

Evaluation Plan

Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme

DECEMBER 2023

CONTENTS

A. OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION	3
1. Programme level evaluation	3
2. Role and main objectives of the Evaluation Plan	5
3. Coverage and rationale	6
4. Analysis of relevant evidence	6
5. Coordination mechanisms	8
B. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	9
1. The evaluation function	9
2. The evaluation process	10
3. Involvement of stakeholders.....	11
4. The source of evaluation expertise	13
5. Training programmes for staff dealing with Evaluation	14
6. Strategy to ensure use and communication of evaluations	15
7. Overall budget for implementing the Evaluation Plan	15
8. Quality management strategy for the evaluation process	16
C. PLANNED EVALUATIONS	18
1. Lists and timetable of the evaluations.....	20
2. Fiches of the planned evaluations.....	21
ANNEXES.....	29
Annex A - Organisational chart of MA	29
ANNEX B - Checklist for assessing the Terms of References.....	30
ANNEX C - Checklist for assessing the inception report	32
ANNEX D - Checklist for assessing the evaluation report.....	33
Annex E - Feedback collected from stakeholders for the Evaluation Plan.....	37
ANNEX F - Procedural aspects	44

A. OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION

1. PROGRAMME LEVEL EVALUATION

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

The current Evaluation Plan (further on referred to as EvalPlan) sets out an evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the programme and has been drawn up by MA in cooperation with NA, building on the input of the Evaluation Unit. The drafting process took into account the provisions of the applicable EU regulations (Interreg Regulation - no. 1059/2021, Common Provisions Regulation - no. 1060/2021, ERDF-CF Regulation - no. 1058/2021) and Better Regulation Guidance¹ and followed closely the Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation issued by the European Commission², the Better Regulation Guidelines³ and also took into account the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania⁴ developed under the service agreement to improve monitoring and evaluation capacity in the context of EU-funded programs in Romania (2021-2027) signed between MEIP and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. As well, the feedback received from the EC Evaluation Helpdesk on the previous generation of evaluation plans drafted by the Evaluation Unit was also used in selecting the types of information to be included in this plan.

Abbreviations and glossary of terms

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

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en

² The Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027 - [EC website](#)

³ https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en

⁴ <https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/en/web/guest/resurse-metodologice> - [Guide](#)

IPs	Info Points, hosted in Hungary, by the Széchenyi Programme Office, established with the purpose of providing updated information and guidance on how to access and successfully implement available funds
MA Unit	Unit MA Romania-Hungary within MDPWA/ Directorate General European Territorial Cooperation/ Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in charge with managing the Programme
Evaluation Unit	Evaluation Unit within MDPWA/ Directorate General European Territorial Cooperation/ Directorate MA for European Territorial Cooperation Programmes ensuring the evaluation function for the Interreg programmes
MDPWA	The Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration in Romania, hosting the MA for the Interreg programmes, including Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme. The organisational chart detailing the location of the relevant departments can be found as annex.
MEIP	The Ministry of European Investment and Projects in Romania. Institution coordinating the management of EU funds in Romania, in which ECU is located.
ECU	Evaluation Central Unit. Unit within MEIP which plays a central role in the overall evaluation set-up of EU funds in Romania. It takes part in ESC.
Interreg funds	The ERDF and the external financing instruments of the Union that support the Interreg Programmes (IPA III, NDICI)
ERDF	The European Regional Development Fund. In line with Regulation (EU) no. 1058/2021, the ERDF shall contribute to reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions within the Union, and to reducing the backwardness of the least favoured regions through participation in the structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind and in the conversion of declining industrial regions, including by promoting sustainable development and addressing environmental challenges
IPA III	The Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance. With its general objective established in Regulation (EU) no. 1529/2021, the instrument also supports Interreg programmes involving IPA countries
NDICI	The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe. With its general objectives established in Regulation (EU) no. 947/2021, the instrument also supports Interreg programmes involving countries in the neighbourhood area.
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
ESC	Evaluation Steering Committee. It supervises the evaluation process, coordinating in terms of: Terms of Reference (for evaluations conducted externally), quality of the evaluation reports.
EvalPlan	Evaluation Plan. The EvalPlan is an instrument for planning the evaluation activities for the whole programming period, which is approved by MC. Its role is to improve the quality of evaluations carried out during the programming period. The ToR are drafted starting from the provisions of the EvalPlan.

ToR	Terms of Reference. A written document presenting the scope of the evaluation, the key questions, the indicative methods to be used, the resources, schedule and reporting requirements.
Effectiveness	How successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives, looking for evidence of why, whether or how the changes are linked to the EU intervention
Efficiency	The costs and benefits of the EU intervention as they accrue to different stakeholders, identifying what factors are driving these costs/benefits and how these factors relate to the EU intervention, depending on data availability; otherwise, qualitative analysis may concentrate on the identification of inefficiencies
Relevance	How well the objectives of the EU intervention being evaluated (still) match the (current) needs and problems
Coherence	How well the intervention works internally and with other EU interventions
EU added value	The value resulting from EU interventions that is additional to the value that would have resulted from interventions initiated at regional or national levels
Inclusiveness	The capacity of the programmes to include and assist different segments of population and especially the more fragile and distant ones from public support
Non-discrimination	The extent to which all the individuals - or the individual organisations - have an equal and fair chance to access opportunities made available by the programme
Visibility	How the communication activities of the programme make the EU policy visible to the interested population and appraise the public awareness of the EU financial and policy effort
Impact	The changes associated with a particular intervention which occur over the longer term
Sustainability	Whether the benefits of a project or programme are likely to continue after its finalisation

2. ROLE AND MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

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

The **objectives** of this EvalPlan are:

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

In addition, the EvalPlan ensures that the evaluation criteria mentioned in the regulations are taken into account while performing the evaluations of the Programme, in line with art. 35(1) of the Interreg Regulation: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value, as well as inclusiveness, non-discrimination, visibility.

Formal arrangements

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

3. COVERAGE AND RATIONALE

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

The Programme is part of the Interreg A strand in line with art. 3(1)(b)(i) of the Interreg Regulation, namely internal cross-border cooperation between adjacent border regions of two Member States. The CBC strand is supported by the EU to promote integrated and harmonious regional development between neighbouring border regions. The neighbouring NUTS III border regions covered by the Programme are 4 counties of Romania (Arad, Bihor, Satu Mare, Timiș) and 4 counties of Hungary (Békés, Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg). The regions are situated along a border of 450 km, crossed by 12 road corridors and 5 railways border crossing points. The programme area covers 11.9% of Romania's national territory and 14.15% of Hungary's national territory, being home to 3.2 million inhabitants (52.5 % on the Romanian side and 47.5 % on the Hungarian side).

The Programme is funded by ERDF (Interreg funds of 140,752,020 euro) as well as match-funding from the two participating countries, adding up to a total budget of 175,940,025 euro and was approved by the European Commission in December 2022.

The performance framework methodology of the Programme is available on the [Programme's website](#).

4. ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT EVIDENCE

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

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

General observation

In addition to programme-targeted evaluations, the Interreg programmes in Romania were also covered by overarching evaluations carried out at Partnership Agreement level. As experience has shown, although evaluation usually brings valuable findings, these findings often come too late or are based on the information available up to a cut-off date that is well back in time. In some cases, especially as regards the financial data and indicators' targets, at the time the recommendations are issued, the bodies of the respective programme had to already make decisions based on monitoring and projections, while the pertinent recommendations of the evaluators had sometimes been already implemented at the time they were made. This is considered a risk derived from the length of programme evaluations.

