

Interreg - IPA CBC **Greece - Albania**



Evaluation Plan

INTERREG IPA CBC PROGRAMME
“GREECE - ALBANIA 2014-2020”

November 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present evaluation plan has been developed according to the provisions of IPA Implementing Regulation (EU) 447/2014, article 41, par. 3 and Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, ~~articles 50, 54, 56 and 114~~ (CPR), Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013 (ERDF Reg., article 14) and the Commission guidance documents on monitoring and evaluation¹ and on evaluation plans².

The evaluation plan sets out the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the Programme, taking into account lessons learned from evaluations made in previous programming periods and the budgetary framework. It sets out the framework to properly plan and implement quality Programme evaluations with the aim to secure the Programme's effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

The theory based methods are suggested to be used in the evaluations of the Interreg IPA CBC "Greece - Albania 2014-2020" Programme. Compared to the counterfactual methods which will be mainly quantitatively based, the theory based methods are expected to give more composite (qualitative, as well as quantitative) knowledge about how and why the Programme has an impact.

One of the main sources of data that can be exploited in evaluations will be the MIS, used for Programme monitoring. All the main data from projects will be available on this database, as well as specific statistics. In particular, the MIS database will provide the overview of the outputs and results generated by the projects.

There may be also a need for new data to be collected specifically for the evaluation. An external evaluator may make use of interviews, desk researches, benchmarking as well as surveys and analysis of case studies. Beyond the Programme monitoring system, the annual implementation report of the policy learning platforms may also provide useful information. The methods and tools will be further specified in the ToR and in the Inception Report, which will be delivered by the contracted evaluator.

Progress in the implementation of the evaluation plan as well as the outcomes of the evaluation activities (when available) will be reported in the Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) of the years 2018, 2021 and the Final Implementation Report (02.2025)). By 31

December 2022, the MA will submit to the EC a report, summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the Programme period..

The evaluation plan foresees three deliverables:

- External evaluation, till 31.12.2018
- Update of external evaluation, till mid 2021
- Final external evaluation, till mid 2024

The estimated cost for external expertise services for the whole programming period 2014-2020 is EUR 70.000,00.

1. OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE, COORDINATION

1.1 Programme context

The INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme “Greece - Albania 2014-2020” expresses the development strategy of the cross border area, their individual objectives and targets, interventions and means that refine and implement development planning for the programming period 2014- 2020.

The overall development vision of the Interreg IPA cross-border cooperation Programme “Greece - Albania 2014-2020” is: “to find the balance between sustainable regional development and enhancement of cross-border cooperation among local population & regional institutions, in accordance with EU & national policies, in order to address common challenges through joint interventions”

The overall strategy of the Interreg IPA cross-border cooperation Programme “Greece - Albania 2014-2020” is served by three (3) priority axes and four (4) selected thematic priorities listed below.

Priority Axes (PA)

- PA.1 : Promotion of the environment, sustainable transport and public infrastructure
- PA.2 : Boosting the local economy
- PA.3 : Technical assistance

Thematic Priorities

- **Thematic Priority (c):**
Promoting sustainable transport, information and communication networks and services and investing in cross-border water, waste and energy systems and facilities
- **Thematic Priority (b):**
Protecting the environment & promoting climate change adaptation & mitigation, risk prevention & management
- **Thematic Priority (d):**
Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage
- **Thematic Priority (g):**
Enhancing competitiveness, the business environment and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment through, inter alia, promotion and support to entrepreneurship, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, and development of local cross-border markets and internationalisation

The eligible cross-border area includes:

- the Regional Units of Grevena, Kastoria, Florina, Arta, Thesprotia, Ioannina, Preveza, Zakynthos, Kerkyra, Kefallinia and Lefkada, in Greece, and
- the Region of Vlorë, the Region of Gjirokastrë, the Region of Korçë and the Region of Berat, in Albania.

1.2 Role and objectives of the evaluation plan

According to article 41 par.3 of IPA Implementing Regulation 447/2014 “Article 56 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 concerning evaluation during the programming period shall apply”.

According to article 56.3 of the Common Provision Regulation 1303/2013 there is a request for impact evaluations: “during the programming period, the managing authority shall ensure that evaluations, including evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact, are carried out for each Programme on the basis of the evaluation plan and that each evaluation is subject to appropriate follow-up in accordance with the Fund-specific rules. At least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the European Structural & Investment (ESI) Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority. All evaluations shall be examined by the monitoring committee and sent to the Commission”.

The Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece- Albania 2014-2020” evaluation plan covers both impact and implementation evaluations aiming at, on one side, capturing the effects of the interventions and, on the other side, looking at how the Programme is being implemented and managed.

The overall tasks of the specific Evaluation Plan are to:

- improve the quality of evaluations through proper planning, including identification and collection of necessary data (Article 54(2) CPR)
- enable informed Programme management and policy decisions on the basis of evaluation findings
- provide a framework to plan impact evaluation (Article 56(3) CPR)
- ensure that evaluations provide inputs for annual implementation and progress reports
- facilitate the synthesis of findings from different Participating States by the Commission and the exchange of available evidence
- ensure that resources for funding and managing the evaluations are appropriate (Article 54(2) CPR).

The specific objectives as far as the impact evaluation is concerned are to evaluate:

- whether the Programme succeeded in achieving the objectives of each priority,
- whether the Programme contributed to the target of the IPA II objectives.

1.3 Coverage of the evaluation plan

This evaluation plan refers to the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece - Albania 2014-2020”, co-financed by IPA II under the European Territorial Cooperation goal.

As stated in the Art 54 (1) of the CPR as well as in guidance documents from the EC the content of the Evaluation Plan concerns mainly the following areas:

- Evaluations on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme,
- Impact evaluations.

The geographic area covered by the Evaluation Plan Programme is the Cross Border area between Greece and Albania.

The duration of the Evaluation Plan is up to 2025.

1.4 Background and legal requirements

The present Evaluation Plan has been developed according to the provisions of IPA Implementing Regulation (EU) 447/2014 article 41 par. 3, Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 (CPR, ~~articles 50, 54, 56 and 114~~), Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013 (ERDF Reg., article 14) and the Commission guidance documents on monitoring and evaluation³ and on evaluation plans⁴.

The Evaluation Plan sets out the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the Programme, taking into account lessons learned from evaluations made in previous programming periods and the budgetary framework. The plan is meant to facilitate informed Programme management and policy decisions and to support Programme implementation and its result orientation. It sets out the framework to properly plan and implement quality Programme evaluations with the aim to secure the Programme’s effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

During the previous programming period, the IPA CB Programme “Greece – Albania 2007-

³ Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation - European regional development fund and cohesion fund - Concepts and recommendations (March 2014):

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

⁴ Guidance Document of Evaluation Plans (February 2015):

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/evaluation_plan_guidance_en.pdf

2013” undertook an on-going evaluation, which provided relevant information on the development and focus of the Programme. These documents will be taken into consideration for the evaluation of Interreg IPA CBC Programme ”Greece – Albania 2014-2020”.

Progress in the implementation of the evaluation plan as well as the outcomes of the evaluation activities (when available) will be reported in the annual implementation report (AIR) for the years 2019, 2021 and the final implementation report (FIR). By 31 December 2022, the MA will submit to the EC a report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the Programme period (Art. 114 (2) of CPR).

The planned evaluations are set out in the present paper, the description is indicative for evaluations planned beyond a 3-year period. New evaluation needs might occur during the Programme lifetime. Therefore, the evaluation plan will be regularly reviewed by the Joint Monitoring Committee and it might be adapted according to the Programme needs.

The present evaluation plan follows the DG REGIO “Guidance Document on Evaluations Plans” and includes the following elements:

- subject and rationale (sections 1, 2 and 3)
- evaluation questions (section 3.1.3)
- methods and data requirements (section 3.1)
- duration and tentative date (section 2.8)
- estimated budget (section 4)

2. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

2.1 Evaluation methodology and data requirements

According to the EU Commissions guidelines, there are two main groups of methods that are suited for impact evaluations:

- theory based methods and
- counterfactual based methods

Theory based impact evaluation is based on establishing the theory behind an intervention (the theory of change) and assessing whether it has been implemented according to that theory in order to judge the contribution of the intervention to observed effects.

