



Evaluation Plan – Annex to the Terms of Reference

January 2011

Based on Final Evaluation Plan as approved by MC6 and
updates concerning the Terms of References

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Abbreviations

CoR	Committee of Regions
ESG	Evaluation Steering Group
LBS	Lead Beneficiary Seminar
MC	Monitoring Committee
MEP	Member of Parliament
ToR	Terms of Reference

Introduction

For the 2007-2013 programming period, mid-term evaluation has been replaced by *ongoing evaluation*, preferably based on a multi-annual evaluation plans. An evaluation plan should, ideally, outline responsibilities for evaluation, the budget, an indicative list of evaluations to be carried out (which can be reviewed and updated periodically), the mechanisms for designing and managing evaluations (tendering, steering groups, etc.), and arrangements for using evaluations (dissemination, responding to recommendations, monitoring the implementation of agreed recommendations, etc.).

The concept of ongoing evaluation is extremely flexible. By leaving it entirely to the discretion of the programme authorities to decide what should be evaluated and when, evaluation should become more of a management tool to help the performance of the programme. Having said this, it is important to remember that the Regulation 1083/2006 specifies two cases when evaluation is compulsory: a) where the monitoring of the Operational Programme significantly departs from the goals as set out and; b) when revisions are proposed for the Operational Programme (article 48:3).

The European Commission's *Working Document No. 5 Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation during the programming period* on ongoing evaluation provides clear guidance on the evaluation plan, which is included below. In addition, the evaluation plan is also building on the experience drawn from the study of INTERACT - *Practical Handbook for Ongoing Evaluation of Territorial Cooperation Programmes*.

In the forthcoming sections of this paper, the evaluation plan for the *INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme 2007 – 2013* is outlined.

Objective and aims of the evaluation plan

The main purpose of establishing an evaluation plan is to provide an overall framework for ongoing evaluation and ensure that it is effectively used and integrated as a proper management tool during the implementation phase during and beyond the programme period. For the *INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme*, it means that ongoing evaluation is useful to reflect on the programme's progress towards achieving its objectives, both on programme and on project level.

A short introduction to each thematic evaluation, including its aims and objectives will be outlined under the chapter '*Indicative list of evaluations to be carried out*'.

Management structure (including an evaluation steering group)

At the Monitoring Committee no. 5 meeting in Malmö, Sweden 28 – 29 October 2009, it was decided that the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) should draw up a working plan for the evaluation. The Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) has the following members:

Verena Hachmann (Germany)
Jim Millard (U K)
Anette Prilow (Denmark)
Axel Rød (Norway)
Cecilia Lagerdahl (Sweden)
Lidwien Slothouwer (the Netherlands)
Elke Tibout (Flemish Region of Belgium)

The Secretariat would coordinate and support the work of the group. The following members are representing the Secretariat:

Henrik Josephson
Jesper Jönsson
Carsten Westerholt

The Monitoring Committee (MC) will be the responsible body for taking the overall decisions of the evaluation plan, including what topics are going to be evaluated. The Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) will facilitate and monitor the ongoing evaluation process. The Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) will report to the Monitoring Committee (MC). Changes in the general evaluation plan in terms of time plan, budget allocation, milestones and deliverables will be communicated to the Monitoring Committee (MC) for decision. In addition, the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) will also be responsible for developing Terms of Reference (ToR) for the upcoming evaluation. This will be drawn up subject for approval of the evaluation plan by the Monitoring Committee.

In order to secure an impartial evaluation, the European Commission's *Working Document No. 5 Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation during the programming period* recommends evaluations to be carried out by external evaluators where appropriate. The Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) will, together with the Monitoring Committee (MC), consider this for each evaluation exercise. This is also closely linked to the quality control system (see section 'Quality control system' - external or internal evaluation').

Financial resources

The technical assistance (TA) budget includes resources for the ongoing evaluation.