Annual implementation reports for the 2014-2020 Programme

According to the annual implementation reports prepared by the programme, in the beginning of the programming period there were some issues which influenced programme implementation: a delay in approving the programme document, caused by the complex process of negotiation, the slow process of setting up the legal and administrative framework

needed for starting the programme implementation, delays in launching of calls for proposals caused by state aid approach, risk of delays related to availability of external experts, extension of the deadlines for submission of the applications at the request of applicants. However, the Programme bodies took measures to speed up and optimise programme implementation in order not to endanger its implementation and targets, including four programme revisions, speeding up of assessment and selection, over-contracting, simplification of procedures, measures to increase the flexibility for the project and Programme implementation process and to speed up the reimbursement process.

As regards the COVID 19 pandemic, the annual implementation report for 2020 pointed out the effects at Programme and project level and the actions taken by the Programme structures, including focus on online communication tools and the importance of mobilizing investments in the health care system and electronic signature for digitalizing the implementation process. The Programme also applied the option to temporarily use a co-financing rate of 100% for expenditures declared in the payment applications. In 2021, the implementation of several projects was affected, which became projects with major risk in implementation. The Programme structures continued with flexibility measures to ease project implementation, at this point in time implementation being on track.

2014-2020 Programme evaluations

For the 2014-2020 programming period, the evaluation plan included one communication evaluation (performed in 2017), one implementation evaluation (performed in 2020) and one impact evaluation (performed in 2023).

Implementation evaluation

The programme was found to be a complex intervention integrating eight Investment Priorities into six Priority Axes, selected to respond to a large number of development needs on the two sides of the border; at the same time it was still considered fragmented. However evaluation showed that the Programme remained relevant to the needs in the eligible area and attractive for both Romanian and Hungarian stakeholders.

The Monitoring Committee was considered as working efficiently and the implementation system was evaluated as functional, MA, NA and JS being highly aware of the problems encountered by the beneficiaries. The Simplified Cost Options applied as Flat rate on Office and Administrative costs were perceived very useful. The eMS was assessed as functional and able to ensure data collection and reporting of the progress on achievements of the Programme's financial and output indicators targets.

The Programme was found to be committed to combating discrimination, promoting gender equality and the integration of disabled people in society.

Impact evaluation

Overall, the impact evaluation was concentrated on the financed fields and was able to grasp to a lesser extent the cross border changes brought by the programme, the cross-border sustainability, possible improvements having in regard the cross-border character of the interventions.

As regards the financed fields, the evaluation results revealed a moderate contribution of the Programme to planned results in tourism, environment, accessibility, emergency response and employment in terms of scale, but with important effects in regards with new collaboration, long-lasting partnerships and increased trust. High Programme contribution to results was found in the fields of health-care services and intensified cross-border cooperation.

Policy context

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

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

Another important effect that could be explored is the cross-border cooperation mindset of the stakeholders, as cooperation for the Interreg programmes is not only the mandatory means, but also a goal, as it paves the way for future initiatives and interventions.

Continuity of interventions and other relevant aspects

As in analysing the impact of a programme the continuity of interventions is a determining factor, analysing whether the interventions under the 2021-2027 programme may be considered a continuation of the interventions of the 2014-2020 is of great relevance for future 2021-2027 evaluations. However, by analysing comparatively the priorities in the two programming periods and the related indicative type of actions it was concluded that most of the 2021-2027 interventions cannot be considered a clear continuation of the ones implemented in the 2014-2020 programme. Therefore, previous 2014-2020 interventions and projects cannot be taken into account in designing the coverage and logic for the impact evaluation. Operations of strategic importance are part of programme implementation in both programming periods. A particular aspect in this programming period is the grouping of indicative actions for all specific objectives into 3 cluster types: Cluster action 1 - Planning and data, Cluster action 2 - Capacity building and Cluster action 3 - Other structural and non-structural joint actions. The reasoning behind the performance framework of the Programme is also based on the same cluster actions approach. Another relevant piece of information is the fact that the Programme includes for each specific objective a clearly set expected change.

5. COORDINATION MECHANISMS

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

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

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

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

B. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

1. THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

The evaluation function for the Programme is ensured by the Evaluation Unit, which supports the MA in its responsibilities connected to programme evaluation.

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

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

Institutional details

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

As it may be seen in the specific organization chart that can be consulted in [Annex B](#), the Evaluation Unit is located within the General Directorate for European Territorial Cooperation, Directorate MA ETC Programmes. Its staff is functionally independent of the staff of the units within the Directorate that perform the functions of MA for each Interreg programme that Romania acts as MA for, as well as of the staff of the other structures within the General Directorate involved in the connected processes and functions (e.g. accounting function, MA and NA for the other Interreg programmes, monitoring, authorisation, electronic monitoring system, payments, irregularities, first level control). Therefore, the implementation of the Programme and the evaluation of the Programme are located within the same organisation but are assigned to different units, ensuring independence and impartiality. The Evaluation Unit is directly subordinated to the Director of MA ETC Programmes and its activity includes regular workflows with the other units within the General Directorate and other supporting departments within the ministry. The decision-making process follows the internal procedural rules established at ministry level, the documents being approved by respecting all hierarchical necessary steps.

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

The Evaluation Unit currently consists of three full-time positions. The staff of the Evaluation Unit has deep Interreg knowledge and carries out various horizontal tasks as well, having an

overview of the programming and implementation of the Interreg programmes in Romania. As regards evaluation-related tasks, the evaluation officers are partly working for Interreg VI-A Romania-Hungary Programme and partly for the other Interreg programmes that Romania participates in.

To ensure the sustainability of programme evaluation activity, the evaluation officers make use of the common Interreg virtual workspace where all important information is stored electronically. As well, all internal procedures are followed, as regards both processes (e.g. archiving, risks, anti-fraud, security of IT systems, data recovery in case of disaster) and human resources (e.g. annual evaluation of staff, workload analysis, training plan, substitution plan, programming of annual leaves to ensure continuity).

Evaluation Unit's responsibilities directly related to the evaluation function are detailed in [Annex F](#) - Procedural aspects.

2. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Regulatory requirements

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

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

All evaluations are published on the Programme's website.

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

Involved bodies

The evaluation process is led by the Evaluation Unit. Evaluations commissioned to external experts are commissioned, monitored and supervised by the Evaluation Unit. The evaluation officers within the Evaluation Unit may also carry out certain studies or evaluations, if deemed necessary during the implementation process.

Evaluation Steering Committee

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

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

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

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

The **functions of ESC** are:

- methodological function - to analyse and approve the preparatory and methodological documents for programme evaluations and the related deliverables, with a view to increasing their quality;

- partnership function - to ensure representation and consultation of the key actors in the CBC programme in planning and implementing the programme evaluations;
- ownership function - to involve the key actors in the CBC programme from the design phase and ensure they are aware of the evaluation results and any measures that need to be taken.

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

a. Evaluation Planning

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

b. Evaluation Management

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

Monitoring Committee

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

Therefore, in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership⁵ the MC decides on the execution of the evaluations by analysing and approving the EvalPlan, examines the progress in carrying out evaluations whenever there are developments to be presented and discussed and analyses the response to the evaluation recommendations proposed by MA and the implementation status of accepted recommendations.

The division of responsibilities between the MA/Evaluation Unit, ESC and the MC, in relation to programme evaluation is presented in [Section B.3](#) - Involvement of stakeholders.

