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Baltic Sea Region
funding cooperation

Evaluation plan

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1. Introduction to the evaluation plan

In the programme period 2014-2020, there is strong focus on result-orientation for programmes funded from the European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF). According to the European Commission, programme evaluations in the previous period mostly focused on management and implementation issues that did not give a proper understanding of what was achieved through the funds. In the 2014-2020 period therefore, the focus on programme evaluation lies especially on impact evaluation and on demonstrating the programme contribution to achieving programme objectives. Results of evaluations will serve as evidence when planning future policies and programmes. All ESIF programmes shall prepare evaluation plans that cover the evaluation activities, and in particular impact evaluations, planned during the 2014-2020 period.

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation plan

This evaluation plan of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 is a strategic document that will support the Programme implementation by:

- providing a framework for evaluations during Programme implementation;
- ensuring good quality of evaluations through proper planning. To this end, the evaluation plan includes information on the planned evaluations including the type of evaluation, methodological approach, data needs and availability as well as resources needed. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of the programme bodies in planning and implementing evaluations as well as in following up on evaluation outcomes;
- ensuring that evaluations are timely and relevant as regards the Programme's implementation phase and reporting requirements towards the Commission;
- ensuring appropriate financial and personnel resources for evaluation activities.

Furthermore, the evaluation plan is a tool for ensuring compliance with the legal requirements on programme evaluation. The legal basis of the evaluation plan is Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 according to which the Managing Authority is responsible for drawing up an evaluation plan for the programme that shall be submitted to the Programme's Monitoring Committee a year after the adoption of the Programme at the latest (Art. 114(1)). Evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact are to be carried out. At least once during the Programme, it shall be assessed how support from ESIF has contributed to the objectives for each priority, i.e., specific objectives of the Programme (Art. 56(3)). As further specified in the Commission's guidance document[1], the extent of such impact evaluation may vary between different specific objectives depending on the nature of result, available evidence and policy importance of the information. Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 also specifies

[1] Commission, the Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, February 2015, p. 8.

that the evaluation plan shall ensure that resources for funding and managing evaluations are appropriate and that evaluations shall be carried out by experts functionally independent from the authorities implementing the programme (Art. 54(3)). It should also be noted that the impact of programmes shall also be evaluated in relation to the targets under the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, having regard to the size of the programme (Art. 54(1)).

In addition to the requirements outlined in Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, this evaluation plan builds on the Commission's Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans (February 2015) and on information provided by the Interact Programme, such as the Question and Answer documents on evaluation plan and impact evaluations as well as Interact seminars. A complete list of references is included at the end of the document.

1.2 Coverage of the evaluation plan

This evaluation plan covers the transnational programme Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2014-2020. Time-wise, the coverage of the evaluation plan spans up until the end of 2023 when the last annual implementation report of the Programme to the European Commission is due. The Programme area covers eleven countries. It comprises eight EU Member States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany[2], Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. In addition, three partner countries outside the EU, Belarus, Norway and Russia[3], take part in the Programme.

The programme area of Interreg Baltic Sea Region overlaps with other transnational as well as with some cross-border programmes. However, a joint evaluation plan or joint evaluations with other programmes are not considered feasible as geographical and thematic overlaps with other programmes are only partial and as the intervention logics also differ from each other.

1.3 Analysis of relevant evidence available

European Commission recommends making use of data collected in public data registers in evaluations. However, in the context of a transnational cooperation programme, geographically relevant data or other evidence for programme evaluation purposes is hardly available outside the programme itself. The situation is especially challenging as the three non-EU countries are not (fully) covered by Eurostat data. Data needs and availability are discussed in further detail in chapter 3 in connection to methodological considerations for planning impact evaluation (section 3.2.2). The evaluation carried out in the context of setting baselines and indicators for the Programme's result indicators in 2014-2015 will be the main reference document for future evaluations. Impact evaluations will be closely

[2] The States (Länder) of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Niedersachsen (only NUTS II area Lüneburg region)
[3] St Petersburg, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Vologda Oblast, Kaliningrad Oblast, Republic of Karelia, Komi Republic, Leningrad Oblast, Murmansk Oblast, Nenetsky Autonomous Okrug, Novgorod Oblast, Pskov Oblast.

linked to the monitoring of the result indicator values and should aim at establishing a link between the change observed in result indicator values and the Programme intervention. As the Programme aims have been defined via increasing the institutional capacities of its stakeholders, which is a new approach compared to the predecessor programmes, other previous evaluations of the predecessor programmes seem less relevant for planning impact evaluations within Interreg Baltic Sea Region.

2. Evaluation framework

2.1 The evaluation process and responsibilities

As outlined in the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013, the Managing Authority is responsible for delivering an evaluation plan to the Programme's Monitoring Committee no later than a year after the adoption of the Programme. In addition, it is responsible for submitting a report to the European Commission by the end of 2022 summarising all evaluation findings during the Programme. The regulation also outlines the responsibilities of the Monitoring Committee, namely, for examining and approving the evaluation plan and its updates as well as for reviewing progress made in the implementation of the plan and ensuring appropriate follow-up to evaluation findings. It is recommended that the Monitoring Committee reviews the implementation of the plan annually.[4]

This evaluation plan has been developed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region's Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat (MA/JS) and the Evaluation Steering Group (ESG). The ESG consists of nine of the Programme's Monitoring Committee members – one member from each participating country[5]. Rules of the ESG are outlined in Annex 2. The MA/JS and the ESG will together be responsible for all further activities related to Programme evaluation, including but not limited to: updating the evaluation plan, preparing impact evaluations, developing terms of reference for impact evaluations, assessing proposals by external experts, managing external evaluations, ensuring a close dialogue with external evaluators, planning communication of evaluation outcomes to third parties, proposing and implementing follow-up activities based on evaluation findings. The MA/JS has the main coordination responsibility on activities related to external evaluation whereas the ESG will be providing input, feedback and advice.

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

2.2 Source of evaluation expertise

Evaluation expertise to be used will be mixed, i.e., combining external and internal expertise.

Impact evaluations will be solely carried out by external evaluators based on terms of reference designed by the relevant Programme bodies. In addition, the Programme will undertake operational evaluation internally. Operational evaluation aims at measuring, assessing and analysing the progress in Programme implementation and contributing to ensuring the good and appropriate functioning of the Programme bodies. Lastly, the Programme bodies (MA/JS) are subject to independent checks on their efficient and

[4] European Commission, the Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, February 2015, p. 10.
5 This refers to full members of the MC, i.e., Russia and Belarus will be asked to nominate representatives to ESG once their full participation in the Programme is effective.

effective functioning carried out by the internal audit department (Internal Audit) of the Managing Authority Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH).

2.3 Maintaining MA/JS expertise for managing evaluations

There is considerable institutionalised knowledge and expertise on practical planning, coordination and management of external evaluations in the MA/JS. This expertise is based on managing numerous evaluations during previous programmes.

An MA/JS internal evaluation group consisting of four to five staff members is responsible for evaluation related activities in the Programme. Participating staff members include those who were in charge of external evaluations already in previously. They, therefore, have insight and understanding of different methodological approaches to evaluation that are prerequisite for preparing terms of reference, for example.

Members of the internal evaluation group closely follow guidance and training on evaluation provided by the European Commission and Interact. For example, staff members from the evaluation group have participated in Interact seminars on evaluation plan and impact evaluation and continue to do so during the Programme when evaluation related seminars are offered. Any other relevant training will be considered as well, for example, related to drafting terms of reference for impact evaluations, in case not offered by Interact. Exchange with other transnational programmes on evaluation has been useful in the past and is also planned to be continued.

