date of notification of the award decision until the completion of the review process of the OP.

3.6. Evaluation Module F - Update of the Communication Strategy Evaluation (Ad-hoc Evaluation)

In relation to the updating of the Evaluation of the Communication Strategy, in addition to the questions posed in the framework of the approved Evaluation Plan of the OP and based on the current Communication Strategy, the communication activities as well as the methods used and contributed to the effective implementation of the Programme should be examined.

Within this context the objective is:

- On the one hand, to determine the implementation of the Communication Strategy and the evaluation of its effectiveness depending on the set goals.
- On the other hand, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy depending on the course of implementation and the effects of the Programme.

The Evaluator is going to focus during the ad-hoc evaluation of the Communication Strategy on the ***impact of the covid-crisis to the outreach campaigns*** and the communication of the OP to the relevant stakeholders, beneficiaries, and potential beneficiaries. Within this context, several in-depth interviews are going to be conducted with all relevant stakeholders to underline the changes in the outreach campaigns and the results achieved both in quantitative and qualitative aspect.

More specifically, the Evaluator is going to focus in the following:

- The adequacy of information about the Programme, its role, objectives, results and impact in terms of stakeholders, i.e. the target audience (potential beneficiaries, partners, beneficiaries, etc.) and to the general public.
- The effectiveness of the organized communication actions (i.e. workshops, seminars, exhibitions, annual events, information via website, social media, etc.). In particular, we are going to consider whether:
    - Complete and timely information was provided on the participation of potential beneficiaries in the Programme, the terms and criteria that must be met.
    - Stakeholders were informed about their role in communicating the Programme and the co-financed operations.
    - The contribution of the communication actions to the performance of the Programme is documented, i.e. to the achievement of specific results and to the contribution of the Programme to them.

In this regard, indicative questions, which should be asked, are as follows:

a. *How effective are the publicity / communication actions of the Programme towards the beneficiary bodies? (seminars or other publicity actions should be listed, such as corporate social responsibility actions, workshops for leading partners, etc.).*
b. *How effective and adequate are the publicity actions for the beneficiaries?*
c. *How effective is the information so far through the Programme website?*

d. *Have actions been taken to promote the participation of the partners and in general all the stakeholders?*
e. *Have communication activities promoted the understanding of cultural differences in the cross-border area and respect between social groups? What specific Programme or project activities?*
f. *What was the impact of covid in the implementation of communication / publicity activities?*

3.7. Impact Assessment Questions

Impact assessment should seek the systematic and organized assessment of the operation of the Programme as well as the assessment of the impact that its implementation had in the eligible (geographical) area and in specific areas (fields) of intervention, but also in the wider economic, social and environmental framework for the implementation of the OP, during the reporting period, from the start of implementation until 31/12/2020.

To this end, the Evaluator is invited to examine per Specific Objective the following:

- The real impact / contribution of the interventions on the results highlighted by the relevant output indicators.
- Whether and to what extent the results would be different without the implementation of these interventions.

It is noted that according to the EU Framework, the impact assessment is going to investigate whether and how the interventions in question brought changes to the beneficiaries who implemented them. At the same time, however, the evaluation is going to link its findings (i.e. the impact on the beneficiaries who benefited from the interventions) with the monitoring of the respective overall policy (policy) that concerns all potential beneficiaries. In other words, it is useful to highlight the impact of the Programme in relation to policymaking and decision-making for the benefit of the citizens in the cross-border region. The final question that the impact assessment should clearly answer in its conclusions is: *"Was the impact of the intervention significant enough to bring about the desired changes?"* In other words, *"Was the intervention helpful?"* It should therefore be emphasized here that systematic analysis and impact assessment presupposes a clear separation of the effects of those purely due to OP interventions from those of other factors.

