Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme

EVALUATION PLAN

Disclaimer

Evaluation plan of Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme, for the period 2014 to 2020, co-financed by the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance fund (IPA II)** Regulation EU 231/2014

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation plan has been developed according to the provisions the Commission Implementing Regulation IPA (EU) No 447/2014 IPA II IR articles 21, 23, 41, recalling 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 evaluation[1] and on evaluation plans[2].

The evaluation plan of the Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme has been drafted by the managing authority and the joint secretariat (MA/JS) and submitted for approval to the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) in written procedure on **08 May 2017**. Following its adoption, it will be sent to the European Commission (EC) for information through the SFC portal. The evaluation plan as well as the outcomes of the evaluations will be published on the programme website.

The evaluation plan sets out the evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the Programme, taking into account lessons learnt from evaluations made in previous programming periods for other programmes active in this area and the budgetary framework. The plan is meant to enable informed programme management and policy decisions to support the 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.

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 year 2019 and the final AIR. By 31 December 2023, the MA will submit to the EC a report summarizing the findings of evaluations carried out during the programme period.

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

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[1] 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

[2] Guidance Document of Evaluation Plans (February 2015): http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/evaluation_plan_guidance_en.pdf

1. EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES

1.1 Objectives

The Programme aims to improve the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the area and to contribute to the EU2020 Strategy, South East Europe 2020 and to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). To support these objectives and its result orientation, the programme will carry out a number of evaluations. These are aimed at improving the effectiveness and impact of the programme, strengthening stakeholders' involvement, ensuring a successful communication and reinforcing the programme capacity to bring a change in the cooperation area in full respect of its natural environment. The present evaluation plan sets the framework to properly plan, implement and follow-up these evaluations. It shall ensure that the evaluations provide appropriate input for programme management and policy decisions.

1.2 Type of evaluations

Based on the above mentioned objectives and in line with article 56 (3) of CPR[3] and on the specific programme needs, three main types of evaluations are planned for 2014-2020:
- Evaluations on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme;
- Impact evaluations on each of the specific objectives selected by the Programme;
- Thematic evaluations.

More details on the evaluations and their timing are provided in section 3.

With the aim of ensuring their quality and optimizing the evaluation efforts and costs, synergy among different types of evaluations will be promoted as much as possible, in particular between those tackling efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

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[3] The article foresees that '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 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 ESI Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority'

2. COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Roles and responsibilities

The JMC, representing the programme partners, has a steering and deciding role as regards the development and implementation of the evaluation plan. It examines and approves the evaluation plan and any of its amendments (article 110 (2) of CPR). The JMC reviews the plan on a regular basis and at least annually, in view of 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.

In line with the "European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds" (article 16 (1) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014) and with the above mentioned guidance documents of the EC on evaluation and in view of supporting the JMC, it has agreed to establish a steering group (SG) which fulfils the following functions:

- representing the programme stakeholders and allowing their participation in the implementation of the evaluation plan,
- providing expertise to support the implementation of such a plan, e.g. providing input on the evaluation questions and on the terms of reference for the selection of evaluation experts; facilitating whenever possible access to information, data and/or data sources useful for the evaluations; reviewing the evaluations reports; proposing and monitoring of follow-up measures based on evaluation findings.

To ensure work efficiency the SG is appointed by the JMC and is composed by:
- ,
- 1 representative nominated by each Partner State,
- 1 representative of the MA, with advisory role
- 1 representative of the JS, with advisory role, while the EC participation is welcome in the SG.

The Steering Group accompanies and steers the work of external evaluators, focusing the evaluation on specificities of the Programme and on aspects, which need a deeper analysis. Therefore the main task of the steering group is to steer the evaluation work, as well as to advice and to reports to the JMC about the evaluation. An efficient organisation of the work of the steering group will be ensured by the JS, while minimising the number of meetings for its members.

The SG members should bring in experience and expertise in the policy fields tackled by the

programme and by the planned evaluations, knowledge of European territorial cooperation (expertise in evaluation will be provided by the evaluation experts specifically procured).

The SG shall perform its tasks without conflict of interest and impartiality, thus ensuring absence of bias.

The SG will normally meet once per year. An additional meeting might be necessary based on specific needs (e.g. defining the ToR for the contracting of experts or when evaluations are carried out).

The communication flow between SG and JMC will be ensured by MA/JS (e.g. through sending the minutes of its meetings to the JMC and informing the SG on decisions taken by the JMC).