2.4 Use and communication of evaluation outcomes

Evaluation outcomes will be used primarily by the Programme bodies and the European Commission. Especially for the MA/JS and the Monitoring Committee, evaluation outcomes and findings will be valuable tools to follow the progress and success of Programme implementation. Based on evaluation outcomes (when available early enough) the Programme bodies will be able to steer the Programme implementation. Furthermore, via the Programme's Monitoring Committee members, evaluation outcomes will reach the relevant national and regional administrations (e.g., related to the implementation of other ESIF funded programmes). European Commission will be using evaluation outcomes in collecting evidence from all programmes for policy-making purposes.

All evaluation reports will be submitted to the European Commission after having been approved by the Monitoring Committee. In addition, the Programme will prepare a summary report on all evaluations carried out during the Programme to be submitted to the European Commission by the end of 2022. All evaluations will also be published on the Programme website. The publication of evaluation reports is planned to be promoted in the Programme newsletter received by thousands of Programme stakeholders from lead partners and potential beneficiaries to policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders in the Programme area (e.g., stakeholders of the EUSBSR). Communication towards these stakeholders will be designed case by case based on the actual evaluation outcomes and their potential relevance to any specific groups.

2.5 Quality management of evaluations

Based on the Programme's previous experience with external evaluations, terms of reference are of utmost importance in assuring good quality evaluation. Therefore, special attention will be paid on the preparation and drafting of terms of reference, including specific selection criteria for best offer. Terms of reference will be prepared jointly by the MA/JS and the evaluation steering group before being reviewed and approved by the complete Monitoring Committee. In addition to independence, qualification and proven experience of the evaluator are important selection criteria when choosing external experts and directly linked to the quality of evaluations. Secondly, once an external evaluator has been contracted, continuous and close dialogue between the evaluator and the Programme bodies will be ensured as this is directly linked to the quality and usefulness of evaluation outcomes. To ensure good cooperation, a member of the internal evaluation group within the MA/JS will be appointed as responsible for contact towards the evaluator and the same approach will be expected from the contracted evaluator. From the beginning, a schedule for interim reports and regular meetings between the Programme and the evaluator will be established. Inception and interim reports will be made available for commenting by the ESG and evaluators will present and discuss evaluation results in MC meetings.

2.6 Overall budget and time planning of evaluations

A total budget of approximately € 270.000 is indicatively allocated to external evaluations from the technical assistance of the Programme. It is based on the budgets of external evaluations carried out during the predecessor programme. The two evaluation contracts planned are expected to be somewhat larger than those in the previous programme. This is due to the evaluation contracts including the update of the Programme's result indicator values three times during the Programme.[6] The internal evaluations planned as well as any evaluation-related training of MA/JS colleagues will be covered from the Technical Assistance of the Programme, mainly in the form of staff costs. As during the predecessor programme, the regular tasks of the MA/JS colleagues also include activities related to evaluation such as data gathering and support to external evaluators.

Annex 1 shows when individual evaluations are planned to be carried out and how they feed into the reporting requirements of the Programme towards the European Commission. The table includes a timeline for the procurement of external evaluators as well as an indicative budget for each of the external evaluations.

[6] See section 3.4 for further information on combining evaluation activities with the monitoring of result indicator values

3. Planned evaluations

This chapter introduces the types of evaluation to be undertaken during the Programme. Evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact are to be carried out and the contribution of ESIF support to the specific objectives of the Programme needs to be assessed.[7] Consequently, the main focus of evaluation during Interreg Baltic Sea Region is on impact evaluation of the specific objectives of the Programme. In addition, the Programme contribution to the EUSBSR and EU2020 is to be assessed by an independent evaluator. Furthermore, the Programme is planning to include the assessment of the involvement of different types of partners (at least local and regional administration, research organisations and private companies) in the Programme in external evaluations.

This chapter discusses in detail the approach and rationale of evaluating the impact of the Programme's specific objectives. It briefly describes the Programme logic, then discusses methodological and data considerations and outlines the main guiding evaluation questions. Other aspects to be included in external impact evaluations are then briefly outlined. Lastly, the internal operational evaluation that the Programme is planning to carry out is introduced and outlined at the end of the chapter.

In line with the guidance from the European Commission, evaluations beyond a three-year period of the approval date of the plan (or its update) are indicative. Thus, it should be noted that whereas this chapter discusses possible methodological approaches and tools to be used for evaluations, the actual approach for each evaluation will be reviewed, and updated if needed, when developing terms of reference. External evaluators will be expected to propose a detailed evaluation design and methodology based on the Programme needs. Final evaluation questions for each evaluation will be discussed and possibly further refined together by the external evaluator, the ESG and the MA/JS. Lastly, evaluation needs may change during the Programme implementation, and also therefore, the planned evaluations should be considered as indicative.

Annex 1 complements this chapter by outlining the timeline of the Programme reporting requirements towards the European Commission, planned evaluations and updates of the result indicator values. The table shows that the evaluations are planned so that results will be available to feed into the Programme's annual implementation reports. Namely, external evaluations will feed into the major annual implementation report due in 2019[8] and into the final evaluation report to the European Commission due by the end of 2022.

[7] For an overview of the legal requirements on evaluation, see section 1.1.
[8] It will not be feasible to carry out an external evaluation that would feed into the first major annual implementation report due in 2017.

Defining and evaluating impact, effectiveness and efficiency

Before discussing the planned evaluations further, it should be clarified what the requirement to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact means in practice and how these three terms are understood and taken into account in the planning of evaluations.

Impact in the context of the Programme impact evaluation is understood *as the Programme's contribution to a change that is observed*. Thus, the specific objectives of the Programme will be evaluated in terms of how successful they are in reaching the intended results. Impact evaluation questions should be formulated so that by answering them, an evaluator can draw conclusions on the Programme's contribution to a change observed.

If effectiveness is understood as *"the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result"*[9] it can be concluded that effectiveness of the Programme and its' specific objectives are in fact covered by impact evaluation. Evaluating the impact of the specific objectives includes an assessment of whether and to what extent the Programme has been successful (effective) in reaching the desired results.

Efficiency in the context of programme evaluation is defined as in *"how the use of financial/administrative resources relates to outputs or results"*[10]. The efficient use of financial resources allocated to each specific objective versus the achieved results will be included in impact evaluations. Based on impact evaluation outcomes, conclusions can be drawn on whether the funds allocated were sufficient and efficiently used for reaching real impacts. As for the use of the Programme's administrative resources, it does not seem feasible to evaluate it separately for each specific objective. Therefore, efficiency in terms of using administrative resources will be evaluated by assessing the proper functioning of the Programme bodies, and especially of the MA/JS that is responsible for the operational implementation and the administrative resources of the Programme. Findings from such evaluation performed by an independent evaluator will be looked at in comparison to the Programme reaching its results.

3.1 Assessing the Programme effects - Impact evaluation

Interreg Baltic Sea Region covers 11 countries with the ultimate aim "to strengthen the integrated territorial development and cooperation for a more innovative, better accessible and sustainable Baltic Sea Region" by aiming to increase the institutional capacities of its target groups. Institutional capacity is defined based on five dimensions of capacity each of which has been further defined and operationalised by specific characteristics.[11] Impact in the context of Interreg Baltic Sea Region is defined as "increased institutional capacity of the

[9] Oxford dictionaries: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/effectiveness (- Regulation (EU)1303/2013 and the European Commission's Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans do not define efficiency in the context of programme evaluations).

[10] European Commission, the Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, February 2015, p. 7.

[11] For more information on the definition and approach to institutional capacity, refer to the Cooperation Programme, p. 10 and to the strategic evaluation report (Final report analysis of projects in 2007-2013 and setting baselines and targets for the indicators 2014-2020) p. 82.

Programme's target groups to bring about a positive change in the region based on the Programme intervention". The specific objectives of the Programme that are to be addressed by impact evaluations are introduced and outlined below.

