Interreg Co-funded by the European Union
Romania – Bulgaria

Evaluation Plan

Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme

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CONTENTS

A. OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION 3
1. Programme level evaluation 3
2. Role and main objectives of the Evaluation Plan 5
3. Coverage and rationale 6
4. Analysis of relevant evidence 7
5. Coordination mechanisms 12
B. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK 13
1. The evaluation function 13
2. The evaluation process 14
3. Involvement of stakeholders 15
4. The source of evaluation expertise 17
5. Training programmes for staff dealing with Evaluation 18
6. Strategy to ensure use and communication of evaluations 19
7. Overall budget for implementing the Evaluation Plan 20
8. Quality management strategy for the evaluation process 20
C. PLANNED EVALUATIONS 22
1. Lists and timetable of the evaluations 24
2. Fiches of the planned evaluations 26
ANNEXES 36
Annex A - Performance Framework overview table 36
Annex B - Organisational chart of MA 44
ANNEX C - Checklist for assessing the Terms of References 45
ANNEX D - Checklist for assessing the inception report 47
ANNEX E - Checklist for assessing the evaluation report 48
Annex F - Questions collected from stakeholders for the Evaluation Plan 52
ANNEX G - PROCEDURAL ASPECTS 53

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A. OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION

1. PROGRAMME LEVEL EVALUATION

Evaluation of Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme (further on referred to as the Programme) aims at assessing both the performance and effects of the Programme. The evaluation criteria related to effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, inclusiveness and non-discrimination are expected to be covered. As well, the impact, sustainability, EU added value and visibility of the programme and its contribution to the EU strategic goals and priorities are aimed at a later stage.

The current Evaluation Plan sets out the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the programme and has been drawn up by MA in cooperation with NA. The drafting process took into account the provisions of the applicable EU regulations (Interreg Regulation – no. 1059/2021, Common Provisions Regulation – no. 1060/2021, ERDF-CF Regulation – no. 1058/2021) and followed closely the Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation issued by the European Commission[1], the Better Regulation Guidelines[2] and the input of EC Evaluation Helpdesk on similar documents.

Abbreviations and glossary of terms

MA	Managing Authority which is responsible for managing the programme with a view to delivering the objectives of the programme
NA	National Authority is the counterpart of the Managing Authority, responsible for the coordination of the programme management in Bulgaria. It takes part in ESC.
MC	Monitoring Committee. Overall monitoring of the Programme implementation lies within the competencies of the MC. MC shall examine the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings. MC shall approve the Evaluation Plan and any amendment thereto.
JS	Joint Secretariat. It assists the MA and the MC in carrying out their respective functions. The joint secretariat shall also provide information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under Interreg programmes and shall assist beneficiaries and partners in the implementation of operations. It may participate in ESC meetings.
MA Unit	Unit MA Romania-Bulgaria within MDPWA/ Directorate General European Territorial Cooperation/ Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in charge with managing the Programme
Evaluation Unit	MA Evaluation Unit within MDPWA/ Directorate General European Territorial Cooperation/ Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, ensuring the evaluation function for the Interreg programmes

[1] The Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027 – EC website

[2] https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en

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MDPWA	The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration in Romania, hosting the MA for the Interreg programmes, including Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme. The organisational chart detailing the location of the relevant departments can be found as annex.
MEIP	The Ministry of European Investment and Projects in Romania. Institution coordinating the management of EU funds in Romania, in which ECU is located.
ECU	Evaluation Central Unit. Unit within MEIP which plays a central role in the overall evaluation set-up of EU funds in Romania. It takes part in ESC.
Interreg funds	The ERDF and the external financing instruments of the Union that support the Interreg Programmes (IPA III, NDICI)
ERDF	The European Regional Development Fund. In line with Regulation (EU) no. 1058/2021, the ERDF shall contribute to reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions within the Union, and to reducing the backwardness of the least favoured regions through participation in the structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind and in the conversion of declining industrial regions, including by promoting sustainable development and addressing environmental challenges
IPA III	The Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance. With its general objective established in Regulation (EU) no. 1529/2021, the instrument also supports Interreg programmes involving IPA countries
NDICI	The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe. With its general objectives established in Regulation (EU) no. 947/2021, the instrument also supports Interreg programmes involving countries in the neighbourhood area.
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee. It supervises the evaluation process, coordinating in terms of: Terms of Reference (for evaluations conducted externally), quality of the evaluation reports.
EvalPlan	Evaluation Plan. The EvalPlan is an instrument for planning the evaluation activities for the whole programming period, which is approved by MC. Its role is to improve the quality of evaluations carried out during the programming period. The ToR are drafted starting from the provisions of the EvalPlan.
ToR	Terms of Reference. A written document presenting the scope of the evaluation, the key questions, the indicative methods to be used, the resources, schedule and reporting requirements.
Effectiveness	How successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives, looking for evidence of why, whether or how the changes are linked to the EU intervention
Efficiency	The costs and benefits of the EU intervention as they accrue to different stakeholders, identifying what factors are driving these costs/benefits and

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	how these factors relate to the EU intervention, depending on data availability; otherwise, qualitative analysis may concentrate on the identification of inefficiencies
Relevance	How well the objectives of the EU intervention being evaluated (still) match the (current) needs and problems
Coherence	How well the intervention works internally and with other EU interventions
EU added value	The value resulting from EU interventions that is additional to the value that would have resulted from interventions initiated at regional or national levels
Inclusiveness	The capacity of the programmes to include and assist different segments of population and especially the more fragile and distant ones from public support
Non-discrimination	The extent to which all the individuals – or the individual organisations – have an equal and fair chance to access opportunities made available by the programme
Visibility	How the communication activities of the programme make the EU policy visible to the interested population and appraise the public awareness of the EU financial and policy effort
Impact	The changes associated with a particular intervention which occur over the longer term
Sustainability	Whether the benefits of a project or programme are likely to continue after its finalisation

2. ROLE AND MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

The EvalPlan represents a practical management tool for the implementation of the Programme by providing the framework for the implementation of quality evaluations to be used effectively by MA, in order to contribute to the implementation of an evidence-based programme. As well, the generated findings can become roots for setting the elements for the next programming period.

The **objectives** of this EvalPlan are:

- to improve the quality of evaluations carried out during the programming period, through proper planning and agreed procedural steps;
- to facilitate informed programme management and policy decisions aiming at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme and at streamlining the next programming period;
- to set the guiding framework for the impact evaluation of the Programme;
- to ensure the proportionality with the financial allocation of the Programme and the practicality in terms of alignment with the expected evolution of the Programme.

In addition, the EvalPlan ensures that the evaluation criteria mentioned in the regulations are taken into account while performing the evaluations of the Programme, in line with art. 3(1) of the Interreg Regulation: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value, as well as inclusiveness, non-discrimination, visibility.

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Formal arrangements

The EvalPlan is submitted for approval to the MC within one year from the adoption of the Programme, in line with art. 35(6) of the Interreg Regulation. It may be later amended in line with the evolution of the Programme, amendments to it being subject to MC decisions. In case of emerging needs, additional ad-hoc evaluations to the ones clearly indicated in the EvalPlan may be carried out.

3. COVERAGE AND RATIONALE

This EvalPlan covers Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme for the entire programming period, taking into account that the impact evaluation has to be completed by 30 June 2029 according to art. 35(2) of the Interreg Regulation.

The Programme is part of the Interreg A strand in line with art. 3(1)(b)(i) of the Interreg regulation, namely internal cross-border cooperation between adjacent border regions of two Member States. The CBC strand is supported by the EU to promote integrated and harmonious regional development between neighbouring border regions. The neighbouring NUTS III border regions covered by the Programme are 7 counties of Romania (Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Călărași, Constanța) and 8 districts of Bulgaria (Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, Silistra, Dobrich). The regions are situated along the 630 km of the Romanian-Bulgarian border, out of which the Danube River unfolds along 470 km. The Programme area covers 19.8% of the two countries, with about two thirds in Romania and one third in Bulgaria, being home to around 4.2 million inhabitants (around 1.35 million in Bulgaria and 2.85 million in Romania).

The Programme is funded by ERDF (Interreg funds of 163,497,401 euro) as well as match-funding from the two participating countries, adding up to a total budget of 207,457,162 euro and was approved by the European Commission in 30th of November 2022.

The performance framework overview table of the Programme is presented in Annex A, which correlates the types of actions, the estimated budget, the output and result indicators and the intervention fields, by specific objective.

Analysis as regards a shared Evaluation Plan

Besides Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme, MDPWA is MA for one more internal CBC programme (Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme), one external CBC IPA programme (Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia Programme), two external CBC NDICI programmes (Interreg NEXT Romania-Republic of Moldova Programme, Interreg NEXT Romania-Ukraine Programme) and one transnational cooperation NDICI programme (Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme).

The territorial distribution of the Interreg Programmes that Romania acts as Managing Authority for during 2021-2027 is all around the country borders, covering NUTS III and NUTS II regions from a variety of countries – EU member states, candidate and neighbouring countries. Part of the NUTS III regions covered by Romania-Bulgaria Programme are shared with two external programmes (one IPA-financed CBC programme and one NDICI-financed transnational programme), which have a significantly lower budget. Therefore, a common Evaluation Plan for more Interreg programmes that would also cover Romania-Bulgaria Programme is considered unfeasible to be put into practice.

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4. ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT EVIDENCE

The first step in designing the future is learning from the past.

In order to root the evaluation of the future programme in the available evidence, the direct sources of information on the previous programming period that contain evaluation-related useful evidence in relation to Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme have been analysed and are detailed below.

Annual implementation reports for the 2014-2020 Programme

According to the annual implementation reports prepared by the Programme, in the beginning of the programming period there were some issues which affected programme implementation: switching to eMS which triggered further administrative and procedural adjustments and interruption of the designation process; delays in project assessment and selection, including in taking the decision to overcontract and select the projects so as to ensure meeting of Programme indicators; withdrawal of Bulgarian public district administrations from the projects which needed partnership modifications, overestimation of indicators by beneficiaries which activated close monitoring by the programme bodies. However, by 2019 the Programme made significant progress, being in an advanced stage of implementation. A Programme modification took place in 2020 covering reallocations between priority axes and corresponding adjustments of target values of indicators.

As regards the COVID 19 pandemic, the annual implementation report for 2020 pointed out the focus on online communication tools and the importance of preparedness and the coordination capacities in covering the needs for medical supplies and equipment for digitalizing the implementation process, such as electronic signatures, video-conference equipment, software. In 2021, the implementation of many projects was affected, 63% of the running projects needing an extension of the implementation period. Even in these conditions, the programme has progressed and followed the implementation schedule without major deviations.

2014-2020 Programme evaluations

For the 2014-2020 programming period, the evaluation plan included two back-to-back evaluations, the tendering process being done jointly, constituting into one single evaluation contract. The advantage of such an approach was that the evaluation process was performed in a coherent and continuous manner. However, two succeeding large evaluations spreading over more than one year and covering all specific objectives represented a high administrative burden for managing structures, stakeholders and beneficiaries alike. Therefore, a more targeted approach to evaluation could be explored for the 2021-2027 period, possibly split by the types of projects financed.

The evaluations conducted analysed the implementation and impact of the programme from its beginning till the end of 2019.

Implementation evaluation

The Programme was found to be mature from the point of view of its relevance, implementation and management: well rooted in the cross-border area, in a consistent continuity with the previous programming period and based on a well-grounded territorial analysis, that has the merit of having identified the key structural problems of the region; all resources had been contracted, mid-term performance targets achieved, and the final achievements looked at reach, with an implementation strategy clearly based on wisdom and prudence, capitalizing on the lessons learnt in the past programming periods; processes and procedures resulting from a stratification of gradual improvements based on the experience of two full programming periods, during which the key staff of the management system bodies has had the great advantage of remaining practically unchanged. Overall, this

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maturity has allowed the Programme to perform very well in terms of physical and financial achievements.

The Programme performances were found to be to a great extent due to an energetic strategic management with very clear priority values, which inspired strong choices. Despite these strong choices, the programme and its management have shown, in all field work sources, important levels of acknowledgement by local stakeholders and beneficiaries. This was attributed to the achievements reached in terms of progressive simplification and reduction of administrative burdens. The generalized adoption of simplified cost options and the progressive digitalization of the procedures are two important steps taken in this programming period.