The MA and JS will carry out all activities related to the set up and implementation of the evaluation plan. These comprise activities related to convening, preparation and follow up of SG and JMC meetings; contracting, coordination and quality control with/of external experts; coordination with EC, EUSAIR, INTERACT, INTERREG programmes and others; ensuring information flow between SG and JMC, etc.

2.2 Synergy with other programmes and initiatives

The programme welcomes and will promote whenever possible synergy and collaborations with EUSAIR, INTERACT, ESPON, other INTERREG and mainstream programmes as well as 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 Source of 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. The structure of the MA and JS does not foresee separate departments/units dealing with evaluation matters. 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, the following approach will be used.

Evaluations will be carried out by external experts, as it includes complex issues such as impact evaluations and complex methodologies or data collection to be applied and carried out. Evaluations shall be commissioned to external experts in line with Programme's eligible expenditures and public procurement applicable rules. The JS will provide them with information and input from the monitoring of the approved projects, extracted by the eMS, as well as information on programme developments and ongoing discussions. Data collection will be completed by the experts whenever necessary (e.g. through surveys).

In order to support the external evaluators, the JS will also carry out an internal analysis aiming at measuring, assessing and analysing the progress in implementing the Programme. This could be a useful tool for the MA/JS for improving its own performance in the early stage of the Programme. For the evaluation of effectiveness, efficiency and the communication strategy, MA/JS will provide the main data and reference analysis and then external experts will review them (see also section 2.7 below).

2.4   Data collection and monitoring system

The Programme recognises the importance of setting up a well-functioning monitoring system, at an early stage. The main responsibility for data collection belongs to MA/JS (top-down approach). This will guarantee an efficient use of financial resources (compared to the full externalization of these tasks) as well as homogeneity and consistency of the methodology used.

The primary source of information for evaluations will be represented by the monitoring of the approved projects through their regular reporting (status/progress reports). Project's reports will be designed as far as possible to support the programme evaluations. Therefore, in addition to programme's indicators, the reports may include additional indicators (e.g. for environmental evaluations, indicators may be integrated following the recommendations of the strategic environmental assessment report). Evaluation experts may be asked to support the Programme in the definition of these additional indicators. Additionally, they will have an "on demand" role and will collect qualitative information through e.g. surveys or case studies to complement data.

To allow gathering richer information at Programme level and also better reaching local and regional stakeholders, this approach will be combined whenever possible with a bottom-up one, i.e. through the involvement of project partners in the collection of data. Projects will be requested to share information concerning the "quality" of their intervention, the target groups reached, etc. They will be supported by the MA/JS and the evaluation experts in this "self-assessment exercise" through capacity building activities and tools to accompany evaluation at project level. The MA/JS will play a role of operational coordination and supervising the correct flow of information. The evaluation experts will be in charge of the methodological and quality aspects. They will support the evaluation capacity building process, e.g. by organizing peer reviewing, specific training among the projects, elaborating guidance, aggregating the findings of the project evaluation, providing meta-evaluation and making in depth analyses when necessary.

Experts that will be contracted for evaluations will be asked to propose adequate methodologies for data collection and analysis such as case studies, desk research, interviews, etc.

2.5   Dissemination of evaluation results

Information on the evaluation plan as well as the evaluation reports will be 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; the use of social media and community development, whenever relevant) as they are foreseen in the communication strategy, also in order to strengthen the evaluation capacity within the relevant stakeholders.

2.6 Quality management

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 for the selection of evaluation experts. They will relate in particular to competencies and expertise in evaluation, with specific regard to INTERREG programmes. Evaluators will be required to use a sound methodology (EVALSED or similar) in the performance of their tasks. They will also be required to produce inception, interim and final reports on the evaluations carried out. MA/JS will be responsible for quality control of the outsourced evaluation activities.

For those cases (effectiveness, efficiency, communication strategy) where the MA/JS provide main data and a reference analysis, the external evaluators will be in charge of reviewing and validating the evaluation concept (planned evaluation questions, methodology and data) and the results of the evaluations (to verify if conclusions are logic and objective).

The SG will be involved in the definition of the ToR for the procurement of external experts and in the design of the evaluation concept for the evaluations carried out by MA/JS staff; will review all evaluation reports; will accompany and monitor the implementation of follow-up measures defined as a result of evaluations; will report to the JMC through the MA/JS.