Evaluation Central Unit

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

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Fully committed to applying the partnership principle in the Programme's evaluation process and also having in mind the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania, the process of collecting questions for the EvalPlan also included an open online questionnaire via EUSurvey which was sent by e-mail to MC members, beneficiaries and stakeholders and was also promoted on the programme website and on social media. Possibly reflecting the stage the Programme was in (active call for proposals), some of the contributions received were not related to Programme evaluations, but to different aspects, including project assessment and selection. These contributions were directed to the MA Unit for analysis. Some of the preoccupying aspects and proposed questions presented in [Annex E](#) could not be introduced among the evaluation questions listed in this plan, but almost all the themes proposed are translated into wider evaluation questions. In addition, based on the input of the Evaluation Unit resulted from the analysis of the available evidence

⁵ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds

presented in [Section A.4](#), the evaluation questions proposed were consulted with the relevant programme structures, resulting in a final set of questions, grouped by evaluation criteria, that are included in [Section C.2](#) - Fiches of the planned evaluations.

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

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

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

Tasks	MA/Evaluation Unit	ESC	MC
1. EvalPlan	Responsible for drafting	Being involved in consultation as listed below	May submit proposals of evaluation questions prior to the drafting of the plan or during the approval process Approves the plan
2. ToRs, including the criteria for selecting the evaluators to ensure their functional independence (for evaluations commissioned externally)/of the Evaluation scope and timing (for evaluations carried out internally);	Responsible for drafting	Analyses and approves the ToRs/the Inception Report	-
3. Selection of Evaluator (for evaluations commissioned externally)	Participates in the Evaluation Committee for selecting the evaluator established in line with the public procurement applicable rules	-	-
4. Draft and final evaluation reports (and Inception Report)	Assesses the quality of the evaluation report and process	Analysis and endorsement of the inception/evaluation	-

for evaluations commissioned externally) - quality aspects	based on the standards recommended in the official relevant documents.	reports, on the basis of the recommendations made by the Evaluation Unit.	
5. Management of the evaluation	Direct contact point for programme evaluations, contract management for evaluation commissioned externally	Analysis of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations; may make proposals on the response to evaluation recommendations	Is being informed on the recommendations in the evaluation report, on the proposed response to evaluation recommendations
6. Follow-up	Tracks the progress made; MA uses a follow-up table to monitor the progress achieved in implementing the agreed evaluation recommendations	-	Is informed by MA on the progress achieved in implementing agreed evaluation recommendations

In addition, stakeholders and project partners are involved in the evaluation of the Programme as part of the data collection process that takes place for each evaluation exercise, the reports being drafted taking into consideration their perception, opinions and suggestions.

4. THE SOURCE OF EVALUATION EXPERTISE

Given the fact that the evaluation function is ensured by the three evaluation officers within the Evaluation Unit for six Interreg programmes, the evaluations carried out for the Programme shall be, as a general rule, commissioned to external experts following internal procedures and the public procurement applicable rules.

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

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

- as a general rule, performing of contract management and carrying out of ESC consultations not by the staff of the MA Unit, but by the evaluation officers in the Evaluation Unit, who are functionally independent from the other functions performed by MA, as regards both programming and implementation;
- carrying out any evaluations performed internally, if any, by the evaluation officers in the Evaluation Unit, who are functionally independent from the other functions performed by MA.

5. TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR STAFF DEALING WITH EVALUATION

Training for MA staff

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

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

Such capacity building activities may refer to:

- self-study of evaluation plans, ToRs and reports, especially for the Interreg strands/programmes;
- self-study of published papers, guidelines and handbooks on programme evaluations;
- participating in online learning platforms/communities/groups related to programme evaluations;
- seminars on planning and managing evaluations, quality controlling of the evaluation reports;
- workshops on qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and methods for impact assessment;
- meetings of the Evaluation Working Group, which allow exchange of information and good practices with other MAs, and meetings of the Evaluation Network in Romania, which allow wide exchange of ideas between the supply and demand sides;
- on-the job coaching;
- Interact events on evaluation and wider related topics, which allow exchange of information and good practices with other Interreg programmes.

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

Training for the other Programme structures

Evaluation-related capacity building initiatives may also be carried to support NA and JS/IPs staff in performing their duties. Should such activities entail participation costs, these may also be covered as part of the Programme's TA activities.

Training for MC members on evaluation-related aspects may also be considered, if such need arises during Programme implementation, to be financed under TA activities. As well, should

general trainings be offered to MC members for this Programme (for new MC members, for example), then these trainings should also cover evaluation-related topics.

6. STRATEGY TO ENSURE USE AND COMMUNICATION OF EVALUATIONS

Dissemination of the evaluation reports

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

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

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

Follow-up and monitoring of evaluation recommendations

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

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

7. OVERALL BUDGET FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION PLAN

The overall budget for implementing the current EvalPlan, covering the external resources used, is up to 180.000 euro, split as follows:

- up to 70.000 euro for the implementation evaluations (including communication)
- up to 110.000 euro for the impact evaluation (including communication).

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

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

Evaluation functions and main activities	Timing	Estimated cost	Financial sources
Technical support and coordination of the MA, including Evaluation Unit	Continuously during the programming period	internal resources (mostly staff costs)	included under MA TA activities
Data provision	After calls for proposals are closed After project selection/contracting After the finalization of projects + Communication questionnaire	internal resources (mostly staff costs)	included under MA/JS TA activities
Evaluation studies	March-November 2027 November 2027-July 2028	external resources - up to 180.000 euro	TA - external services
Dissemination of results and events	After performed evaluations	internal resources (mostly staff costs)	included under MA/NA/JS TA activities
Capacity building initiatives	Continuously during the programming period	internal resources	included under MA/NA/JS TA activities

8. QUALITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE EVALUATION PROCESS

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

1. Evaluation timing

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

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

2. Drafting the ToR

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

3. Selection of evaluators

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

ratio. As a general rule, to ensure impartiality the persons appointed in the selection committee are different from the person who drafted the ToR.

4. Contract implementation

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

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

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

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

5. Disseminating the evaluation results

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

6. Follow-up

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

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

C. PLANNED EVALUATIONS

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

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

Assumptions on the expected evolution of the Programme

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

Call for proposals/ Projects	Allocation (Interreg funds)	Coverage	Launching	Estimated contracting time	Maximum duration of projects	Estimated end date of projects
Open call 1 -Both soft and hard projects (all 3 priorities)	42.82 mil. euro	S.O. 2.2 Renewable energy S.O. 2.4 Climate change adaptation S.O. 2.7 Biodiversity and green infrastructure S.O. 4.5 Health S.O. 4.6 Culture and tourism ISO 6.3 People to people	June 2023	2024	30 months for S.O. 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 4.5, 4.6 12 months for ISO 6.3	2027/2028 for S.O. 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 4.5, 4.6 2025/2026 for ISO 6.3
Operations of strategic importance (all 3 priorities)	70.37 mil. euro	S.O. 2.2 Renewable energy S.O. 2.4 Climate change adaptation S.O. 4.5 Health S.O. 4.6	Direct submission	2024	36 months	2027/2028

		Culture and tourism ISO 6.1 Institutional capacity ISO 6.2 Efficient public administration				
Open call 2 - (all 3 priorities)	18.35 mil. euro (+ any other savings)	S.O. 2.2 Renewable energy S.O. 2.4 Climate change adaptation S.O. 2.7 Biodiversity and green infrastructure S.O. 4.5 Health S.O. 4.6 Culture and tourism ISO 6.3 People to people	2024/2025	2025/2026	30 months for S.O. 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 4.5, 4.6 12 months for ISO 6.3	2028/2029 for S.O. 2.2, 2.4, 2.7, 4.5, 4.6 2028/2029 for ISO 6.3

The co-financing rate is 80%.