The counterfactual method does not per se explain why a given intervention makes a difference. The core element of a counterfactual impact evaluation is to compare two groups/areas to see what has been the change in the group/area with the intervention and in the group/area without the intervention. Counterfactual method can typically be applied to only some interventions (e.g., training, enterprise support), i.e. relatively homogenous interventions with a high number of beneficiaries. If a public authority wishes to estimate the effects of interventions for which counterfactual methods are inappropriate (for instance, for major infrastructures), other methods can be used.⁵

“Most Interreg Programmes will be using the theory based impact evaluation, considering the available budget, data and capacity⁶”. In case of the Interreg IPA CBC Programme “Greece-Albania 2014-2020” the means and resources are very limited in relation to the eligible area and challenges that have to be met. In this challenging context, the theory based methods appear much more adapted for the Interreg IPA CBC “Greece- Albania 2014-2020” Programme. Compared to the counterfactual methods which will be mainly quantitatively based, the theory based methods are expected to give more composite (qualitative as well as quantitative) knowledge about how and why the Programme has an impact. This knowledge is expected to enhance the understanding of how Programme funded interventions are functioning. The quality of an evaluation relies in particular on the quality on the data it builds

⁵ Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, European Cohesion Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Concepts and Recommendations, March 2014

⁶ Q&A Evaluation 2014-2020, INTERACT, 1st version, January 2016

on. The evaluation questions will determine which data need to be collected, and when.

One of the main sources of data will be the MIS used for Programme monitoring. All the main data from projects will be available on this database as well as specific statistics. In particular, the MIS database will provide the overview of the outputs and results generated by the projects.

There may be also a need for new data to be collected specifically for the evaluation. An external evaluators may make use of interviews (e.g. with Programme bodies, beneficiaries, other main target groups), desk researches (e.g. projects website, Programme documents such as application form, and project's progress reports), benchmarking as well as surveys and analysis of case studies (e.g. on approved projects). Depending on the specific type and topic of each evaluation, the relevant tool and data requirements will be selected. Beyond the Programme monitoring system, the annual implementation report of the policy learning platforms may also provide useful information.

Further details will be provided in the terms of reference for the selection of the evaluation experts but it will be up to them to propose the most suitable evaluation method and data requirements.

2.2 Synergies with other Programmes and Initiatives

The Programme welcomes and will promote whenever possible synergies and collaborations with the other Policies / Programmes, such as:

- **Global Initiatives:** Rio+20, the Kyoto Protocol
- **Interregional & ENPI Cross Border Programmes:** Interreg Europe 2014-2020, ENPI CBC Programmes 2014-2020, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- **Cross Border Programmes:** Greece - FYROM IPA II CBC Programme 2014-2020, Albania - FYROM IPA II CBC Programme 2014 – 2020
- **Networking Programmes:** ESPON Programme 2014-2020, URBACT Programme 2014-2020, INTERACT Programme 2014-2020
- **Transnational Programmes:** MED 2014-2020, Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020, Adriatic-Ionian 2014-2020 Transnational Programme (ADRION)
- **Thematic Programmes:** the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020, Horizon 2020, Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050, Life+, etc.
- **Greek Regional Operational Programmes:** Ionian islands 2014-2020 Regional Operational Programme, Epirus 2014-2020 Regional Operational Programme, Western Macedonia 2014-2020 Regional Operational Programme,

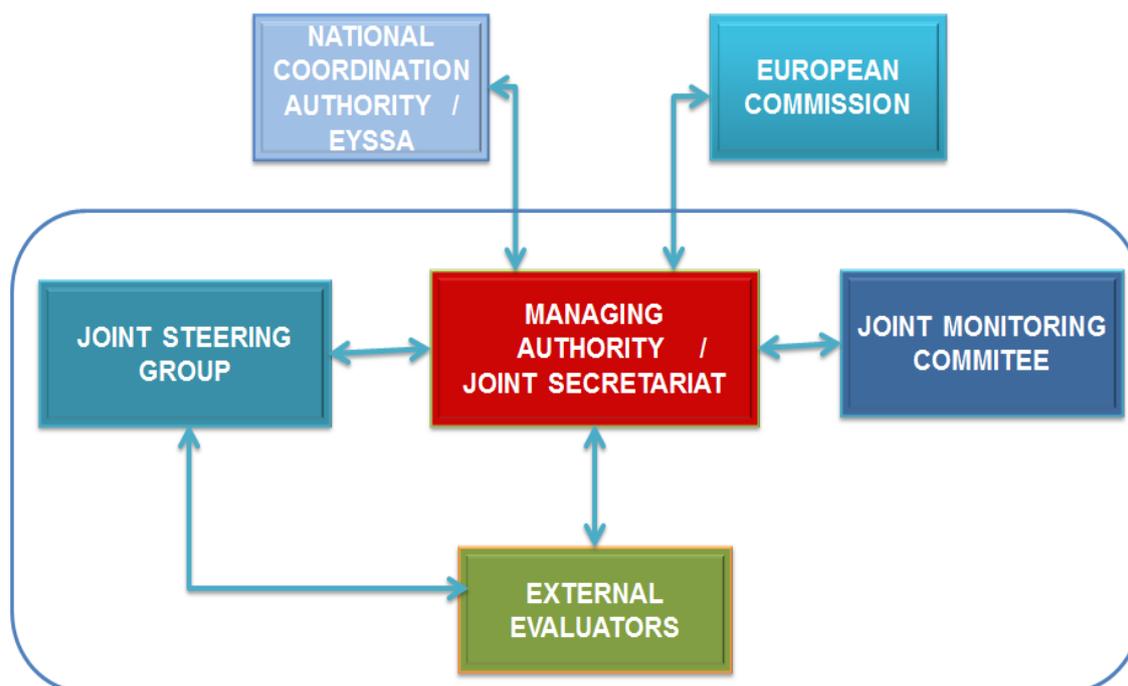
- **EU Policies:** Europe 2020, Seventh EU Environmental Action Programme

