

EVALUATION PLAN

for INTERREG-IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme

Bulgaria – Serbia

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: GENERAL CONTEXT	3
1. Programme context	3
2. Regulatory context	5
SECTION II: OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION OF THE EVALUATION PLAN.....	5
1. Role and objectives of the Evaluation plan.....	5
2. Coverage of the Evaluation plan.....	6
3. Analysis of available evidence.....	6
4. Coordination of evaluations	6
SECTION III: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK.....	7
1. Evaluation process and responsible bodies	7
2. Involvement of partners in the evaluation	7
3. Evaluation expertise.....	7
4. Planned training activities related to the evaluation process	7
5. Communication strategy for evaluation findings.....	8
6. Quality management strategy for the evaluation process	8
SECTION IV: PLANNED EVALUATIONS	8
SECTION V: TIMETABLE AND BUDGET.....	11
SECTION VI: DESCRIPTION OF PLANNED EVALUATIONS.....	11

SECTION I – GENERAL CONTEXT

1. Programme context

INTERREG-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Serbia 2014-2020, hereinafter referred to as the Programme, is the successor of Bulgaria – Serbia IPA Cross-border Programme 2007–2013 and builds upon the experience gained during programming and implementing process. The Programme is designed in the framework of the European strategy for a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth and the relevant national and regional strategic documents.

The overall aim of the programme is to strengthen the Bulgaria – Serbia cross-border cooperation capacity in the field of nature protection and sustainable tourism, leading to enhancement of European territorial cohesion.

a) Eligible area

The Programme area includes 13 administrative units: 6 districts in Bulgaria, which correspond to NUTS level III (EUROSTAT), and the equivalent NUTS III 7 districts in Serbia. The core area remains in larger part the same as in the period 2007 – 2013, with the addition of 2 districts: on the Bulgarian side – the Vratsa district, and on the Serbian side – the Toplička district.

The cooperation area covers a territory of 43 933 sq.km, or around 22% of the both countries' territories, with a total population of 2 144 054 inhabitants (as of 2012) or 14.7% of the total population of both countries, with average population density of 49 inhabitants per sq. km.

b) Programme budget (EUR)

<i>Priority axis</i>	<i>EU support (a)</i>	<i>National counterpart (b)</i>	<i>Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)</i>	<i>Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e)</i>
1	10 145 420	1 790 370	11 935 790	84.99%
2	7 246 729	1 278 836	8 525 565	84.99%
3	8 696 074	1 534 602	10 230 676	84.99%
4	2 898 691	511 534	3 410 225	84.99%
Total	28 986 914	5 115 342	34 102 256	84.99%

c) Priority axes, investment priorities and specific objectives

<i>Priority axis</i>	<i>Total funding (EUR)</i>	<i>Thematic priority</i>	<i>Specific objective corresponding to thematic priorities</i>
PA 1 “Sustainable tourism”	11 935 790	TP (d) “Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage”	SO 1.1 “Tourist attractiveness: Supporting the development of competitive tourist attractions achieved through cooperation, thus contributing to the diversification of tourist product(s) in the cross-border region”
			SO 1.2 “Cross-border touristic product: Capturing economic benefits from development of natural and cultural heritage in the border area through creating common cross-border touristic destination(s)”
			SO 1.3 “People-to-people networking: Capitalising the effect of cultural, historical and natural heritage tourism on border communities through common actions”
PA 2 “Youths”	8 525 565	TP (e) “Investing in youth, education and skills”	SO 2.1 “Skills & entrepreneurship: Supporting the development of attractive environment for advancement of young people in the border region achieved through cooperation”
			SO 2.2 “People-to-people networking: Promoting cooperation initiatives for and with young people, thus enhancing mobility of young people across borders”
PA 3 “Environment”	10 230 676	TP (b): “Protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management”	SO 3.1 “Joint risk management: Preventing and mitigating the consequences of natural and man-made cross-border disasters”
			SO 3.2 “Nature protection: Promoting and enhancing the utilization of common natural resources, as well as stimulating nature protection in the programme area, through joint initiatives across the border”
PA 4 “Technical Assistance”	3 410 225	N/A	SO 4.1 “Programme’s administration: To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the Programme”

2. Regulatory context

In accordance with the principles set out in Article 54 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 evaluations are carried out so as to improve the quality of the design and the implementation of programmes as well as assess their effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

The current Evaluation plan has been drafted in accordance with Article 41 (3) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 447/2014, in relation to Article 56 (1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. The Evaluation plan was examined and approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) under the Programme on 21 April 2016.