3.1.1 Thematic priorities 1-3

The 12 thematic specific objectives of the Programme address a range of issues related to innovation, natural resources and transport. All aim at increasing the institutional capacities of relevant stakeholders which in turn are expected to lead to improvements in the region (in the state of regional development). Consequently, data availability as well as methodological possibilities are similar for these specific objectives. Therefore, it seems appropriate to evaluate the impact of each thematic specific objective in the same manner and to same extent. Projects implemented under the extension stage and clustering tools will belong to a (group of) specific objective(s). Thus, the impact evaluation of priorities 1-3 includes the evaluation of the extension stage and clustering concepts. This will be taken into account when drafting terms of reference.

3.1.2 Priority 4

The Programme has two specific objectives that allocate Programme funds to increasing the institutional capacity for macro-regional cooperation. In practice, these two specific objectives serve to allocate ERDF to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region by 1) funding preparatory seed money projects and by 2) funding activities of the policy area coordinators and horizontal action coordinators of the EUSBSR, funding the Strategy forums as well as supporting specific communication activities identified by the National Coordinators of the Strategy. These two specific objectives are by nature very different from the other Programme specific objectives. In fact, through priority 4, the Programme delivers a service to the EUSBSR stakeholders by channelling funds for the implementation and coordination of the Strategy. Thus, the approach to evaluating their impact will differ from that of the thematic specific objectives (see section 3.2.4 for more information).

3.2 Planning of impact evaluations

Three issues are essential when planning impact evaluations, namely the guiding *evaluation questions*, the *characteristics of the programme* evaluated and the *capability of evaluation designs and methods*. These three aspects form the basis - "a design triangle" - for planning impact evaluations and are interlinked. [12]

This chapter outlines the basis for planning impact evaluations for Interreg Baltic Sea Region loosely relying on the triangle model explained above. The first step is to discuss the Programme characteristics and their methodological consequences. The characteristics of the Programme are the starting point for evaluation planning as the nature of transnational cooperation clearly limits the choice of evaluation methodology and availability of data that

[12] Elliot Stern, 2015. Presentation: Good Evaluation Planning – and why this matters, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/network/meetings/#2

will further affect the planning of evaluation questions. As a second step and follow-up to the methodological considerations, it seems relevant to address the question of data availability and collection. As a last step, the basic theory of change underpinning the Programme's intervention logic is outlined and guiding evaluation questions formulated. The questions should be such that they can be properly addressed based on available data and resources. The task of an impact evaluator will be to assess - based on the guiding evaluation questions - whether and to what extent the theory of change underpinning the Programme remains valid.[13]

3.2.1 The Programme characteristics and methodological considerations

When it comes to evaluating the impact of a transnational cooperation programme, it is important to acknowledge the programme context, area and scope. Taking into account the wide geographical coverage and the limited financial resources of the Programme divided between many specific objectives, qualitative approach (as opposed to quantitative) seems most feasible for evaluating the Programme's impacts.[14] It should be recognised that in the context of transnational cooperation, where multiple influences are present, it is difficult to isolate the impact of a single transnational programme from other developments in the region. Nevertheless, impact evaluations can provide insight into how the Programme's impact is perceived by the target groups and end-users.

Two possible methodological approaches to qualitative impact evaluation of ESIF Programmes are put forward by the European Commission: theory-based evaluation and counter factual evaluation.[15]

> **Theory-based impact evaluation** is based on following the steps of a programme's intervention logic (how things should logically be linked together to produce the desired change) and identifying causal links as well as mechanisms of change. It answers questions like *why* and *for whom* an intervention works. Thus, instead of a number or differences between groups that are compared, it aims at providing insight into why things work (or do not work).
>
> **Counterfactual impact evaluation** is based on using control/comparison groups next to the actual group in the focus of an intervention. The counterfactual method is well-suited for answering questions like *does it work* or *how much of a change* is due to a specific intervention. Counterfactual impact evaluation can be used for quantifying effects and it requires establishing what would have happened in the absence of an intervention as a comparison for the reality where the intervention being evaluated took place.

[13] COM(2015) 215 final, Commission Staff Working Document Better Regulation Guidelines, p. 45.
[14] European Commission, 2015, Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, p. 8; Interact, 2015, Questions and answers on impact evaluation(s) for Interreg programmes 2014-2020.
[15] European Commission, 2015, Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, p. 9

The counterfactual approach does not appear suitable in the context of a transnational cooperation programme. It would be very challenging, if not impossible, to set-up credible control or comparison groups of non-supported target groups at the level of the Programme area. Also, the counterfactual method requires a large enough number of participants for controls in order to be credible and is thus very resource-demanding.[16] It would not be feasible to fund such evaluation activities from the limited Programme budget. Furthermore, even if it was possible to use control groups, so many other factors influence institutional capacities of the relevant stakeholders in the Programme area that it would be challenging to credibly attribute possible differences between the cases observed to the Programme intervention.

Theory-based approach to impact evaluation is more relevant in the Programme context than the counterfactual one. Qualitative information on the Programme impact (why and for whom) will support steering the Programme implementation as well as provide valuable input to planning future programme intervention logics. Moreover, multiple methods can be used for theory-based impact evaluation and it seems to provide a more flexible approach than the counterfactual one that is always linked to the establishment of control groups. Taking into account the main aims of the Programme objectives - increasing the institutional capacities of the Programme's target groups - reaching the Programme target groups and end-users will be of paramount importance for getting relevant feedback on the Programme performance. From this perspective, especially surveys, interviews, case studies and focus groups seem like suitable tools for evaluating the Programme's impact relying on the theory-based approach.

3.2.2 Data needs and collection

In connection to sound methodology, access to reliable data is a key requirement to any evaluation of quality. Impact evaluations need to be based on data that allow evaluators to make conclusions on the Programme's impact on the institutional capacities of the Programme's target groups. Taking into account the Programme area and the aspect of transnational cooperation, it is clear that such data or statistics are not being collected outside the Programme itself. In the context of the theory-based approach, two sources of data, or evidence, are relevant and available for evaluating the impact of the Programme. On one hand, the Programme's online monitoring system BAMOS collects information from projects via their regular project reporting. The project reporting forms are designed so that the data/evidence needs for evaluations are taken into account and consequently project reporting can directly be used to feed data into impact evaluations. The monitoring system delivers quantitative and qualitative data on the Programme's output indicators as well as qualitative data on project outputs. On the other hand, considerable amount of data will also be collected outside the Programme. Qualitative and quantitative data in relation to the Programme's result indicators will be collected by external experts when updating the result indicator values for monitoring purposes. In addition, external impact evaluators will

[16] Idem

generate data and evidence on the Programme's impact, e.g., via surveys and interviews among the Programme target groups, end-users and other relevant stakeholders in the region. Table 1 gives an overview of available data relevant for impact evaluations.

Data source	Type of data
Internal: BAMOS monitoring system	Quantitative data on Programme output indicators
	Qualitative data on Programme output indicators
	Qualitative data on project outputs
	Further qualitative information on project results and achievements from project reports
	Quantitative data on Programme target groups
	Qualitative data on Programme target groups
	Quantitative data on horizontal principles (feeds in to Programme reporting to the European Commission)
External: Monitoring of the Programme result indicator values (through interviews, focus groups, desk research).	Quantitative data (values) on Programme result indicators
	Qualitative data on Programme result indicator values
External: Impact evaluators (through interviews, surveys, desk research and other relevant sources, such as national and international statistics when available)	Qualitative data on the Programme's contribution to the observed development of the Programme result indicator values

Table 1: Data sources and types relevant for impact evaluations

3.2.3 Theory of change and evaluation questions (priorities 1-3)

In order to formulate impact evaluation questions for theory-based impact evaluation, it is important to understand the theory of change underpinning the Programme's intervention logic. The theory of change behind the specific objectives of Interreg Baltic Sea Region can be deducted from the Cooperation Programme. The simplified illustration below is constructed using the European Commission's guidance[17] and is applicable to any of the thematic specific objectives of the Programme. It presents the basic chain of steps through which the Programme is expected to contribute to regional development by increasing the institutional capacities of its target groups.[18] The theory of change is always based on the needs and opportunities that the Programme addresses in a given field by aiming at

[17] European Commission, 2015: Presentation on Methods and data requirements for impact evaluations delivered in the Interact Seminar on impact evaluation in June 2015.