Since no major issues were identified as regards efficiency or effectiveness and the management and control system is largely a roll-over of the previous one, the analysis should focus on whether there are bottlenecks or major issues faced on this circuit and whether the new elements were effective in practice - as financing PO5, the use of the HIT, more extensive use of SCOs, financing of strategic and limited financial value projects, TA flat rate. Evaluating the efficiency of project submission, contracting and implementation and the support granted by the Programme authorities to applicants/beneficiaries would be more useful in practice if organised as an ongoing process.

Impact evaluation

In terms of impact evaluation, at the time the evaluation was performed all the priority axes had recorded significant improvements.

Navigability: There was scope for improvement as far as navigation safety was concerned. Programme's contribution was yet to be fully materialised. However, some progress had been made even though it was difficult to attribute it to the Programme itself.

Heritage and Environment: The Programme contributions to the progress in using sustainably the natural and cultural heritage and in improving the tourism in the cross-border area were found to be high. The key factor that has facilitated the contribution of the Programme to this progress was the quality of the partnerships created inside the projects. Due to the regional importance of the projects, which targeted the cross border natural area, the cross-border added value was higher and generated the premises for regional development in areas where national policies were not focused on.

Risk Management: The Programme has contributed significantly towards improving joint risk management in the cross-border area. A net impact of the contribution of the Programme's interventions was unfeasible to be measured at the moment the evaluation was performed.

Institutional Capacity: The initiatives of the Programme showed to be effective in creating synergies, facilitating the dialogue and creating common development opportunities for stakeholders and actors from a wide range of sectors that would have hardly had space for discussion, improvement and exchange of ideas without the Programme.

Regional Development: All the priority axes have recorded significant improvements and demonstrated how all the areas of intervention are connected to each other and are capable of creating positive spill over effects in other domains.

Sustainability: The Programme's outputs and results are likely to be sustainable in the long run. Thus – if the overall same approach would be implemented also in the next programming period – no major issues on sustainability should arise. However, concerns remained over financial corrections and the allocation of funds, which later on proved not to be an issue.

Programme evaluation has shown that the added value of the European intervention has made the difference in the region, creating synergies between the cross-border communities

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and laying the foundations for further cooperation opportunities, with the programme stimulating the cross-border dialogue and concretely helping the citizens.

Policy context

Policy wise, the **ERDF** aims to contribute to the objective of strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion and to reducing disparities between the level of development of the various regions. However, the aim of the **CBC programmes** is more targeted in the regulations, as they are listed to promote integrated and harmonious regional development between neighbouring border regions. Moreover, the regulations no longer require impact evaluation at the level of each priority.

Therefore, it makes sense to also evaluate at programme level how the Interreg support brought its contribution to the overall integrated and harmonious regional development in the eligible area, highlighting the peak fields.

Continuity of interventions

As the continuity of interventions proved to be a strong point of the 2014-2020 Programme, analysing whether the interventions under the 2021-2027 Programme may be considered a continuation of the interventions of the 2014-2020 is of great relevance for future 2021-2027 evaluations. For certain fields, it might also be helpful to analyse the impact of the aggregated interventions in both programming periods. To this end, a comparison is made in the table below, which also took into account the types of actions covered by the two programmes:

Present 2021-2027 interventions	**Related 2014-2020 interventions/projects**
(PO3)(ii) Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility – rail Only strategic projects financed for the entire allocation: Enhancing rail connectivity and mobility across the Danube Project (Rail connectivity)	Railway connections could in principle be financed under (PA1) (SO1.1) Improve the planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems for better connections to TEN-T transport networks, but no such project was submitted and contracted. Almost all the implemented projects concerned road transport.
12 mil. Euro ERDF	-
(PO3)(ii) Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility (Code 115) Inland waterways and ports (TEN-T) excluding facilities dedicated to transport of fossil fuels Only one strategic project financed for the entire allocation: DISMAR – Danube Integrated System for MARking	(PA1) (SO1.2) Increase transport safety on waterways and maritime transport routes (Code 041) Inland waterways and ports (TEN-T)
8 mil. Euro ERDF	9.79 mil. Euro ERDF
(PO2)(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and	(PA3) Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience

APPROVED

resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches Includes two strategic project financed: (Danube RISK) - Danube Risk Prevention – 14 mil. euro; STREAM 2 – Streamlining cross-border cooperation: Joint approach in disaster resilience - 19.5 mil. euro	and developing disaster management systems
40.8 mil. Euro ERDF	35.3 mil. Euro ERDF
(PO2)(vii) Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	(PA2) (SO 2.2) To enhance the sustainable management of the ecosystems from the cross-border area (Code 085) Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure + (Code 086) Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites
28 mil. Euro ERDF	1.27 mil. Euro ERDF
(PO4)(ii) Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and life-long learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training	There is no perfect correspondence of interventions with the 2014-2020 programme, but certain educational and training schemes were financed as part of projects financed under (PA4) (SO 4.1) To encourage the integration of the cross-border area in terms of employment and labour mobility
12 mil. Euro ERDF	-
(PO5)(ii) Fostering the integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security, in areas other than urban areas	(PA2) (SO2.1) To improve the sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage (code 091) Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas + (code 094) Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets
52 mil. Euro ERDF	44.86 mil. Euro ERDF

As it can be noticed from the table above, almost all interventions, apart from the one concerning rail, may be considered similar to the ones implemented in the 2014-2020 programme. Unlike the 2014-2020 programme, the new programme also finances operations of strategic importance in the field of transport and disaster risk prevention and resilience, with a total allocation of 53.5 mil. Euro (around 35% of the total ERDF allocation of the Programme without TA resources) and individual allocations between 8 and 19.5 mil. euro ERDF.

A particular aspect in this programming period is also the different implementation system required by the regulations for PO5, with an allocation of 52 mil. euro ERDF (around 34% of the total allocation of the Programme without TA resources) placed under the responsibility of a Strategy Board which is a partnership structure comprising Romanian and Bulgarian relevant stakeholders from the cross-border region, to develop the integrated territorial strategy of the area and to ensure its implementation and monitoring. A particular element to be considered is also that cooperation among local stakeholders in the Programme area

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was not solid enough to trigger self-starting participative approach for drafting the integrated territorial strategy. Therefore the Programme bodies needed to light up and support the cooperation of stakeholders in order to be able to finance PO5 in the terms required by the regulations. The need to enhance territorial integration was pointed out by the territorial analysis and, as a consequence, during the negotiations for setting the policy objectives of the Programme, the programming committee agreed and decided to finance PO5. Evaluation of the strategy itself is expected to be planned and carried out at Strategy Board level, but the role played by the specific features of PO5 in the effective implementation of the ERDF support provided by the Programme and in accommodating the needs of the stakeholders is useful to be explored under the Programme evaluation. As well, evaluation may also explore whether the cooperation among the local actors in the eligible area, triggered by the current implementation mechanism, has improved enough to be able to function without constant support from the Programme.

Additional relevant information on the programming and implementation documents for 2021-2027

In search of the major trends that could translate into future evaluation questions, the analysis of the 2021-2027 programming document showed increased thematic focus and concentration of available resources, as well as a participatory approach and attention to the cooperation character of the interventions, safeguarding the protection of the fundamental rights and commitment to horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women), integration as much as possible of the core values of the New European Bauhaus (sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion), promotion of solutions that are friendly with the environment and observe the DNSH ("do no significant harm") principle, alignment with EUSDR (addressing priority areas such as waterways mobility, rail-road-air mobility, culture and tourism, people and skills), EU Green Deal and EU Territorial Agenda 2030, use of simplified cost options, promotion of transparency and green procurement, as well as the strategic use of public procurement.

In addition, to determine whether the evaluation process may be split by types of projects financed, the table below is a representation of the programme from this point of view, given the information available after the launching of the first two calls for proposals:

S.O.	Strategic projects	Regular projects	Small scale projects
3.2	Navigability; Rail estimated ending of projects: DISMAR 2027, Rail connectivity 2029	n/a	n/a
2.4	Risk prevention & resilience estimated ending of projects: Danube RISK 2029, STREAM 2 2028	Climate change adaptation estimated ending of soft projects: 2025/2026 estimated ending of hard projects: 2026/2027	n/a
2.7	n/a	Nature, biodiversity & green infrastructure estimated ending of soft projects: 2025/2026 estimated ending of hard projects: 2026/2027	n/a

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4.2	n/a	Education & training estimated ending of projects: 2027	Education & training estimated ending of projects: 2026
S.O.	**Projects financed under the integrated territorial strategy**		
5.2	estimated ending of projects: 2029		

As mirrored in the table above, there is a variety of estimated ending times both within the same specific objective across the different types of projects and within the same type of project across the various specific objectives. Therefore evaluations targeting one type of project only or one specific objective only would cover too small a part of the programme to justify the administrative required burden, unless there is a stringent and specific theme that puts the programme implementation at risk and needs to be addressed. However, given the fact that it is the first time the programme finances such variety of types of projects and in order to be able to capture the specific success factors and challenges for each type of project, the implementation evaluation can be conducted as a chain of in-depth analyses of the different types of projects, the timing of the analyses depending on the estimated finalisation of the projects. At the same time, given the fact that there are only four strategic projects, which will be closely monitored, including as regards their progress towards the expected results, the process evaluation may cover only the regular and small scale projects. Any implementation aspects hindering the overall effect of the strategic projects may be pointed out under the impact evaluation. As well, an overarching approach may be used for the projects financed under the integrated territorial strategy for PO5 and the related implementation system.

5. COORDINATION MECHANISMS

In Romania, ECU, as part of MEIP, plays a central role in the overall evaluation set-up of EU funds and is in charge of both PA-level evaluation and ensuring the methodological coordination of the overall evaluation process and promoting capacity building at system level. At a higher level, the Coordination Committee established for the Partnership Agreement approves Evaluation Plans for national programmes, while also supervising the use of evaluation results.

In addition, the National Evaluation Working Group, also leaded by ECU, plays an active role in coordinating methodological efforts at national level. The group gathers representatives of all MAs' evaluation units, including the Evaluation Unit, which ensures the evaluation function for the Interreg programmes that Romania acts as Managing Authority for. The undertaken coordination efforts are the key in creating consistent practices across the system and in sharing good evaluation practices, as well as providing the means and the place to both give and receive adequate guidance and support on evaluation matters.

As regards the coordination mechanisms established at EU level, the information received by MEIP by taking part in DG Regio's Evaluation Network is shared with the relevant national actors, including the Evaluation Unit.

In addition, Interact is playing an important role in favouring the exchange of knowledge and best practices between the Interreg programmes, by organizing periodical events focused on evaluation themes, organizing online courses, developing and upkeeping an online library with all presentations and briefing documents and by hosting a platform on results and evaluation for posting updates and having dialogues on various evaluation topics.

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B. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

1. THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

The evaluation function for the Programme is ensured by the MA, through the Evaluation Unit.

The evaluation activity is linked to monitoring and audit activities, but there is a strong distinction between these processes. Monitoring measures the performance of a Programme, but does not assess its quality, effectiveness and impact, as evaluation does. Audit verifies the compliance of an implementation system with the existing rules, but does not appraise the influence of the implementation on the final effects, as evaluation does. As audit and monitoring cannot be confused with evaluation, evaluation is not to be used for audit or monitoring purposes. These different instruments all contribute to the effective management of the Interreg funds and reciprocally integrate their findings, but each of them covers a specific area of investigation and pursues different objectives.

According to the European Commission in the Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation, the task of programme evaluation is to assess the effects of the programmes, in a wider context, as performance judgment cannot be made purely on indicator achievement values (indicators measure 'what', but do not explain 'why'). Evaluations should be an essential part of the life cycle of a programme. They are intended to increase knowledge of what works and what does not and in which context in order for decision makers and other stakeholders to make timely decisions to support the implementation of programmes and to draw conclusions for policy making.

Institutional details

As it may be seen in the specific organization chart that can be consulted in Annex B, the Evaluation Unit is located within the General Directorate for European Territorial Cooperation, Directorate MA ETC Programmes. Its staff is functionally independent of the staff of the other units of the MA (e.g. MA Unit, monitoring, authorisation, electronic monitoring system, payments, irregularities etc.). Therefore, this arrangement ensures the independence and impartiality of the programme evaluation process.

As regards the relationship with the coordinating bodies, the Evaluation Unit acts as the main Interreg counterpart for ECU in all aspects related to evaluation, participating in working groups, meetings and any other related trainings. As well, the activity of the Evaluation Unit also implies regular workflows with other departments within MEIP (e.g. reporting on the status and developments of the Interreg programmes; submitting positions on the documents discussed in the CPR-related committee and expert group and in the preparatory bodies of the Council of the EU with implications on Interreg – especially SMOR; participating in the meetings of the Monitoring Committee of the Technical Assistance Operational Programme).