The change in the concept of "impact" in the Regulations of the Programming Period 2014-2020 in relation to previous periods (as reflected in the relevant directives of the European Commission, DG Regional Policy) is also going to be taken into consideration. The new directives are clearly different from the previous ones in terms of both the *"use"* and the *"position"* of the term *"impact"* on the Programming process. In the new context, *"effects"* are now understood as *"changes"* that can, in a credible way, be attributed to the effect of specific interventions. Since, in most cases, these *"changes"* are usually the result of many factors, the *Impact Assessment* should focus on, highlight and evaluate the (real) contribution of the Programme to specific results and changes in indicators associated with its interventions.

According to the Programme Evaluation Plan, the impact assessment should include as a minimum and indicatively, the following evaluation questions, which are organized at the level of Priority Axes and Specific Objectives:

Priority Axis 1: A competitive and innovative cross-border area

Specific objective 1: Improving the business support systems of SMEs

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the "Business Support Environment" score index? How does it compare to the baseline?
2. If an improvement is measured, to what extent has the Programme contributed to that improvement? If no improvement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Specific Objective 2: Improve the ability of SMEs to expand beyond local markets.

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the "*Total value of annual cross-border exports*" result index? How does it compare to the base price?
2. If an improvement is measured, to what extent has the Programme contributed to that improvement? If no improvement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Priority Axis 2: Cross-border area with sustainable and climate adaptation

Specific objective 3: Improve cross-border cooperation in flood risk management plans at river basin level.

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the *"Number of international river basin districts with jointly coordinated flood risk management plans in accordance with Directive 2007/60 / EC"?* How does it compare to the base price?
2. To what extent did the Programme contribute to this? If no value is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Specific objective 4: Utilization of the cultural and natural heritage of the cross-border area for tourism purposes

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the result index *"Annual tourist overnight stays in accommodation"*? How does it compare to the base price?
2. If an improvement is documented, to what extent has the Programme contributed? If no improvement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Specific objective 5: Enhance the effectiveness of biodiversity protection activities

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the *"% of Natura sites reporting excellent or good conservation"* score? How does it compare to the base price?

2. If an improvement is measured, to what extent has the Programme contributed to that improvement? If no improvement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Specific objective 6: Strengthen water management.

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the result index% of surface water in the GES in the cross-border area? How does it compare to the base price?
2. If an improvement is measured, to what extent has the Programme contributed to that improvement? If no improvement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Priority Axis 3: A better interconnected cross-border area

Specific objective 7: Improving cross-border accessibility

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the result index "Number of functional border crossings" in the cross-border area? How does it compare to the base price?
2. If an improvement is measured, to what extent has the Programme contributed to that improvement? If no improvement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Priority Axis 4: A socially inclusive cross-border area

Specific objective 8: Improve access to primary and emergency health care (in isolated and deprived communities) in the cross-border area

Indicative questions are:

1. What are the values of the outcome indicators "Annual visits to primary health care" and "annual visits to secondary / tertiary health care" in the CB area and the most important is the ratio of the two indicators? How does it compare to base prices and most importantly to the ratio of the two key indicators?
2. If the shift is measured from secondary / tertiary to primary care, to what extent has the Programme contributed to this improvement? If no displacement is measured, what are the reasons behind it?

Specific objective 9: Expansion of social entrepreneurship in the cross-border area

Indicative questions are:

1. What is the value of the result index "Social enterprise employees in the CB area"? How does it compare to the baseline (2014)?

4. Methodologies, tools and techniques to be used to implement the project

This module includes the methodologies, tools and techniques that will be used to implement the project. These methodologies are divided into two main tasks: A) Project management methodologies and B) Evaluation methodologies

A brief description of them follows.

4.1. Project Management Methodologies

Project Management Methodology

Project management will be based on the PRINCE2 methodology (Projects in Controlled Environments). This methodology covers the management and control of projects and Programmes and provides to organizations a standardized approach and an easily applicable method for managing all types of Programmes.

PRINCE2 Methodology is:

- A method of project-Programme management
- A reference manual
- A process guide
- A recognized methodological level of implementation

The main features of PRINCE2 methodology are the following:

- Provides structure and control
- Approaches a calibrated scale based on procedures
- Separates the performance of products or services from management
- It clearly defines the structure of the organization's management plan and roles definition
- Consolidates business risks
- Focuses on distributed products / services
- Provides a communication plan for all stakeholders
- It can and must be adapted to individual situations

Risk Management Methodology

This methodology ensures the smooth development of all project-related activities, anticipating in time all the problems that may emerge. The purpose of this tool is to recognize, record, evaluate and manage (effectively and efficiently) the main risks that may occur during the project and which threaten its smooth and unhindered implementation.

