

CONCEPT NOTE EX-ANTE EVALUATION OF BSR 2014-2020 (II)

The ex-ante evaluation will follow the guidelines prepared by the European Commission¹. The guidelines are split into to four overall components which are addressed in section 1-4:

- Programme strategy;
- Indicators, monitoring and evaluation;
- Consistency of financial allocation;
- Contribution to Europe 2020).

The issues to be appraised are listed according to the component, issue and judgement criteria which will be used (Tables 1 and 2) below for easy reference and overview. The methodology for the ex-ante was presented in the proposal and this concept note outlines the specific methodological steps and the analytical approach to be used. A separate concept note has been prepared for the Strategic Analysis of Reference Documents (I) and SEA (II).

1.1 Programme strategy

While assessing the proposed strategy of the programme the ex-ante should appraise the consistency of the selected thematic objectives, the priorities and corresponding objectives of the programmes with the Common Strategic Framework². This means that programme specific objectives should be aligned with challenges and needs in the relation to Europe 2020 strategy and that these have been given appropriate weight in the programme. The assessment therefore includes 4 key areas:

1) An appraisal of whether the proposed programme thematic objectives, priorities and corresponding objectives are consistent with the CSF. As the programming itself, is based on an analysis of this in order to ensure **consistency**, it is assumed that it will. However, an analysis of the programme "the other way" (then the strategic analysis) should be able to establish whether the programme indeed really is.

2) In order to appraise the **coherence** of the programme with other related instruments, it is important to identify the instruments (EU, national, regional) relevant to this comparison and we suggest that a list of relevant instruments are identified together with the JPC. Furthermore, a comparison between these actions and the actions included in the proposed intervention should be carried out, checking whether the intervention will be complementary to³ and coherent⁴ with the existing activities. It is important to determine the extent and kind of synergy effects which can be expected.

3) An important part of the analysis will be the assessment of the programme activities and outputs and whether these are **likely to achieve the expected results** and finally have the desired impact. Here, it is important that not only the outputs themselves be assessed, but also the factors which will enable (implementing partner capacity etc.) the outputs to be translated into results. The programme must show a strategy for securing that outputs are turned into results. Here, as in the rest of the evaluation, the general scope and size of the programme must be kept in mind, ensuring proportionality in the analysis.

¹ The Programming Period 2014-2020. Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy. ERDF, ESF CF. Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation. Draft 15 March 2012. European Commission. DG REGIO

² Article 48 (3) (d) CPR

³ No duplication

⁴ No undermining/possible contradictions

Table 1 Overview of programme strategy appraisal issues and judgement criteria

	Appraisal issues	Proposed judgement criteria
Consistency of programme objectives	Europe 2020 challenges and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution of national efforts for Europe 2020 in regional situation and needs • The thematic objective, the priorities and objectives are consistent with the CSF. • The strategy reflects the challenges and needs in the programme area as a whole. • Evidence justifying specific regional challenges diverging from the national. • Horizontal principles have been considered in the identification of needs and challenges
	Consistency of objectives with challenges and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of thematic priorities and investment priorities is justified. • The challenges and needs are translated into objectives in the programme • Objectives precisely demonstrate how the programme contribute to EU 2020 in addressing regional challenges and needs. • Justification is given for non inclusion of major challenges and needs
Coherence	Internal coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships between objectives of the priority axis, • Complementarities and potential synergies (identifying lack of coherence) • Appropriate coordination mechanisms exist for effective delivery of multi-fund programmes
	Relation with other relevant instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme is aligned with other relevant instruments (such as EAFRD, EMFF, other Union or national funding instruments and the EIB), ensuring complementarity. • Programme supports integrated territorial approaches are appropriate to achieve the thematic priorities combining available tools • Regional, local and urban development initiatives are reflected where relevant. • The contribution to the EU BSR Strategy is clearly identified. • The programme creates synergies and leavers other activities which would not have occurred without EU assistance.
Linkages between supported actions, expected outputs and results		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are clear causal links between different actions, planned outputs and the intended results (intervention logic) • External factors which may influence the results have been taken into account. • The change that the programme intended to bring should be achievable through he operations delivering the outputs. • The rationale for the form of support proposed is assessed as reasonable • The expected outputs will contribute to results • The proposed support is relevant in a transnational cooperation context. • Policy assumptions are backed by evidence (previous experience, evaluations or studies) • Actions targeting needs of specific territories are relevant.
Horizontal principles	Measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women/ prevent discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan has been provided on how to ensure equal opportunities in the interventions. • Equal opportunities and discrimination are included in the indicator system. • l) the adequacy of planned measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women and to prevent discrimination • The aim of promoting equality has been taken into account in preparation of the programme. • Clear objectives established and specific initiatives foreseen for ensuring programme contribution to
	Measures to promote sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme addresses how it will meet the environmental protection requirement and secure resource efficiency, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management. • The programme addresses support for climate change objectives. • The adequacy of planned measures to promote sustainable development