Links to programme monitoring

In order to carry out an effective evaluation plan, close links with the programme monitoring system are essential. Programme documents, such as the Operational Programme, including the SWOT analysis, the INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Communication Plan, Annual Reports, together with the statement of accounts on allocated funds and payment of funds are tools already available for monitoring on Programme level. On project level, project progress reports, including periodical activity and financial reporting, final reports, project and environmental indicators, strategic environmental assessment (SEA), service visits evaluations are available as monitoring tools. These programme monitoring aspects will be a crucial component during the on-going evaluation activities and measures (see section 'Indicative list of evaluations to be carried out'). For instance, the Annual Reports will serve as an important evaluation tool on a yearly basis, giving the overall performance and progress of the programme on a yearly basis as an important milestone for the on-going evaluation activities.

The *INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme* online monitoring system will facilitate the overall coordination and implementation of the forthcoming evaluation for the programme.

Potential links and complementarities with ongoing evaluations at national level

There are currently a number of ongoing evaluation exercises on national level.

Countries	Ongoing evaluation procedures	Potential links
Germany	Benefits and impact study, targeted evaluation (private partners) potentially planned for 2011 (not a formal evaluation as such)	
Sweden	Organisational and management evaluation (A-programmes)	
Norway	Tendering a study on impacts, including organisational and management evaluation (A-programmes)	
U K	Mainly mainstreaming. No separate evaluation on European Territorial Co-operation Programmes.	
The Netherlands	Analysis of the Dutch participation in IVB. Results will lead into publications and promotional materials.	
Belgium	Objective 2 evaluation is planned	
Denmark	A mid-term evaluation is on the way in Denmark for both the Regional fund and the Social fund. The programmes are being evaluated by the Danish consultancy firm COWI. It will be decided upon at their next monitoring committee meeting some time before Christmas 2010.	

The use of evaluation results - Publication and availability of evaluation reports

The outcomes of each evaluation will be communicated by the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) to the Monitoring Committee (MC), including recommendations for further actions. The Monitoring Committee (MC) will take appropriate action and decide on measures that need to be taken in order to implement evaluation results and recommendations during the lifetime of the programme. The results will also be used in terms of preparation for the new programming period, where appropriate.

Dissemination of the ongoing evaluation will be displayed through the *Interreg IVB North Sea Region's* website. Furthermore, the results will be integrated and communicated through the various events that the programme is having throughout the year. Mainly during the Annual Conference, but also in relation to the Lead Beneficiary Seminars (LBS),

thematic workshops, project development workshops, where appropriate. Relevant information will also be disseminated to various stakeholders of the programme, such as the committees of the programme (Monitoring Committee, Steering Committee) and the National Contact Points, international organisations (European Union, OECD, IMO, EMSA, EEA, Assembly of European Regions, Group of Auditors, North Sea Commission), european lobbying organisations, regions, national authorities, politicians (all levels of government, MEPs, CoR, national, regional and local level), relevant media and SMEs, chamber of commerce's, NGOs, environmental agencies, research and transport organisations, lead beneficiaries, beneficiaries and sub-beneficiaries and the general public of the participating countries in the *INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme*.

In addition, interim and final reports will be available at the Programme series of e-publications about the North Sea Region titled "North Sea Region Programme Papers". The papers are registered under the ISSN 1904-4704. They are presented on <http://northseapapers.northsearegion.eu>.

Quality control system - external and internal evaluation

The European Commission's *Working Document No. 5 Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation during the programming period* strongly recommends that evaluations should be carried out by experts or bodies (internal or external), independent from the involved managing authorities. The report is also stressing the importance of the independence of evaluation can be further enhanced by the presence and the involvement of steering groups¹. This approach has been considered by the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) and appropriate action will be taken during future evaluation exercises, to support an independent evaluation approach.

In terms of the quality standards as set out in Annex II of the European Commission's *Working Document No. 5 Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation during the programming period* will be adopted as good practice for managing the ongoing evaluation procedure for the *INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme*².