Given the projects' timing estimated above, it is expected that for this Programme evaluations would bring more valuable feedback later in the programming period. Streamlining the efficiency of the Programme and of its communication activities/actions may also be done using internal resources.

Data collection

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

Therefore, **questionnaires** will be used at key points to collect users' opinions, their aggregated results feeding directly into informed evidence-based decisions. These questionnaires will be applied to all applicants after the calls for proposals are closed, to all unsuccessful applicants after project selection, to successful applicants after project contracting and to all beneficiaries after project finalisation. The actual questions in each questionnaire will be proposed by the Evaluation Unit and agreed with the MA Unit, while the responses will be aggregated by the Evaluation Unit and sent to the MA Unit for consideration. This approach would also allow the beneficiaries and applicants to fill in the information while it is still fresh and prevent them from receiving very long questionnaires

at the time programme evaluations are performed, generating a higher response rate. The aggregated responses shall also be ready to be provided to the evaluators for the subsequent programme evaluations or other programme structures and may be used in technical or MC meetings. As regards **communication**, another questionnaire will be active during the entire implementation period of the Programme, gathering feedback on the communication aspects and Programme's visibility.

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

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

The territorial analysis performed for drafting the Programme revealed that one of the main barriers for evidence-based planning and cooperation is the lack of statistical data at NUTS 3 and LAU levels. Significant data gaps have been uncovered in what concerns cross-border mobility and commuting data, healthcare spending, cultural consumption, governance participation and other relevant topics to the CBC programme. Furthermore, there are disparities or differences between readily available indicators, due to the different practices of data collection and indicator development leading to difficulties in comparing the data between Romania and Hungary, in domains such as delineation of marginalized areas. The programme development process overcame this lack of statistics by collecting and aggregating qualitative information about the perceptions of stakeholders in the area: enriching the findings by exchanges and consultations with the key stakeholders in the region. A similar approach is expected to be needed for future Programme evaluations in order to form a sound evaluation base, depending on the exact methodology applied.

1. LISTS AND TIMETABLE OF THE EVALUATIONS

Planned programme evaluations are summarised below:

Code	Objective of the evaluation	Content and scope of the evaluation			Estimated Period	Type of evaluation	Planned Cost
		Priorities	SOs	Interventions			
OngoingEval	To provide users' feedback in order to streamline efficiency, effectiveness and communication actions	All	All	All	January 2024-December 2029	Data provision	Internal resources
ImplemEval	To produce specific knowledge on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, internal and external coherence, visibility and commitment to	All	All	All	March-November 2027	Implementation evaluation, including communication	up to 70.000 euro

	horizontal principles of the programme						
ImpactEval	To capture the change brought by the cooperation programme as a whole, highlighting peak fields, while also analysing the mechanism that stands behind the effects	All	All	All	November 2027-July 2028	Impact evaluation	up to 110.000 euro

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

Additional evaluations

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

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

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

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

Retrospective evaluation

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

2. FICHES OF THE PLANNED EVALUATIONS

OngoingEval - Ongoing evaluation of the efficiency of the implementation system of the Programme	
Priority and specific objectives covered by the evaluation	all
Types of interventions to be evaluated	all
Type of evaluation	ongoing process evaluation
Focus and rationale of the evaluation	<p>The Programme aims to incorporate users' perceptions into the decision-making process in order to streamline its efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>By collecting users' opinions, the aggregated results are available to feed directly into informed evidence-based decisions. Questionnaires are applied to all lead applicants after the calls for proposals are closed (to assess the application process), to all unsuccessful lead applicants after</p>

	<p>project selection, to successful lead partners after project contracting (to assess the selection and contracting processes) and to all beneficiaries after project finalization (to assess the implementation process and effectiveness at project level). The support granted by the programme structures to applicants and beneficiaries is also envisaged to be included, as well as the ease of reaching projects' objectives and the added value of the EU intervention.</p> <p>This approach not only supports the programme structures to adapt to the needs of the applicants and beneficiaries, but also allows the beneficiaries and applicants to fill in the information requested while it is still fresh and prevent them from receiving very long questionnaires at the time programme evaluations are performed, generating a higher response rate.</p> <p>The actual questions in each questionnaire are set before each process is launched, based on the proposals made by the Evaluation Unit that are discussed, adapted and agreed with the MA Unit. The responses are aggregated by the Evaluation Unit and sent to the MA Unit for consideration and use during Programme implementation. The overall themes/main evaluation questions presented below will serve as basis for formulating the questions addressed to the lead applicants/beneficiaries, adapted to the type of respondents. Additional questions than the ones derived from the themes/main evaluation question below may be added along the way to incorporate any emerging needs or aspects that need basis for decisions.</p> <p>As regards communication, some questions will be introduced in the questionnaire above and another dedicated questionnaire will be active starting with 2024, gathering feedback on the communication aspects and Programme's visibility. It will also include questions on how the respondents found out about the questionnaire, to check the most effective communication channels. Open fields for suggestions will also be included.</p> <p>The responses received would also be ready to be provided to programme evaluators or other programme structures and may be used by the programme bodies in technical or MC meetings.</p>
<p>When the evaluation will be implemented</p>	<p>January 2024-December 2029</p>
<p>Main evaluation questions</p>	<p>Efficiency</p> <p>Q1. Are the application, selection and contracting processes efficient? What can be improved? <i>(users' feedback on the application form and applicant's guide, selection and contracting process)</i></p> <p>Q2. What are the major difficulties faced by the beneficiaries during the implementation of projects? <i>(feedback on difficulties faced during project implementation stages, including project finalisation)</i></p> <p>Q3. Is Jems efficient? What can be improved? <i>(feedback on the practical use of Jems)</i></p> <p>Q4. Are the simplification and result-focused actions taken at Programme level appreciated by users? What can be improved? <i>(feedback on Programme level actions taken - e.g. the use of SCOs)</i></p> <p>Q5. Do the beneficiaries receive sufficient support from the Programme bodies to prepare projects and implement them? <i>(feedback on the support granted by the programme bodies to applicants and beneficiaries)</i></p> <p>Q6. Are the potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries acquainted with the conflict of interest, irregularities, anti-fraud concept and preventive measures and/ or aware of the anti-fraud measures taken by the Programme bodies? <i>(checking the beneficiaries' and potential beneficiaries' awareness -</i></p>

	<p><i>question also used as instrument to raise awareness)</i></p> <p>Effectiveness</p> <p>Q7. According to the beneficiaries, have the projects managed to reach their objectives? <i>(beneficiaries' perception on the extent to which project objectives were reached)</i></p> <p>Q8. Were the expected outputs and results at project level easily reachable? <i>(users' feedback on the ease of reaching the expected outputs and results)</i></p> <p>Q9. Were there any internal or external factors that affected, positively or negatively, the process of reaching the objectives/expected outputs and results? <i>(users' feedback on internal and external factors affecting project objectives/expected outputs and results)</i></p> <p>Q10. Did the needs change from project submission to project implementation? If so, did the change affect project implementation? <i>(beneficiaries' feedback on the relevance of the needs covered any effect on effectiveness)</i> - also touching relevance criterion</p> <p>Q11. According to the beneficiaries, did the projects have a positive impact? <i>(beneficiaries' perception on the positive effects brought by their projects)</i></p> <p>EU added value</p> <p>Q12. To what extent could the projects' results and outputs have been achieved without support from the Programme? <i>(users' feedback on the added value of the Programme for reaching the results and outputs)</i></p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Q13. Which tools and channels have the highest outreach?</p> <p>Q14. How satisfied are the stakeholders with the information received from the Programme?</p> <p>Q15. What can be improved in the support provided to beneficiaries regarding the projects' communication activities?</p> <p>Q16. Are there any issues that affect the ability of projects' staff to observe transparency and communication requirements?</p> <p>Q17. How could the Programme's visibility be increased? <i>(This set of questions targets communication aspects and will be addressed either via the questionnaires sent to lead applicants/partners or via a permanent questionnaire on communication)</i></p>
Methodological approach and possible methods	<p>Method: qualitative research</p> <p>Tools: desk research, data collection through questionnaires and analysis</p>
Data sources	<p>administrative data on project lead applicants and project beneficiaries are needed to direct the questionnaires, available in Jems; to generate a high response rate, questionnaires reach the applicants and beneficiaries through their usual contact channels (e.g. JS officers, Jems)</p>
How the evaluation will be implemented	<p>internal expertise used, covering all calls for proposals and contracted projects</p>
Planned cost (Euro)	<p>internal resources used</p>