as well as with other institutions from the cooperation area carrying out evaluations, in view of widening the evaluation perspective, enriching results of the evaluation activities and avoiding duplications.

2.3 Evaluation process – Roles and responsibilities

The coordination, planning and monitoring throughout the life of the Programme will be the responsibility of the following bodies:

Figure: Evaluation Network - Competent bodies / Authorities



Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat

The Managing Authority (MA)⁷ has the responsibility for designing and delivering the evaluation plan. The MA prepares the plan under the guideline of the National Coordination Authority and in cooperation with the Joint Secretariat (JS).

The MA/JS will present the evaluation plan to the JMC members for approval. The evaluation plan should be seen as a strategic document, through which the JMC takes a stand on the expected main results of the Programme and their timing. The JMC is expected to discuss and approve the evaluation plan. The JMC shall approve any amendments which are deemed necessary.

The follow-up and status of the evaluation plan will be discussed at least once a year. When relevant, an updated evaluation plan will be presented at the JMC meeting. The JMC members will contribute actively to its development. Any follow-up measures of evaluation findings will also be reported to the JMC.

After JMC approval of each version of the evaluation plan, the MA shall submit the plan to the Commission for information. The plan is submitted through the SFC system.

The MA is responsible for the tendering of external experts.

The Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat will carry out all activities related to the set up and implementation of the evaluation plan. These comprise activities related to organising JMC meetings, contracting, coordinating and ensuring quality control with/of external experts; coordinating with EC, INTERACT and others.

In particular, Unit A' (Planning and Monitoring of MCS, horizontal issues and Interreg Europe) of MA is coordinating evaluation issues internally, liaises with NCA, assesses the relevant needs and drafts the necessary training plan. Unit A' also, represents MA in the Evaluation Network (see below) coordinated by NCA.

Joint Monitoring Committee

The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), representing the Partners States, has a steering and deciding role with regards to the development and implementation of the evaluation plan. It examines, approves and reviews the evaluation plan (article 110 (2) of CPR), in view of

⁷ Decision no. 109283 / EYTHY 1012 / 23.10.2015 Ministerial Decision (Official Government Gazette 2362 / B / 04.11.2015) Restructuring of the Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Objective OPs, Article 5 paragraph 5 Law. 4314/2014 and repealing of Decision no. 175294 / DIOE 196 / 06.07.2002 (Official Government Gazette 730 / B / 13.6.2002).

ensuring that emerging needs in terms of evaluation activities are reflected in the plan. The JMC also examines the progress made in the implementation of the plan and the follow up given to the findings of the evaluations (article 110 (1) (b) CPR). The review of the evaluation plan could be combined with the approval of the annual implementation report in which progress made in implementing the evaluation plan will be reported.

National Coordination Authority E.Y.S.S.A (Unit B: Planning and Evaluation) (YA 69136 /EYTHY 627/07.10.2015, Official Government Gazette (OGG) 1451 / B / 10.7.2015)

The coordination of the planning of evaluations and utilization of their findings, as well as the elaboration of Programme Evaluation Plans, is primary responsibility of the Planning and Evaluation Unit of EYSSA.