Risk management involves the following steps:

Step 1 "Risk Identification": Includes the recognition of risks emerging during the implementation of the project and is based on as much as possible understanding of the actual requirements and objectives set. Knowing the main objective, the Evaluator will attempt a systematic recording of the risks involved, but above all the causes that may provoke them. For the identification of the risks, the data resulting from the evaluator's work and experience as well as from interviews / cooperation with the Contracting Authority are evaluated.

Step 2 "Risk Assessment": The assessment of the risks identified in step 1 is performed to determine their severity (ie the severity of their effects) and the likelihood of their occurrence. The risk assessment is based on the categorization of the potential risks, based on the following parameters: a) what is the probability of the specific risk? (b) what is the degree of impact of the risk?

Step 3 "Risk Management" includes the effort to reduce the probability and / or reduce the negative consequences of the event. It mainly concerns the risks of high and medium severity and likelihood of occurrence. Risk management actions can be divided into two main categories: a) Preventive actions aimed at minimizing or even eliminating the possibility of occurrence of the risk or minimizing its severity; b) Risk management actions if the risk eventually occurs.

Step 4 "Systematic Review of Risk Mechanisms and Risks": The objective is to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of risk-impairment mechanisms as outlined in the above Action Plan and to contribute to the continuous and reliable monitoring of all potential sources of risk.

The above actions must be carried out at the beginning of the project, in the context of the design, and then be continuously updated during the Project and adapted to new data that will occur during this development.

Quality Assurance Methodology

The Evaluator has the basic principle of providing reliable and quality services that fully meet the requirements of the particular project. To this end, Evaluator has developed and implemented a Quality Assurance System that can ensure the rational implementation of the project and the achievement of its objectives in the specific tight timeframes. Implementation of the Quality Assurance System will be achieved through a number of complementary actions, which in many cases coincide with time. These actions include:

- the design and implementation of quality assurance procedures to precisely determine what is required, by whom and the standards with which work is carried out for the implementation of the project,
- developing a team approach to review and improve project implementation work,
- periodic quality assessment to assess the effectiveness of internal processes in achieving performance targets.

Proposed assessment procedures include:

- assessment of the data used in each action based on the specific case requirements,
- assessment over the means used (logistical infrastructure - human resources);
- assessment during the implementation of each activity, so that any deviation is identified and corrected,
- assessment the results and their compatibility with the specific case-by-case requirements.

Delivery Assessment System - Acceptance Assessment, Coherence and Compliance Assurance

The Evaluator has established a documented assessment system to ensure that only services that meet specified specifications are handed over to the Contracting Authority. The assessment system covers the following parameters:

- Assessment during the preparation of deliverables (or other documents produced as part of its work).
- Final assessment before delivery to the Contracting Authority.

The deliverables of the Project are distinguished from those that are expected to be assessed and evaluated as satisfactory and those that have been assessed and rejected. For this reason, all deliverables to be prepared and submitted to the Contracting Authority will be characterized by:

- **Analytical character,** in terms of content and extent of the analysis (sufficiency of information).
- **Accuracy,** in terms of delivery time.
- **Essence,** in terms of their realistic character.

The Project Manager (PM) is responsible for conducting the assessments. Deliverables that have been assessed and judged to be satisfactory are approved by the PM and ultimately delivered to the Contracting Authority. Deliverables that have been reviewed and found unsatisfactory are returned to their writing manager and corrected.

If a deliverable is found to be unsatisfactory, either by the PM or by the Contracting Authority, a non-compliance report is filled in. Corrective actions are also proposed in the non-compliance report. The corrective actions are defined as the maximum time within which they should be implemented and which may be small or large depending on the nature of the problem. At the same time, the timetable for implementation is defined and the PM communicates these actions to the concerned Project Team members.