The Evaluation Unit currently consists of three full-time positions. Two of the currently employed evaluation officers have economic background and have been involved in evaluation activities for two and eleven years respectively, having gained over time the skills and expertise needed for managing evaluation contracts and participating in various trainings on evaluation topics. A third evaluation officer recently joined the team, with sociologic background and extensive experience in conducting evaluations of communication strategies and activities in regional operational programmes. The staff of the Evaluation Unit has deep Interreg knowledge and carries out various horizontal tasks as well, having an overview of the programming and implementation of the Interreg programmes in Romania. As regards evaluation-related tasks, the evaluation officers are partly working for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme and partly for the other Interreg programmes that Romania participates in.

To ensure the sustainability of programme evaluation activity, the evaluation officers make use of the common Interreg virtual workspace where all important information is stored

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electronically. As well, all internal procedures are followed, as regards both processes (e.g. archiving, risks, anti-fraud, security of IT systems, data recovery in case of disaster) and human resources (e.g. annual evaluation of staff, workload analysis, training plan, substitution plan, programming of annual leaves to ensure continuity).

Staff's responsibilities directly related to the evaluation function may be found in Annex G - Procedural aspects.

2. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Regulatory requirements

According to the regulations, programme evaluations may address one or more of the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes. Evaluations may also cover other relevant criteria, such as inclusiveness, non-discrimination and visibility, and may cover more than one programme. Other criteria relating to the needs of programmes may be addressed.

In addition, an evaluation for each programme to assess its impact is to be carried out by 30 June 2029.

All evaluations are published on the Programme's website.

The regulatory provisions require MA to draw up the current EvalPlan which is approved by the MC, as well as any amendment thereto. The MC also examines the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings.

Involved bodies

The evaluation process is led by the MA through the Evaluation Unit. Evaluations commissioned to external experts are commissioned, monitored and supervised by the Evaluation Unit. Evaluation Unit/MA/JS staff may also carry out certain studies, if deemed necessary during the implementation process.

Evaluation Steering Committee

An ESC shall be convened for the Programme and shall oversee the implementation of the EvalPlan and corresponding evaluations. The ESC shall convene for each evaluation exercise.

The **core membership** of the Committee will remain the same for the duration of its existence, and will include:

- The Head of MA (or his/her substitute);
- A representative of the Bulgarian NA;
- The evaluation officers within the Evaluation Unit (who also provide secretarial support: convening the Committee, organising consultations);
- A representative of the European Commission;
- A representative of ECU.

The MA and NA may also invite sectorial or academic experts for evaluations with technical nature.

The **functions of ESC** are:

- methodological function - to analyse and approve the preparatory and methodological documents for programme evaluations and the related deliverables, with a view to increasing their quality;
- partnership function - to ensure representation and consultation of the key actors in the CBC programme in planning and implementing the programme evaluations;

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- ownership function – to involve the key actors in the CBC programme from the design phase and ensure they are aware of the evaluation results and any measures that need to be taken.

The ESC is consulted in the following indicative **stages**:

a. Evaluation Planning
   - Approval of ToR, including the criteria for selecting the evaluators to ensure their functional independence (for evaluations commissioned externally)/of the Evaluation scope and timing (for evaluations carried out internally);

b. Evaluation Management
   - Consultation on the inception report (for evaluations commissioned externally);
   - Consultation on draft evaluation reports;
   - Endorsement of the final evaluation reports, based on the quality grid previously filled in by the Evaluation Unit.

Monitoring Committee

In line with the regulations, the functions of the MC as regards evaluation are to approve the current EvalPlan and any other subsequent amendments to it and to examine the progress in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings.

Therefore, in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership[3] the MC decides on the execution of the evaluations by analysing and approving the EvalPlan, examines the progress in carrying out evaluations whenever there are developments to be presented and discussed and analyses the response to the evaluation recommendations proposed by MA and the implementation status of accepted recommendations.

The division of responsibilities between the MA, ESC and the MC, in relation to programme evaluation is presented in Section B.3 – Involvement of stakeholders.

Evaluation Central Unit

ECU provides the Evaluation Unit both guidance and the relevant information received as part of the Evaluation Network coordinated by the European Commission. As well, it is part of the ESC of the Programme. The EvalPlan approved by the MC is also sent to ECU for information.

The procedural flows for drafting the EvalPlan before submission to MC, for drafting of preparatory documents for commissioning evaluations externally, for carrying out evaluations with internal expertise and ESC consultations is presented in Annex G – Procedural aspects.

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3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

A first set of evaluation questions resulted from the analysis of the available evidence presented in Section A.4 and enriched based on previous experience, was consulted with the relevant programme structures and MC members, resulting in a final set of questions, grouped by evaluation criteria, that are included in Section C.2 - Fiches of the planned evaluations. The additional questions collected during this consultation process are presented in Annex F. They could not be introduced as such among the evaluation questions

[3] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds

listed in this plan, but all the themes proposed are translated into wider evaluation questions.

In line with article 15 of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, MA also involves the relevant partners in the evaluation of the Programme within the framework of the MC, where evaluation-related matters are presented, discussed and, in the particular case of the EvalPlan, approved. The programming document also states that the MC represents the platform in which relevant partners can voice their positions on strategic matters, including concerning the evaluation of the Programme and that a large partnership will be used for the public consultations launched during the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IP.

Given the fact that for any programme-related process the involvement of the stakeholders brings in added value, a specific working group for programme evaluation may be established by the MC. Nevertheless, taking into account that the work of any group has to be based on constant and active input in order to bring useful results, such a group may be established only if enough participating members express their active interest in programme evaluation.

The responsibilities in relation to programme evaluation are divided between the MA, ESC and the MC (as forum for the involvement of stakeholders) as follows:

Tasks	**MA**	**ESC**	**MC**
1. EvalPlan	Responsible for drafting	-	May submit proposals of evaluation questions prior to the drafting of the plan or during the approval process Approves the plan
2. ToRs, including the criteria for selecting the evaluators to ensure their functional independence (for evaluations commissioned externally)/of the Evaluation scope and timing (for evaluations carried out internally);	Responsible for drafting	Analyses and approves the ToRs/the Inception Report	- (should a specific MC working group on programme evaluation be established, it is kept up-to date on the progress of the ToRs/the Evaluation scope and timing, which may be analysed upon request)
3. Selection of Evaluator (for evaluations commissioned externally)	Participates in the Evaluation Committee for selecting the evaluator established in line with the public procurement applicable rules	-	-

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4. Draft and final evaluation reports (and Inception Report for evaluations commissioned externally) – quality aspects	Assesses the quality of the evaluation report and process based on the standards recommended in the official relevant documents.	Analysis and endorsement of the inception/evaluation reports, on the basis of the recommendations made by MA.	- (should a specific MC working group on programme evaluation be established, it is kept up-to date on the progress of the reports, which may be analysed upon request)
5. Management of the evaluation	Direct contact point for programme evaluations, contract management for evaluation commissioned externally	Analysis of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations; may make proposals on the response to evaluation recommendations	Is being informed on the recommendations in the evaluation report, on the proposed response to evaluation recommendations and may make proposals on the response to evaluation recommendations
6. Follow-up	Tracks the progress made; MA uses a follow-up table to monitor the progress achieved in implementing the agreed evaluation recommendations	-	Is informed by MA on the progress achieved in implementing agreed evaluation recommendations

In addition, wide consultations will take place while implementing the evaluations, as relevant stakeholders, including programme beneficiaries, will be addressed in order to collect views and relevant data to be taken into account for the evaluation reports.

4. THE SOURCE OF EVALUATION EXPERTISE

The implementation and impact evaluations carried out for the Programme shall be, as a general rule, commissioned to external experts following internal procedures and the public procurement applicable rules.

The team of evaluators should preferably combine different experiences and skills: knowledge and experience in ETC/Interreg programmes; knowledge and experience in monitoring and measuring of regional development (for impact evaluations), knowledge and experience in data collection and visualization methodologies, knowledge and experience in stakeholder management.

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In order to ensure the impartiality and functional independence of the evaluators and to minimise the risk of biased opinions or any unwanted interferences, the following measures are taken:

- inclusion in the ToR (endorsed by ESC) of provisions to ensure the independence of the evaluators (e.g. not MC members or observers, not having been involved in programming, in the calls for proposals, in the management of projects financed under the programme (depending on the type of evaluation);
- setting out clear award criteria and quality requirements;
- wide advertising of the public procurement procedure (including website and social media platforms);
- appointing a selection committee responsible for evaluating the bids against the criteria set out in the ToR, in line with applicable public procurement rules; the selection of the evaluators as part of a selection committee is performed, as a general rule, by different persons than the ones who drafted the ToR and are in charge of evaluation contract management;
- requesting signed declarations of impartiality and objectivity from the key experts and team leader to prevent any conflict of interest;
- as a general rule, performing of contract management and carrying out of ESC consultations not by the staff of the MA Unit, but by the evaluation officers in the Evaluation Unit, who are functionally independent from the other functions performed by MA, as regards both programming and implementation;
- carrying out any evaluations performed internally, if any, by the evaluation officers in the Evaluation Unit, who are functionally independent from the other functions performed by MA.

5. TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR STAFF DEALING WITH EVALUATION

Training for MA staff

Two of the current officers within the Evaluation Unit attended a full evaluation training programme designed specifically for the staff of evaluation units in Romania and organised under a TA project managed by ECU for supporting the evaluation capacity as regards EU funds. The training programme was delivered during 2019-2022 and covered various evaluation-related topics as the theory of change, indicators, evaluation design, quantitative and qualitative data analysis necessary in evaluations, evaluability and quality control. The support and guidance offered by ECU shall continue to cover the Interreg programmes during the 2021-2027 programming period.

Regardless of the framework, the MA staff dealing with evaluation should continue to be involved in capacity building activities, including carrying out self-studies, and should continue to regularly take part in trainings, offered especially by Interact and ECU, on programme evaluation and wider related topics.

Such capacity building activities may refer to:

- self-study of evaluation plans, ToRs and reports, especially for the Interreg strands/programmes;
- self-study of published papers, guidelines and handbooks on programme evaluations;
- participating in online learning platforms/communities/groups related to programme evaluations;

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- seminars on planning and managing evaluations, quality controlling of the evaluation reports;
- workshops on qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and methods for impact assessment;
- meetings of the Evaluation Working Group, which allow exchange of information and good practices with other MAs, and meetings of the Evaluation Network in Romania, which allow wide exchange of ideas between the supply and demand sides;
- on-the job coaching;
- Interact events on evaluation and wider related topics, which allow exchange of information and good practices with other Interreg programmes.

Such capacity building activities are not budgeted separately in the current EvalPlan and should they entail participation costs for MA, these would be covered as part of the Programme's TA activities on a case by case basis, following internal administrative procedures.

6. STRATEGY TO ENSURE USE AND COMMUNICATION OF EVALUATIONS

Dissemination of the evaluation reports

Final evaluation reports shall be distributed by MA to MC members, NA, EC, JS and ECU. According to the regulations, they shall also be published on the Programme website.

Evaluation results are integrated into the Programme's structures' day-to-day work (including information and communication wise), posted on social media, used whenever relevant during technical or higher-level meetings and events.

In order to facilitate the dissemination of evaluation results in a user-friendly format, final evaluation reports shall be required to be delivered together with eye-catching one-pagers and info graphics, as well as project stories and testimonials, in order to facilitate their presentation to decision-makers and their use in future communication activities related to the Programme.

Follow-up and monitoring of evaluation recommendations

Evaluation recommendations may be accepted, marked as already implemented at the time they were proposed, rejected or deferred for later consideration (e.g. taken into account for the next programming period). In order to ensure practical use of evaluation results, where a specific course of action is decided for an evaluation recommendation, the MA will monitor the progress achieved in its implementation, by using a follow-up table. The status shall be reported by MA to the MC whenever there is significant progress or upon previous request by an MC member.

In order to support the programme bodies in implementing the recommendations, but also to ensure that the recommendations made are of practical nature, tentative action plans for implementing each recommendation are also to be requested from the evaluation teams.

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7. OVERALL BUDGET FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION PLAN

The overall budget for implementing the current EvalPlan, covering the external resources used, is 210.000 euro, split as follows:

- 130.000 euro for the implementation evaluations (including communication and data collection for the impact evaluation)
- 80.000 euro for the impact evaluation (including communication).