[18] The ex-ante evaluation of the Programme acknowledged the Programme's approach and confirmed the plausibility of the planned intervention logic, i.e., the causal links between the proposed activities, outputs and expected results at the level of the specific objectives.

increasing the institutional capacities of its target groups.[19] For example, in the case of specific objective 2.2 Renewable energy, enhanced capacity of public and private actors involved in energy planning and supply is expected to increase production of sustainable renewable energy in the region for which the region has potential and political interest as outlined in the SWOT analysis.

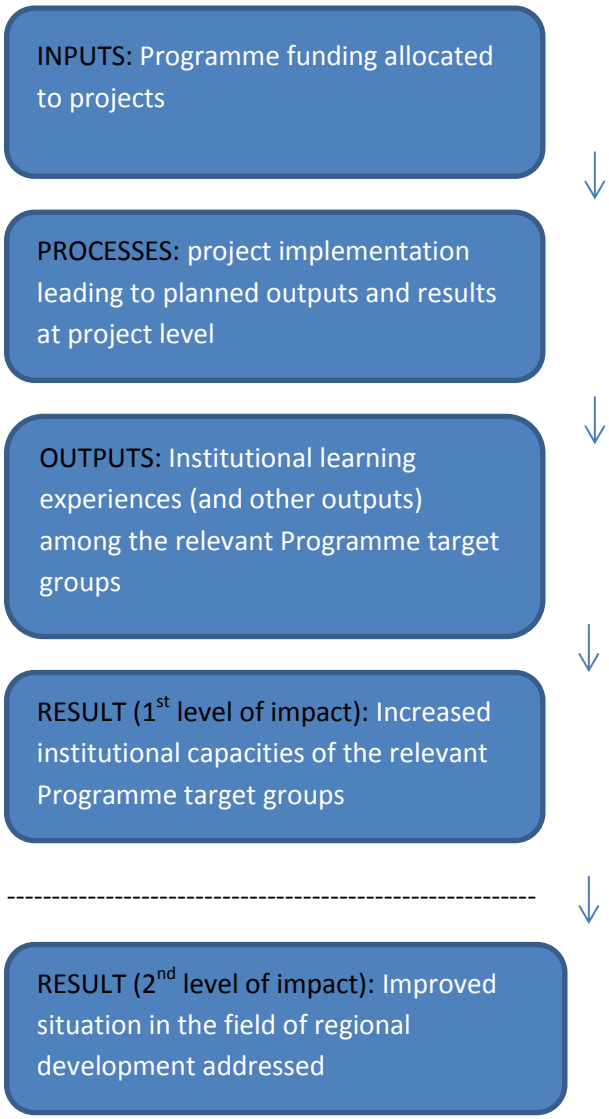

Figure 1: Theory of change underpinning priorities 1-3

Evaluating the impact of the Programme's specific objectives will address the first, immediate level of impact on institutional capacity of the Programme's target groups that is directly addressed by the Programme interventions. While both levels of impact are subject to a multitude of impacts from outside the Programme, the second level of impact as

[19] These are described in detail in the Cooperation Programme for each specific objective, for more information see the descriptions of the priorities starting from p. 22 and SWOT analysis (annexes 3.1-3.3 to the CP).

improvement in regional development (e.g. increased production of sustainable renewable energy in the case of the specific objective 2.2 Renewable energy used as an example above) seems to be even more so. This supports limiting impact evaluation to the first level of Programme impact, i.e., the increase of institutional capacities of the relevant target groups.

The theory of change underpinning the Programme serves as a guideline for formulating evaluation questions while the limitations deriving from the Programme characteristics as well as the methodological considerations will need to be taken into account. The task of an impact evaluator will be to test the theory of change - answers to evaluation questions should help understand whether the causal chain assumed by the theory of change works in reality. Only questions that can be addressed via the available methodologies should be included in an impact evaluation.

Main guiding evaluation questions / priorities 1-3 (same approach and guiding questions for each specific objective)

- Have the Programme interventions reached the relevant target groups?
    - Have the project outputs and results led to institutional learning experiences among the relevant target groups?
    - What are the specific impacts of the Programme in terms of increasing the capacity of a certain target group (target group(s) to be defined based on the specific objective evaluated)? – please see Annex 3 for detailed guiding questions on capacity building for each specific objective. These will be further specified by developing sub-questions together with external evaluators.
    - Which dimensions of institutional capacity have been increased by the Programme contribution?
- How do the relevant target groups experience the institutional learning?
    - How/through which processes have Interreg Baltic Sea Region projects contributed to the institutional capacity building of the relevant target groups in selected thematic areas?
      a) Enhanced institutionalised knowledge and competence;
      b) Improved governance structures and organisational set-up;
      c) More efficient use of human and technical resources (databases, technical solutions, small infrastructure etc.);
      d) Better ability to attract new financial resources;
      e) Increased capability to work in transnational environment.
- If no impact is observed / experienced by a relevant target group, what is the lack of impact due to?
- Which other factors have influenced the change in institutional capacities of the target groups? How and why?

3.2.4 Impact evaluation of priority 4

Priority 4 comprises two specific objectives (4.1 Seed Money and 4.2 Coordination of macro-regional cooperation) that clearly differ from the thematic specific objectives as well as from each other. Consequently, different approaches should be applied for impact evaluation. From the Programme point of view, it seems relevant to evaluate how seed money support has helped in establishing EUSBSR flagship projects and how the Programme support has helped to better coordinate the implementation of the Strategy. However, the Programme should avoid trying to evaluate the performance of the EUSBSR stakeholders or its structures, as such evaluation would relate to assessing the Strategy itself.

Specific objective 4.1 Seed Money

For seed money, it seems relevant to assess how and how much the seed money funding has supported the development of EUSBSR flagship projects. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare EUSBSR flagship projects developed with and without seed money. The flagships with seed money would include also those that have received Seed Money Facility funding (the predecessor or the Programme seed money funded by the European Parliament) and other seed money funding (e.g. Swedish Institute funding). As a comparison group would be available, it seems possible as well as useful to rely on a counterfactual approach for evaluating the impact of the specific objective on Seed Money.

The guiding evaluation questions include:

- What is the rate of seed money projects resulting in full project applications? To what extent do the applications result in funding to projects?
- What are the differences between EUSBSR flagship projects developed with and without seed money?

Specific objective 4.2 Coordination of macro-regional cooperation

For the specific objective 4.2 it is most relevant to concentrate the evaluation efforts on PAC/HAC support which covers a major share of the funds allocated to the specific objective.[20] Here, it is possible to apply the general theory of change that was outlined above in relation to the thematic specific objectives under priorities 1-3.

[20] The general support and communication activities funded under 4.2 will in practice result in a few projects and they are less relevant in terms of funds allocated.