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

2.7 Human and financial resources

One staff member of the MA and one staff member of the JS are engaged in the preparation and implementation of the plan. Additional staff members of MA and JS will be involved in the evaluations on demand. The JS communication officer will contribute to the evaluation of the communication strategy and will also ensure the communication of the outcomes of programme evaluations.

To ensure good knowledge of qualitative, quantitative evaluation methodologies and sound planning and managing of evaluations MA/JS staff will regularly take part in trainings offered, especially by INTERACT, carry out self-studies and exchange with other INTERREG programmes.

Based on the estimated evaluation needs and the overall budget available from the technical

assistance budget (TA), a maximum amount of **EUR 100.000,00** is reserved for external expertise evaluations in the period 2014-2020, to be specified in the annual TA plans, taking into account the major relevance to impact evaluation process. The internal analysis planned, as well as any related training of the MA/JS components, will be covered by the technical assistance budget (TA).

3. PLANNED EVALUATIONS AND TIMING

This section introduces the types of evaluation, to be undertaken during the Programme. Evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact, are to be carried out and the contribution of ESIF support to the specific objectives of the Programme needs to be assessed. Consequently, the main focus of evaluation during Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme is on impact evaluation of its specific objectives. In addition, the Programme contribution to the EUSAIR and EU2020 is to be assessed by an independent evaluator.

Furthermore, the Programme is planning to include the assessment of the involvement of different types of partners (at least local and regional administration, research organisations and private bodies) in the Programme external evaluations.

In line with the guidance from the European Commission, evaluations beyond a three-year period of the approval date of the plan (or its update) are indicative. Thus, it should be noted that whereas this section discusses possible methodological approaches and tools to be used for evaluations, the actual approach for each evaluation will be reviewed, and updated if needed, when developing terms of reference. External evaluators will be expected to propose a detailed evaluation design and methodology based on the Programme needs.

Final evaluation questions for each evaluation will be discussed and possibly further refined together by the external evaluator, the ESG and the MA/JS. Lastly, evaluation needs may change during the Programme implementation, and also therefore, the planned evaluations should be considered as indicative.

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

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

Efficiency in the context of programme evaluation is defined as in "how the use of financial/administrative resources relates to outputs or results". The efficient use of financial resources allocated to each specific objective versus the achieved results will be included in impact evaluations. Based on impact evaluation outcomes, conclusions can be drawn on whether the funds allocated were sufficient and efficiently used for reaching real impacts. As for the use of the Programme's administrative resources, it does not seem feasible to evaluate it separately for each specific objective. Therefore, efficiency in terms of using administrative resources will be evaluated by assessing the proper functioning of the Programme bodies, and especially of the

MA/JS that is responsible for the operational implementation and the administrative resources of the Programme. Findings from such evaluation performed by an independent evaluator will be looked at in comparison to the Programme reaching its results.

All evaluations will be conducted through a theory-based evaluation in order to assess to what extent (why and how) an intervention has produced (intended or unintended) effects. Evaluators may make use of interviews, desk researches, benchmarking with other programmes as well as surveys and analysis of case studies. Depending on the specific type and topic of each evaluation, the relevant method and data requirements will be selected. Elements will be provided in the terms of reference for the selection of the evaluation experts whereas it will be up to the bidders to propose the most suitable evaluation method and data requirements.

The programme evaluation activities shall answer questions such as the following ones. The questions listed below are indicative. They will be combined with each other, reformulated or further specified in the terms of reference for the selection of evaluation experts or in the concept description for the evaluations carried out internally by MA/JS with the necessary external support.

Impact evaluation of each specific objective
✓ What has changed in the cooperation area, in terms of quality of governance, integration of policies, sustainable economic development, etc.?
✓ How has the programme contributed to such change and how are the effects of the programme distributed in the partner territories (metropolises, cities, stable/growing/declining/shrinking rural areas, tourism areas)?
✓ What continued interventions would be needed in this field?
✓ How has the priority and/or specific objective contributed to wider policy objectives, in particular those of EUSAIR (in terms of contribution to the strategy and mutual benefit), Europe2020, territorial agenda, the horizontal principles defined by the programme and European Commission (non- discrimination, sustainable development, etc.) or aspects such as the quality of life of citizens?

Efficiency and effectiveness of programme procedures
✓ Are the phases from project generation to contracting as well as project monitoring efficient? What can be improved (identify bottle-necks and lessons learnt)?
✓ Is the monitoring system effective in measuring the targeted results and outputs?