As mentioned above in the section *Management structure (including an evaluation steering group)*, the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) will report to the Monitoring Committee (MC). Changes in the general evaluation plan in terms of time plan, budget allocation, milestones and deliverables will be communicated to the Monitoring Committee (MC) for decision. In

¹ European Commission: *Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation during the Programming Period – Working Document no. 5* (April 2007), p. 15).

² *Ibid*, p. 16.

addition, the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) will also be responsible for developing Terms of Reference (ToR) for the upcoming evaluation.

The Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) discussed to bring in additional external resources for the ongoing evaluation. The Evaluation Steering Group (ESG) is also in favor to link any external evaluation to relevant research capacities. In this respect the ESPON programme might be an additional source to fund a focused external cross-programme evaluation activity. Another source and link might be a specific PhD programme in Denmark. Relevant evaluation themes could be elaborated through PhD studies. After approval of the evaluation plan the Secretariat will get in touch with the Danish programme and ESPON on this.

Indicative list of evaluations to be carried out

The Evaluation Plan for the on-going evaluation is based on three priorities that are of special interest to the programme. Each evaluation priority will have a number of sub-themes. These priorities and sub-themes are inter-related with each other and will be able to influence each other during and beyond the on-going evaluation. A conceptual approach on how this will be done will be initiated with the external evaluator(s) once the public procurement has been finalised. In addition, future on-going evaluations should potentially create a link to the next programming period. These sub-themes are described under the section 'scope of each evaluation', followed by the section 'Main evaluation questions to be considered'. In addition, the cross programme evaluation carried out by Interact will run as a pilot for the European Commission and start in autumn 2010. Potential links to this pilot evaluation will be used for the programme's evaluation purposes, where applicable.

The indicative list of evaluations is including the following³:

Institutional capacity and performance

Regulative

- Financial and control systems set-up

Administrative

- Efficiency of programme organisational structures
- Application procedures and project development

³ Can be covered on both or either on programme and / or project level.

Added value

- Programme impact and coverage
- Transnational cooperation
- Legacy

Publicity and communication

- Programme visibility
- Relevant and effective communication measures for the future on project level, Connection between communications & content results in projects = well communicated projects
- Programme and project cooperation in communication

These evaluations will be carried through three so called case studies campaigns and a number of surveys.

Scope of each evaluation⁴

Evaluation on institutional capacity and administrative performance

Objective and aims:

Evaluation on institutional capacity and administrative performance is covering issues like efficiency and effectiveness in terms of functioning of administrative structures as there are Call for Applications, technical assessments, progress in implementation of Operational Programme, administration procedures, regulations, financial management and control set up, operational procedure and management, project development, committee structures, implementation and management structures etc.

Sub-themes and main evaluation questions to be considered:

- *Financial management and control set up*

Once focusing on the framework of the regulation of the programme, how did the projects manage the financial control set-up, delivery of financial control and the administrative capacity of its organisational set-up? As the first projects are being closed by 2011, it would be possible to make an initial analysis on how these issues have been dealt with by the projects. Results might be used to influence the ongoing project implementation. In addition, the results from the system control will also be reflected within this evaluation set up.

⁴ See evaluation matrix based on the discussion in Brussels 1 – 2 February and 5 March 2010. This section also encompasses 'Main questions to be considered'.

Regulations: Implementation on quantitative level

As an example on the implementation of regulations on a quantitative level the private sector integration and the set-up of public-private partnerships in projects could be used. Participation from the private sector, involved in 1st and 2nd call for applications, could serve as an initial analysis already at this early stage. This could be followed by another analysis, covering projects from the 3rd call for applications on.

- *The efficiency of programme organisational structures*

The management and the efficiency of programme organisational structures is important for the delivery of the programme. How can efficiency be maintained and improved for the next programming period? In terms of the committees of the programme, how do they complement each other in terms of management of the programme? This sub-theme can serve as an important instrument for future transnational cooperation activities.

- *The efficiency of application procedures and project development*

The efficiency and the set-up of the application procedure is an important tool for the delivery of projects in terms of the implementation of the programme. How can efficiency be maintained and what have been relevant measures and activities to develop good and transnational projects?