The above-mentioned budget should cover all evaluation related external activities, including any necessary data collection.

The external resources used are backed up by the programme bodies' internal resources (mainly staff), required for coordinating evaluations, collecting programme data, supporting external evaluators, decision-making, follow-up measures and dissemination and use of results. Any specific related costs are covered as part of the Programme's TA activities.

Evaluation functions and main activities	Timing	Estimated cost	Financial sources
Technical support and coordination of the MA, including Evaluation Unit	Continuously during the programming period	internal resources (mostly staff costs)	included under MA TA activities
Data provision (ongoing evaluation)	After calls for proposals are closed After project selection/contracting After the finalization of projects	internal resources (mostly staff costs)	included under MA/JS TA activities
Evaluation studies	January-December 2027 (implementation evaluation) February-October 2028 (impact evaluation)	external resources - 210.000 euro	TA - external services
Dissemination of results and events	After performed evaluations	internal resources (mostly staff costs)	included under MA/NA/JS TA activities
Capacity building initiatives	Continuously during the programming period	internal resources	included under MA/NA/JS TA activities

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8. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Quality assurance in implementing the current EvalPlan is a process integrated in all related steps:

1. Evaluation timing

   The timing of the evaluations is planned in line with the expected evolution of the programme, so that evaluations are performed early enough to provide information to feed the decision-making process, but late enough in the programming period to benefit from a sound evaluation basis.

Timings may be adjusted in line with the actual evolution of the Programme.

2. Drafting the ToR

   Ensuring quality will start with drafting the ToR in a clear manner which provides the potential bidders with the necessary information to draw up the offer, based on previous adequate planning. Clear award criteria and quality requirements are set. The ToR will be verified against the checklist in Annex C - Checklist for assessing the Terms of References. This checklist is designed to verify the pertinence of the ToR and the inclusion of all the needed items. It will be used while drafting the ToR to make sure that all necessary elements are included.

3. Selection of evaluators

   Following the applicable public procurement rules, the evaluators will be selected by a selection committee responsible for evaluating the bids against the criteria set out in the ToR. All needed administrative steps are followed and the technical offers are thoroughly assessed against a previously established evaluation grid, which takes into account the elements in the ToR needed to perform the evaluations in a qualitative manner. The selection of the evaluators is done with a 70/30 technical score/price ratio. As a general rule, to ensure impartiality the persons appointed in the selection committee are different from the person who drafted the ToR.

4. Contract implementation

   To ensure mutual understanding of the scoping, methodology to be applied and expected results, contract implementation starts with a kick-off meeting between parties to clarify all aspects of the ToR and technical offer and an Inception Report is requested. In addition, at least one mid-term progress report will keep the evaluation commissioners informed on the activities performed and further steps to be taken. The contract also includes a procedure for the early termination of the contract conditional on the quality of the work provided.

   As a general rule, the person who drafted the ToR will be appointed as the MA's contract officer. Both the MA and the ESC have a role to play in assessing the quality of the inception and evaluation reports.

   As regards the reports that are delivered, the quality of the inception and final evaluation reports shall be assessed by using the checklists presented in Annex D – Checklist for assessing the inception report and Annex E – Checklist for assessing the evaluation report. The checklist for assessing the quality of the inception report sets out the major aspects that need to be taken into account. The thorough checklist for assessing the evaluation reports includes the most important aspects for each part of a report as well as general considerations, allowing a thorough analysis of the report's quality. The checklists have two intended purposes that are related to evaluation management: (1) they represent tools for the evaluation commissioners to assess the content of the reports (2) they are practical tools to guide the evaluators, while preparing the reports. Therefore, the evaluators can self-rate their own progress during the writing phase. They can also use the checklists to identify weaknesses or areas that need to be addressed in their reports. To this end, the checklists shall also be included in the ToR for each evaluation, to serve as guidance for the evaluators in drafting the reports.

   The reports are then consulted in the ESC. While the checklists will represent a tool for the MA's contract officer to verify the evolution of the reports from one version to another (from draft reports to final reports), only the final reports are sent in the ESC together with the checklist filled in by the MA's contract officer.

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5. Disseminating the evaluation results

   Having in mind the quality of the process of disseminating the evaluation results, the reports are required to be delivered together with highly visual summarised content. Details can be found in Section B.6 – Strategy to ensure use and communication of evaluations.

6. Follow-up

   The follow-up table used by MA for the progress achieved in implementing the agreed evaluation recommendations is a means to ensure a structured way to both monitor achievements and keep the MC informed on all pending issues. As well, it ensures the practical use of the evaluation results and recommendations.

In case there will be a need to carry out evaluations internally, the applicable elements of the checklist will be used while drafting the Evaluation scope and timing and the subsequent evaluation reports, in order to ensure that the reports drafted internally follow as close as possible the standards requested from the ones commissioned to external experts.

C. PLANNED EVALUATIONS

The choices made below as regards Programme evaluation are rooted into Section A.4 – Analysis of relevant evidence, where more details on the justification of those choices may be found.

The timings presented below are those anticipated at the time of writing the current EvalPlan and may be slightly adjusted in practice to the actual evolution of the programme, in order to reach the best need-benefit ratio, not requiring formal amendment of the EvalPlan. As well, practical experience has shown that timing delays may occur while applying the public procurement procedures needed to commit the evaluations. These kind of delays are not regarded as needing to trigger EvalPlan amendments, should they not hinder the achievement of the final scope of the evaluations. However, major decisions as regards evaluation timing, scope, coverage or means of implementation need revisiting of the current document and formal amendment.

Assumptions on the expected evolution of the Programme

The following timetable as regards the finalisation of projects is taken into account in setting the timing and coverage of evaluations:

Call for proposals/ Projects	Allocation (Interreg funds)	Coverage	Launching	Estimated contracting time	Maximum duration of projects	Estimated end date of projects
Call 1 - Strategic projects (Priorities 1,2)	53.5 mil. euro	S.O. 3.2 Navigability &Rail S.O. 2.4 Risk prevention& resilience *strategic projects*	May 2023	2024	36 months DISMAR & Danube RISK 48 months Rail connectivity & STREAM 2	2027 DISMAR (3.2) & Danube RISK (2.4) 2029 Rail connectivity (3.2) & STREAM 2 (2.4)

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Call 2 - Regular projects (Priority 2)	40.8 mil. euro	S.O. 2.4 Climate change adaptation S.O. 2.7 Nature, biodiversity & green infra. *regular projects*	May 2023	2024	18 months soft projects 36 months hard projects	2025/2026 soft projects 2026/2027 hard projects
Call 3 - (Priority 3)	12 mil. euro	S.O. 4.2 Education& training *regular+ small scale projects*	2024	2025	12 months small scale projects 24 months regular projects	2026 small scale projects 2027 regular projects
Call for proposals identified in the Integrated Territorial Strategy for Priority 4	52 mil. euro	S.O. 5.2 *projects financed under the integrated territorial strategy, including the private sector*	Estimated 2023/2024, depending on Strategy Board decision	2024/2025	around 36 months	2029

The co-financing rate is 80%.

Data collection

In order to minimise the risk derived from the length of evaluations, the Programme closely monitors the physical and financial achievements of the financed projects and keeps track of projections, so that informed implementation decisions may be made in due time based on own analysis. As regards the efficiency of the implementation system, users' feedback right away would be a valuable asset. The Programme may then be able to incorporate users' perceptions into the decision-making process, as an ongoing evaluation approach to streamline the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme, which is also in line with the Programme's participatory approach.

Therefore, **questionnaires** will be used at key points to collect users' opinions, their aggregated results feeding directly into informed evidence-based decisions. These questionnaires will be applied to all applicants after the calls for proposals are closed, to all unsuccessful applicants after project selection, to successful applicants after project contracting and to all beneficiaries after project finalisation. The actual questions in each questionnaire will be proposed by the Evaluation Unit and agreed with the MA Unit, while the responses will be aggregated by the Evaluation Unit and sent to the MA Unit for consideration. This approach would also allow the beneficiaries and applicants to fill in the information while it is still fresh and prevent them from receiving very long questionnaires at the time programme evaluations are performed, generating a higher response rate. The aggregated responses shall also be ready to be provided to the evaluators for the subsequent programme evaluations or other programme structures and may be used in technical or MC meetings.

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For the implementation evaluations performed externally, most relevant data will be available in Jems, programme strategic and implementation documents, DMCS and relevant procedures being also available. Given the 2021-2027 approach of the result indicators, it is expected that they will be measured by the Programme mostly based on Jems data, mirroring how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives. Programme evaluation as regards effectiveness would therefore not have to measure the progress in achieving the indicators, but rather to analyse how the mechanisms behind worked, looking for evidence of why, whether or how the changes are linked to the EU intervention.

For some criteria (e.g. relevance) and for the impact evaluation, apart from the data available in Jems, the evaluators will have to base their work on other sources, including the statistical data in both countries. Therefore, collection of additional data from primary and secondary sources may be necessary to be performed by the evaluators as part of their contracts.

The territorial analysis performed for drafting the Programme revealed missing cross-border data, the availability of comparable and homogenous statistical information at the level of NUTS3 units in the two countries representing a constraint. The main sources used were the National Statistics Institute in Bulgaria (NSI) and Romania (INS) and Eurostat. In some cases recent regional data was difficult to collect, the analysis being adjusted to the latest data available for both countries. For certain sectors data availability at county/district level was limited, the analysis being based on national level data instead. For other sectors the data in the two countries was not comparable, since different calculation methodologies were used. The analysis had to be complemented and enriched based on county and district level documents and of documentation obtained through national and local level sources, in both Romania and the Bulgaria. Surveys also had to be used, bearing in mind that among their limitations is the fact that they cannot provide strong evidence of cause and effect and consistent connections between them. A similar approach is expected to be needed for future Programme evaluations in order to form a sound evaluation base, depending on the exact methodology applied.

1. LISTS AND TIMETABLE OF THE EVALUATIONS

Planned programme evaluations are summarised below:

Code	Objective of the evaluation	Content and scope of the evaluation			Estimated Period*	Type of evaluation	Planned Cost
		Priorities	SOs	Interventions			
OngoingEval	To provide users' feedback in order to streamline efficiency and effectiveness	PA1 PA2 PA3	3.2 2.4 2.7 4.2	All All All All	November 2023-December 2029	Data provision	Internal resources
ImplemEval	To produce specific knowledge on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, internal and external coherence, visibility and commitment to horizontal principles of the programme and to contribute to	PA2 PA3	2.4 2.7 4.2	All All All	January-December 2027	Implementation evaluation, including communication + data provision for the impact evaluation	130.000 euro

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	its management and performance; to collect useful information for the impact evaluation						
	While timely applying all the other necessary phases and tools, this evaluation will also include the following steps:						
	Step 1 – in-depth analysis of the soft and small scale projects	PA2 PA3	2.4 2.7 4.2	Soft projects Soft and small scale projects	March-April 2027		
	Step 2 – in-depth analysis of the projects financed under the integrated territorial strategy	PA4	5.2	All	May-June 2027		
	Step 3 – in-depth analysis of the hard projects	PA2 PA3	2.4 2.7 4.2	Hard projects Hard projects	July-August 2027		
	Step 4 – integrated implementation evaluation report covering all themes (including communication)	PA2 PA3 PA4	2.4 2.7 4.2 5.2	All All All All	September-November 2027		
ImpactEval	To capture the effects of the cooperation programme by specific objective, while also analysing the effects of the cooperation programme as a whole and the mechanism that stands behind the effects	All	All	All	January-September 2028	Impact evaluation	80.000 euro
	While timely applying all the other necessary phases and tools, this evaluation will also include the following steps:						
	Step 1 – in-depth analysis of the strategic projects	PA1 PA2	3.2 2.4	All Strategic projects	January-March 2028		
	Step 1B - any other data collection and processing for performing the	All	All*	All	January-March 2028		

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	theory-based evaluation						
	Step 2 – Integrated impact evaluation report (including communication)	PA1 PA2 PA3 PA4	3.2 2.4 2.7 4.2 5.2	All All All All All	April-September 2028		

*The timings are indicative and may be adjusted in practice, as long as the succeeding logic is kept and objectives are achieved; actual timings also depend on the inception report and its approval.

In order not to overburden the beneficiaries and request their input several times on different themes, the implementation evaluation and impact evaluation are seen as interlinked and may be performed in a coherent manner, ensuring continuity in both the logic and the knowledge of the external evaluators, with support from the Programme bodies at key steps.