Subsequently, the Project Team members participating in the deliverable perform the corrective actions to eliminate the presented problem. At the end of the planned timetable, the PM confirms the effectiveness of the corrective actions. If the problem is dealt with, it is noted in the non-compliance report that the actions required to address the problem have occurred and therefore the report "closes". If the taken actions do not address or eliminate the problem, a new non-compliance report is composed.

Communication and Information System

The effective implementation of the Project contributes to the development of a Communication and Information System, covering both the internal communication - cooperation of the Project Team members as well as the external communication - cooperation between the Project Team and the Contracting Authority and the other stakeholders (Joint Secretariat, etc.).

This system will achieve:

As regards the operation of the Project Team (internal communication system):

- Timely transfer and exchange of information related to Project work.
- The periodic evaluation and monitoring of the progress of the work and deliverables of the Project.
- Timely take corrective and preventive actions to address any implementation problems.
- The delivery of the work and deliverables of the Evaluator at the times agreed with the Contracting Authority.

In terms of communication - cooperation of the Project Team with the Contracting Authority and the other stakeholders (external communication system):

- Establishing an appropriate climate for communication and co-operation between the co-operating parties.
- Determination - clarification of the objectives and expected results of the Contracting Authority from the project to be executed.
- Timely and effective gathering and sharing of information and opinions / proposals.
- Ensure timely information for all parties involved.
- Effective handling of issues arising during the performance of the Evaluator's work.

Specifically, the Communication and Information System, which will be formed under the responsibility of the PM at the beginning of the Project, will include at least the following:

Workshops: This involves regular and extraordinary meetings between the individual Project Team elements, as well as between the Project Team and the Contracting Authority (including other stakeholders in the Project). Objective of these may be:

- Planning and organizing the Project's work.
- The collection of data and necessary information for the Project.
- The presentation of the project performed up to the reference period.
- Evaluate and draw conclusions about the work performed over the past period.

- Determining and scheduling the next time operations.
- Solving problems and generally critical issues arising during the Evaluator's Project.

Communication Documents: Includes any written communications that take place in the project, such as: letters of information, guidelines - directions, issues to be solved for the execution of the Project, presentations, requests, agenda and meeting proceedings.

Other ways of communication: Indicative oral communication / concise private conversations, emails, telephone conversations, teleconferences etc.

4.2. Evaluation Methodologies

Existing Status Analysis Methodology

Detailed information on the internal and external environment of the Programme is collected as part of the methodology for analyzing the current situation. The Evaluator will analyze and evaluate the current situation, utilizing a wealth of data sources, indicative of which was given in paragraph 2.3.

This methodology will be used for all project evaluations (implementation, impact, communication).

Methodologies for Data Collection

Use of Secondary Data

Secondary is the data that has not been gathered by the evaluator himself through some kind of field research. Included in this category are elements of the Programme's Management and Monitoring System, data from general statistics and data bases, data from surveys and studies, including previous evaluations, etc. For the purposes of this project, secondary information includes:

- Information regarding the Programmematic planning of the Programme
- Data from the course of implementation of the actions.
- Information on progress in achieving the Programme's indicators
- Issues about information and communication actions of the Programme

For the collection of the relevant data, various sources will be used, indicative of which were given in paragraph 2.3.

Collection of Primary Data

A basic tool for collecting primary data will be the interview. The interview is preferable when the size of the population is small and the depth of the analysis is large. In this case, it concerns the gathering of data and the recording of views of entities involved in the implementation of the Programme, with emphasis on MA executives.

This methodology will be used for all project evaluations (implementation, impact, communication)

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is a particularly useful tool for summarizing the results of the development of the methodology for the analysis of the current situation, focusing on the analysis of the internal and external environment. This method is reviewed and recorded to evaluate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that characterize the Programme's environment.

SWOT analysis is often used as a tool in planning and evaluating Programmes. The combined analysis of strengths and weaknesses with opportunities and threats, associated with the external environment can be used to design and / or evaluate the progress of a Programme's objectives, indicators, strategy and priorities.