Evaluation on added value

Objective and aims:

Evaluation on added value is focusing on the specific themes and cross-cutting issues which are of major importance for the programme, such as innovation, clustering approach⁵, sustainable development, territorial development, regional governance, policy links, socio-economic and environmental impact, equal opportunities, territorial impact, towards 2020 e t c).

Sub-themes and main evaluation questions to be considered:

- *Added value of the programme impact and coverage*

In terms of impact of the programme's specific themes (socio-economic aspects, contribution to EU and national policies) and the visibility of priorities, how far did projects adopted good practice? In terms of the programme's priorities, what has been delivered through the projects? How has the horizontal added value been visible and strengthening

⁵ Being discussed on programme level at the moment (March 2010)

the programme impact and coverage? How has the clustering approach feed into the potential impact of the programme in a long-term perspective?

Measuring the successful impact of the programme is also made visible through the project and the environmental indicators. Value of data of finalised projects will only become available in 2011, when the first projects have been finalised. Once the data becomes available, reporting and analysis based on the project indicator system as set-up in the Structural Funds Common Database (SFC) database will be considered. However, it is important to stress that the project indicators will be closely monitored and collected in the Annual Reports, which makes it possible to identify potential gaps and to discuss appropriate action, if necessary. Thus, the project and the environmental indicators will also be an important instrument in measuring the added value of the programme. In addition, the work carried out by INTERACT on cross programme evaluation of project achievements, based on the typology pilot group meeting, will also be a valuable tool for this evaluation.

In close relation to the project indicators, the monitoring of the environmental effects (Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme will be assessed throughout the programme implementation. This ensures that appropriate remedial actions can be undertaken if the evaluation reveals unintended adverse environmental effects.

▪ *Added value of transnational cooperation on project level*

How 'transnational' are our projects in reality? Specific themes and cross-cutting issues could be part of the added value of transnational cooperation within projects. The clustering approach⁶ and the clusters' impact on transnational cooperation could be a relevant topic. What relevant measures and activities were carried out by the projects in order to create a critical mass for creating a strong environment for genuine transnational cooperation?

▪ *Legacy*

How have the project's follow-up activities created long lasting impact and what kind of an added value, legacy has been created on both project and on programme level? What kind of relevant measures and activities has the projects undertaken in order to safeguard the legacy and follow up impact on project level? Following topics should be considered:

- Projects' contributions to EU policies

⁶ Being discussed on programme level at the moment (March 2010)

- Projects' approach towards innovation: What kind of innovation projects enhanced the impact of the programme? Innovation enhanced the contribution of programme implementation, what kind of relevant actions could be identified as good practice?
- Visibility of Programme's priorities
- Relevant measures/activities on project level in terms of project design
- Financial recovery: Did the financial crisis actually prevent projects from delivery its aims and objectives? The interesting focus should be on issues for recovery rather than on the financial crisis itself. In terms of the SWOT analysis, how did the added value of each programme priority affect or influence the implementation of the programme SWOT analysis? What kind of measures or activities needs to be updated for the following SWOT analysis for the future programming period?

Evaluation on publicity and communications

Objective and aims:

The third evaluation priority is focusing on the programme's visibility in terms of publicity and communications. It is important to consider effective communications on project level.

Another important issue is addressing the inter-linkage between projects and programme in terms of efficient cooperation in communications.

Sub-themes and Main evaluation questions to be considered:

- *Connection between communications and content results in projects = well communicated projects*

If there are clear connections between what would be considered strong projects on the content side and what would be considered strong projects in communications, it would indicate that relevant communications have an impact on overall output and results.

Evaluating if such connections exist and if the conclusion is relevant should be the top priority in evaluating communications because it will show the strategic value of communications and its relevance as a business development tool.

Could we see different results in terms of well communicated projects through project themes or from the programme's priorities in terms of measuring work package 2 activities? Are the results dependent of theme or priority? Good practice models?

- *Project and programme cooperation in communication*

What kind of methodological measures have been taken between project and programme level in order to generate a stronger and more effective cooperation in communication?