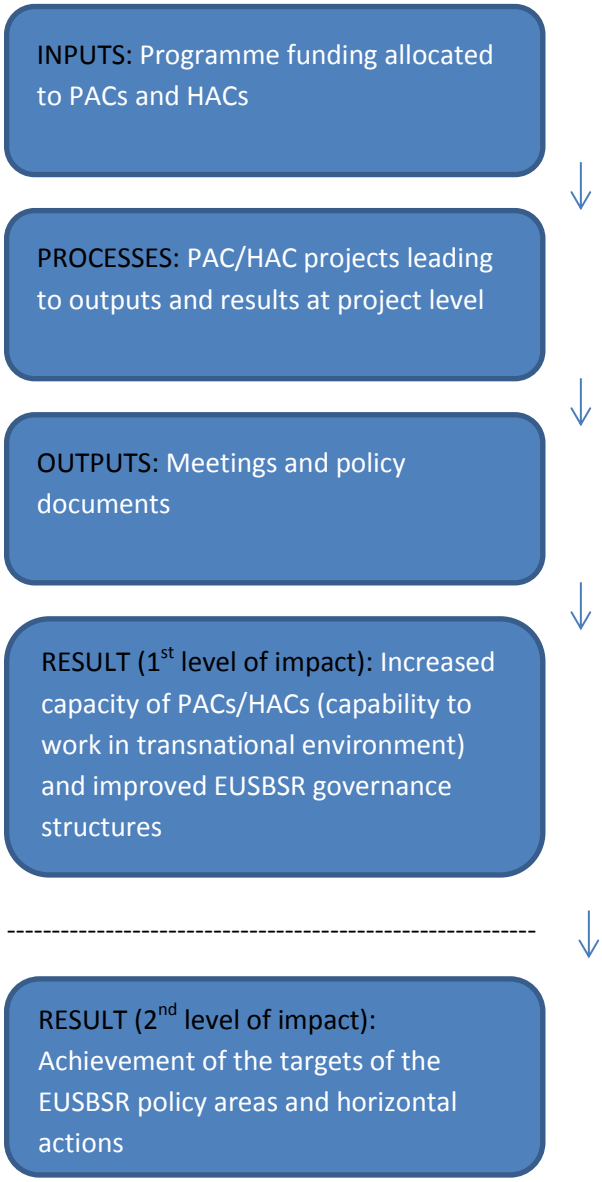

Figure 2: Theory of change underpinning specific objective 4.2

According to the theory of change, the first level of impact is increased capacity in the form of increased capability to work in transnational environment (meetings held) and improved governance structures (policy documents). These results reply to the need for support that PACs and HACs have in order to take over tasks beyond the regular role of their organisations and need additional support in particular for frequent communication with stakeholders. The second level of impact is the achievement of the targets of the policy areas. As for the priorities 1-3, also in this case both levels of impact are subject to multiple influenced also outside the Programme. Only the first level of impact will be addressed as the second level relates to assessing the Strategy itself.

Main guiding evaluation questions / specific objective 4.2

- What influence does the Programme support have to the coordination capacities of the PACs/HACs?
- What influence does the Programme support have to the (improved) governance structures of the EUSBSR?
- What type of activities have PACs/HACs needed and used the Programme funding for (in comparison to costs covered through other resources)?

3.3 Timing of impact evaluations

Impact evaluations can only be carried out once results have been achieved. Moreover, only at the end of the Programme will it be possible to get a comprehensive view of the Programme impacts.[21] Yet, impact evaluation should take place early enough to provide feedback on Programme implementation based on which the Programme bodies can steer the Programme. In addition to these considerations, impact assessments need to be planned so that they contribute to the Programme reporting towards the European Commission.

Consequently, it seems suitable to evaluate the Programme impact twice during the implementation. An initial impact evaluation based on the first results from projects is planned for 2018. It will be useful for ensuring that the Programme is on the right track and will feed into the Programme's second major annual implementation report due in 2019. The second impact evaluation is planned for 2022. It is timed so that final conclusions will be available for the final evaluation report of the Programme due by the end of 2022.[22] The majority of final project reports are expected to be submitted on time to feed into the second impact evaluation. Even if some reports were to be submitted towards the end of 2022, the main achievements of all projects are expected to be available already earlier.

Annex 1 outlines all evaluations planned to be carried out during Interreg Baltic Sea Region and shows how they feed into the Programme's annual implementation reports towards the European Commission. The sections below outline further details and implementation steps for the impact evaluations.

Impact evaluation 2018:

In 2018, three calls will have been finalised and up to 90 projects are expected to be approved. Initial results from (around 30) projects approved in the first call for priorities 1-3 are expected to be available. It should be noted that the allocation of Programme funds is not predefined at the level of specific objectives and therefore, based on the quality of project applications, differences are expected in the numbers of projects under different specific objectives. Such differences may influence especially the first impact evaluation. I.e., in case some specific objectives are not covered by projects in the first call of the

[21] This does not include the possible long-term impacts of transnational cooperation that can only be perceived years after the Programme closure.
[22] European Commission, 2015, Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, p. 9

Programme, they cannot be included in the first impact evaluation. This will be taken into account when drafting terms of reference for impact evaluations.

No broad conclusions will be possible based on the limited number of available project results but the first impact evaluation will serve to give an initial indication of whether the Programme is on track towards reaching the intended impacts and to what extent. Based on this, and if needed, the Programme bodies will be able to adjust the Programme implementation. In case a follow-up programme is being prepared, the impact evaluation results will be useful input to the drafters. Results from the first impact evaluation will feed into the second major annual implementation report of the Programme due in mid-2019. The impact evaluation will be combined with updating the Programme result indicators values planned for 2018.

Timeline: major steps

- By mid-2017: Terms of reference and other procurement documents approved by the MC
- By end of 2017: Selection of an external expert
- Early 2018: External expert starts working
- By end of 2018: Updated values for the Programme result indicators delivered to the European Commission
- Mid-2019: Results from the impact evaluation included in the Programme's second major implementation report
- By end of 2020: additional update on the Programme result indicators delivered to the European Commission

Estimated budget

- 120 000 €

Impact evaluation 2022/2023

It is expected that a vast of majority of projects will be finalised by mid-2022 and thus sufficient evidence would be available on time to provide conclusions on the impact of the Programme by the end of 2022 and thus feed into the European Commission's ex-post evaluation. The second impact evaluation will cover all thematic specific objectives of the Programme and thus address any gaps there may be after the first impact evaluation.

In addition to the Programme evaluation report, the results will feed into the final implementation report of the Programme. At the end of the Programme implementation, conclusions on the impacts will also be directed at the project implementers as evidence of ESIF well-spent. The impact evaluation will be combined with updating the Programme result indicators values in 2023.

Timeline: major steps

- By mid-2021: Terms of reference and other procurement documents approved by the MC
- By end of 2021: Selection of an external expert
- Early 2022: External expert starts working
- By end of 2022: (Initial) Results from the impact evaluation included in the Programme evaluation report
- By end of May 2023: Updated values for the Programme result indicators delivered to the European Commission
- (By mid-2023: If relevant – in case all project results were not available by the end of 2022 to feed into the report on impact evaluation results, final updated results of the Programme impact evaluation available for the final implementation report.)

Estimated budget

- 150 000 €

3.4 Combining monitoring of result indicators and impact evaluation

Three times during the Programme implementation, in 2018, 2020 and 2023, an external expert will be checking the Programme progress in terms of reaching the targets set for the result indicator values that capture the institutional capacities of the Programme target groups. Qualitative baselines and target values for the result indicators were set as a result of an external evaluation in 2014-2015. The same methodology, based on an online survey and thematic interviews, will be repeated when checking the progress.

Monitoring the result indicator values and evaluating the Programme impact have different functions. While monitoring relates to verifying and updating the status of the Programme result indicator values without estimating why the values have (or have not) changed, impact evaluation aims at showing the Programme contribution to the change observed in the result indicator values. This being said, it is clear that the two are very closely interlinked result indicator values being the starting point for impact evaluation. Moreover, a number of other factors support undertaking the two simultaneously:

- The type of external expertise needed is similar for indicator monitoring and for impact evaluation.
- Participants and methodologies in the two exercises overlap to a large degree: the same people will be asked to participate to surveys and interviews in both cases. Combining the two, therefore, also seems suitable in order to avoid unnecessary survey fatigue.[23]

[23] As many ETC programmes are planning to use surveys for monitoring their result indicators (and consequently, the same could be expected for their impact evaluations) survey fatigue among the ETC programmes' stakeholders is considered a real risk (presentation by Spatial Foresight in the Interact Seminar on Evaluation Plan in February 2015).