This methodology will be mainly used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme.

PESTLE Analysis

Among the various techniques that guarantee the complete analysis of the project's external environment, the Evaluator considers it appropriate to apply the PESTLE technical analysis. PESTLE (Political – Economic – Sociocultural – Technological – Legal – Environmental) methodology is widely used in mapping external environment parameters / factors to feed downstream design steps with the appropriate parameters that may affect any intervention.

As far as the analysis of the external environment of the Programme is concerned, it may include elements such as:

- Define and demarcate the external environment of the Programme's Regions
- Political and social trends affecting these Areas
- Economic, Institutional, Environmental and Technological Factors affecting these Areas
- Trends and prospects at European and country level.

This methodology will be mainly used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme.

Affinity Evaluation Methodology - Matrix of Relevance

In order to assess the degree of coherence where required (eg evaluation of relevance to national and EU policies such as Europe 2020), a matrix of relevance will be established. On the vertical axis, one of the two fields of interest will be shown to measure the relevance (eg Programme Objectives), while the other field of interest (eg Priority Axis / Special Target) will appear on the horizontal axis. In the right-hand part of the matrix, using the projected public expenditure or actual implementation figures, the total financial burden directed towards the field of interest is shown as a percentage of the total public expenditure of the Programme.

At the intersection of the fields of interest, regular numbers (1 existence of affinity and 0 non-existence of affinity) are given as elements. Through colored differentiation of the matrix's cells the estimated intensity of their affinity (dark gray high affinity, light gray mean affinity, white low affinity) is recorded.

This methodology will be used in evaluating the implementation of the Programme

Indicator System Evaluation Methodology

The development of indicator systems at international and European level is based on the proper selection of the indicators that make up them. For the selection of indicators, a number of methodological approaches have been developed. The SMART methodology will be used as part of the evaluation of the updated indicator system:

SMART[4] The SMART methodological approach is geared towards increasing the speed and ease of data collection. According to this methodology, indicators should be:	
Specific	*they are clear and unambiguous for the intended purposes*
Measurable	*they can be quantitated with a defined unit of measurement.*
Achievable[5]	*they can be achieved at an acceptable cost*.
Relevance to the objective concerned[6]	*they are appropriate to adequately capture the goals they are concerned with*.
Time bound	they *refer to a specific time*.
SPICED[7] The SPICED methodological approach is a participatory approach. According to this methodology, indicators should be:	
Subjective	they are linked to sources that are able to provide a specific picture based on the pre-existing experience.
Participatory	they are determined by the set of stakeholders.
Interpreted or explained	they are sufficiently explanatory that they do not need to be explained.
Cross-checked and Compared	the validity can be checked against other relevant indicators and sources of information.
Empowering	the indicators must be such as to allow the respondents to react.
Diverse	indicators should be able to derive information from the full range of sources / informants and the information should be recorded in such a way that these differences can be evaluated over time.

[4] European Commission, "Manual Project Cycle Management", March 2004
[5] (Acceptable, Applicable, Appropriate, Attainable or Agreed upon).
[6] (Reliable) and (Realistic) (when not in use the words (Achievable/ Attainable)
[7] Chris Roche, Impact Assessment for Development Agencies, 1999

Methodology for assessing the physical progress of the Programme and the current achievement of its quantitative and qualitative objectives

In order to evaluate the progress of the implementation of the Programme and its individual structural levels (Priority Axes, Investment Priorities), the current degree of achievement of its quantitative and qualitative objectives, as well as for the evaluation of efficiency indicators according to the following, the Evaluator will evaluate the progress of the physical integration of the Programme, based primarily on the following categories of indicators:

- **Output indicators** that provide information on the progress of the implementation of the physical object of a Project. Summing up from the level of a Project, output indicators are calculated for all overarching structural levels of the Programme (such as Investment Priorities, Priority Axes, Programme).
- **Result indicators** that record the interaction between a Project and the Special Objective it serves**.**

To assess the relevant physical object outputs, the Evaluator will rely on the official physical object implementation data recorded in the MIS. However, in cases of lack of information, the Evaluator will seek more targeted information-gathering methods, such as direct interviews with those responsible for the implementation of the OP.