SECTION II: OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

1. Role and objectives of the Evaluation plan

The Evaluation plan is a strategic programme document setting out how evaluations will be organised under the Programme during the 2014 – 2020 period. Its objective is to support the result orientation and general implementation of the Programme. The plan defines the strategy chosen for evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme actions and interventions and provides crucial information for decision-makers, programme implementation bodies and for reporting.

In accordance with the EC Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans the main tasks of the Evaluation plan are to:

- Improve the quality of evaluations through proper planning, including through identification and collection of necessary data (Article 54(2) CPR);
- Ensure that resources for funding and managing the evaluations are appropriate (Article 54(2) CPR);
- Provide a framework to plan evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme and to ensure good follow-up of the evaluations (Article 56(3)CPR);
- Enable informed programme management and policy decisions on the basis of evaluation findings;
- Ensure that evaluations provide inputs for annual implementation / progress and other reports and for the programming of cross-border cooperation beyond 2020;
- Facilitate the synthesis of findings by the EC and the exchange of available evidence.

2. Coverage of the Evaluation plan

This Evaluation plan covers INTERREG-IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – Serbia 2014 – 2020, co-financed by Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance II.

3. Analysis of available evidence

During the 2007-2013 the programme undertook on-going internal studies on the level of achievement of the programme outputs and results, and a mid-term (implementation) evaluation on the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the Programme.

The main points raised by the programme evaluation indicates that the evaluation efforts in the 2014 – 2020 period should concentrate on learning added value of the programme on the local stakeholders and on the benefit to Serbia in terms of achievement of the specific IPA objectives and in particular strengthening regional integration and territorial cooperation. Additionally, the level of consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives to the relevant macro-regional, national and regional strategies needs to be further assessed.

4. Coordination of evaluations

According to the Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Commission, a coordination mechanism is set up to ensure that the complementarity principle is met at the stage of Programmes' management, monitoring, evaluation and control. The Council for Coordination of the EU funds is the national platform for exchanging the information with other national programmes and contributes to the coordination at the different stages of the programmes lifetime (including evaluation).

At programme level, the JMC encompasses range of institutions involved in implementation of national initiatives and other programmes co-financed by the ESI funds that allows for proper coordination of evaluations and a good follow-up of the evaluation conclusions and recommendations. In addition, the Managing Authority (MA) will streamline the planning and implementation of evaluations with the other Interreg – IPA CBC Programmes managed by the Republic of Bulgaria.

Exchanges with the managing authorities of programmes covering the same regions or policy fields and sharing of information with other cross-border programmes through evaluation network facilitated by Interact are also foreseen.

SECTION III: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

1. Evaluation process and responsible bodies

The MA has the responsibility for designing and delivering the Evaluation plan and presenting it to the JMC for approval. The EC can advise the JMC at all stages of the evaluation process.

The status of the Evaluation plan will be discussed at least once a year by the JMC that also will approve any amendments in it, whenever deemed necessary. After JMC approval of each version of the Evaluation plan, the MA shall submit the plan to the EC for information through the SFC2014 system.

The MA with the support of the Joint Secretariat (JS) shall communicate evaluation results with the JMC, EC, Interact, Interreg programmes and other relevant stakeholders and report any follow-up measures of evaluation findings to the JMC. Information about the implementation of the evaluation plan is presented in the Programme implementation reports.

2. Involvement of partners in the evaluation

Relevant partners (e.g. balanced representation of national, regional and local public authorities, economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, universities and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination) shall be involved in the evaluation of the programme within the framework of the JMC. All partners, as well as other relevant stakeholders and programme target groups will also be consulted during the evaluations carried out.

3. Evaluation expertise

The evaluations will use a mixed approach of both internal and external expertise (Article 54 (3) of the CPR). Different approaches may be defined for the evaluation exercise, but as a general rule they will be carried out by external experts. These experts will be provided with information and input from the monitoring reports, internal assessments and ongoing discussions.