- Updating the values of result indicators will be a major effort for the Programme, both in terms of human and financial resources, when it comes to the preparation, procurement and managing the process. It is more resource-efficient to combine the use of external expertise in a few larger assignments that include monitoring and evaluation instead of procuring numerous smaller ones concurrently.
- Considering the timeliness of impact evaluations (see chapter 3.3), monitoring of the result indicators and impact evaluation would in any case at least partially overlap.

3.5 Other external evaluation during the Programme

3.5.1 Programme contribution to EUSBSR and EU2020

In addition to evaluating the impact of the specific objectives, the Programme's contribution to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and to the Union Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EU 2020) is to be evaluated.

Especially the Programme contribution to EUSBSR is expected to be substantial as EUSBSR was one of the main reference documents when the Programme funding priorities were designed. As regards EUSBSR, it should be clarified that while impact evaluation of priority 4 focuses on the Programme support to the development of EUSBSR flagship projects (Seed Money) as well as to the coordination of the EUSBSR, here the focus is on the contribution of the Programme's thematic objectives under priorities 1-3 to the implementation of the EUSBSR.

On the other hand, from the Programme point of view, it would useful to get feedback on the benefits of the Programme alignment with and support to the EUSBSR. [24] Questions covering this topic will be included in external evaluations.

The Programme will collect information on these aspects directly from projects via its reporting forms. In order to get a good understanding out about the Programme contribution to the relevant strategies, evaluators will need to get in touch with stakeholders of the strategies and with project implementers, for example, via interviews and surveys. Also desk research may be a useful tool in this context. Evaluation of the Programme contribution to EUSBSR and EU2020 will be included in both external impact evaluations.

The guiding evaluation questions:

- How has the Programme contributed to the (successful) implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)/ Europe 2020 Strategy? (to be assessed separately for each specific objective)
- Are there differences in quality and achievements between EUSBSR flagship projects supported by the Programme and the "regular" projects?

[24] Apart from the direct EUSBSR support under Priority 4, EUSBSR implementation is supported, for example, by prioritisation of flagship projects in the selection of applications.

- Has supporting the EUSBSR raised awareness about the Programme? Are there new project partners or target groups due to the EUSBSR support?

3.5.2 Communication strategy

The Programme needs to report to the European Commission on the results of information and communication activities carried out under the communication strategy. Therefore, assessment of the Programme communication strategy will be included in the two external impact evaluations. Evaluations will provide valuable information to the Programme bodies on how the strategy performs and what needs for revision there may be.

The guiding evaluation questions:

- What has been the impact and added value of the implementation of the communication strategy?
- Has there been an increase in awareness of the Programme among the target groups?
- Which communication activities have proven most useful to communicate the Programme?

3.5.3 Involvement of different types of partners

From a territorial cooperation point of view, it will be important to address the involvement of different types of partners in projects. One of the new elements in Interreg Baltic Sea Region in comparison to its predecessor programmes is that private for-profit companies are allowed to receive Programme co-financing. It will be useful for the Programme bodies to get feedback on this new feature to understand the benefits and challenges as regards project outcomes but also project implementation. It will be equally useful to look into the involvement of other target groups. For example, that of public authorities as the role of local and regional administrations seems to have diminished during the predecessor programme. On the other hand, research organisations have been increasing their participation. Feedback on the participation of these types of partners will be collected directly from project partners via project reporting. In addition, and especially related to the added value in terms of project results, it will be useful to include the evaluation of the involvement of different types of partners in external evaluation at least once. Feedback via interviews and surveys from project partners and other stakeholders collected by an external evaluator is needed to get a comprehensive understanding of the pros and cons of e.g., involving the private sector. In order to assure a larger sample of projects involving private partners, assessment of the involvement of different types of partners will be included in the second impact assessment of the Programme.

The guiding evaluation questions:

- Has the participation of – type of partner to be specified (e.g., private companies) – brought added value in terms of project results? What and how?
- What are the main challenges and obstacles in the involvement – type of partner to be specified – in projects? How can they be solved?

3.5.4 Performance of the MA/JS and use of technical assistance (P5)

External impact evaluation

In order to get feedback on the Programme's administrative capacity and performance from the Programme stakeholders, the two external impact evaluations will include questions that address the functioning of the Programme bodies. Based on the ex-ante evaluation[25], the following areas will be covered:

- MA/JS support to the MC
- Support to project applicants
- Support to project implementers
- Monitoring and evaluation

Detailed questions will be developed together with external evaluators using the ex-ante evaluation as a starting point.

Evaluation by the IB.SH Internal Audit

The IB.SH Internal Audit, the Managing Authority Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein's independent audit department is responsible for carrying out system checks of other IB.SH units approximately once every three years. Thus, in order to ensure the efficient functioning of the MA/JS, the IB.SH Internal Audit carries out risk-based and process orientated system checks that verify the eligibility and sound implementation of tasks carried out by the MA/JS[26]. The checks generally include samples drawn from process documentation, projects/award cases and inter-linkages with other relevant units at IB.SH like the accounting /control department or the legal department. The checks follow an evaluation plan agreed between the internal revision department and the IB.SH board. To support the checks of the IB.SH Internal Audit, the MA/JS annually collects information on the functioning of the Programme bodies during the operational evaluation of the management structures at the Programme level (for more information, see section 3.6.1).

The checks carried out by the IB.SH Internal Audit provide for an independent evaluation of the functioning of the Programme bodies (MA/JS) and a verification of the efficient use of technical assistance (priority 5) by the MA/JS.

[26] The checks also cover the functions of the Certifying Authority implemented by the MA.

Topics of the checks:

- Internal organisation, separation of functions where needed, fulfilment of tasks as laid down in contracts with third parties (European Commission/CP, countries participating in the Programme/MCS-Agreement & Land Schleswig-Holstein/AÜV) and in the relevant EU or national regulations.
- System check of specific MA/JS tasks, e.g.
    - application, assessment, selection procedure
    - monitoring of project implementation
    - documentation, reporting towards the European Commission and Programme bodies (e.g. MC, AA)
    - sound financial management
    - First level control of technical assistance
    - coordinating and receiving Programme/project payments
    - networking and public relations
    - development and operation of the project database = the electronic monitoring system used by the Programme (BAMOS)

Results of the checks:

- a comprehensive view of the functioning of the Programme bodies hosted by IB.SH
- evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of MA/JS in carrying out its tasks
- recommendations if needed and follow-up of measures taken to solve audit findings

Independence of the IB.SH Internal Audit

The IB.SH Internal Audit's checks are standardised and their schedule or approach cannot be negotiated by the units or departments being checked. Standardised means that following an announcement, there are audits on the spot, desk checks of the system as set-up in the unit or department depending on tasks and external contracts (e.g. with European Commission, with the Federal State of Germany or the Land Schleswig-Holstein etc.) as well as checks of interlinkages with other IB.SH units. The checks of the IB.SH Internal Audit are followed by an audit report including findings and recommendations as well as a procedure for a thorough follow-up when applicable.

3.6 Internal operational evaluation

This type of internal evaluation aims at measuring, assessing and analysing the progress in implementing the Programme as well as ensuring the good and appropriate functioning of the Programme bodies. Internal operational evaluation was carried out yearly during the predecessor Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. On one hand, it proved to be a useful tool for the MA/JS for monitoring and improving its own performance in the early stages of the programme. On the other hand, it served as input to the annual implementation reports of the Programme. The Evaluation Steering Group will be informed of the outcomes of internal operational evaluation.