ImplemEval - Implementation evaluation of the Programme, including the communication activities	
Priority and specific objectives covered by the evaluation	all
Types of interventions to be evaluated	all
Type of evaluation	implementation evaluation
Focus and rationale of the evaluation	<p>The risk of decommitment and the achievement of objectives in terms of output and result indicators, as well as forecasting based on the contracted and selected projects, is constantly monitored by the programme bodies in order to make informed decisions, therefore it is not included in the evaluation process. User's feedback on efficiency aspects is also collected constantly and feeds the decision-making process.</p> <p>Since no major issues were identified by the evaluations of the previous programme as regards efficiency or effectiveness and the general management and control system is a roll-over of the previous one, the evaluation does not cover once again on each and every part of this system and the procedural workflows. Instead, it investigates whether there are bottlenecks or major issues faced and whether the new elements were effective in practice - as more extensive use of SCOs, TA flat rate.</p> <p>As regards efficiency, the evaluation focuses on identifying any underused simplification opportunities. The costs of the beneficiaries related to the communication activities are also examined, but as part of the evaluation of the communication which is included in the implementation evaluation.</p> <p>To deepen knowledge on the current programme, but also to feed into the next programming process, the evaluation also covers aspects related to the Programme's relevance, internal and external coherence and commitment to the horizontal principles.</p> <p>Therefore, the implementation evaluation is performed in order to produce specific knowledge on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, internal and external coherence, visibility and commitment to horizontal principles of the programme and to contribute to its management and performance and in the decision-making process for the following programming period.</p> <p>The findings collected so far through the ongoing process evaluation shall also be provided to the evaluators to be used in their analysis.</p>
When the evaluation will be implemented	March-November 2027
Main evaluation questions	<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>Q1. To what extent is the Programme delivery taking place as expected initially? <i>(whether the evolution of the programme is in line with the initial expectations of the Programme bodies, including as regards the achievement of the outputs and results)</i></p> <p>Q2. Are there any internal or external factors that foster or affect the process of achieving the Programme's objectives and outcomes, at programme level or by type of project or specific objective? <i>(how does the delivery mechanism work and which factors have a contribution to achieving Programme outputs and results e.g. use of SCOs, decision-making process, procedural flows, actions taken by the Programme bodies)</i></p> <p>Q3. To what extent is the administrative and financial capacity of the Programme bodies and of the beneficiaries a success or hindering factor? <i>(whether the capacity of programme bodies and beneficiaries affects</i></p>

or supports Programme delivery towards objectives; TA flat rate is also to be investigated under this question)

- Q4. Did the Programme take the necessary measures to effectively involve relevant partners in programme management and delivery?
(whether the measures taken by the programme to involve relevant partners in programme management and delivery are effective)
- Q5. Are the anti-fraud strategic measures taken by the Programme bodies in order to prevent, detect and correct fraudulent activities effective? What can be improved?
(whether the responsibilities of the actors involved in preventing, detecting and responding to fraud are clearly set in the anti-fraud strategy and effectively put into practice and what can be improved to minimise the opportunities for individuals to commit fraud and to provide an effective response if fraud occurs)

Efficiency

- Q6. Are there any bottlenecks or major issues affecting the efficiency of the Programme's implementation system?
(whether the efficiency of the Programme is affected by deficiencies in the implementation system, including in terms of monitoring the physical and financial evolution of projects)
- Q7. To what extent does the Programme use the available options to streamline and simplify operations?
(whether the Programme found the right balance to streamline and simplify operations or more options should have been taken into account)

Relevance

- Q8. To what extent did the programme strategy respond to the needs identified at programming stage?
(whether the Programme strategy responded in practice to the needs identified initially in the programming stage)
- Q9. How relevant are the financed projects to the communities living in the area?
(whether the financed interventions are relevant and useful for the communities living in the area)

Internal and external coherence

- Q10. To what extent are the interventions under the Programme internally coherent and able to create synergic effects?
(how well the Programme interventions work together and whether their interaction is capable of creating synergic effects)
- Q11. To what extent is the Programme coherent with other EU interventions having similar objectives which also cover the eligible territory?
(how well the Programme works with the other EU interventions - complementarities, gaps)
- Q12. To what extent is the Programme coherent with the strategies and initiatives in place?
(e.g. EUSDR, New Bauhaus Initiative, green infrastructure, green procurement, strategic use of public procurement)

Inclusiveness, non-discrimination and other horizontal principles

- Q13. To what extent is the programme inclusive and accessible to all target groups?
(whether the programme has a discriminatory approach and whether all target groups have access to the programme)
- Q14. To what extent are the horizontal principles covered adequately and clearly within the guidelines for applicants and programme monitoring arrangements?
- Q15. How do the financed projects contribute to the application of the

	<p>horizontal principles?</p> <p><i>(this set of two questions aims to cover at least equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women, sustainable development, DNSH)</i></p> <p>Visibility/Communication</p> <p>Q16. Are the communication activities/actions carried out by the programme authorities able to respond to the three communication objectives?</p> <p>Q17. Are the communication activities/actions of the Programme taken in a fair, just and inclusive manner for all stakeholders?</p> <p>Q18. Which are the tools and channels that have the highest outreach to potential beneficiaries/beneficiaries/end users and general public?</p> <p>Q19. How could the Programme's visibility be increased?</p> <p>Q20. How effective was the programme in supporting project communication activities and in reducing related costs on the beneficiaries?</p> <p><i>(this set of five questions, targeting the evaluation of the communication activities of the Programme, aims to also point out what would be needed to reach more people in terms of Programme visibility and investigates the costs of the beneficiaries related to the communication activities)</i></p>
Methodological approach and possible methods	<p>Method: mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, case studies</p> <p>Tools: data collection and analysis, desk research, interviews, surveys, stakeholder analysis</p>
Data sources	<p>programme strategic and implementation documents, DMCS and relevant procedures, Jems data, findings of the ongoing process evaluation</p>
How the evaluation will be implemented	<p>evaluation commissioned externally, following public procurement applicable rules (open procedure)</p>
Planned cost (Euro)	<p>up to 70.000 euro</p>