This methodology will be mainly used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme

Programme Efficiency Evaluation Methodology

Efficiency evaluation aims at analyzing the physical progress made towards achieving the Programme's objectives. The measurement consists of monitoring the progress of physical object implementation in relation to the initially planned physical objectives, at Project level, the Investment Priority, the Priority Axis and the entire Programme.

More specifically, for the measurement of effectiveness, a bottom-up reversal approach will be applied from the Project level (and / or, in some particular cases, sub-project) to the supernumerary Programmematic levels. This methodology is to measure the physical progress of each Project and to reduce this physical progress to the higher structural levels of the Programme (eg Investment Priority, Priority Axis, Total Programme) by equationing.

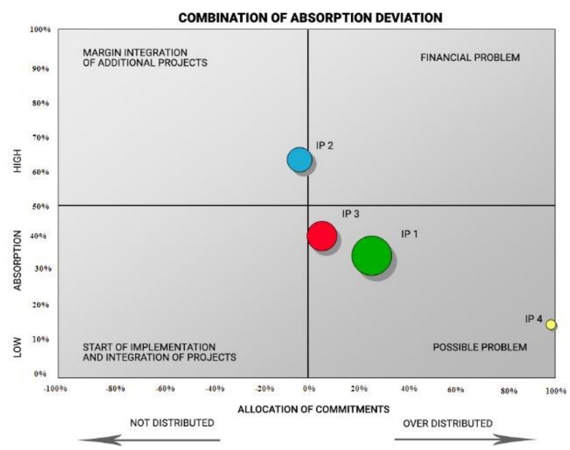
For the purpose of estimating the effectiveness, **the efficiency indicator** is used, which expresses the progress of the physical implementation of the Programme at each individual level and is estimated by the quotient of the materialized physical object at the time of controlling the originally planned physical object, based on below numerical relationship:

Efficiency Indicator =	Physical Implementation
	Physical Objective

Efficiency can be directly measured at the Project level, with an appropriate equation, but can also be calculated for the level of the Investment Priority, the Priority Axis and the Programme as a whole. The equation used for this purpose relates to the financial importance of each underlying structural level of the Programme at the immediately overlying level, thus making it possible to reduce the effectiveness from Project level to the Investment Priority level and from there to the level of the Priority Axis of the Programme.

This methodology will be used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme

Methodology for detecting deviations from initial Programming and their causes



Analyzing the rate of physical integration of Programme interventions and measuring the relevant effectiveness indicators will make it possible to identify those Programme Actions that show a significant deviation from the original Programming and to search for the underlying causes of this deviation. To this end, we will analyze the key factors that have influenced positively or negatively the effectiveness of implementation up to the time point in order to strengthen (wherever possible) the factors that have positively influenced the effectiveness of implementation and, above all, to address those which negatively affected. In this context, an assessment will be made as to whether or not the factors which delayed the physical implementation of the interventions (and hence the observed delay itself) are temporary or not, which will make it clear whether immediate corrective action is required. Particular attention will be given to those Projects that may be left inactive, for which an attempt will be made to identify precisely the reasons for delaying implementation (inadequate content specialization, deficiencies in the required legal and institutional framework for implementation, inability of beneficiaries, external factors etc).

This methodology will be used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme

Methodology for evaluating the economic integration of the Programme

The evaluation of the financial integration of the Programme will be based on the classic Index absorption / financial integration (IFI) calculated on the basis of commitments and payments at each structural level of the Programme, as derived from the following formula applied mutatis mutandis each individual level, but also the whole of the Programme.

$$\text{Index of Financial Integration} = \frac{\text{Payments}}{\text{Commitments}}$$