4. Planned training activities related to the evaluation process

Training activities that can support the evaluation process for the MA, JS, and JMC representatives may be organised if deemed necessary. In particular the working group on evaluation, set up by Interact, shall be taken into consideration on this regard. Training activities may refer to:

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

5. Communication strategy for evaluation findings

The MA will discuss with JMC the findings and recommendations made by the evaluators. The JMC will finally agree on the follow-up of each recommendation.

The evaluation reports will be made public on the programme website and their content used in programme communication to the target groups (applicants, projects, wider audiences) where considered appropriate.

6. Quality management strategy for the evaluation process (description of the implementation of the quality checks)

To ensure quality of programme evaluations, sufficient time will be foreseen to plan and procure evaluations. For the latter, specific selection criteria will be defined in the terms of reference for the tenderers. They will relate in particular to professional and technical capacity in evaluation. Evaluators will be required to use a sound methodology in the performance of their tasks. They will also be required to produce inception, interim (when required) and final reports on the evaluations carried out. MA/NA/JS will be responsible for quality control of the outsourced evaluation activities. The JMC will be regularly informed of progress on evaluation activities, their outcomes and will also receive evaluation reports.

SECTION IV: PLANNED EVALUATIONS

1. Assumptions regarding the evolution of the programme

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

Call for proposals	Call budget (EUR)	Launching	Estimated contracting time	Maximum duration of projects	Estimated end date of projects
1 st Call for Proposals	12 687 304,24	17 Aug. 2015	Q3 – Q4 2016	15 months – soft / 24 months – investment projects	Q1 2018 Q4 2018
2 nd Call for Proposals	18 004 727	Q2 – Q3 2017	Q2 – Q3 2018	15 months – soft / 24 months – investment projects	Q2 2019 Q1 2020

2. Evaluations during the programming period

Having in regard the size and scope of the programme, as well as the need of sufficient physical progress to serve as basis for evaluation, no evaluations are planned before 2018. Therefore, the progress reporting on the implementation of the Evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations will start in 2019. The estimated timing for carrying out the evaluations for the Programme also takes into account that the evaluation results should later be used during the programming and ex-ante evaluation process for the next cross-border cooperation programme between Bulgaria and Serbia for the programming period beyond 2020.

No	Timing	Evaluation theme	Subject, rationale	Methods	Data available	Expertise / Indicative budget EUR
1.	Q4 2018 – Q2 2019	Implementation / Mid-term evaluation	Effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system	Desk research; Data analysis; Survey; Interviews with programme bodies, beneficiaries, etc.; Case studies	Programme management structures; Decision making; processes; Project application and selection processes; Project implementation and monitoring processes	External expertise / 70 000
			Effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation		Progress in terms of achievement of programme objectives and expected results; Progress in relation to performance framework milestones and targets; Respect of horizontal principles; Contribution to EU2020 strategy and macro-regional strategies	
			Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives		Programming document; Annual implementation reports; Financial data; Outputs of the projects	
			Effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy		Communication strategy; Annual, communication plans; Annual implementation reports; Follow up of specific indicators of the	

					communication strategy	
2.	Q4 2021 – Q3 2022	Impact evaluation	Thematic and territorial impacts of programme implementation; Contribution to EU 2020 targets.	Theory based impact evaluation based on: Desk research; Data analysis; Surveys; Focus groups; Case studies; Interviews	Programming document; Financial data at programme level; Available Annual Implementation Reports; Results of the Implementation Evaluation as regards the physical and financial progress of the programme and of the projects; List of projects funded and project description up to the cut-off date	External expertise / 90 000

Taking into consideration the timing of the above-mentioned evaluations, the tendering process shall be done jointly, constituting into one single evaluation contract to be performed in a coherent and continuous manner.

Detailed information on the evaluations planned for the Programme can be found in Section VI of the Evaluation plan.

3. Additional evaluations

Additional evaluations may be carried out in case of emerging urgent needs, e.g. where 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 priority axes or specific objectives.

These evaluations cannot be anticipated at this stage and will be carried out either by external experts or internally by MA.

The scope and subject, evaluation questions, tasks and expected results of evaluations will be defined separately for every evaluation to be carried out.