Additional evaluations

Additional evaluations may be carried out in case of emerging urgent needs, e.g. where programme monitoring reveals a significant gap from the goals initially set or where proposals are made for the revision of the programme.

These additional evaluations can address either issues regarding the entire programme or one or several priorities or specific objectives.

These evaluations cannot be anticipated at this stage and will be carried out either by external experts or by the Evaluation Unit.

Any ex-ante and SEA evaluations for the next CBC programme between Romania and Bulgaria, for the programming period 2028+, may also be financed as part of the Programme's TA activities, starting with 2026.

Retrospective evaluation

The Commission shall carry out a retrospective evaluation to examine the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value of each fund by 31 December 2031. This evaluation shall focus in particular on the social, economic and territorial impact of the funds in relation to the supported policy objectives. Based on previous experience, Interreg is expected to be also covered under this evaluation. Should the Programme be part of the sample of Interreg programmes to be actively covered by this evaluation, all necessary data and support will be provided to the evaluators selected by the EC.

2. FICHES OF THE PLANNED EVALUATIONS

OngoingEval - Ongoing evaluation of the efficiency of the implementation system of the Programme	
Priority and specific objectives covered by the evaluation	all
Types of interventions to be evaluated	all

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Type of evaluation	ongoing process evaluation
Focus and rationale of the evaluation	The Programme aims to incorporate users' perceptions into the decision-making process in order to streamline its efficiency and effectiveness. By collecting users' opinions, the aggregated results are available to feed directly into informed evidence-based decisions. Questionnaires are applied to all lead applicants after the calls for proposals are closed (to assess the application process), to all unsuccessful lead applicants after project selection, to successful lead partners after project contracting (to assess the selection and contracting processes) and to all beneficiaries after project finalization (to assess the implementation process and effectiveness at project level). The support granted by the programme structures to applicants and beneficiaries is also envisaged to be included, as well as the ease of reaching projects' objectives and the added value of the EU intervention. This approach not only supports the programme structures to adapt to the needs of the applicants and beneficiaries, but also allows the beneficiaries and applicants to fill in the information requested while it is still fresh and prevent them from receiving very long questionnaires at the time programme evaluations are performed, generating a higher response rate. The actual questions in each questionnaire are set before each process is launched, based on the proposals made by the Evaluation Unit that are discussed, adapted and agreed with the MA Unit. The responses are aggregated by the Evaluation Unit and sent to the MA Unit for consideration and use during Programme implementation. The overall themes/main evaluation questions presented below will serve as basis for formulating the questions addressed to the lead applicants/beneficiaries, adapted to the type of respondents. Additional questions than the ones derived from the themes/main evaluation question below may be added along the way to incorporate any emerging needs or aspects that need basis for decisions. The responses received would also be ready to be provided to programme evaluators or other programme structures and may be used by the programme bodies in technical or MC meetings.
When the evaluation will be implemented	November 2023-December 2029
Main evaluation questions	**Efficiency** Q1. Are the application, selection and contracting processes efficient? What can be improved? *(users' feedback on the application form and applicant's guide, selection and contracting process)* Q2. What are the major difficulties faced by the project partners during the implementation of projects? *(feedback on difficulties faced during project implementation stages, including project finalisation)* Q3. Is Jems efficient? What can be improved? *(feedback on the practical use of Jems)* Q4. Are the simplification and result-focused actions taken at Programme level appreciated by users? What can be improved? *(feedback on Programme level actions taken – e.g. the use of SCOs)* Q5. Do the applicants and partners receive sufficient support from the Programme bodies to prepare projects and implement them? *(feedback on the support granted by the programme bodies to applicants and beneficiaries)*

PROJECT

	Q6. Are the potential applicants and partners acquainted with the conflict of interest, irregularities, anti-fraud concept and preventive measures and/ or aware of the anti-fraud measures taken by the Programme bodies? *(checking the partners' and applicants' awareness – question also used as instrument to raise awareness)* **Effectiveness** Q7. According to the project partners, have the projects managed to reach their objectives? *(beneficiaries' perception on the extent to which project objectives were reached)* Q8. Were the expected outputs and results at project level easily reachable? *(users' feedback on the ease of reaching the expected outputs and results)* Q9. Were there any internal or external factors that affected, positively or negatively, the process of reaching the objectives/expected outputs and results? *(users' feedback on internal and external factors affecting project objectives/expected outputs and results)* Q10. Did the needs change from project submission to project implementation? If so, did the change affect project implementation? *(partners' feedback on the relevance of the needs covered and any effect on effectiveness)* – also touching **relevance** criterion **EU added value** Q11. To what extent could the projects' results and outputs have been achieved without support from the Programme? *(users' feedback on the added value of the Programme for reaching the results and outputs)*
Methodological approach and possible methods	Method: qualitative research Tools: desk research, data collection through questionnaires and analysis
Data sources	administrative data on project lead applicants and project partners are needed to direct the questionnaires; to generate a high response rate, the links to questionnaires reach the lead applicants and partners through their usual contact channels (e.g. JS officers,)
How the evaluation will be implemented	internal expertise used, covering all calls for proposals and contracted projects
Planned cost (Euro)	internal resources used

ImplemEval - Implementation evaluation of the Programme, including the communication strategy	
Priority and specific objectives covered by the evaluation	all
Types of interventions to be evaluated	all
Type of evaluation	implementation evaluation

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Focus and rationale of the evaluation	The risk of decommitment and the achievement of objectives in terms of output and result indicators, as well as forecasting based on the contracted and selected projects, is constantly monitored by the programme bodies in order to make informed decisions, therefore it is not included in the evaluation process. User's feedback on efficiency aspects is also collected constantly and feeds the decision-making process. Since no major issues were identified by the evaluations of the previous programme as regards efficiency or effectiveness and the general management and control system is a roll-over of the previous one, the evaluation does not cover once again on each and every part of this system and the procedural workflows. Instead, it investigates whether there are bottlenecks or major issues faced and whether the new elements were effective in practice - as the use of the HIT, more extensive use of SCOs, financing of different types of projects, TA flat rate. As regards efficiency, the evaluation focuses on identifying any underused simplification opportunities. The costs of the beneficiaries related to the communication activities are also examined, but as part of the evaluation of the communication strategy which is included in the implementation evaluation, in addition to the actions taken at Programme level in order to ensure a qualitative information and communication process. To deepen knowledge on the current programme, but also to feed into the next programming process, the evaluation also covers aspects related to the Programme's relevance, internal and external coherence and commitment to the horizontal principles. Therefore, the implementation evaluation is performed in order to produce specific knowledge on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, internal and external coherence, visibility and commitment to horizontal principles of the programme and to contribute to its management and performance. A particular aspect of this evaluation is that several in-depth analyses will be performed, covering the following types of projects: soft and small scale projects, hard projects and projects financed under the integrated territorial strategy. While the findings will be grouped by project type, the conclusions and recommendations may be addressed jointly where possible. The analysis of strong points and challenges by type of project should also take place. As well, the in-depth analyses shall also be used with a view to collecting the data necessary for the impact evaluation. However, the data collected with this view will only be processed for the impact evaluation report. The findings collected so far through the ongoing process evaluation shall also be provided to the evaluators to be used in their analysis.
When the evaluation will be implemented	January-December 2027
Main evaluation questions	**Effectiveness** Q1. To what extent is the Programme delivery taking place as expected initially, by type of project and specific objective? *(whether the evolution of the programme is in line with the initial expectations of the Programme bodies)* Q2. Does the division by type of projects influence programme effectiveness? If so, why? Are there any other internal or external factors that foster or affect the process of achieving the Programme's objectives and outcomes, at programme level or by type of project or specific objective? *(how does the delivery mechanism work and which factors have a contribution to achieving Programme outputs and results, including*

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	specific factors by type of project; implementation factors - e.g. use of HIT, use of SCOs, influence of the financial execution of the financed projects - are also to be explored) Q3. To what extent is the administrative and financial capacity of the Programme bodies and of the beneficiaries a success or hindering factor, by type of project? *(whether the capacity of programme bodies and beneficiaries affects or supports Programme delivery towards objectives, PO5 implementation system included; TA flat rate is also to be investigated under this question)* Q4. How has the Programme support influenced the development and implementation of the integrated territorial strategy and the delivery system for PO5? *(whether and how the support under the Programme was a determining factor in developing and implementing the integrated territorial strategy)* Q5. Is the cooperation capacity and involvement of local actors sufficient to trigger self-starting participatory approach in the future? Has cooperation improved enough so that the development and implementation system of an integrated territorial strategy would function without constant support from the Programme? *(whether the cooperation and ownership of the local stakeholders in the eligible area is solid enough to determine the drafting and implementation of a future integrated territorial strategy, with little or no support from the Programme)* Q6. Did the Programme take the necessary measures to effectively involve relevant partners in programme management and delivery? *(whether the measures taken by the programme to involve relevant partners in programme management and delivery are effective)* Q7. Are the anti-fraud strategic measures taken by the Programme bodies in order to prevent, detect and correct fraudulent activities effective? What can be improved? *(whether the responsibilities of the actors involved in preventing, detecting and responding to fraud are clearly set in the anti-fraud strategy and effectively put into practice and what can be improved to minimise the opportunities for individuals to commit fraud and to provide an effective response if fraud occurs)* **Efficiency** Q8. Are there any bottlenecks or major issues affecting the efficiency of the Programme's implementation system, by type of project or specific objective? *(whether the efficiency of the Programme is affected by deficiencies in the implementation system, by type of project)* Q9. To what extent does the Programme use the available options to streamline and simplify operations? *(whether the Programme found the right balance to streamline and simplify operations or more options should be taken into account)* **Relevance** Q10. To what extent did the programme strategy respond to the needs identified at programming stage? *(whether the Programme strategy responded in practice to the needs identified initially in the programming stage)* Q11. To what extent is the programme strategy relevant to the current needs in the cross-border area? *(whether the needs of the Programme area changed over time and are*

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	addressed by the Programme strategy) **Internal and external coherence** Q12. To what extent are the interventions under the Programme internally coherent and able to create synergic effects? *(how well the Programme interventions work together and whether their interaction is capable of creating synergic effects)* Q13. To what extent is the Programme coherent with other EU interventions having similar objectives which also cover the eligible territory? *(how well the Programme works with the other EU interventions – complementarities, gaps)* Q14. To what extent is the Programme coherent with the strategies and initiatives in place? *(e.g. EUSDR, New Bauhaus Initiative, green infrastructure, green procurement, strategic use of public procurement)* **Inclusiveness, non-discrimination and other horizontal principles** Q15. Is the programme inclusive and accessible to all target groups? *(whether the programme has a discriminatory approach and whether all target groups have access to the programme)* Q16. To what extent are the horizontal principles covered adequately and clearly within the guidelines for applicants and programme monitoring arrangements? Q17. How do the financed projects contribute to the application of the horizontal principles? *(this set of two questions aims to cover at least equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women, sustainable development, DNSH)* **Visibility/Communication Strategy** Q18. Do the communication activities/actions carried out by the programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives and indicators set out in the Communication Strategy? Q19. Have the communication activities/actions of the Programme been implemented in a fair, just and inclusive manner for all relevant parties of the Programme area (partners, stakeholders, general public)? Q20. Which are the communication tools and channels that have the highest outreach to potential applicants/applicants/stakeholders/general public? Q21. How could the Programme's visibility be increased? Q22. How effective was the programme in supporting partners in project communication activities? Q23. Which are the communication tools that are used the most by project partners to promote their project and how efficient are these tools? *(this set of five questions, targeting the evaluation of the communication strategy of the Programme, aims to also point out what would be needed to reach more people in terms of Programme visibility and investigates the costs of the beneficiaries related to the communication activities)*
Methodological approach and possible methods	Method: mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, case studies Tools: data collection and analysis, desk research, interviews, surveys, stakeholder analysis The succeeding in-depth analyses are to be performed by the same experts,

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	in a logical chain that allows the development and stratification of conclusions as the contract activities advance. Case studies should be used to the maximum extent. Given the expected stage of implementation of the projects, the in-depth analyses shall be designed in such a way to also collect the data necessary for the theory-based impact evaluation.
Data sources	programme strategic and implementation documents, DMCS and relevant procedures, Jems data, findings of the ongoing process evaluation
How the evaluation will be implemented	evaluation commissioned externally, following public procurement applicable rules (open procedure)
Planned cost (Euro)	130.000 euro