4) We will appraise the **horizontal issues** by assessing how the programme ensures equality and prevent any type of discrimination (included in measures, actions, etc.). Also, a number of environmental and climate change concerns have to be addressed when preparing and implementing the programme. An effective way of securing the inclusion of cross-cutting issues in the programme implementation is to develop indicators for these issues in the monitoring system.

2 Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

The second component of the ex-ante include an assessment of 4 key areas:

- Relevance and clarity of programme indicators;
- Quantified baselines and target values;
- Suitability of milestones;
- Administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation.

1) Setting up a robust indicator system reflecting the programme objectives and capable of measuring outputs, results and impacts is a prerequisite for all programmes. The key to measuring the accumulated results and comparing these to policy targets is to develop an indicator framework consisting of indicators which correspond to targets and which can be applied to the majority of the projects. Streamlining the selection and use of indicators will be an important issue during the start-up phase of the evaluation. It is noted that the Regulation refers to a common set of indicators, in addition to programme-specific ones, which has to be developed before the programming is initiated. Indicators need to be developed according to certain principles in order to ensure that these can and will be useful for the monitoring and for the evaluations. We will use the RACER template where each indicator is assessed according to whether it is **Relevant – Accepted – Credible – Easy – Robust**.

2) For the results indicators **baselines** needs to be established in the programme. Where these are not easily available data needs to be collected. We will assist if necessary with advising on sources and methods for the informing the baselines. Targets have to be set at a realistic level (see above RACER) for both results output indicators taking into consideration the programme type.

3) A performance framework has to be defined for each programme in order to monitor progress towards the objectives and targets. Performance reviews will be undertaken in 2017 and 2019. In case shortfalls are observed in achieving **milestones**, payments may be suspended (in the case of ETC programmes, there is no reserve in case of good performance)⁵. We will assess the suitability of the milestones and whether the milestones capture essential information of the progress of a priority. It will also be important to assess the realism of the milestones i.e. can these be achieved within the given programme, financing and the timeframe. Milestones should primarily be financial outputs (quantifiable). The timing for the milestones also needs to be set.

4) The BSR programme is by now a mature programme and has considerable experience with management and monitoring of programmes. It is assumed that a large part of this will be continued which means the assessment of **administrative capacity** can be based on the existing system. The assessment will include a

⁵ Common provisions

review of the current organisation and staffing of the MA and JTS and its antenna in relation to the proposal for a new programme. A prerequisite for being able to **monitor and evaluating** programme development, as well as carry out evaluations, is that data on results and, ideally, impacts are collected and relevant. An assessment of functioning of the procedures and current system for data collection will be carried out.

Table 2 Overview of appraisal issues in relation to Indicators, monitoring and evaluation and judgement criteria

	Appraisal issues	Proposed judgement criteria
Relevance and clarity of programme indicators	Relevance of results and output indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive to policy. • Cover most important changes. • Indicators are complementary to ETC common indicators.
	Clarity of indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The result and output indicators are robust. • Statistical validation coming from reliable and official sources (Eurostat or national statistics). • Date sources for results indicators are identified and publicly available. • The indicators are RACER (see below).
Quantified baseline and target values		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the quantified target values for indicators are realistic, having regard to the support from the CSF Funds envisaged. • Baselines have been established and data is available. • The proposed activities will lead to outputs which will have the required results.
Suitability of milestones	Milestones selected for the performance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic (in relation to the timing of the reviews) and suitable milestones have been selected, reflecting the nature and complexity of the programme. • The suitability of the milestones selected for the performance framework. • Set at adequate and realistic timing (steps in implementation, or reviews).
Administrative capacity, data collection procedures and evaluation	Human resources and administrative capacity for management of the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed implementation structure is adequate in relation to the size and complexity of the programme. • The adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity for management of the programme. • Positive benchmark in relation to current structure. • A plan of use of technical assistance has been included. • An assessment of the administrative burden for beneficiaries.
	Procedures for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed monitoring system corresponds with the requirements of the CSF. • The suitability of the procedures (manuals) for monitoring the programme and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations. • Time schedule for collection of monitoring data (and evaluation plan). • Sources and quality of collection of data (including check and control of data). • Positive assessment of performance of existing system (evaluations of systems).