SECTION V: TIMETABLE AND BUDGET

Based on previous experience, the indicative allocation from the Technical Assistance budget for contracting external expertise for carrying out evaluations is EUR 160 000 where the estimated budget for mid-term evaluation is EUR 70 000 and for impact evaluation, divided into 3 modules – EUR 90 000.

SECTION VI: DESCRIPTION OF PLANNED EVALUATIONS

1. Implementation / Mid-term evaluation

1.1 Scope, subject and rationale

The main goal of the planned mid-term evaluation is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management and implementation, including appraising the appropriate functioning of the programme management settings. It further aims at assessing the relevance of the programme and the progress of implementation of the communication strategy. Therefore the focus is put on the following evaluation criteria:

- Effectiveness – whether the programme is on good track to achieve its objectives and expected results;
- Efficiency – comparison between the actual outputs and the inputs – the resources mobilized;
- Relevance – whether the programme objectives relevant to the current needs;

Based on the above mentioned evaluation criteria, the scope of the **Implementation/Mid-Term Evaluation** covers the following main aspects:

Effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system

- Programme management structures;
- Decision making processes;
- Project application and selection processes;
- Project implementation and monitoring processes;

Effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation

- Progress in terms of achievement of programme objectives and expected results;
- Progress in relation to performance framework milestones and targets;
- Respect of horizontal principles;
- Contribution to EU2020 strategy and macro-regional strategies;

Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives

- Programme strategy, set milestones and targets;

Effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy

- Programme communication;
- Partner involvement;

The implementation/mid-term evaluation shall cover the entire project cycle and shall assess the progress of thematic achievements, programme communication results and the programme relevance in relation to the current cross-border needs and expectations. This will allow appraising whether the programme specific objectives are already covered by a sufficient number and critical mass of approved projects, and to identify potential gaps to be considered for the forthcoming call(s) (if needed), i.e. to assess whether the programme is well on track towards reaching the set objectives. Furthermore it will allow integrating findings on programme management settings in view of immediate response and respective follow up measures to any detected weaknesses.

1.2 Evaluation questions

Taking into account the evaluation criteria, the following indicative evaluation questions have been identified which could be further adapted and specified when launching the evaluation exercises.

As regards the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management system

- Is the overall management and control system effective? What can be improved?
- Are decisions making processes at programme level clear and transparent?
- How efficient and effective are the project generation, selection and contracting processes?
- How effective is the programme monitoring system?
- How effective are the project implementation rules? Did the use of simplified cost options prove to be efficient?
- What are the major difficulties faced by the beneficiaries? What measures could be taken to overcome them?
- Are there any specific factors hindering the effective use of Technical Assistance funds? Are there any steps in the use of Technical Assistance funds that could be made more efficient?

As regards the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation

- What is the progress towards the overall programme goal, specific objectives and expected results? How is the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilised?
- What is the actual level of achievement of programme's result and output indicators? Which are the internal and external factors affecting the achievement of the set targets?

- Are there any risks/problems (including de-commitment risks) hindering the smooth programme implementation? What specific actions should be taken in order to minimise the risks?
- Are the relevant target groups of the programme successfully involved? How is the participation in terms of beneficiaries' type as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the programme area?
- To what extent are horizontal principles integrated in the programme management arrangements and in the activities of funded projects?
- To what degree is the programme implementation contributing to the EU2020 strategy and to relevant macro-regional like the European Strategy for the Danube Region, national and regional strategies?
- To what extent does the Programme add benefit to the partners from Serbia in terms of achievement of the specific IPA II objectives and in particular strengthening regional integration and territorial cooperation?
- Have synergies been created with other instruments and funds? How effective is the coordination with other Interreg programmes?

As regards the assessment of the relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives

- Are the Programme objectives still relevant, consistent and complementary in the policy context?
- Is Programme properly addressing the current development needs in the programme area?
- Are there any stringent uncovered needs that could be tackled under this or future cross-border programme?

As regards the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy

- Do the communication activities carried out by the programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives set out in the Communication Strategy? If not which changes are needed?
- Which communication tools were the most effective in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme?

1.3 Methods to be used and data requirements

The indicative methods and tools to be applied for the implementation/mid-term evaluation are listed below. They will be further specified in the ToR and in the inception report to be delivered by the contracted evaluator.