Effectiveness, partnership and stakeholders' involvement
✓ Has the specific objective reached its target or is it on a good way to do so?
✓ Has the programme succeeded in involving its stakeholders and in particular policy relevant partners and private partners?
✓ How far has the programme managed to attract new, relevant partners?
✓ What are the features of the partnerships (location within the Partner States, type of partner, etc.)?
✓ Did the project associated partner benefit from their involvement in the projects and vice

versa?
- ✓ Which obstacles have been identified to the participation of stakeholders to the programme and which improvements in the programme management are deemed necessary based on the evaluation findings (e.g. reducing administrative burden, simplifying programme procedures)?

Evaluation of the Communication strategy
- ✓ Have programme bodies been efficient in ensuring a well-functioning communication flow in the programme area?
- ✓ Have the programme communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?
- ✓ Has the programme contributed to increase the capacity of projects to communicate their own achievements?
- ✓ Has the programme raised awareness about its activities and achievements?
- ✓ Does the communication strategy need to be updated for the remaining programme period based on the evaluation findings?

Compliance with the strategic environmental assessment
- ✓ Are environmental aspects sufficiently taken into account in the phases of project evaluation and selection? Do the approved projects comply with the criteria of the strategic environmental assessment and with the typology and level of the impact identified?
- ✓ Is there the need for other environmental indicators to be included in the monitoring and which?

In connection to sound methodology, access to reliable data is a key requirement to any evaluation of quality. Impact evaluations need to be based on data that allow evaluators to make conclusions on the Programme's impact on the institutional capacities of the Programme's target groups. Taking into account the Programme area and the aspect of cross-border cooperation, it is clear that such data or statistics are not being collected outside the Programme itself. In the context of the theory-based approach, two sources of data, or evidence, are relevant and available for evaluating the impact of the Programme.

On one hand, the Programme's online monitoring system eMS collects information from projects via their regular project reporting. The project reporting forms are designed so that the data/evidence needs for evaluations are taken into account and consequently project reporting can directly be used to feed data into impact evaluations.

The monitoring system delivers quantitative and qualitative data on the Programme's output indicators as well as qualitative data on project outputs. On the other hand, considerable amount of data will also be collected outside the Programme. Qualitative and quantitative data in relation to the Programme's result indicators will be collected by external experts when updating the result indicator values for monitoring purposes. In addition, external impact evaluators will generate data and evidence on the Programme's impact, e.g., via surveys and interviews among the Programme target groups, end-users and other relevant stakeholders in the region. The

following table gives an overview of available data relevant for impact evaluations.

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

The timing for evaluations will be shaped according to the different programme implementation phases. Evaluations aiming at appraising programme efficiency and effectiveness will be carried out at an earlier stage than impact evaluations so that the findings of evaluations can still be taken on board and be used to improve or reorient where necessary the programme approach and practices.

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

Consequently, it seems suitable to evaluate the Programme impact twice during the implementation. An initial evaluation based on the first projects launched at the end of 2017 is planned for 2018. It will be useful for ensuring that the Programme is on the right track and will feed into the Programme's annual implementation report due in 2019.

The second impact evaluation is planned for 2022. It is timed so that final conclusions will be available for the final evaluation report of the Programme due by the end of 2022.

The majority of final project reports are expected to be submitted on time to feed into the second impact evaluation. Even if some reports were to be submitted towards the end of 2022, the main achievements of all projects are expected to be available already earlier.

The timing for evaluations will also take into account the EC monitoring requirements. Progress in the implementation of the plan as well as the outcomes of the evaluation activities (when available) will be reported in the AIR submitted in 2019 and 2023 (covering the previous year of implementation). The findings of all evaluations carried out during the programme period will be reported by 31 December 2022.

In addition in 2018 and 2023, the programme is required to monitor its result indicators against the baseline included in the CP. In view of obtaining comparable data, surveys will be addressed as much as possible to the same respondents (persons or administrations/departments) of the questionnaire used for the baseline. To ensure efficiency, impact evaluations of the SOs will include the monitoring of result indicators.