Thematic, cluster- and generic approaches? Do we have any good practice, which we can gain momentum on for the future?

- *Programme visibility*

What measures are relevant and have functioned during the programme period? What measures might have an impact for the future? In terms of the effectiveness and user-friendliness of the programme's website, how has this measure contributed to the programme's visibility? In addition, in terms of communication strategy, what kind of measures needs to be addressed for future transnational cooperation activities?

- *Relevant and effective communication measures for the future (on project level)*

What kind of communication tools on project level has been used in order to generate relevant and effective communications that will have long term effect?

The suggested indicative list of evaluations to be carried out is based on different types of evaluations and methodologies:

Types of evaluations:

- *Strategic evaluation*
- *Operational evaluation*
- *Thematic evaluation*
- *Cross-programme evaluation*

Methodologies:

- *Touchstone surveys*
- *Case studies: Telling a story*
- *Questionnaires*

Table 1: Type of evaluation: Evaluation Matrix – Outline

Type of evaluation	<i>Strategic evaluation</i>	<i>Operational evaluation</i>	<i>Thematic evaluation</i>	<i>Cross-Cutting programme evaluation</i>
<i>Touchstone survey</i>	Institutional capacity and performance Added value	Institutional capacity and performance Added value	 Added value	 Added value
<i>Case studies: Telling a Story</i>	Institutional capacity and performance Added value Publicity and communication	Institutional capacity and performance Added value Publicity and communication		 Added value

- a) Strategic evaluation is focusing on what topics were useful and what can be improved. It is mainly focusing on the longer term and includes the broader policy context to decide on current or future strategic decisions.⁷
- b) Operational evaluation is focusing on statistics, figures and graphical presentation. It is mainly focusing on operational issues, addressing application procedures or performance of the programme. Efficiency and effectiveness of the programme is the central focus here⁸.
- c) Thematic evaluation is focusing on a specific theme. For instance, innovation or equal opportunities⁹.
- d) Cross-programme evaluation is focusing on a specific evaluation issue such as relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Cross-programme evaluation normally focuses on several programmes at the same time¹⁰.

It is important to remember that these types of evaluation are often performed in combination. The forthcoming set of evaluations will consider these combinations and apply them wherever appropriate.

In order to carry out an effective evaluation plan, the close links with the programme monitoring system is essential. Touchstone surveys will be used as a method for data collection. A number of questionnaires will be initiated, co-ordinated and monitored by the

⁷ INTERACT Handbook Practical Handbook for Ongoing Evaluation of Territorial Cooperation Programmes, October 2009, p. 58.
⁸ Ibid, p. 58.
⁹ INTERACT Handbook Practical Handbook for Ongoing Evaluation of Territorial Cooperation Programmes, October 2009, p. 58.
¹⁰ Ibid, p. 58.

Evaluation Steering Group (ESG). In addition, a number of case studies will be initiated and implemented by external experts.

Furthermore, the results will also be integrated and communicated through the various events that the Secretariat is having throughout the year. This will mainly be done by the 'telling a story' approach (see section 'The use of evaluation results - Publication and availability of evaluation reports').

Prioritisation of evaluation measures

The evaluation steering group proposes that the following evaluation measures should immediately start after adoption of the evaluation plan. The Evaluation Steering Group agreed to prioritise those activities which could start soon after adoption and which outcomes could still influence the implementation of the programme. The cross programme evaluation carried out by Interact will run as a pilot for the European Commission and start in autumn 2010.

Regulations, financial and control systems set-up, programme impact and coverage and the connection between communications and content results in projects are particular relevant. Especially as the programme is closing in on 30% of allocated ERDF funds and Norwegian equivalent have been spent by the final beneficiaries, as this has been targeted as a milestone approach for evaluations, as addressed in the Operational Programme.

These evaluation measures should be followed by efficiency of programme organisational structures, application procedures and project development, transnational cooperation on project level, legacy, programme and project cooperation in communications and relevant and effective communication measures for the future on project level.