Specifically, National Coordination Authority has the following responsibilities:

- Provides instructions and guidelines on the preparation and conduct of evaluations of the NSRF and the strategic nature of its assessment.
- Coordinates evaluation of the programs co financed by the GRNET.
- Coordinates, in cooperation with other EAS services the assessment procedure of integrated spatial urban development strategies, financial engineering instruments and the smart specialization strategy.
- Coordinates the Evaluation Network and ensure the quality of ratings for the exploitation of the NSRF evaluation data and findings and NSRF Programmes.
- Provides directions, coordinates training Evaluation Plans of Operational Programmes and monitors progress in their implementation.
- Provides instructions for carrying out the evaluations (assessment of effectiveness, efficiency, impact of the programs and the environmental impact strategy), process the results of the evaluations and provides guidance on their revision. For this purpose, cooperates with EYSEKT for the OP co-financed by the ESF.
- An Evaluation Network among the NSRF 2014-2020 Programmes has been set up in order to coordinate productively and transfer the experience and know how. The network is coordinated by National Coordination Authority E.Y.S.S.A. The National Coordination Authority E.Y.S.S.A in collaboration with the EYSEKT, will elaborate the National Evaluation Plan and identify all the strategic issues to be addressed through the evaluations.

Joint Steering Group

A Joint Steering Group (JSG) shall be appointed in order to coordinate the process of the evaluation. Members of the JSG will be from the MA, representatives of both countries, important stakeholders and/or academics or other experts recommended by the MA. The purpose of the JSG will be to fulfill both an institutional and a technical-methodological function. Indicative responsibilities of the JSG include:

- May advise on the terms of reference
- Ensures that the interests of all major stakeholders/partners are taken into consideration and the institutions which might have to act on the recommendations are involved
- Safeguards the technical quality of the evaluation from a methodological viewpoint and guarantees independence of the evaluation by relying on scientific experts
- Supports the evaluation work
- Assesses the quality of the deliverables
- Ensures evaluation activities are conducted in a professional and ethical manner

European Commission

In compliance with the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the Programme, the European Commission will have an observer role and therefore can advise the JMC at all stages of the evaluation process.

2.4 Involvement of partners

In compliance to the principle of partnership, the Programme promotes the engagement of its stakeholders in the design and implementation of the evaluation of the Programme. In the frame of the evaluation, the Programme seeks the contribution of its stakeholders. The Programme will also explore other forms of consultation and exchange. Finally, stakeholders will be the target of the Programme's dissemination and communication activities with regard to the evaluation results.

Specifically, relevant partners as Regional and Local Authorities, the Certifying Authority, etc, shall be involved in the evaluation of Programme within the framework of the Joint Monitoring Committee meetings. Therefore, the involved partners shall examine the progress made in the implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations.

The findings of the evaluators are cross-checked with beneficiaries and stakeholders' workshops organized by the MA.

Within the same framework, the partners shall also be consulted on the report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period, to be submitted by 2022.

2.5 Evaluation expertise

Article 54 (3) of the CPR regulation states that evaluations are to be carried out by experts (internal or external) that are functionally independent from the authorities responsible for Programme implementation.

As a general rule, evaluations will be carried out by external experts especially when complex issues such as impact evaluations are concerned and when complex methodologies or data collection have to be applied and carried out.

The structure of the MA and JS does not foresee separate departments/units dealing with evaluation matters and therefore such functionally independency cannot be ensured. Therefore evaluation will be carried out by external expert / evaluators.

Still, the Programme intends to guarantee an efficient use of the human and financial resources allocated to evaluation activities as well as to ensure ownership of such activities from the Programme. . Therefore, in order to facilitate the evaluation tasks, internal resources (from MA and JS) will be used to the greatest extent possible - without endangering independence and impartiality.

The MA and JS will provide the contractor with information and input from the monitoring of the approved projects, Programme developments and ongoing discussions. Data collection will be completed by the experts whenever necessary (e.g. through surveys, desk research, interviews, case study analysis, benchmarking).

2.6 Training Programme

Training activities that can support the evaluation process for the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Joint Monitoring Committee may be organised if deemed necessary. In particular the working group on Evaluation set up by INTERACT shall be taken into consideration on this regard.

The Unit A of Managing Authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes assesses the training needs, coordinates all training activities that will be undertaken by all parties

involved, including EYSSA and EYSSEKT and ensures that all involved staff members have access to the relevant trainings.

Training activities may refer to:

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

Training activities will also be organized by EYSSA and EYSEKT, supported by MOU S.A. Annual training Programmes will be planned according to the needs of the beneficiaries.

The training fields identified by the Managing Authority so far are:

- selection of appropriate methodological tools and techniques depending on the scope of evaluation,
- formation of evaluative questions,
- elaboration of the terms of reference,
- monitoring and approval of qualitative evaluations,
- integration of evaluations findings and feedback to the Programmes

2.7 Use and communication of evaluation results

With regard to the transparency of the Programme, the results of the evaluations carried out pursuant to Art. 54 (4) of the CPR will be available to the public. This is foreseen through the annual implementation reports, where the results of the evaluations are summarized alongside the progress of the Evaluation Plan.