Based on the good experience from the predecessor programme internal operational evaluation will be continued at all levels (financial, management structures at project and Programme levels as well as Programme delivery) in Interreg Baltic Sea Region. It serves as a tool for checking the financial and physical progress of the Programme, including analysis of reasons for deviations from targets (on project and Programme levels). Operational evaluation also addresses the good functioning of the management structures at the project level in order to identify needs for revision of procedures, such as project application, selection and monitoring procedures/systems of the Programme. The evaluation of Programme delivery addresses the relevance and quality of outputs at project and Programme levels. Lastly, operational evaluation at the Programme management level feeds into the checks of the Programme's Managing Authority Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein and will be performed annually. The frequency of the other levels of operational evaluation will be based on needs related to the phases of Programme implementation. In 2017 and 2019 comprehensive operational evaluations addressing all the levels (financial, management structures at project and Programme levels as well as Programme delivery) are planned to be carried out to feed into the Programme's major annual implementation reports to the European Commission.

Operational evaluation is carried out internally by the MA/JS that is most familiar with the monitoring and management system of the Programme. External support will be used to evaluate selected processes or approaches in the Programme implementation and administration in case malfunctioning is suspected.

The main target group for the results from internal operational evaluation is the MA/JS to whom this type of evaluation provides information on its own performance and allows adjusting its operations and approaches. Another main target group for the evaluation of management structures at the Programme level is the internal revisions department of the Managing Authority. Secondary indirect target groups for operational evaluation are the European Commission and the Monitoring Committee, who follow the Programme performance via the annual implementation reports.

3.6.1 Approach and methodology for operational evaluation

Operational evaluation is to a large extent based on data from the monitoring system of the Programme and feedback collected from potential applicants, applicants and lead/project partners (e.g. feedback on events like lead partner seminars). The approach and main evaluation questions/topics for the different levels of operational evaluation are outlined below. Detailed check lists of questions have been developed by the MA/JS. They are revised before each evaluation round to ensure the relevance of the checks with regard to the stage of the Programme implementation. The checklists are available on request to MA/JS.

Management structures at project level

This part of operational evaluation aims at looking into the Programme procedures related to providing support to potential applicants, applicants and lead partners in the different stages of project planning and implementation. The purpose is to identify needs for changes

and improvement as well as best practices to be kept. Different aspects will be evaluated depending on the phase of the Programme implementation. E.g., in the beginning, the focus will be on support measures to applicants and lead partners in project development, application (concept note and full application) and contracting stages. Later on, the focus will shift to evaluating the procedures for supporting projects in their implementation as well as to the monitoring and project closure procedures. The main guiding evaluation questions are outlined below.

- Is the support from MA/JS to project development sufficient (in relation to the coverage of topics, partner/country involvement and quality)?Is the admissibility check procedure adequate?
- Is the assessment procedure adequate? Is the time required for contracting the projects acceptable?
- Is the JS support to the approved projects sufficient?
- Is the monitoring process efficient?
- Is the project closure process efficient?
- Is BAMOS (the Programme's online application and monitoring system) performance acceptable?

Financial performance

The most important financial data are continuously processed at the occasions of various reporting duties - mainly towards the European Commission (payment requests, annual implementation reports) but also towards various Programme stakeholders (reports to the Monitoring Committee or requests from individual participating countries). Therefore, the operational evaluation of financial performance focuses on questions going beyond the regular reporting duties. Questions related to evaluation of the management structures at project level listed above are to large extent relevant for the evaluation of financial performance as well. The main guiding questions relevant at the beginning of the Programme implementation are listed below.

- Can the financial assessment procedure of project applications be further improved?
- Is the support from MA/JS to projects sufficient to avoid financial errors/ineligible expenditure (relevant for the application and implementation phases)?
- Can internal procedures (contracting/monitoring/closure) be further improved or accelerated from the financial point of view?
- Is the performance of the tools used (including BAMOS, management toolkit etc.) acceptable? How can they be further improved?
- Assessment of measures undertaken to avoid de-commitment. Are new measures needed? Which ones? (These are follow-up to the analysis of de-commitment risk done e.g. when preparing the annual implementation reports)
- How effective are measures to increase fund spending at Programme and project levels?

Programme delivery

The purpose of evaluating the Programme delivery is to allow the Programme bodies to draw conclusions on the quality of main outputs at project level and on the contribution to the Programme output indicators at the Programme level.

The aim of checking main outputs (including investments) at project level is to get an overview of the types of main outputs produced and their use by target groups. Such checks will support the MA/JS in finding out the main challenges that projects may have in terms of ensuring durable outputs as well as in drawing recommendations for projects and the possible follow-up programme. The main topics to be addressed include:

- Nature of the main output (e.g. beneficiaries, linkage to the overall project concept)
- Transnationality: is the main output of transnational relevance?
- Durability: how likely does is seem that the main output will be used beyond the project lifetime?
- Differences between what was planned and what was implemented (including budget)

At the Programme level, project contributions especially to the obligatory output indicator "documented learning experience" will be assessed and analysed in detail. Contributions to the other output indicators will also be checked to get an overall indication of the Programme performance. Potential and needs for improvement will be taken into account for further support and advice to projects. The main topics to be addressed include:

- Nature of the learning experience (e.g., what is understood as a learning experience, how is it documented, transnationality and transferability of the learning experience)
- Types of non-financial support enterprises receive
- Types of cooperation between enterprises and research institutions
- Types of newly developed market products and services

Management structures at Programme level

This part of operational evaluation feeds into the checks carried out by the IB.SH Internal Audit (see section 3.5.5 for more information) that evaluates the performance and efficiency of the MA/JS. As the MA/JS will be informed about the timing of the checks on short notice only, it annually collects detailed information that the IB.SH Internal Audit can use as input for its checks. The internal checks are based on the topics listed in section 3.5.5 and cover the functioning and main operating procedures of the MA/JS, Audit Authority, the Group of Auditors and the Monitoring Committee.

List of references

Direct references in the evaluation plan are made to the following sources:

- Elliot Stern, 2015. Presentation: Good Evaluation Planning – and why this matters, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/network/meetings/#2

- European Commission, 2013, Regulation (EU)1303/2013

- European Commission, 2015, Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans, February 2015

- European Commission, 2015, Commission Staff Working Document Better Regulation Guidelines, COM (2015) 215 final

- European Commission, 2015, presentation on Methods and data requirements for impact evaluations delivered in the Interact Seminar on impact evaluation in June 2015.

- Interact, 2015, Questions and answers on impact evaluation(s) for Interreg programmes 2014-2020, August 2015.

- Oxford dictionaries: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/effectiveness.

- Spatial Foresight, 2015, presentation in the Interact Seminar on Evaluation Plan in February 2015.

In addition, further sources have been used as background information and inspiration in the development of the evaluation plan:

COWI, 2014, Ex-ante Evaluation of Cooperation Programme of the Baltic Sea Region 2014-2020, Final report, May 2014.

European Commission, 2013, EVALSED: The resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development, September 2013.

European Commission, EVALSED Sourcebook: Methods and Techniques.

European Commission, 2015, Guidance document of monitoring and evaluation, concepts and recommendations.

Interact, 2015, Evaluation plan – question and answer document, March 2015.

Interact seminar on evaluation plan, February 2015.

Interact seminar on impact evaluation, June 2015.

Interact seminar on evaluation plans for transnational programmes, September 2015.

Ramböll Management Consulting, 2015, Analysis of projects in 2007-2013 and setting baselines and targets for the indicators 2014-2020, July 2015.