It is important to stress that regulations, programme impact and coverage, legacy and connection between communications and content results in projects will be measured twice during the evaluation period, starting after adoption of the plan and followed by additional measures in the following years.

Conclusion

The Evaluation Plan for the on-going evaluation is based on three main themes that are of special interest to the programme. Each evaluation plan will have a number of sub-themes.

These themes and sub-themes are inter-related with each other and will be able to influence each other during and beyond the on-going evaluation. A conceptual approach on how this will be done will be initiated with the external evaluator(s) once the public procurement has been finalised. In addition, future on-going evaluations should potentially create a link to the next programming period. These sub-themes are described under the section 'scope of each evaluation'. The indicative list of evaluations is including the following¹¹:

- *Evaluation on institutional capacity and administrative performance;*
- *Evaluation on added value;*
- *Evaluation on publicity and communications.*

Indicative timetable (preliminary timetable)

As mentioned, the on-going monitoring and evaluation of operational nature is carried out continuously throughout the programme period by the Secretariat's staff, mainly by the programme monitoring system. The evaluation of strategic nature, to be undertaken by external experts based on a tendering procedure, should be carried out from April 2011 to December 2014.

¹¹ Can be covered on both or either on programme and / or project level.

	Case Studies Campaign 1 Regulations (A) Programme Impact	Case Studies Campaign 2 Transnational Cooperation Programme-Project Communication	Case Studies Campaign 3 Legacy Communication Measures	Surveys Programme Structures Programme Visibility Application Procedures & Project Development Regulations (B)	
Apr 11	First meeting			First meeting	
Jun 11	Questionnaire Regulations Questionnaire Impact – min. 10 projects			Structures' Regulations' Questionnaires Programme Stakeholders	
Sep 11		First meeting			First meeting
Oct 11	Case studies' interviews 2 projects			Structures' Regulations' Interviews Stakeholders and Programme Authorities	
Nov 11	Second meeting			Second meeting	
Dec 11	Interim Reports Institutional Capacity and Performance 1 (A) Added Value 1	Questionnaire Cooperation Questionnaire Communication – min. 10 projects		Interim Report Institutional Capacity and Performance 1 (B) Final Report Institutional Capacity and Performance 2	Application Procedures & Project Development Questionnaire Visibility Questionnaire Stakeholders
Jan 12			First meeting		
Apr 12		Case studies' interviews 2 projects and 1 Cluster			Visibility Interviews Stakeholders Application Procedures & Project Development Interviews min. 15 projects plus Stakeholders
May 12		Second meeting	Questionnaire Legacy Questionnaire Communication - min. 10 projects		Second meeting
Jun 12		Interim Reports Added Value 2 Publicity and Communication 1			Final Report Publicity and Communication 1 + 2 Final Report Institutional Capacity and Performance 3
Oct 12	Third meeting		Case studies' interviews 2 projects and 1 Cluster		

	Case Studies Campaign 1 Regulations (A) Programme Impact	Case Studies Campaign 2 Transnational Cooperation Programme-Project Communication	Case Studies Campaign 3 Legacy Communication Measures	Surveys Programme Structures Programme Visibility Application Procedures & Project Development Regulations (B)	
Nov 12			Second meeting		
Dec 12	Revised questionnaires – min. 5 projects		Interim Reports Added Value 3 Publicity and Communication 3		
Apr 13	Case studies' interviews - 2 projects	Third meeting			
May 13	Fourth Meeting				
Jun 13	Final Reports Institutional Capacity and Performance 1 Added Value 1	Revised questionnaires - min. 5 projects			
Oct 13		Case studies' interviews 2 projects + 1 cluster	Third meeting		
Nov 13		Fourth Meeting			
Dec 13		Final Reports Added Value 2 Publicity and Communication 1	Revised questionnaires – min. 5 projects		
Apr 14			Case studies' interviews 2 projects and 1 Cluster		
May 14			Fourth Meeting		
Jun 14			Final Reports Added Value 3 Publicity and Communication 3		