The annual implementation reports (AIR) are published on the Programme website.

In addition the Programme will actively promote the findings of evaluations through different communication and dissemination activities (e.g. through thematic workshops for beneficiaries, policy makers and other stakeholders; through social media and community development, whenever relevant) as they are foreseen in the communication strategy.

Besides the regulatory requirements, the Interreg IPA CBC “Greece - Albania 2014-2020” Programme intends to use the evaluation outcomes as a tool to improve the implementation of the Programme and to inform the development of the next Programme post 2020.

The evaluation reports accompanied by supporting documents will be uploaded to the SFC and made available to the EC, as suggested in the EC Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans.

2.8 Evaluation timing

For the planned evaluations a schedule has been created, which is presented below. According to the Guidance Document of the EC, all information on evaluations that are planned more than three years in advance should be regarded as indicative.

The evaluation will be carried out as follows:

Table 1: Evaluation timing

Evaluation	When
External evaluation	end 2018
Update external evaluation	mid 2021
Final evaluation	mid 2024

Table 2: Timetable – Milestones – Planned evaluation feeding

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
REPORTING OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION										
ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT	AIR 2014/15	AIR 2016	AIR 2017	AIR 2018	AIR 2019	AIR 2020	AIR 2021	AIR 2022	AIR 2023	
Submission Deadline	31.05	30.06	31.05	30.06	31.05	31.05	31.05	31.05	31.05	
Final implementation report										FIR
Submission Deadline										15.02
Summarising evaluation report							Summary evaluation report			
Submission Deadline							31.12			
EVALUATIONS FEEDING INTO REPORTS										
External Evaluation			31.12							
Update external evaluation						Mid 2021				
Final external evaluation									Mid 2024	

2.9 Quality management strategy

To ensure quality of Programme evaluations, MA will adopt the guidelines of Annex 2 “Guidance on quality management of external evaluations”, contained in the “Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans” from DG REGIO.

Preparation phase

To ensure quality of Programme evaluations, adequate time will be foreseen to plan and procure evaluations. For the latter, specific criteria will be defined in the terms of reference (ToR) for the selection of evaluation contractor. They will relate in particular to competencies and expertise in evaluation, in particular evaluation of Cohesion policy and ETC Programmes. Evaluators will be required to use a sound methodology in the performance of his tasks.

During the phase of the tender selection, MA will appoint a Selection Committee (SC) responsible for evaluating the bids against the criteria set out in the ToR according to the provisions of the relevant legislative framework.

General management

A Joint Steering Group (JSG) will be appointed in order to coordinate the process of the evaluation (as presented in section 2.3).

Within this context, an official responsible for the evaluation and key point of contact with the evaluation experts will be appointed.

Products: Project milestones and deliverables

A kick-off meeting will be organized during which the contractor / evaluation expert will be briefed about the ToR.

The evaluation expert will be required to produce an Inception Report (detailing the methodology that will use in carrying out the tasks of the ToR).

The evaluation expert will also be required to produce Interim and Final Reports on the evaluations carried out. MA/JS will be responsible for quality control of the outsourced evaluation activities.

The JMC will be regularly informed of the progress on the evaluation activities, its outcomes and will also receive evaluation reports.

Transparency

In the frame of the programming period 2014-2020, the principle of transparency is applied through the following actions:

- Publication of the approved evaluation plan on the websites of the Managing Authority, Programme and the Albanian National Authority of the Programme (www.interreg.gr, www.greece-albania.eu, www.integrimi.gov.al)
- The ToR of the evaluations will be published on the website of the Managing Authority and the National Authority of the Programme
- The evaluations and their summaries will be published on the website of the Managing Authority and the National Authority of the Programme
- The final evaluations will be uploaded on DIAULOS e-platform in order to disseminate the findings to Programme's partners/stakeholders

Objectivity

The objectivity in the evaluation process is determined by the impartiality and independence of the persons involved in the evaluation procedure. Impartiality refers to the absence of conflict of interest and independence concerns the lack of dependence on the contracting authority. The adoption of the principle of objectivity improves the quality of assessment and enhances the validity and reliability of the evaluations' findings.

The evaluators should impartially evaluate without any external interferences and influences. It should be ensured the lack of any conflict of interest on the part of the evaluators.