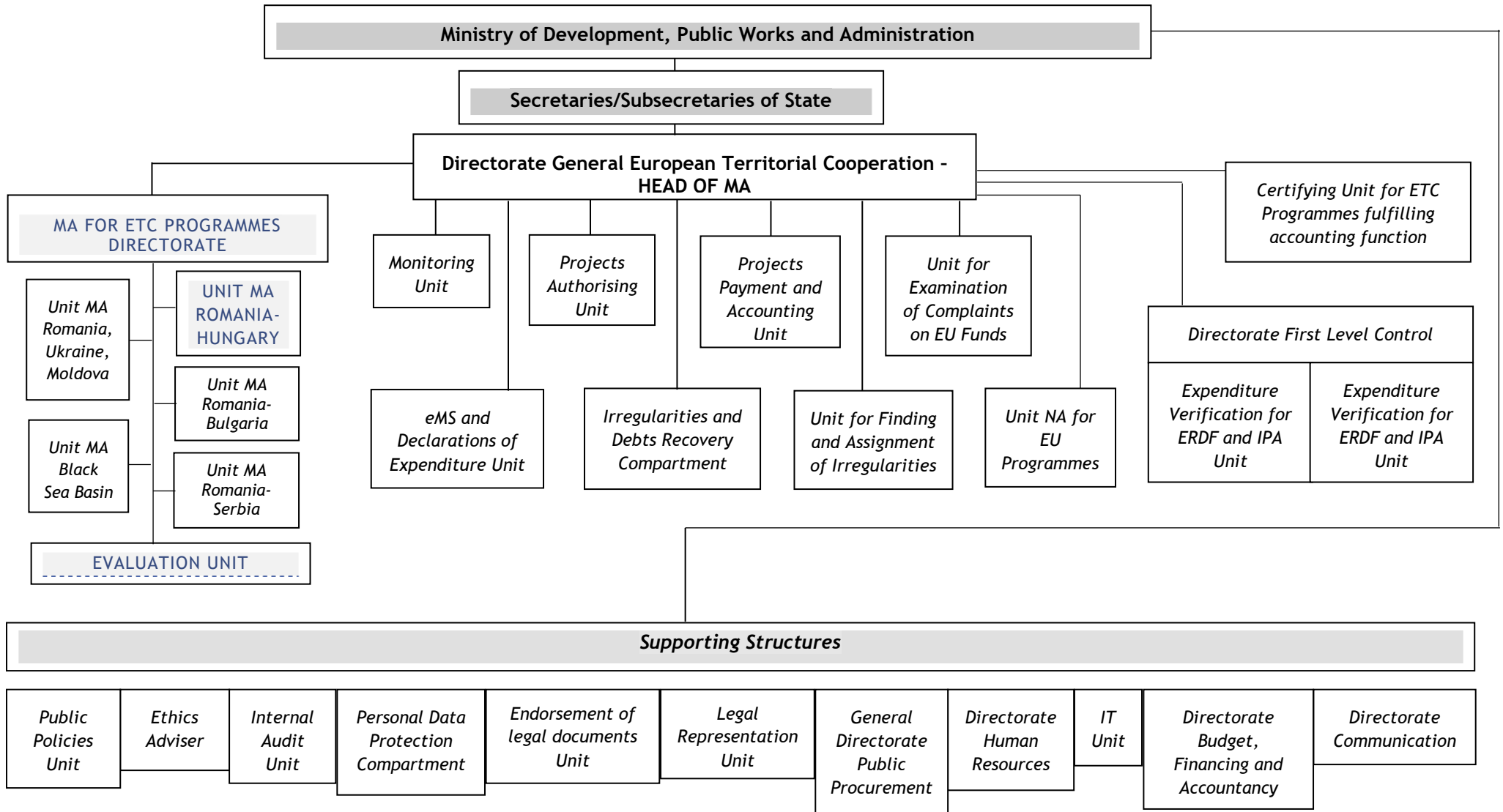
ImpactEval - Impact evaluation of the Programme	
Priority and specific objectives covered by the evaluation	<p>all</p>
Types of interventions to be evaluated	<p>all</p>
Type of evaluation	<p>impact evaluation</p>
Focus and rationale of the evaluation	<p>Based on the previous evaluation experience, for the current programming period the chosen approach is for impact evaluation to be more focused on the cross-border aspects. Therefore, impact evaluation will assess at programme level how the support received from the Interreg funds brought its contribution to the integrated and harmonious regional development in the eligible area. Another important effect that will be explored, also on the feedback received from the stakeholders, is the effect on the cross-border cooperation mindset.</p> <p>Effects in the financed fields will still be analysed, having in mind the change expected by the Programme in each field.</p> <p>Besides the impact, the criteria directly covered are EU added value, sustainability and visibility. Other criteria, as effectiveness, relevance or</p>

	<p>coherence might need to be taken into consideration for answering certain evaluation questions (pointing to internal and external success or hindering factors). In assessing visibility, the impact of the communication activities/actions taken at Programme level shall also be evaluated.</p> <p>The evaluation findings will be available and may also be integrated into the final performance report to be submitted to EC by 15 February 2031.</p>
<p>When the evaluation will be implemented</p>	<p>November 2027-July 2028</p>
<p>Main evaluation questions</p>	<p>Overall cross-border cooperation impact</p> <p>Q1. To what extent do the cross-border interventions of the Programme contribute to promoting an integrated and harmonious regional development in the cross-border region?</p> <p>Q2. What are the effects of the Programme related to the cross-border cooperation mind-set of stakeholders in the eligible area?</p> <p>Q3. Are there any unintended or spill-over effects of the cross-border interventions, inside or beyond the eligible area?</p> <p>Q4. What are the internal and external factors fostering or affecting the cross-border effects of the Programme?</p> <p><i>(this set of four questions aims to capture the impact at programme level, from the cross-border perspective, including any unintended or spill-over effects, also analysing the “why” and “how” - e.g. effects of the response to the territorial needs, of internal or external coherence, of the types of projects financed and the balance between the changes related to socio-economic development vs. building capacities, of the limited funds available; the analysis should take into account both the current and expected contribution - based on the finalised and contracted projects; integrated and harmonious regional development is also to be regarded from the point of view of: coordination, balanced socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, cultural aspects, cooperation governance)</i></p> <p>Policy fields</p> <p>Q5. To what extent do the cross-border interventions of the Programme contribute to the progress in the financed fields?</p> <p><i>(this question aims to capture the impact of the cross-border interventions, by specific objective; the analysis should take into account both the current and expected contribution - based on the finalised and contracted projects; relevant unintended effects and factors mentioned for the previous set of questions should also be analysed;</i></p> <p><i>given the cross-border character, the analysis should focus towards:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>increasing cooperation in the field of renewable energies, contributing to building green and renewable energy communities in the cross-border area, including by promoting joint solutions to upscale and further promote renewable energy resources</i> - <i>increasing the capacity and efficiency of the emergency services and risk prevention (both climate and non-climate-related), thanks to cooperation</i> - <i>improving the coordination and protection of the natural heritage across the border</i> - <i>increasing the resilience, personalisation and quality of the health care sector, thanks to cooperation</i> - <i>developing a common vision for the joint promotion of common cultural and natural heritage, including cultural initiatives and the development of tourism sites and tourism niches</i> - <i>increasing the understanding of cross-border exchanges and of the</i>