Year (of submission)	Programme reporting requirement towards the European Commission	Planned monitoring & evaluation	Comments
2016	**(Light) annual implementation report: AIR 2014/15** - financial figures - indicators values (when available) - citizen summary	n/a	
2017	**(Major) annual implementation report: AIR 2016** - light report AND reporting on: - progress towards achieving the programme objectives incl. contribution of ERDF funds to changes in the values of result indicators (when available) - results of information and communication activities carried out under the communication strategy - contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies	**Internal operational evaluation** - Programme delivery (n/a) - Financial performance - Management structures (project and programme levels)	Procurement for external evaluation 2018 to be finalised by the end of 2017 Planned budget: up to € 120.000
2018	**(Light) annual implementation report: AIR 2017** - financial figures - indicators values (when available) - citizen summary	**External evaluation** - Monitoring of result indicator values & evaluation of the programme impact for each SO - Evaluation of the communication strategy - Evaluation of the contribution to EUSBSR - Evaluation of the contribution to EU 2020 - …	

2019	**(Major) annual implementation report: AIR 2018** - light report AND reporting on: - progress towards achieving the programme objectives incl. contribution of ERDF funds to changes in the values of result indicators (when available) - results of information and communication activities carried out under the communication strategy - contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies - progress made towards achievement of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	**Internal operational evaluation** - Programme delivery - Financial performance - Management structures (project and programme levels)	
2020	**(Light) annual implementation report: AIR 2019** - financial figures - indicators values (when available) - citizen summary	**External evaluation** - Monitoring of result indicator values	Included in the contract for the first external evaluation
2021	**(Light) annual implementation report: AIR 2020** - financial figures - indicators values (when available) - citizen summary		Procurement for external evaluation 2022/2023 finalised by the end of 2021 Planned budget: up to € 150.000
2022	**(Light) annual implementation report: AIR 2021**	**External evaluation** - Monitoring of result indicator values &	

	- financial figures - indicators values (when available) - citizen summary **Report summarising the findings of evaluations** carried out during the programming period	evaluation of the programme impact by an external evaluator (2022/2023) - Evaluation of the communication strategy - Evaluation of the contribution to EUSBSR - Evaluation of the contribution to EU 2020 - …	
2023	**Final implementation report** - light report AND reporting on: - progress towards achieving the programme objectives incl. contribution of ERDF funds to changes in the values of result indicators (when available) - results of information and communication activities carried out under the communication strategy - contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies - progress made towards achievement of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	**Continuation of the external evaluation launched in 2022**	

Rules for Evaluation Steering Group – Interreg Baltic Sea Region

(state: 22.10.2015)

Introduction

The evaluation steering group (ESG) of Interreg Baltic Sea Region was nominated on 26 June 2015. The task of the ESG is to accompany and follow-up on external evaluation and related activities during the Programme. These activities include, inter alia, setting up an evaluation plan, preparation of external evaluations and commenting on draft evaluation reports. While the Joint Secretariat is responsible for drafting documents such as the evaluation plan or terms of references for external evaluations, the ESG supports these processes by providing the Joint Secretariat with feedback and advice. All decision-making on evaluation-related matters will be with the Monitoring Committee.

Set-up

The ESG is composed of one nominated MC member per participating country as well as representatives of the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat.

Tasks and responsibilities

The following main tasks are foreseen for the ESG during the implementation of Interreg Baltic Sea Region:

- Providing feedback to the Programme evaluation plan and its updates;
- Providing feedback to preparation of terms of reference for external evaluations;
- Providing feed-back during the selection processes of external evaluators;
- Providing input and feed-back to evaluators during evaluation processes;
- Commenting on and giving feedback to draft evaluation reports;
- Providing advice to the Monitoring Committee in relation to evaluation;
- Ensuring that the interests of all major stakeholders are taken into consideration and that the institutions which might have to act on the recommendations are involved;
- Discussing and facilitating the uptake of evaluation outcomes at national level

All final decisions related to external evaluation activities, e.g., approval of Terms of Reference and approval of final evaluation reports, will be taken by the Monitoring Committee.

Communication, meetings and input by ESG

Principally, the ESG will provide feed-back to and participate in evaluation activities mainly through email exchange and phone conferences. In exceptional cases, and upon need, direct meetings might be convened.

Meetings of the MA/JS with external evaluators, e.g., kick-off meetings and intermediate meetings to discuss results, are generally open to interested members of the ESG.

Input and feed-back shall be provided by all ESG members within one week following the request initiated by the MA/JS and/or external evaluators.

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
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Specific objective	Thematic objective	Investment Priority	Programme result indicator + Indicative evaluation question	
1.1 Research and innovation infrastructures	1	1a	Capacity of research and innovation infrastructures in the Programme area to implement measures to increase the market uptake of innovation.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of research and innovation infrastructures in the Programme area to implement measures to increase the market uptake of innovation?
1.2 Smart specialisation	1	1b	Capacity of innovation actors (Innovation intermediaries, authorities, research institutions, enterprises) in the Programme area to implement smart specialisation strategies.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of innovation actors in the Programme area to implement smart specialisation strategies?
1.3 Non-technological innovation	1	1b	Capacity of innovation actors (Innovation intermediaries, authorities, research institutions, enterprises) in the Programme area to implement measures to increase uptake of non-technological innovation.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of innovation actors in the Programme area to implement measures to increase uptake of non-technological innovation?
2.1 Clear waters	6	6b	Capacity of public authorities / practitioners (from water management, agricultural, forestry, fisheries etc. sectors) in the Programme area to implement measures to reduce nutrient inflows and decrease discharges of hazardous	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of public authorities / practitioners in the Programme area to implement measures to reduce nutrient inflows and decrease discharges of hazardous

			substances.	substances?
2.2 Renewable energy	6	6g	Capacity of public/private actors in energy planning and supply (authorities, agencies, enterprises, NGOs in energy, waste, forestry and agricultural sector) in the Programme area to implement measures to increase the use of sustainable renewable energy.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of public/private actors in energy planning and supply in the Programme area to implement measures to increase the use of sustainable renewable energy?
2.3 Energy efficiency	6	6g	Capacity of public and private actors involved in energy planning (public authorities, energy agencies, enterprises, NGOs) in the Programme area to implement measures to increase energy efficiency.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of public and private actors involved in energy planning in the Programme area to implement measures to increase energy efficiency?
2.4 Blue growth	6	6g	Capacity of public authorities, enterprises, and NGOs in the Programme area to implement measures to advance sustainable business opportunities for blue growth.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of public authorities, enterprises, and NGOs in the Programme area to implement measures to advance sustainable business opportunities for blue growth?
3.1 Interoperability	7	7b	Capacity of public and private transport actors in the Programme area to implement measures increasing interoperability between transport modes and systems.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of public and private transport actors in the Programme area to implement measures increasing

				interoperability between transport modes and systems?
3.2 Accessibility	7	7b	Capacity of public / private transport actors (public authorities, logistic and transport operators) in the Programme area to implement economically efficient solutions to improve the accessibility of remote regions/regions affected by demographic change.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of public / private transport actors in the Programme area to implement economically efficient solutions to improve the accessibility of remote regions/regions affected by demographic change?
3.3 Maritime safety	7	7c	Capacity of maritime actors (maritime admin., rescue services, authorities, shipping operators, ports, research and intergovernmental org.) in the Programme area to implement measures to increase maritime safety and security.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of maritime actors in the Programme area to implement measures to increase maritime safety and security?
3.4 Shipping	7	7c	Capacity of maritime actors (maritime admin., rescue services, authorities, shipping operators, ports, research and intergovernmental org.) in the Programme area to implement measures to reduce negative effects of shipping on the marine environment.	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of maritime actors in the Programme area to implement measures to reduce negative effects of shipping on the marine environment?
3.5 Urban mobility	7	7c	Capacity of urban transport actors (public authorities, ports,	To what extent has the Programme increased the capacity of urban transport

			infrastructure providers and operators) in the Programme area to implement environmentally friendly transport solutions in urban areas.	actors in the Programme area to implement environmentally friendly transport solutions in urban areas?