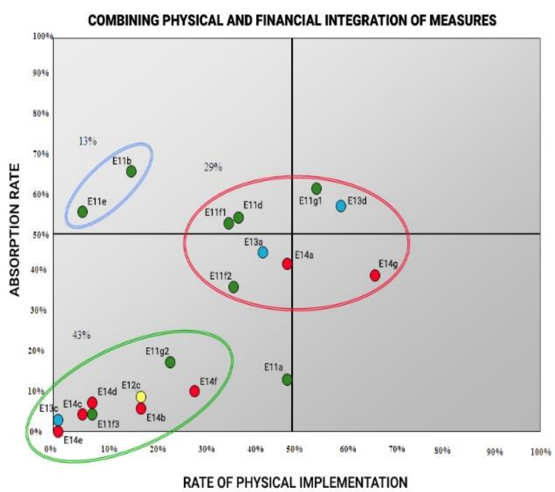
These indicators will be calculated in terms of public expenditure and will relate the payments of each Investment Priority, Priority Axis and the overall Programme, as recorded in the MIS, to the corresponding commitment in two different ways:

- Compared to the total available public expenditure at each Project Level, an estimation that allows conclusions to be drawn on the rate of absorption of all available resources that are committed to the relevant Investment Priority, Priority Axis or the overall Programme.
- Compared to the committed public expenditure of the Implementing Acts of each Structural Level of the Programme, an estimation that allows conclusions to be drawn on the actual absorption rate of those interventions already in place.

This methodology will be used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme

Programme's Performance Evaluation Methodology

The quantitative assessment of the concept of profitability is made by taking into account elements of physical and economic development at an individual Project level and then of all other overlying structural levels of the Programme. The measurement consists essentially of monitoring the evolution of the unit cost of the physical object of the Transactions as they are realized, in relation to the unit cost initially planned. From this analysis, useful conclusions can be drawn regarding the "economy" of the implementation of Projects and the Programme as a whole if the Programme is implemented in economic terms better, worse or just as initially planned. On the basis of these conclusions, it is possible to deduct in the second place reliable estimates of the adequacy of the resources of the Programme and of all its individual components, the completion of the planned physical object and the ability to achieve the stated development goals.



The methodology to be used to measure the effectiveness of the Programme is also based here on a bottom up approach that is almost identical to what was described and on the estimation of effectiveness, ie a weighted reduction from the Project level at the upper levels of the Programme (Investment Priority, Priority Axis, Programme).

The efficiency of a Project is numerically expressed by the ratio of physical to financial progress. In other words, the performance indicator of a Project is equal to the ratio of efficiency indicator to absorption.

$$\text{Effectiveness Indicator} = \frac{\text{Efficiency Indicator}}{\text{Absorption}}$$

This methodology will be used to evaluate the implementation of the Programme

Impact evaluation Methodologies

The impact evaluation of a Programme's interventions aims to quantify and explain the impact of the interventions concerned, and in particular the extent to which the general and specific objectives of the Programme have been achieved but are also required to explain "what works or what does not" why, for whom and in what context it works". The concept of impact is differentiated from the previous Programming period 2007-2013. Today, as a consequence, it means changing the result that can be attributed to a response in a credible way. The distinction between the net effect of an intervention and the impact of other factors is a task of evaluation.

This is the most difficult form of evaluations, but it is the one that allows policy makers to make informed decisions.

There are two categories of impact evaluation methods:

A. Theory Based Evaluation

The theory based evaluation, is based on an understanding of for what reasons an intervention produces a desired or not result. The goal is to answer the question "Why does this work?" By identifying a change theory for the Programme and assessing the success of the Programme by comparing theory and actual implementation. The theory based evaluation has at its center two key elements. The first is conceptual, the second empirical. Conceptually, these evaluations form a theory for the Programme. Empirically, theory-based evaluations seek to test this theory, explore whether, why or how the Programme causes the desired or not results.

Typical methods of evaluation based on theory include literature reviews, analysis of administrative data, case studies, interviews and surveys / reviews to re-create and verify the logic of intervention. Frequently reported approaches are:

(i) realistic evaluation
(ii) general elimination methodology
(iii) contribution analysis and
(iv) participatory evaluation.

A good evaluation of this type should always be able to point to undesirable results. Such results and the understanding of their mechanisms can be as important as the intended intervention logic.