	<p><i>capacity to plan effective joint actions leading to an increased number and quality of joint strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>increasing the understanding of barriers to cooperation and in defining possible solutions with the involvement of the adequate governance level</i> - <i>increasing people-to-people actions and cross-border cooperation in community initiatives, to pave the way to future, more structured, community-led interventions)</i> <p>Q6. Are there any systemic improvements brought by the Programme? <i>(whether the Programme brought systemic positive changes in the eligible area in any of the financed fields)</i></p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Q7. Are the Programme’s positive effects sustainable without ongoing Programme support? <i>(whether the positive effects in the eligible area and any systemic positive changes identified at the question above have long-term viability and durability; the capitalisation potential of the financed projects and continued results in the sustainability period are also to be explored)</i></p> <p>Q8. Is the Programme’s cross-border sustainability expected to be strong? <i>(whether the Programme’s positive effects are viable and effective on long-term in the regions covered by the Programme in the two countries)</i></p> <p>EU added value</p> <p>Q9. To what extent could the results and outputs have been achieved without the EU intervention or without its cross-border character? <i>(whether the results and outputs would have been reached without EU funds - e.g. by the two participating states acting alone with national funds, by the beneficiaries without grants received for cooperation or by grants not implying cross-border partnerships)</i></p> <p>Visibility</p> <p>Q10. Is the Programme successful in raising the awareness of the beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries of the Interreg Programme/end users and general public on the positive impact of the EU financial contribution?</p> <p>Q11. Which communication activities/actions or tools/channels were the most effective?</p> <p>Q12. How could this effect be increased in the next programming period? <i>(this set of three questions aims to capture the impact achieved by the Programme’s communication activities/actions)</i></p>
<p>Methodological approach and possible methods</p>	<p>Method: theory-based evaluation (realist evaluation and contribution analysis are taken into account at this stage, but the exact combination of methods is requested from the external evaluators)</p> <p>Tools: desk research, interviews, focus groups, expert panels, case studies, surveys</p>
<p>Data sources</p>	<p>programme strategic and implementation documents, DMCS and relevant procedures, Jems data, relevant data collected during the implementation evaluation, findings of the ongoing process evaluation</p>
<p>How the evaluation will be implemented</p>	<p>evaluation commissioned externally, following public procurement applicable rules (open procedure)</p>
<p>Planned cost (Euro)</p>	<p>up to 110.000 euro</p>

ANNEXES

ANNEX A - Organisational chart of MA



ANNEX B - CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCES

The present Evaluation Report Checklist⁶ was produced as part of the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania.

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

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

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

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

ANNEX C - Checklist for assessing the inception report

The present Inception Report Checklist⁷ is used for assessing the quality of inception reports. A checked box by a statement indicates that item is not problematic. Details are included below each statement

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

⁷ This checklist was also used for the 2014-2020 programming period.

ANNEX D - Checklist for assessing the evaluation report

The present Evaluation Report Checklist⁸ was produced as part of the Guide for Drafting the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy in Romania.

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

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

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

⁸ The checklist uses different sources and adapts their contents according to the experience of the authors; in particular see: Evaluation Checklist, Gary Miron (2004); Checklist for preparing the Evaluation Report ILO (2021); EVALSED: The resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development (2013)

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

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

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



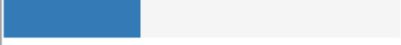

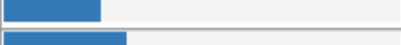
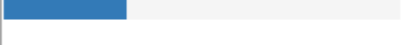
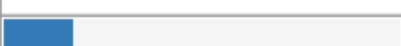
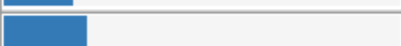
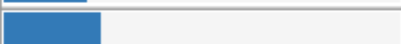

ANNEX E - FEEDBACK COLLECTED FROM STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE EVALUATION PLAN

Feedback was collected prior to defining the evaluation questions via a EUSurvey open questionnaire. Contributions were received from members of the Monitoring Committee of the Programme or of a previous CBC Romania-Hungary programme, people who work in organisations that are active or have effects in the eligible area, beneficiaries in the projects financed by the previous CBC Romania-Hungary programmes, applicants that weren't selected for financing, staff of the Programme structures or their hosting institutions, people who live in the eligible area. Some of the contributions received were directed to the MA Unit for analysis, as they were not related to Programme evaluations, but mainly to project assessment and selection.

While collecting preoccupying aspects and proposed questions for the future Programme evaluations, the stakeholders' perception on the most likely effects that the programme would bring were also collected.

These are reflected in the table below:

Having in mind our Programme's budget, scope and financed fields and actions, what are the most likely effects that the Programme will bring, during or after its implementation?

		Answers	Ratio
improved cooperation capacity		19	65.52 %
increased cross-border cooperation mindset		16	55.17 %
integrated and harmonious regional development		10	34.48 %
a greener region		7	24.14 %
increased resilience, personalisation and quality of the health care sector		9	31.03 %
common vision in culture&tourism		5	17.24 %
alleviated cross-border barriers		6	20.69 %
cross-border communities		7	24.14 %
other		0	0 %
No Answer		1	3.45 %

The evaluation-related feedback that was collected is presented in the table below, grouped as much as possible by criterion/topic:

Preoccupying aspects/Proposed questions	Proposed actions	Covered Yes/No	Related EQ
Implementation			
<i>Relevance</i>			
Are the selected projects really the ones that community need?	This topic can be covered under a more general relevance question (e.g. How relevant are the financed projects to the communities living in the area?)	Yes	ImplemEval Q9
The interests to submit for the eligible applicants for each specific objective(renewable energy, climate changes' adaptability biodiversity, health protection)	These aspect is generally analysed as part of assessing relevance	Yes	ImplemEval Q8
Was the program budget distributed equitably among the priorities and projects?			
I am the most preoccupied about the actions for a Greener region especially biodiversity conservation because the two countries Romania and Hungary are situated in the same bioregion and biodiversity protection need cross-border actions.	May be touched under the relevance criterion	Yes, if found a relevant	ImplemEval Q8, Q9
people to people actions are important for a better knowledge of the same problems/aspects/etc of the citizens in both countries.	May be touched under the relevance criterion	Yes, if found a relevant	ImplemEval Q8, Q9
<i>Efficiency</i>			
Funding Allocation and Financial Management: Properly allocating and managing funds to support various projects and initiatives, while ensuring transparency, accountability, and compliance with program guidelines and regulations.	These aspects and any deficiencies are checked as part of the audit missions	No	-
Governance structure and decision making process, what's the path to simplification?	Any such approach may arise as part of analyzing the factors influencing the efficiency of the Programme's implementation system	Yes, if found a factor	ImplemEval Q2
The possibility to create permanent common cross-border management structures.			

Are the project assessment, selection and contracting systems efficient? What can be improved?	This question may be used as a general evaluation question on project assessment, selection and contracting	Yes	OngoingEval Q1
how much the information content and clarity of the Application Guide (call and annexes) helped the preparation of the proposals (the Project Implementation Manual is not available among the call documents of the 1st call, which makes planning difficult, and a courtesy document in .doc or .docx of the AF would also be useful)	These may be covered under the more general evaluation question above.	Yes	OngoingEval Q1
Implementing efficient measures to reduce the time during receiving the project proposal and contracting the project, if proposal was successful.			
How can be the contracting phase easier and faster both for beneficiaries and the program bodies in order to fastening the launch of the new projects in 2024? Are there sufficient human resources available within program bodies for this task?			
Progress reports Reimbursement of the expenditures Jems User platform	These topics are included in the evaluation as part of the factors influencing the projects	Yes	OngoingEval Q9
in the implementation of the Program, I am most concerned with reporting and acquisitions			
To meet new partners who have the same needs as ours. To learn ways of cross-border collaboration.	These preoccupying aspects or questions came from different stakeholders and are regarded from the evaluation point of view as a proxy for the interest in the change of abilities and mindset that cross-border cooperation may bring with it.	Yes	OngoingEval Q9 ImplemEval Q2 ImpactEval Q2
The implementation process brings together people with different abilities, competencies and values			
How to draw up a successfull project; Find partners in Hungary			
To be able to communicate and work with our partners in a high and organized way, respecting deadlines and showing commitment.			
1.How do you think this program will change you? 2.Do you think this program will improve your speaking skills in a foreign language? 3.What are your expectations from this program? 4.What are the criteria by which you consider yourself elected? 5.What are your tasks in this programme and what can you improve?			