ImpactEval - Impact evaluation of the Programme	
Priority and specific objectives covered by the evaluation	all
Types of interventions to be evaluated	all
Type of evaluation	impact evaluation
Focus and rationale of the evaluation	The Programme combines not only various specific objectives, from the strategic point of view, but also various types of projects, from the implementation point of view. That is why the overall approach for evaluating the programme intermixes the two evaluations and uses the case studies carried for the in-depth analyses performed under the implementation evaluation for also collecting the information needed for the impact evaluation. The impact evaluation will build up on this data collected, complimented with an additional in-depth analysis of the strategic projects as well as any other needed data collection and processing methods and tools. As regards PO5, evaluation of the strategy itself is expected to be planned and carried out at Strategy Board level. The programme evaluation will mainly focus on the role played by the Programme in achieving the overall goals. Therefore, for the current programming period the chosen approach is to evaluate at programme level how the support received from the Interreg funds brought its contribution to the integrated and harmonious regional development in the eligible area. In addition, the impact evaluation also aims to capture the effects of the cooperation programme as a whole, while also analysing the mechanism that stands behind the effects. Besides the impact, the criteria directly covered are EU added value, sustainability and visibility. Other criteria, as effectiveness, relevance or coherence might need to be taken into consideration for answering certain evaluation questions (pointing to internal and external success or hindering factors). In assessing visibility, the impact of the communication activities/actions taken at Programme level shall also be evaluated. The evaluation findings will be available and may also be integrated into the final performance report to be submitted to EC by 15 February 2031.
When the evaluation will	February-November 2028

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be implemented	
Main evaluation questions	***Policy fields*** Q1. What role do the cross-border interventions of the Programme play in enhancing rail connectivity and mobility across the Danube in the cross-border region? Q2. What role do the cross-border interventions of the Programme play in Improving the navigation conditions and safety on the Danube and Black Sea in the cross-border region? Q3. What role do the cross-border interventions of the Programme play in climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience in the cross-border region? Q4. What role do the cross-border interventions of the Programme play in reducing pollution, supporting the development of green infrastructures and enhancing biodiversity conservation, recovery and sustainable use of and protection of natural heritage in the cross-border region? Q5. What role do the cross-border interventions of the Programme play in improving access to services in education, training and life-long learning in the cross-border region? Q6. What role do the cross-border interventions of the Programme play in developing the Eurovelo6 cycling route and in supporting tourism activities, connected sectors and industries in the cross-border region? *(this set of six questions aims to capture the impact of the cross-border interventions and the quality of the results and outputs, by specific objective; the analysis should take into account both the current and expected contribution - based on the finalised and contracted projects; relevant unintended effects and factors mentioned for the previous set of questions should also be analysed;* *given the cross-border character, the analysis should focus towards:* - *improved cross-border mobility and connectivity and enhanced access to TEN-T at regional and local level (Q1&Q2)* - *improved protection against natural and hazardous events and risks linked to human activities for the population and businesses in the cross-border area & reduced vulnerability of natural and human systems to actual or expected effects of climate change in the cross-border area (Q3)* - *restrained environmental degradation from unsustainable human activities in the cross-border area (Q4)* - *reduced challenges and discrepancies in the cross-border area in the field of education and learning (Q5)* - *developed and diversified economic sector of the cross-border area, through the capitalization of historical, natural and cultural heritage) (Q6)* **Overall cross-border cooperation impact** Q7. To what extent do the cross-border interventions of the Programme contribute to promoting an integrated and harmonious regional development in the cross-border region? Q8. Are there any unintended or spill-over effects of the cross-border investments, inside or beyond the eligible area? Q9. What are the internal and external factors fostering or affecting the effects of the Programme? *(this set of three questions aims to capture the impact at programme*

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	level, from the cross-border perspective, the real improvements in the Programme area, including any unintended or spill-over effects, also analysing the "why" and "how" - e.g. effects of the response to the territorial needs, of internal or external coherence, of the choice to finance certain types of projects in some specific objectives, of the limited funds available; the analysis should take into account both the current and expected contribution - based on the finalised and contracted projects; any implementation aspects hindering the overall effect of the strategic projects are also to be covered under this question) Q10. Did the enhanced participatory approach under PO5 lead to having higher impact than it would have had with a regular development and delivery system? *(to investigate whether the specific development and delivery system for PO5 also enhanced the effects of the interventions; for this questions, similar 2014-2020 interventions may be taken into account)* **EU added value** Q11. To what extent has the Programme brought outputs and results that cannot be adequately achieved at national level? Can specific examples be provided? *(whether the results and outputs would have been reached without the EU funds under the Programme -by the two participating states acting alone with national funds)* Q12. What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the Programme support after 2029, especially for the integrated territorial strategy? *(what would be the effects of ceasing to support the integrated territorial strategy in a future programming period)* **Sustainability** Q13. Are the Programme's outputs and results sustainable on long term? *(whether the benefits are likely to continue beyond the interventions)* **Visibility** Q14. Is the Programme successful in raising the awareness of the partners/potential applicants of the Programme/general public on the positive impact of the EU financial contribution? Q15. Which communication activities/actions or tools/channels were the most effective? Q16. How could this effect be increased in the next programming period? Q17. Are the communication activities/actions and tools/channels implemented/used by the Programme authorities involved in communication and visibility focused and dedicated to all categories of stakeholders/beneficiaries/general public (including youth, women, vulnerable and marginalised groups)? *(this set of four questions aims to capture the impact achieved by the Programme's communication activities/actions)*
Methodological approach and possible methods	Method: mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, case studies; theory-based evaluation (qualitative comparative analysis is taken into account at this stage, but the exact combination of methods and case studies is requested from the external evaluators) Tools: desk research, interviews, focus groups, expert panels, surveys
Data sources	programme strategic and implementation documents, DMCS and relevant procedures, Jems data, relevant data collected during the implementation

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	evaluation, findings of the ongoing process evaluation
How the evaluation will be implemented	evaluation commissioned externally, following public procurement applicable rules (open procedure)
Planned cost (Euro)	80.000 euro

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ANNEXES

ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW TABLE

Priority and PO	SO	Activities	Allocated financial resources (total ERDF+ National Contribution - excluding TA) (euros)	Output Indicators	Milestone 2024	Target 2029	Result indicators	Baseline	Target 2029	Intervention fields	Allocated financial resources (total ERDF+ National Contribution - excluding TA) (euros)
P1, PO3	3.2	a) Actions improving the navigation conditions and safety on the Danube and Black Sea in order to enhance the mobility and connectivity in the cross-border area (DISMAR)	10,000,000.00	RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (no)	0	1	RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations (no.)	0	1	115 Inland waterways and ports (TEN-T) excluding facilities dedicated to transport of fossil fuels	10,000,000.00
				PSO2 Length of waterway supported in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (km)	0	470					
				RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders (no)	0	2	RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion (no.)	0	1		
		b) Actions enhancing	15,000,000.00	PSO1 Length of rail	0	0.5	RCR 58 Annual users of newly	0	5,000	100 Reconstructed or modernized	8,750,000.00

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		rail connectivity and mobility across the Danube		reconstructed or modernised - in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (km)			built, upgraded, reconstructed or modernised railways (no.)			railways - TEN-T core network		
				RCO53 New or modernised railway stations and stops (no)	0	2				102 Other reconstructed or modernised railways	2,500,000.00	
				RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders (no)	0	2	RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion (no.)	0	1	104 Digitalisation of transport: rail	2,500,000.00	
				RCO83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed	0	1	RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations (no.)	0	1	105 European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS)	1,250,000.00	
P2, PO2	2.4	a) Actions targeting risk prevention and management of natural and hazardous events (e.g. flood, droughts, erosion, earthquakes and landslides)	41,875,000	RCO26 Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change (ha)	0	8	RCR35 Population benefiting from flood protection measures (no)	0	800,000	058 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides	16,421,041.38	
				RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (no)	0	2	RCR 104 Solutions taken up or up scaled by organizations	0	1	059 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires	15,394,726.30	

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		and risks linked to human activities and disaster resilience (Danube Risk and Stream 2)		RCO24 Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against natural disasters (euro)	0	20,000,000	RCR 37 Population benefiting from protection measures against climate related natural disasters (other than floods or wildfire)	0	1,000,000	060 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought	5,684,232.32
				RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders (no)	0	6	RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	0	3	061 Risk prevention and management of non-climate related natural risks (i.e. earthquakes) and risks linked to human activities (e.g. technological accidents), including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems, infrastructures and ecosystem based approaches	4,375,000.00
				RCO122 Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response	0	4,000,000	RCR96 Population benefiting from protection measures against non-climate related	0	300,000		

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				systems against non-climate related natural risks and risks related to human activities (euro)			natural risks and risks related to human activities				
		b) Actions targeting climate change mitigation (regular projects)	9,126,637.50	RCO26 Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change (ha)	0	59	RCR35 Population benefiting from flood protection measures (no)	0	200,000	058 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: floods and landslides	3,578,958.62
				RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (no)	0	2	RCR 104 Solutions taken up or up scaled by organizations	0	1	059 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: fires	3,355,273.70
				RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders (no)	0	7	RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	0	4	060 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and drought	2,192,405.18
P2, PO2	2.7	a) Actions targeting protection, restoration, conservation and sustainable use of	35,000,000.00	RCO 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented	0	16	RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations	0	8	078 Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites	6,250,000.00
										080 Other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in	3,750,000.00

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		biodiversity and habitats								the area of preservation and restoration of natural areas with high potential for carbon absorption and storage, e.g. by rewetting of moorlands, the capture of landfill gas	
		b) Actions targeting developing green infrastructures and supporting biodiversity and protecting nature in human settlements; Raising awareness of the benefits of green spaces		RCO36 Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change	0	5	RCR95 Population having access to new or improved green infrastructure	0	3,750	079 Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure	18,750,000.00
		c) Actions targeted at improving pollution control by supporting investments in monitoring and data collection on air, soil and water pollution, particularly		PSO3 Tools implemented for mitigating pollution	0	8	PSR3 Population living within the area covered by the tools implemented for mitigating pollution	0	210,000	077 Air quality and noise reduction measures	6,250,000.00

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		in urban areas,									
		All actions under SO 2.7		RCO 87 Organizations cooperating across borders	0	32	RCR 84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	0	16		
P3, PO4	4.2	a) Actions targeting development of joint training and other joint initiatives to improve cross-border collaboration in education and training	7,500,000.00	RCO85 Participations in joint training schemes	0	2,600	RCR81 Completion of joint training schemes	0	1,560	149 Support for primary to secondary education (excluding infrastructure)	2,500,000.00
										150 Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	2,500,000.00
										151 Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	2,500,000.00
		b) Actions targeting investments in educational / training / learning infrastructure	7,500,000.00	PSO4 Investments in education, training and life-long learning services (no)	0	13	PSR4 Annual users of the supported investments in education, training and life-long learning services	0	7,800	122 Infrastructure for primary and secondary education	1,250,000.00
										123 Infrastructure for tertiary education	2,500,000.00
										124 Infrastructure for vocational education and training and adult learning	3,750,000.00
		All actions under SO 4.2		RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders	0	33	RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders	0	16		

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							after project completion				
P4, PO5	5.2	a) Actions targeting the development of the Eurovelo 6 cycling route	22,500,000.00	RCO58 Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported	0	200	RCR64 Annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure	0	5,000	083 Cycling infrastructure	22,500,000.00
		b) Supporting tourism activities, connected sectors and industries	40,000,000.00	RCO77 Number of cultural and tourism sites supported		18	RCR77 Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported	0	32,400	165 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services	16,250,000.00
										166 Protection, development and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services	11,250,000.00
										167 Protection, development and promotion of natural heritage and eco-tourism other than Natura 2000 sites	6,250,000.00
				RCO01 Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	0	31	RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	0	45	021 SME business development and internationalisation, including productive investments	6,250,000.00
				RCO02 Enterprises supported by grants	0	31					

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		c) Support for implementing the ITS	2,500,000.00	RCO76 Integrated projects for territorial development	0	60				169 Territorial development initiatives, including preparation of territorial strategies	2,500,000.00
		All actions under SO 5.2		RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders	0	60					