- Desk research (e.g. programme documents such as Cooperation Programme, internal procedures, application guide, Programme implementation manual, etc.);
- Data analysis (e.g. information collected through the programme monitoring systems such as data on applicants and project beneficiaries, Programme's result and output indicators, project progress reports, financial and Programme monitoring data, etc.);
- Surveys (e.g. among applicants, beneficiaries, other stakeholders and target groups etc.);
- Interviews (e.g. with programme bodies, project beneficiaries, other relevant target groups etc.);
- Case studies (e.g. on selected focus groups, types of beneficiaries, thematic achievements);

For the above mentioned methods the following data requirements apply:

As regards the desk research and data analysis

The information related to the programme procedures and (monitoring) data is well documented in various programme documents/manuals, and in the electronic programme monitoring system (MIS). In particular, the latter contains all information and data related to applications, project selection, project implementation and monitoring of the progress (including indicator system and financial data). These documents and data serve as a solid base for the desk research and data analysis.

As regards the surveys and interviews

The programme bodies and in particular the JS dispose of a comprehensive contact data of project beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders which is constantly updated and which can be used for the purposes of the evaluation. The contact data could be sorted according to various criteria allowing targeted communication and selection of addressees for surveys and interviews.

As regards the case studies

The JS is closely monitoring the implementation of the funded projects via project progress reports and when needed through on-the-spot visits. The electronic monitoring system provides information on the deliverables and outputs from the project monitoring, including progress reports and on-the-spot visit reports which constitute a very comprehensive information source for the conduction of case studies by the evaluators.

1.4 Duration and timing

The implementation/mid-term evaluation is planned to start in the last quarter of 2018 and is supposed to be finalised in the first half of 2019. The evaluation is estimated to take around 8-9 months. This timing is linked to the fact that at this stage of programme implementation first project results will be already

available. Furthermore it will allow appraising the progress towards the achievement of the Programme result indicators in 2018.

The findings stipulated in the interim evaluation report including results of information and publicity activities will be integrated in the Programme annual implementation report to be submitted by 30 June 2019 and a final report feeding into the Programme annual implementation reports for 2020. The conclusions and recommendations related to programme relevance could be used for the preparation of the next programming period which is likely to start in 2019.

1.5 Indicative budget

An indicative budget of EUR 70 000 (external expertise) has been estimated for the implementation/mid-term programme evaluation.

2. Impact evaluation

2.1 Scope, subject and rationale

The main goal of the planned impact evaluation is to assess the effects of the Programme implementation to the cross-border regional development and to analyse the mechanisms producing the impact. The challenges of the impact evaluation clearly lie in distinguishing the effects of programme implementation from the contribution of other external factors (such as other EU co-financed programmes, socio-economic developments, political changes, etc.).

The impact evaluation covers the programme priority axes 1 to 3 and their specific objectives by considering the following guiding principles of theory based impact evaluation:

- *Identifying changes:* What change can be observed in relation to the objectives of the programme?
- *Estimating impacts:* To what extent can the observed changes be attributed to the implementation of the programme?
- *Understanding impacts and showing what works best in terms of effectiveness and efficiency:* What mechanisms of programme implementation have delivered the observed impact?

2.2 Evaluation questions

Considering the above mentioned guiding principles, the following indicative evaluation questions have been drawn for each programme specific objective. The indicative evaluation questions and the topics to be tackled will be further developed before launching the evaluation.

Priority Axis 1 “Sustainable tourism”

Specific objective 1.1 “Tourist attractiveness: Supporting the development of competitive tourist attractions achieved through cooperation, thus contributing to the diversification of tourist product(s) in the cross-border region”

- What change can be observed in enhancing the tourism attractiveness of the cross-border region in view of diversification of tourist product(s) achieved through cooperation?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the increased attractiveness of the region?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Specific objective 1.2 “Cross-border touristic product: Capturing economic benefits from development of natural and cultural heritage in the border area through creating common cross-border touristic destination(s)”

- What change can be observed in capturing economic benefits from development of natural and cultural heritage in the border area through creating common cross-border touristic destination(s)?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the increase of joint and integrated approaches to sustainable tourism development in the border area?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Specific objective 1.3 “People-to-people networking: Capitalising the effect of cultural, historical and natural heritage tourism on border communities through common actions”

- What change can be observed in the field of capitalising the effect of cultural, historical and natural heritage tourism on border communities?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the level of community involvement and awareness about sustainable use of cross-border tourist resources?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Priority Axis 2 “Youths”

Specific objective 2.1 “Skills & entrepreneurship: Supporting the development of attractive environment for advancement of young people in the border region achieved through cooperation”

- What change can be observed in the level of professional and social realisation of young people in the border area?

- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the development of attractive environment for advancement of young people in the border region?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Specific objective 2.2 “People-to-people networking: Promote cooperation initiatives for and with young people, thus enhancing mobility of young people across borders”

- What change can be observed in the level of youth involvement in networks across the border?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to enhancing mobility of young people across borders?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Priority Axis 3 “Environment”

Specific objective 3.1 “Joint risk management: To prevent and mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made cross-border disasters”

- What change can be observed in the level of preparedness to manage risks of transnational dimension?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to prevention and mitigation of the consequences of natural and man-made cross-border disasters?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

Specific objective 3.2 “Nature protection: Promoting and enhancing the utilization of common natural resources, as well as stimulating nature protection in the programme area, through joint initiatives across the border”

- What change can be observed in the capacity for nature protection and sustainable use of common natural resources in the border region?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to nature protection and valorisation of common natural resources in the programme area?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?

2.3 Methods to be used and data requirements

The impact evaluation will be carried out following a *theory-based approach*¹, which follows the steps of the programme intervention logic identifying causal links and mechanisms of change. Its main goal is to explain why a given change has occurred and how an intervention has caused that change. It will also analyse the assumptions which were made when establishing the intervention logic. This approach mainly produces a qualitative estimate of the impacts.

A *counterfactual approach* is considered as not suitable to be used in the context of an impact evaluation of the Programme due to the fact that setting up randomised comparison groups of supported and non-supported target groups at the level of the programme area would require a too large number of participants and entities for ensuring statistical significance and would be by all means time consuming.

The *indicative methods and tools* to be applied for the impact evaluation are listed below. They will be further specified in the ToR and in the inception report to be delivered by the contracted evaluator.

- Desk research and literature reviews;
- Data analysis (in particular data collected on output and result indicators);
- Surveys (e.g. addressing project beneficiaries, target groups, experts);
- Focus groups (e.g. with thematic experts);
- Interviews (e.g. with project beneficiaries, relevant stakeholders and target groups, experts etc.);
- Case studies (e.g. on thematic achievements, target groups involvement, policy impacts, etc.);

Data collection:

The monitoring of the progress of the result indicators at different stages of programme implementation (2018, 2023) and the comparison with the baseline situation (2014-2015) will provide an important input for the impact evaluation since it will give evidence of changes, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This will allow getting a clear and impartial perception on progress made and on results achieved by the programme compared to the initial situation as described in the baseline. The information gathered for the needs of result indicators monitoring will also contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the changes achieved and will serve as a valuable basis for the impact evaluation.

Other relevant data for the impact evaluation are available from the monitoring of the funded projects which is uploaded in the MIS. The system also includes all deliverables and outputs from the project

¹ Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans. Terms of References for Impact Evaluations. Guidance on Quality Management of External Evaluations. February 2015.

implementation as well as reported indicators which constitute a very comprehensive information source for analysing the thematic project achievements.

The availability of other information and data in terms of the programme documents, programme monitoring system, contact details etc. is described under section 1.3 in relation to the implementation/mid-term evaluation.

2.4 Duration and timing

The impact evaluation is planned to commence in the last quarter of 2021 when sufficient information on project achievements is expected to be available (at this time the implementation of projects approved under the calls for proposals will be finalised). This timing will also allow feeding the impact evaluation with information collected through the monitoring of result indicator progress foreseen in 2018. The impact evaluation is estimated to last 8-9 months.

The conclusions and recommendations will be integrated in the Programme annual implementation report to be submitted by 30 June 2023 as well as in the final implementation report to be submitted in 2024.

2.5 Indicative budget

An indicative budget of EUR 90 000 (external expertise) has been estimated for the Programme's Impact evaluation.