3. Consistency of financial allocations

The consistency of the financial allocation needs to be assessed based on the financial appropriation to each priority. The consistency should be checked insofar as to appraise whether the identified objectives

can be met with the allocated resources. We will make this appraisal based on the assessment of the challenges and needs. The allocations should also be checked in relation to the forms of support as not all forms of needs require the same financial effort. If relevant and necessary, it should be appraised how resources coming from different sources contribute to the integrated approaches (sustainable urban development, ITI, marginalised communities).

4. Contribution to Europe 2020

In addition to the assessment of the consistency of the programme outlined under section 1, the programme needs to be checked with regard to the extent to which its contribution to the Europe 2020, having regard to the selected thematic objectives and priorities.

The Europe 2020 sets out strategic flagships which all programmes must contribute to. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that the programme objectives and priorities correspond to one or more of the flagships. This analysis can be based on the assessment that we will make in connection with the strategic analysis (concept note I). When carrying out this assessment, we need to take into account national and regional needs and contexts.

The table indicates a check system which can be used to provide an overview of the potential contribution the BSR Programme contributes to the Europe 2020.

Table 3. Priorities in the programme addressing the EU 2020 flagships (all or some).

Priorities of BSR	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
EU 2020 Flagships				
Innovation Union	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth on the move				✓
A digital agenda for Europe		✓		
Resource efficient Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
An industrial policy of the globalisation era	✓	✓	✓	✓
An agenda for new skills and jobs			✓	✓
European platform against poverty				✓

5. Process

We foresee participating and acting as sparring during the process. During the entire programming period we will participate in meetings with the JPC and/or Programming Task Force to discuss and provide inputs on ad hoc themes as the programming progresses.

In the first part of the programming phase we will provide analysis of the different parts of the programmes as it develops. This will be done in the format of notes and presentation in meetings. When the first draft of the programme has been submitted we will submit a first report covering the draft programme. A second report will be submitted based on an assessment of the consolidated draft. And a final report will be developed based on the final report (the latter will be an update of the second report). The focus of this part will be the final programme and the extent to which the findings of the draft evaluation report were

taken into account in the final programme. The summary of the ex-ante evaluation will be prepared when the final evaluation report has been adopted by the JPC.

Table 3. Activities of the Ex-ante evaluation

No	Activity	Description	
3.1	Participation in meetings with the JPC	Take part in discussions at JPC meetings with other stakeholder groups	November-December 2012
3.2	Assessment of the draft programme:		
3.3.1	Document analysis	Analysis of the programme document according to the methodology presented in 4.2	January-April 2013
3.3.3	Expert interviews	Validate finding with experts.	
3.3.3	Participation in meeting with reference groups/stakeholders	Take part in discussions at JPC meetings with other stakeholder groups	
3.4	Preparation and submission of assessment report on full first draft	Prepare report on assessment of draft programme	April 2013
3.5	Presentation of the assessment of the draft programme	Presentation of draft report to the JPC - discussion of findings with the JPC	May 2013
	Programme in public consultation		May-September 2013
3.7	Assessment of the consolidated programme	Assessment of the final programme document	October 2013
3.8	Preparation of the final report based on final programme.	Prepare report on assessment of draft programme taking into account the changes made to the programme since the draft version	December 2013
3.9	Preparation of the summary for the programme document	Summary of the ex-ante evaluation will be prepared for insertion in the programme document	December 2013

We foresee that we will perform document analysis; perform internal validation by our expert group; interview experts; and participate in stakeholder events/conferences on the programme. These data collection events will provide inputs to the analysis of the programme according to the guidelines. We will consult a number of key stakeholders to validate our findings, either in connection with meetings or other gathering of stakeholders or through interviews (primarily per telephone).

The outputs of the ex-ante evaluation will be the following:

- Ongoing assessments (notes) during the main part of the programming phases;
- Evaluation report on the draft programme (layout will be discussed with the JTS);
- Evaluation report on the consolidate programme;
- Final evaluation reports;
- Summary for the programme.