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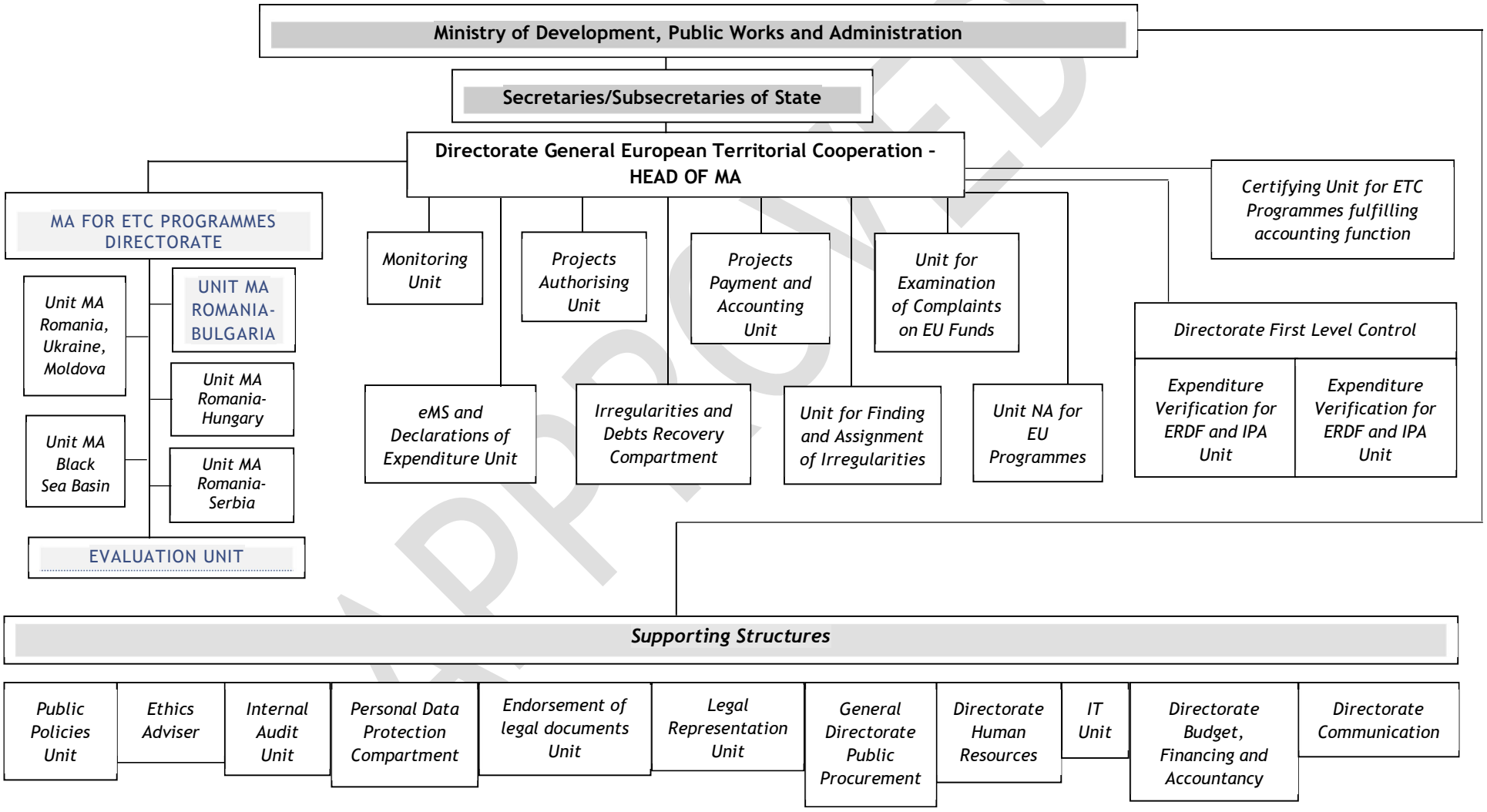
ANNEX B - Organisational chart of MA



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ANNEX C – CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCES

The present Evaluation Report Checklist[4] was produced as part of the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania.

A checked box by a question indicates that item is not problematic.

Checklist	Yes
1. The selection procedure	
1.1. Is the procedure to select the evaluator compatible with the timing of the planned evaluation?	☐
1.2. Does this procedure provide a good balance between the large access of evaluators (competitiveness) and the time needed for the selection (efficiency)? Is this procedure more effective/efficient than other procedures of public procurement?	☐
1.3. Has the office charged for managing the procedure the skills and the personnel sufficient to successfully implementing it?	☐
2. The administrative specifications	
2.1. Are all the key elements of the procedure included in the administrative specifications (e.g. functioning of the procedures, deadlines, criteria to participate and be selected, etc.)?	☐
2.2. Are the main deadlines specified (e.g. to request additional documentation, to pose questions, to submit the tender)?	☐
2.3. Are the eligibility criteria to have access to the call for proposals clear, in line with the national and EU rules and do not create serious limitations to competition?	☐
2.4. Are the selection (or quality) criteria clear and capable to identify the best quality proposal?	☐
2.5. Is the weight of price in comparison to the other selection criteria balanced and not excessive?	☐
2.6. Is the way to apply (interpretation, scoring, ranking, etc.) the selection and price criteria specified?	☐
2.7. Are the composition and role of the selection committee defined?	☐
2.8. Is the documentation to submit clearly identified and does it include standardised application forms or other tools to simplify and minimise errors?	☐
2.9. Is the structure of the technical offer indicated (main contents, chapters, length, etc.)?	☐
3. The technical specifications	
*3.1. **Context, objectives and scope***	
3.1.1. Is the policy context of the evaluation (EU regulation, Evaluation Plan, OP and other EU or national relevant decisions) explained?	☐
3.1.2. Are the main objectives and the users of the evaluation identified?	☐
3.1.3. Is the type of evaluation (e.g. preliminary study, implementation or process, impact, mix of different types) defined?	☐
3.1.4. Are the interventions to evaluate, the territory to cover and the period to	☐

[4] The checklist uses different sources and adapts their contents according to the experience of the authors; in particular see: Evaluation Checklist, Gary Miron (2004); Checklist for preparing the Evaluation Report ILO (2021); EVALSED: The resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development (2013)

Checklist	Yes
examine (the scope of the evaluation) well-defined and clearly distinguishable?	
3.1.5. Is a brief description of the implementation and the advancement of the interventions to evaluate provided?	☐
3.1.6. Are the key stakeholders of the evaluation identified?	☐
3.1.7. Are the evaluation questions clearly stated? Are the key evaluation questions well-defined?	☐
3.1.8. Is the ToC of the interventions to evaluate clarified? Or, is the evaluator requested to identify the pertinent ToC?	☐
3.2. ***Methodology***	
3.2.1. Is the general methodological framework suggested? And, is a request for major specification of the methodological approach made?	☐
3.2.2. Is expected data to use defined? And, is a request for major specification of necessary data and collection tools made?	☐
3.2.3. Is a request for clarifying the main methodological techniques and analyses to use clearly made?	☐
3.2.4. Are the main tasks to fulfil in the evaluation identified?	☐
3.2.5. Is a request for specifying the methods used to validate results and findings of the evaluation made?	☐
3.2.6. Are the main deliverables (reports, meetings) of the evaluation defined? And, are their main expected contents specified?	☐
3.2.7. Are a risk assessment of the evaluation process and a specific quality control requested?	☐
3.3. ***Professional qualifications***	
3.3.1. Are requirements for skills and experience of the team clearly defined? And, are these requirements coherent with the service requested?	☐
3.3.2. Are requirements for skills and experience clearly interpretable, sufficiently wide to be found in the market and not limit competition?	☐
3.3.3. Is the multidisciplinary composition of the team expressly detailed (if necessary)?	☐
3.3.4. Is the request of specifying the distributions of roles and responsibilities in the team made?	☐
4. **Budget and Payment**	
4.1. Is the maximum price for the evaluation stated?	☐
4.2. Is specified how the budget of the evaluation has to be presented (total cost, detailed budget for main voices, etc.)?	☐
4.3. Are the timing and the amount of the payments unambiguously defined?	☐
5. **General**	
5.1. Is the number of objectives and evaluation questions not excessive? Can they be addressed in a unique evaluation?	☐
5.2. If doubts on the feasibility of the evaluation exist, is a feasibility analysis included in the requests and a potential “plan B” defined (e.g. alternative approaches or the break of the contract)?	☐
5.3. Is the language used clear, simple and always well-focused on the main elements?	☐
5.4. Are all the requests sufficient and adequate to assess the proposals according to the adopted selection criteria?	☐

ANNEX D – Checklist for assessing the inception report

The present Inception Report Checklist[5] is used for assessing the quality of inception reports.

A checked box by a statement indicates that item is not problematic. Details are included below each statement

Checklist	Yes
1. General quality statements	
1.1. All provisions in the Terms of Reference and in the Technical Offer are addressed	☐
Details: …	
1.2. All aspects agreed in the kick-off meeting are addressed	☐
Details: …	
1.3. The approach for data collection is reasonable, feasible and likely to provide all information needed to answer the evaluation questions (particularly as regards data availability at beneficiary level)	☐
Details: …	
1.4. The ratio between desk research and fieldwork is adequate to provide the information needed to answer the evaluation questions	☐
Details: …	
1.5. Statistical or other appropriate data analysis methods are proposed, whether the data are obtained from the national administrations or are generated by the consultant through surveys or by gaining access to administrative data	☐
Details: …	
1.6. Fieldwork is described and research methods are appropriate - such as interviewing methods - online, telephone or face to face, interviews with stakeholders, focus groups; the proposed questionnaires include all the appropriate questions (balance between open and closed questions, impartiality, clarity, specificity etc.) and the forms/models proposed are appropriate	☐
Details: …	
1.7. Identification of regions and projects for case studies is based on statistical or other appropriate analysis	☐
Details: …	
1.8. In case there is an association between economic operators, the coordination mechanism between the consortium members is established	☐
Details: …	
1.9. Quality control procedures for all deliverables are established	☐
Details: …	

[5] This checklist was also used for the 2014-2020 programming period.

ANNEX E – Checklist for assessing the evaluation report

The present Evaluation Report Checklist[6] was produced as part of the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania.

Instructions: Rate each component of the report using the following rubrics. Place a check mark in the cell that corresponds to your rating on each checkpoint. If the item or checkpoint is not applicable to the report, indicate the "NA" cell to the far right. Comments may be added in the dedicated row in each section.

1=Not addressed, 2=Partially addressed, 3=Fully addressed, NA=Not applicable

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
1. Executive Summary				
1.1. The programme/ IP/ SO/ theme evaluated is well described	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2. Evaluation questions and purpose of the evaluation are presented	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.3. A brief description of methods and analytical strategy (if appropriate) is provided	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.4. A summary of main findings and policy implications or recommendations is included	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.5. Length is adequate (in general no more than 10-12 pages, or around 10% of the report)	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.6. Comments:				
2. Introduction				
2.1. The introduction helps the reader in approaching the report	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2. An overview of the report and the description of report structure are available	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3. Objectives and scope of the evaluation are clearly presented	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.4. The programme/ intervention to evaluate, its expected use and relevant users are specified	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.5. References of the evaluation to the Evaluation Plan and other possible decisions of the MC are included	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.6. Evaluation questions and how they have been identified (e.g. interviews, surveys, discussion with the MA, meetings with MC and the stakeholders, etc.) are clearly described	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.7. Evaluation criteria included in the analysis are specified, as well as their relations with the evaluation questions	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.8. The target population of the programme/ IP/ SO (as relevant) and territorial areas covered by the intervention are clearly identified	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.9. The main stakeholders of the evaluation are clearly identified	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.10. Comments:				

[6] The checklist uses different sources and adapts their contents according to the experience of the authors; in particular see: Evaluation Checklist, Gary Miron (2004); Checklist for preparing the Evaluation Report ILO (2021); EVALSED: The resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development (2013)

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
3. Background and context				
3.1. A description of the programme/ IP/ SO/ theme being evaluated (its strategy in terms of economic and social cohesion, strategic importance in the OP, etc.) is included	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.2. The cause-effect relations underlying the programme/intervention are explicitly presented (a ToC or other interpretative framework)	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.3. The implementation of the programme/ intervention is well described and allows to understand possible bottlenecks or difficulties	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.4. The main interactions with other relevant European or national policies are identified and described	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.5. A well-focused review of the related literature is available to identify what is already known (including aspects on previous and similar financing and lessons learned etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.6. Comments:				
4. Methodology				
4.1. Evaluation approach and its rationale are clearly described and fit the ToC and the evaluation questions	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.2. Sources of information and data are adequately presented (e.g. primary or secondary data, sampling method, statistical error, questionnaires, timing of data collection, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.3. Analytical techniques are well described and allow to understand the reliability of the results	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.4. The strategy of combining methods/approaches (if any) is justified and allows to answer the evaluation questions properly.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.5. Possible limitations of the evaluation are specified (e.g. limitations related to methods, data sources, potential sources of bias etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.6. Comments:				
5. Main findings				
5.1. The methodology is correctly applied	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.2. Details of analyses and findings are clearly and logically described	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.3. Analyses and findings cover all main aspects as deriving from the cause-effect relationships identified with the help of the ToC or other interpretative framework used	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.4. Discussion of evaluation findings is objective and complete, including – where relevant – both negative and positive findings	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.5. Findings are supported by evidence and are consistent with methods and data used	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.6. All evaluation questions are addressed, and an explanation is included for questions that could not be answered	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.7. Findings with regard to the examined evaluation criteria and the evaluation questions are presented	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.8. Unintended and unexpected results are discussed (if the case, applying to impact evaluations)	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.9. Factors contributing to the success/failure of the programme	☐	☐	☐	☐