On the part of the Managing Authority, the principle of objectivity implies that:

- External evaluators have full access to the required information,
- External evaluators have autonomy in the elaboration of the evaluations
- The Communication Officer of the Programme should not participate in the Committees responsible for the monitoring and acceptance of deliverables, relating to the evaluation of the Programme's communication strategy.

Ethics

Throughout the life cycle of an evaluation the ethical issues that may arise should be taken into account. In this context, it is of high importance the following issues to be included in any terms of reference:

- Detailed description of the logic, purpose and content of the evaluation, the key evaluative questions, the preferred evaluation methods and all critical issues those

must be taken into consideration. The external evaluators must be informed in time on the ethical risks may arise.

- Explicit reference to confidentiality, i.e. the commitment of each evaluator to keep confidential the information and evaluation findings until the final approval of the evaluations.
- Explicit reference to principles of information security.

Quality

The quality of each evaluation is ensured in two phases: at the phase of specification of the terms of reference and at the phase of the approval of each evaluation's deliverables.

At the first phase it is necessary to specify the criteria for the selection of the evaluators according to the needs of each evaluation. Selection criteria must be described in the terms of references as these will be delivered by the EAS, under the law 4412 / 08.08.2016 and all relevant provisions, as are in force.

At the phase of the approval of the evaluations, it is necessary to set minimum requirements for quality assurance of the deliverables. For this purpose EYSSA and EYSEKT will deliver, a list of quality control criteria which must be incorporated in the terms of reference.

Utility

All the evaluations should focus on specific user groups (e.g. Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, groups of beneficiaries etc) and to provide adequate information to respond to their interests. In particular, the results of the assessments may be used by the Managing Authority for the revision of the Programme, the design of new interventions, the delivery of new Programme and to support decision-makers in policy. Furthermore, the utility of evaluation lies in the way of the results' dissemination.

The principle of utility is enhanced through the following actions:

- Identification and specification of the user groups within each evaluation,
- Grouping according to the profile and needs of each user group and dissemination the conclusions and recommendations of evaluations to all users/groups of beneficiaries,
- Use milestones to ensure that evaluations are submitted on time, based on the evaluation plan and the needs that arise in the implementation of the Programme.

3. PLANNED EVALUATIONS

3.1 External Evaluation

The external evaluation shall cover the period till end 2023 and shall assess the progress of thematic achievements, Programme communication results and the Programme relevance in relation to the current cross-border needs and expectations. This will allow appraising whether the Programme specific objectives are already covered by a sufficient number and critical mass of approved projects, and to identify potential gaps to be considered for the forthcoming call(s) (if needed), i.e. to assess whether the Programme is well on track towards reaching the set objectives. Furthermore it will allow integrating findings on Programme management settings in view of immediate response and respective follow up measures to any detected weaknesses.

The results of this evaluation will feed in the Annual Implementation Reports of 2018, 2021, and the Final Implementation Report (CPR Art.50). First lessons learnt during the programming period 2014-2020 will also be highlighted.

3.1.1 Scope, subject and rationale

The external evaluation includes two types of evaluations. The evaluation on effectiveness and efficiency (including evaluation of communication strategy) and the impact evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation on effectiveness and efficiency is to assess effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system and Programme implementation. Effectiveness refers to the degree to which set objectives and targets are achieved. Efficiency refers to the use of financial / administrative resources in relation to outputs and results. The aim of impact evaluations is to assess how the IPA II funding contributed to the objectives of each priority Axis of the Programme (Art. 56(3) CPR).

The impact of the Programme shall be evaluated and disentangled from any other trends and developments in the Programme area.

3.1.1.1 Evaluation on effectiveness and efficiency

Based on the above mentioned evaluation criteria, the scope of the external evaluation on effectiveness and efficiency covers the following main thematic areas/ aspects:

Thematic aspects / areas	
Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme management structures • Decision making processes • Project application and selection processes • Project implementation and monitoring processes
Effectiveness and efficiency of Programme implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress in terms of achievement of Programme objectives and expected results • Progress in relation to performance framework milestones and targets • Respect of horizontal principles • Contribution to EU2020 strategy and macro-regional strategies
Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme strategy, set milestones and targets
Effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme communication • Partners involvement

3.1.1.2 Impact Evaluation

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

The impact evaluation covers the Programme Priority Axes 1 to 2 and their specific objectives by considering the following guiding principles of theory based impact evaluation. The evaluation covers the following main thematic areas/ aspects

Thematic areas / aspects	
Identifying changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What change can be observed in relation to the objectives of the Programme?
Estimating impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent can the observed changes be attributed to the implementation of the Programme?