The planned evaluations and the relevant timing are listed below:

Table Programme reporting and programme Evaluation time schedules

Year of report submission	Reporting of the Programme implementation	Evaluations planned	Comments

2016	▪ Light Annual implementation report 2014-2015
	    1. financial figures
	    2. indicators values (when available)
	    3. citizen summary		

2017	▪ Annual implementation report 2016
	▪ Progress report 2016
	  1. towards achieving the programme objectives incl. contribution of ERDF funds to changes in the values of result indicators (when available)
	  2. results of information and communication activities carried out under the communication strategy
	  3. contribution to EUSAIR (when available)
		▪ Internal analysis on:
		1.
		2. Financial performance
		3. Progress of the Programme
			▪ Procurement for external evaluation 2018 to be finalised by the end of 2017

2018	▪ Annual implementation report 2017
	  1. financial figures
	  2. indicators values (when available)
	  3. citizen summary
		▪ Initial external evaluation
		1. Monitoring of result indicator values & evaluation of the programme impact for each SO (when available)
		2. Evaluation of the communication strategy
		3. Evaluation of the contribution to EUSAIR (when available)
		4. Evaluation of the contribution to EU 2020 (when available)	

2019	▪ Annual implementation report 2018 ▪ Progress report 2018 1. towards achieving the programme objectives incl. contribution of ERDF funds to changes in the values of result indicators (when available) 2. results of information and communication activities carried out under the communication strategy 3. contribution to EUSAIR (when available) 4. progress made towards achievement of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (when available) ▪ Key implementation step on result indicator	▪ Internal analysis on: ▪ 1. 2. Financial performance 3. Progress of the Programme	

2020	▪ Annual implementation report 2019
	  1. financial figures
	  2. indicators values (when available)
	  3. citizen summary
		▪ External evaluation
		1. Monitoring of result indicator values	

2021	▪ Annual implementation report 2020
	  1. financial figures
	  2. indicators values (when available)
	  3. citizen summary
	▪ Result indicator report
		▪ Follow up evaluation (optional)	

2022	▪ Annual implementation report 2021
	  1. financial figures
	  2. indicators values (when available)
	  3. citizen summary
	▪ Report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period
		▪ External evaluation
		1. Monitoring of result indicator values & evaluation of the programme impact by an external evaluator (2022/2023)
		2. Evaluation of the communication strategy
		3. Evaluation of the contribution to EUSAIR
		4. Evaluation of the contribution to EU 2020	

2023	▪ Annual implementation report 2022
	▪ Progress report 2023
	  1. towards achieving the programme objectives incl. contribution of ERDF funds to changes in the values of result indicators (when available)
	  2. results of information and communication activities carried outunder the communication strategy
	  3. contribution to EUSAIR
	  4. progress made towards achievement of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
		▪ Follow up evaluation	

2024	▪ Final Report		

Annex 1: *Rules for Evaluation Steering Group*

Rules for Evaluation Steering Group
Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme

Introduction
The evaluation steering group (ESG) of Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme was nominated on xx xx 2017. The task of the ESG is to accompany and follow-up on external evaluation and related activities during the Programme. These activities include, inter alia, setting up an evaluation plan, preparation of external evaluations and commenting on draft evaluation reports. While the Joint Secretariat is responsible for drafting documents such as the evaluation plan or terms of references for external evaluations, the ESG supports these processes by providing the Joint Secretariat with feedback and advice. All decision-making on evaluation-related matters will be with the Monitoring Committee.

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

Tasks and responsibilities
The following main tasks are foreseen for the ESG during the implementation of Interreg IPA CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro Programme :
- Providing feedback to the Programme evaluation plan and its updates;
- Providing feedback to preparation of terms of reference for external evaluations;
- Providing feed-back during the selection processes of external evaluators;
- Providing input and feed-back to evaluators during evaluation processes;
- Commenting on and giving feedback to draft evaluation reports;
- Providing advice to the Monitoring Committee in relation to evaluation;
- Discussing and facilitating the uptake of evaluation outcomes at national level

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

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

Meetings of the MA/JS with external evaluators, e.g., kick-off meetings and intermediate meetings to discuss results, are generally open to interested members of the ESG.
Input and feed-back shall be provided by all ESG members within one week following the request initiated by the MA/JS and/or external evaluators.

List of abbreviations

AIR	Annual implementation report
CP	Cooperation programme
EC	European Commission
EUSAIR	European strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region
JS	Joint secretariat
MA	Managing authority
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
SFC	System for fund management in the European Union
SG	Steering group
SO	Specific objective
TA	Technical assistance
ToR	Terms of reference

List of references

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

- Elliot Stern, 2015. Presentation: Good Evaluation Planning – and why this matters, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/network/meetings/#2
- European Commission, 2013, Regulation (EU)1303/2013
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