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
/intervention are identified and discussed				
5.10. Comments:				
6. Conclusions, lessons learned and emerging good practices				
6.1. Answers to all evaluation questions and values of interventions/ themes in relation to the evaluation criteria are provided	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.2. Conclusions are formulated by synthesizing the main findings into summary judgments of merit and worth (any limitations of the results should be also explained)	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.3. Conclusions are fair, impartial and consistent with the findings	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.4. Conclusions are clear, concise and their potential generalization (at the level of a larger target groups, in time or in the space) is clarified	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.5. Conclusions reflect the analysis of horizontal or cross-cutting themes (including trans-territorial relationships in ETC, gender and environmental sustainability) conducted in the evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.6. Lessons learned, including context and applicability are included (if the case)	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.7. Emerging best practices, including context and applicability are included (if the case)	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.8. Comments:				
7. Recommendations and policy implications				
7.1. Recommendations logically follow from conclusions, lessons learned and good practices	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.2. Recommendations indicate the action needed to improve the performance of the programme/intervention in a concise manner. Long sentences and paragraphs are avoided	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.3. Recommendations are based on priority or importance (e.g. high, medium, low)	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.4. Recommendations are sufficiently detailed (who is called upon to act, time frame for their implementation, costs and/or complexity, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.5. Recommendations were discussed and validated with implementers and stakeholders (if requested or useful)	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.6. Comments:				
8. Annexes and references				
8.1. A suitable style or format is used consistently for all references	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.2. Annexes included useful information, that could not be detailed in the text and help to understand context or other aspects presented	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.3. All annexes are referenced in the text and are included in the Annexes section, in the order they are referenced	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.4. Data and information in the annexes are clearly presented and actually integrate the text	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.5. Comments:				
9. General considerations				

Checklist	1	2	3	NA
9.1. The report is written clearly and set out logically	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.2. The report presents an independent point of view and is not influenced by any stakeholder	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.3. Specialized concepts are used only when necessary and clearly described (when useful, a glossary is included)	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.4. Cross-cutting issues such as: (i) gender; (ii) tripartite and social dialogue issues (iii) international labour standards, (iv) environmental sustainability and (v) medium and long- term effects of capacity development action are assessed (if requested)	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.5. All data is disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic group or other relevant demographic categories, where feasible;	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.6. Charts, tables and graphs are understandable and appropriately and consistently labelled	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.7. The report addresses the demand of the commissioner/s and is useful	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.8. Comments:				

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ANNEX F – QUESTIONS COLLECTED FROM STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE EVALUATION PLAN

A first set of evaluation questions was consulted with the stakeholders via an online questionnaire, which was sent to MC members, Programme structures, posted on the Programme website and on social media. In response, each proposed question has received, on a scale from 0 to 5, a score above 3.5. For 76% of the questions the score received was above 4 and for 26% of the questions above 4.5. The scores indicate high to very high usefulness of proposed evaluation questions.

In addition, the following aspects were raised:

Preoccupying aspects/Proposed questions	**Proposed actions**	**Covered Yes/No**	**Related EQ**
Projects being complementary to other initiatives	Coherence is part of Programme evaluation.	Yes	ImplemEval Q12-13
Maybe questions related to achieving the specific goals and indicators of the Programme, but the questionnaire will become too large	Given the 2014-2020 approach for result indicators, they are expected to be measured by programme bodies and need not be subject to evaluation. Effectiveness is covered by Programme evaluation (ImplemEval Q1-Q7).	No	-
The Programme bodies have to ensure that all partners in a proposal have the relevant information regarding the project management. Sometimes important information is focused in LB and not shared among partners.	Should this be an issue in implementation, it would arise while analysing the factors that affect the projects.	Yes, if found a factor	OngoingEval Q9 ImplemEval Q2
I would like to underline the very useful role, that JS in Calarasi plays supporting us in project's implementation.	Support from Programme bodies is covered by Programme evaluation.	Yes	OngoingEval Q5
How will present initiatives be continued in the future?	Sustainability and added value questions cover part of this aspect. Some result indicators also regard cooperation after project end. Continuity of interventions beyond this programming period depends on various factors.	Partly yes	ImpactEval Q12-13
What is the CBC project/program Added Value to the other forms of support?	Added value questions are included.	Yes	ImpactEval Q11
The quality of the results and outputs and real improvements in the cross- border area	These aspects were introduced as part of the analysis for the impact evaluation.	Yes	ImpactEval Q1-7

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ANNEX G – PROCEDURAL ASPECTS

The current annex presents the procedural aspects regarding the drafting and implementation of the EvalPlan.

The drafting process of the EvalPlan before submission to MC

The activities undertaken for drafting the EvalPlan are the following:

1. Thorough consultation of the applicable regulatory, procedural and guidance provisions, of the relevant available evidence and programme documents;
2. Drafting by the Evaluation Unit of a first version of EvalPlan;
3. Sending the draft EvalPlan to the MA Unit;
4. Analysis of the comments received and revision of the plan by the Evaluation Unit, if necessary;
5. Consulting the proposals of evaluation questions and collecting additional questions from the stakeholders (e.g. other units, MC);
6. Analysis of the raised aspects and revision, if necessary;
7. Sending, directly or through the MA Unit, the revised EvalPlan version to the interested parties indicated by the respective unit (e.g. NA, JS);
8. Analysis of the comments received and revision of the plan, if necessary;
9. Proposing the MA to submit the EvalPlan to the MC for analysis and approval (administrative steps for formal internal approval prior to the MC consultation are performed by the MA Unit);

Drafting of preparatory documents for commissioning evaluations externally

Planning for the evaluations that will be carried out by external experts shall begin at least 9 months in advance of their intended start date. The first stage in the process will be the drafting of the ToR, which builds upon the information included in this EvalPlan.

Drafting of the ToR is one of the key tasks of the Evaluation Unit. The ToR document serves as a guide to drafting offers and performing evaluations and is a central part of the public procurement dossier for contracting the evaluation services.

After it is agreed with the MA Unit, the draft ToR document is consulted in the ESC, following the procedural flow described in Section B.2 – The evaluation process. Once the ESC has approved the draft ToR and once funds have been secured in the MDPWA budget in order to finance the evaluation, the public procurement process can begin. The ToR approved by ESC may be adjusted during the internal institutional approval process prior to launching the public procurement. The contracting time depends on the evolution of the public procurement process.

Carrying out evaluations with internal expertise

If the evaluations are carried out with internal expertise, the following steps should be followed:

1. Drafting a document on the Evaluation scope comprising the methodology to be used in order to perform the evaluation and a timetable for the activities to be carried out;
2. Producing a draft evaluation report (deadline - 6 months from the approval of the Evaluation scope and timing)
3. Submitting the draft evaluation report to ESC for comments;
4. Drafting the final evaluation report based on the comments from the ESC;

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5. Sending the final evaluation report to ESC members for approval;
6. Approval of the final evaluation report by ESC, after treating any additional comments or observations.

ESC consultations

After the ToR (for evaluations commissioned externally)/the Evaluation scope and timing (for evaluations carried out internally) is finalised by the Evaluation Unit and agreed with the MA Unit, the ESC consultation process may be launched.

The Evaluation Unit informs the members of the ESC, by e-mail, about the intention to launch an ESC consultation procedure and about the topics to be analysed. The members of the ESC will be asked either to confirm, by e-mail, their availability to participate, or to appoint, also by e-mail, a designate to take part in this process.

In case one member does not confirm participation and does not appoint a designate, the activity of the ESC can continue without the respective member. However, the consultation process cannot be held without the participation of the head of MA (or his/her designate) and at least one representative of the Evaluation Unit.

During an evaluation exercise, the number of consultations among ESC members will depend on the complexity and duration of the evaluation. For evaluations commissioned externally, the Evaluation Unit performs a first quality check on the deliverables received from the evaluators prior to their submission to ESC. The deliverables are sent to the ESC for consultation or approval only after they pass this first quality check. ESC members should take the necessary time to study the circulated documents so that they are in a position to contribute effectively to the ESC consultation. The decisions shall be taken by **consensus**.

In order to provide the members with the opportunity to thoroughly consult the documents, as a general rule the consultations shall take the form of written procedure, via e-mail. If deemed necessary by the members of ESC, an online consultation meeting may be convened.

Steps for the **written procedure**:

1. For the written consultation procedure, the Evaluation Unit submits to the ESC members via e-mail the necessary documents, with delivery and read receipt. Any additional points or comments from the participating institutions regarding the presented documents shall be sent to the Evaluation Unit by the member in the ESC, in the form of a consolidated position.
2. The objections or the agreement on the documents transmitted according to the written consultation procedure can be submitted to the Evaluation Unit by e-mail within maximum 5 working days from the date the documents were transmitted for interim evaluation reports and within maximum 7 working days for final reports. The deadline may be extended at the written request of one member, should the implementation calendar of the contract allow such extensions. Deadlines may be also set shorter.
3. If no objection was received by the deadline, the proposal is considered approved in the sent format.
4. In case objections are received, the Evaluation Unit formulates its position and sends it to the ESC members, together with the revised report, if necessary. The lack of reaction on proposals/objections is equivalent with the agreement with the received position.
5. The Evaluation Unit submits to the ESC members the final version of the documents adopted under the written consultation procedure.
6. Material errors in approved documents may be corrected under the condition that the Evaluation Unit consequently informs all the ESC members and all interested parties.

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The Evaluation Unit, at the time of announcing via e-mail the intention to launch a consultation procedure, or the ESC members, while replying to this e-mail, may propose to organise an online meeting of the ESC instead of a consultation via written procedure.

Evaluation Unit/MA's staff's tasks related to the evaluation function

General tasks

- coordinating the evaluation activities of the Interreg programmes in line with the relevant regulations;
- drafting, revising and implementing the Evaluation Plans; organising timely programme evaluations and following the monitoring of the resulting recommendations;
- managing procurements and contracts for evaluation activities;
- supporting evaluation teams for programme evaluations carried out at the initiative of the Commission or of ECU;
- representing the Interreg programmes at evaluation coordination events organised by ECU (e.g. Evaluation Working Group);
- participating in training and evaluation capacity building activities organised by ECU, Interact or other bodies;
- being the key liaison point with major stakeholders for evaluation purposes;
- contributing to developing and refining indicators for the Interreg programmes;
- ensuring the evaluation reports are disseminated and made available to the public;
- tracking progress on the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations.

Tasks related to the evaluation, commissioned externally

- convening the Evaluation Steering Committee and participating in its decision-making process;
- attending and reporting to meetings of the MC or facilitating the participation of the contracted experts, if required;
- commissioning of evaluation contracts (preparing tender documentation, drafting ToR, participating in the evaluation committee for choosing successful tenderers);
- once contracted, monitoring and supervising the activities undertaken during the evaluation exercise (facilitating the meetings of key stakeholders with the evaluators, liaising with the evaluators contracted to provide evaluation services, facilitating suitable levels of access for consultants to key stakeholders during the course of their evaluation work, ensuring proper access for evaluators to the relevant monitoring and other available data, managing the Unit repository, which holds all relevant evaluation materials);
- quality controlling of all evaluation reports submitted under the terms of an evaluation contract (endorsing inception reports, ensuring evaluators meet deadlines for report submissions, commenting on draft reports, assessing the final evaluation reports against the evaluation grids and submitting the reports to the ESC).

Tasks related to the evaluations carried out internally (should such evaluations be deemed necessary)

- drafting the Evaluation scope and timing and submitting them to ESC consultation and endorsement;
- carrying out the evaluations (undertaking activities to support the evaluation project - collection of relevant data, including desk research, consultations with relevant stakeholders within the evaluation scope, etc., drawing up draft evaluation reports and final evaluation reports and submitting them to ESC for consideration).

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