3.1.2. Methods to be used and data requirements

According to the evaluation subject, different methods may apply. The indicative methods and tools to be applied for evaluations are listed below. They will be further specified in the ToR and in the Inception Report to be delivered by the contracted evaluator (as presented in Section 2.9).

3.1.2.1 Evaluation on effectiveness and efficiency

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

Data requirements

For the above mentioned methods the following data requirements apply:

Desk research and data analysis

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

Case studies

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

Surveys and interviews

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

3.1.2.2 Impact Evaluation

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

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

Data collection:

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

monitoring will also contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the changes achieved and will serve as a valuable basis for the impact evaluation.

Other relevant data for the impact evaluation are available from the monitoring of the funded projects which are uploaded in the MIS. The system also includes all deliverables and outputs from the project implementation as well as reported indicators which constitute a very comprehensive information source for analysing the thematic project achievements.

3.1.3 Indicative Evaluation Questions

3.1.3.1 Evaluation on effectiveness and efficiency

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

Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system

- Is the overall management and control system effective?
- What can be improved? Are decisions making processes at Programme level clear and transparent?
- How efficient and effective are the project generation, selection and contracting processes? How effective is the Programme monitoring system?
- How effective are the project implementation rules?
- What are the major difficulties faced by the beneficiaries? What measures could be taken to overcome them?
- Are there any specific factors hindering the effective use of Technical Assistance funds? Are there any steps in the use of Technical Assistance funds that could be made more efficient?
- Is the right balance of relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Programme, including as regards their participation in the JMC, from the point of view of applying the partnership principle?

Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of Programme implementation

- What is the progress towards the overall Programme goal, specific objectives and expected results? How is the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilised?

- What is the actual level of achievement of Programme's result and output indicators? Which are the internal and external factors affecting the achievement of the set targets?
- Are there any risks/problems (including de-commitment risks) hindering the smooth Programme implementation? What specific actions should be taken in order to minimise the risks?
- Are the relevant target groups of the Programme successfully involved? How is the participation in terms of beneficiaries' type as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the Programme area?
- To what extent are horizontal principles integrated in the Programme management arrangements and in the activities of funded projects?
- To what degree is the Programme implementation contributing to the EU2020 strategy and to national and regional strategies?
- Have synergies been created with other instruments and funds? How effective is the coordination with other Interreg Programmes?

Assessment of the relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives

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

Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Communication strategy

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

3.1.3.2 Impact Evaluation

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

Priority Axis 1: Promotion of the environment, sustainable transport and public infrastructure

Specific objective 1.1: Increase the capacity of cross border infrastructure in transport, water and waste management

- To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve the border infrastructure?
- What change can be observed in the field of effective management of water and waste?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the Programme in this field?

Specific objective 1.2: Increase the effectiveness of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources

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

Specific Objective 1.3 : Increase energy efficiency and the use of RES

- What change can be observed in the level of energy efficiency and the use of RES?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to nature protection and valorisation of RES in the Programme area?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the Programme in this field?

Specific Objective 1.4: Improve the effectiveness of risk prevention and disaster management with a focus on forest fires

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

Priority Axis 2: Boosting the local economy

Specific Objective 2.1: Preserve cultural and natural resources as a prerequisite for tourism development of the cross border area.

- What change can be observed in enhancing the tourism attractiveness of the cross-border region in view of diversification of tourist product(s) achieved through cooperation?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the increased attractiveness of the region?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the increased number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the increased employment in the tourism sector?
- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the Programme in this field?

Specific Objective 2.2: Improve cross-border capacity to support entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness.

- What change can be observed in the level of professional realisation of entrepreneurs in the border area?
- To what extent has the Programme contributed to the development of entrepreneurship, business survival and competitiveness?

- What are the factors facilitating that contribution? Are there any unintended effects of the Programme in this field

3.2 Update External Evaluation

The update of the external evaluation shall cover the period 31.12.2018 till mid-2021.

The contractor shall comply with the previous evaluation's methods and will update the Evaluation.

The final evaluation will be submitted till mid 2024.

4. BUDGET ESTIMATED

The estimated cost for external expertise services for the whole programming period 2014-2020 is EUR 70.000,00.

The respective cost will be covered by the technical assistance budget (TA), which is updated and approved by the JMC on an annual basis. Thus, the budget for evaluation may be revised if deemed necessary.