Cross-Border Cooperation and Coordination: Ensuring effective collaboration and coordination between stakeholders from both Romania and Hungary, considering differences in administrative processes, legal frameworks, and cultural contexts			
the communication with the management authority that manages the program	This topic is covered by evaluation as part of analyzing the support provided by the Programme structures	Yes	OngoingEval Q5
how well the National Contact Points supported the applicants by providing relevant and accurate information during clarification process	Support from Programme bodies is included in the evaluations.	Yes	OngoingEval Q5
How the Monitoring Committee is supported to decide on main aspects related to Programme implementation	Decision-making process is included.	Yes	ImplemEval Q2
Financing of the Programme structures, both timing and amount	This topic is covered by evaluation as part of analyzing the administrative and financial capacity of the Programme bodies and of the beneficiaries	Yes	ImplemEval Q3
Is the method of financing TA so late, as a flat rate applied to the eligible expenditure included in the payment applications to the EC, effective for successful programme implementation?			
Effectiveness			
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting: Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track project progress, measure outcomes, and report on the achievement of program objectives and indicators.	This topic is covered by evaluation as part of analyzing the factors affecting the Programme	Yes	ImplemEval Q2
Did the program indicators get fulfilled?	It is expected that the indicators will be measured by the Programme mostly based on Jems data. Evaluations will analyse how the mechanisms behind worked, looking for evidence of why, whether or how the changes are linked to the EU intervention.	Yes	ImplemEval Q1-Q3
Have the program's objectives been met? Are the intended outcomes and impacts being achieved?			
Is the programme effective?			
Late commencing of the Programme	This topic is covered by evaluation as part of analyzing the factors affecting the Programme	Yes	ImplemEval Q2
Are the selected projects influenced by the political content?	Any such approach may arise as part of analyzing the factors influencing the Programme	Yes, if found a factor	ImplemEval Q2

<i>Partnership, Inclusiveness</i>			
Is the right balance of relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of the programme, including as regards their participation in the Monitoring Committee, from the point of view of applying the partnership principle?	Topic covered by evaluation.	Yes	ImplemEval Q4
Preoccupations: Transparency, Communication, Management, Cross-Border Character, Involvement of border communities, including the RO on the HU side, mainly absent from the programme. Question: What is the involvement of the RO communities on the HU side in the program?	Such aspects may arise as part of analyzing the factors influencing the projects and the Programme	Yes, if found a factor	ImplemEval Q2
<i>Impact, Strategic projects</i>			
Did the implemented projects have a positive impact?	Topic included in the evaluations		OngoingEval Q12 ImpactEval
What are the long term effects of the programme for increased cross-border cooperation mindset ?	This topic is included in the impact evaluation	Yes	ImpactEval Q2
Given that this is a border that acts in many ways as a barrier (it is still a Schengen border, the economic, linguistic and cultural differences are significant etc) it is very important to prioritize the cooperation element between the two countries.	The impact evaluation questions are taking into account this approach	Yes	ImpactEval Q2
The systemic positive changes due to the Programme intervention in the eligible area: Do you think that systemic improvements has been made in the topics covered by the priority axis, due to the Programme intervention in the eligible area?	Given the cross-border character and limited financial value of the Programme, thematic impact is expected in a lower extent. However, the topic is covered by evaluation.	Yes	ImpactEval Q6
What has been the wider socio-economic, environmental, and cultural impact of the program on the targeted cross-border region?	Taken into account while analysing the overall integrated and harmonious regional development	Yes	ImpactEval Q1
The impact of the Programme can be expanded if the projects are evaluated for transferability, replicability or scalability, for example whether the project activities / soft programs are suitable or applicable for any other city/town in PA to adopt them locally? Can these activities/solutions serve as best practices for other authorities/organizations in the PA?	This was regarded as a suggestion on the assessment process. However, capitalization is taken into account in evaluation.	N/A	-

What is the balance between changes related to socio-economic development vs building capacities (cooperation capacities even), in the implemented/foreseen operations ?	This topic is included in the impact evaluation	Yes	ImpactEval Q4
Strategic projects			
Were the operations of strategic importance able to increase the impact of the programme as compared to regular projects, considering the allocation?	This topic is included in the impact evaluation as part of analyzing the factors affecting the effects of the Programme	Yes	ImpactEval Q1
Most of the funding is targeting state organizations, even if local or regional/national level organizations. Half of the program funds are practically distributed directly to state organizations, with no real strategic impact.	Such aspects may arise as part of analyzing the factors affecting the effects of the Programme	Yes, if found a factor	ImplemEval Q2 ImpactEval Q4
Should big infrastructure projects be eligible in cbc programmes?			
The impact that the strategic projects seem to have on the overall performance of the Programme. The large scale investments should not be supported by Interreg Programmes.			
Sustainability			
Have measures been put in place to ensure the continued impact and success of projects beyond the program's lifespan? How can these innovations and best practices be shared and replicated in other contexts?	This topic is included. Aspects related to capitalization may arise while answering the different evaluation questions and is also included connected to sustainability.	Yes	ImpactEval Q7
Long term sustainability of the ongoing projects	This topic might be part of the analysis related to sustainability	Yes	ImpactEval Q7
Did the implemented projects have continued results in their sustainability period?			
Communication			
How effective has the communication and dissemination of program information been to various stakeholders, including the public?	This topic is included.	Yes	ImpactEval Q11
Which were the main and most effective communication tools used by the Programme structures?	This topic is included.	Yes	
What could be improved in order to reach and provide support for all partners or potential partners?	This topic is included.	Yes	ImpactEval Q1

How the projects' staff is observing the communication (including visibility rules) obligations during the implementation of projects	These topics are more likely to be part of implementation/monitoring/controls, not evaluation. In evaluation, this aspect would arise only if found a factor affecting the Programme.	N/A	-
How the Joint Secretariat is monitoring aspects related to projects visibility, how the penalties - if necessary - are applied in relation with communication issues, according to provisions of new Regulations			

ANNEX F - PROCEDURAL ASPECTS

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

Evaluation Unit's responsibilities directly related to the evaluation function are:

General tasks

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

Tasks related to the evaluations that are commissioned by MA to external experts

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

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

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

Procedural flow

The drafting process of the EvalPlan before submission to MC

The activities undertaken for drafting the EvalPlan are the following:

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

Drafting of preparatory documents for commissioning evaluations externally

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

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

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

Carrying out evaluations with internal expertise

If the Evaluation Unit carries out the evaluations, the following steps should be followed:

1. Drafting a document on the Evaluation scope comprising the methodology to be used in order to perform the evaluation and a timetable for the activities to be carried out;
2. Producing a draft evaluation report (deadline - 6 months from the approval of the Evaluation scope and timing)
3. Submitting the draft evaluation report to ESC for comments;
4. Drafting the final evaluation report based on the comments from the ESC;
5. Sending the final evaluation report to ESC members for approval;
6. Approval of the final evaluation report by ESC, after treating any additional comments or observations.

Upon request or if deemed necessary during the drafting process, the Evaluation Unit may also provide interim versions of the evaluation reports between the draft report and the final report.

ESC consultations

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

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

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

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

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

Steps for the written procedure:

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

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