B. Counterfactual Methods

The second category of methods is counterfactual methods. The starting point of these methods is the question of whether a given intervention has the desired effect on a predetermined dimension of interest. Therefore, the main question to be answered in this case is: "Does (the intervention) make the difference?". Typical methods of this category are:

(i) difference-in-difference,
(ii) discontinuity design,
(iii) propensity score matching,
(iv) instrumental variables and
(v) randomised controlled trials.

The existence of basic data and information on the status of those supported and those that were not supported at some point in time after the completed intervention is a critical condition for the application of counterfactual methods. In this way, the disadvantages of simpler approaches that compare the situation of the beneficiaries before and after, assuming that the influence of the other factors (except for the intervention being assessed) is negligible. It is noted that counterfactual methods can typically be applied only to relatively homogeneous interventions with a large number of beneficiaries (eg training, business support). Ideally counterfactual methods and theory-based methods should complement one another and policy makers should use the results of both methods appropriately.

5. Project Deliverables

5.1. 1st Deliverable: METHODOLOGY

This deliverable includes the finalization of the evaluation methodology.

Indicative contents:

Introduction
Presentation of Cross-border Programme Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020
Evaluation during the Programming period 2014-2020 - Approved Cross-border Project Evaluation Plan Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020
Cross-Border Programme Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020 Evaluation Subject
Evaluation questions, Evaluation Questions and Tools - Methodologies
Deliverables of Evaluation

5.2. 2nd Deliverable: 1st REPORT

The Evaluator must submit, by 17/2/2021, a Report that includes the 1st Plan for updating the implementation / implementation evaluation of the Programme (excluding the strategic communication) and the 1st Plan for the impact assessment of the Programme. The 1st Impact Assessment Plan should contain at least the structure (s.s. contents, etc.) of the final deliverable and the first indications per Specific Objective.

5.3. 3rd Deliverable: 2nd REPORT

The Evaluator must submit, by 31/3/2021, a Report that includes the final update of the evaluation of the implementation / progress of the Programme, including the Communication Strategy and the 2nd Plan of the impact evaluation of the Programme.

5.4. 4th Deliverable – Final : FINAL REPORT

The Evaluator must submit, by 23/4/2021 the full Report with the update of the first evaluation, including the communication strategy and the impact evaluation, as follows:

- ***Complete Evaluation report in English,*** which includes the executive summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the Evaluation in Greek, Bulgarian and English.
- Dissemination plan of the Evaluation conclusions and recommendations, which will include:
    - The detailed identification and standardization of the user groups of the evaluation,
    - The simplified version of the staff summary of the Assessment (up to 10 pages) in plain language, in Greek, Bulgarian and English, on the basis of a standard form which should describe the methodology, data, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Assessment per group of users.

In addition to the above, the Evaluation is going to:

- Support the contracting authority in matters of documentation in relation to the ongoing process of revision of the OP, until its completion. Relevant support should be described in a specific report for this purpose.
- Include in all deliverables except the 1st (Methodology), a special section where useful conclusions from the implementation of the Programme so far will be summarized, which can be used in the preparation of the new Cooperation Programme for the Programming period 2021-2027. In this context, the conclusions and proposals of the evaluator are expected to be an important input for the preparation of the objectives, priorities and indicators of the Programme for the period 2021-2027. Therefore, it is possible to request the participation of the evaluator in relevant workshops.

Finally, all deliverables will be submitted electronically to the Contracting Authority in English which is the official language of the Programme except in cases where the need for delivery is explicitly stated in Greek and Bulgarian.

6. Project implementation schedule

According to the relevant proclamation, the expected duration of the project is defined by the signing of the Contract until 30/09/2021.

As part of the evaluation project, as mentioned above, four (4) deliverables are included. The schedule of the deliverables is as follows.

Deliverable	Date of Submission
1st Deliverable: METHODOLOGY	Within one (1) month from the notification of the project award decision
2nd Deliverable: 1st REPORT	17/02/2021
3RD Deliverable: 2nd REPORT	31/03/2021
4TH Deliverable: FINAL REPORT	23/04/2021

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