

EVALUATION PLAN

for INTERREG V-A Romania-Bulgaria
Programme



CONTENTS

SECTION I - GENERAL CONTEXT	3
1. Programme Context	3
2. Regulatory Context	6
Section II: OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION OF THE EVALUATION PLAN	6
1. Role and Objectives of the Evaluation Plan	6
2. Coverage of the Evaluation Plan	7
3. Analysis of available evidence	7
3. Coordination of evaluations	8
Section III: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	9
1. Evaluation Function	9
2. Evaluation Process	11
3. Involvement of Partners	11
4. Evaluation expertise	12
5. Training programme	12
6. Use and Communication of Evaluations	12
7. Quality Management Strategy	13
Section III: PLANNED EVALUATIONS	14
Section IV: INDICATIVE BUDGET	16
Annex: Evaluation questions, stakeholders, methods, available data, expertise .	17

SECTION I - GENERAL CONTEXT

1. Programme Context

Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme is the successor of Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 and builds upon the experience gained during its implementation, both in terms of programming and implementing provisions.

The **overall strategic goal of the programme** is to bring together the people, communities and economies of the Romania-Bulgaria border region to participate in the joint development of a cooperative area, using its human, natural and environmental resources and advantages in a sustainable way.

a) Eligible area

The eligible NUTS III regions - 15 counties/districts:

- *Romania*: the counties of Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Calarași and Constanța
- *Bulgaria*: the districts of Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Ruse, Dobrich and Silistra

b) Programme budget

EUR

Union support (ERDF)	National contribution	Total funding
215.745.513	42.758.613	258.504.126

Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR):

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
10.701.145	15.625.119	22.313.659	40.543.785	41.354.660	42.181.755	43.025.390

c) Priority axes, investment priorities and specific objectives

Priority axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Thematic Objective	Investment priorities	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities
PA 1: A well connected region	81,983,295	TO 7: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	IP 7b: Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes	SO 1.1: Improve the planning, development and coordination of cross border transport systems for better connections to TEN-T transport network
			IP 7c: Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility	SO 1.2: Increase transport safety on waterways and maritime transport routes
PA 2: A green region	53,936,378	TO 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	IP 6c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage;	SO 2.1: To improve the sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage
			IP 6d: Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.	SO 2.2: To enhance the sustainable management of the ecosystems from the cross-border area

<p>PA 3: A safe region</p>	<p>40,991,647</p>	<p>TO 5: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p>	<p>IP 5b: Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems.</p>	<p>SO 3.1: To improve joint risk management in the cross-border area</p>
<p>PA 4: A skilled and inclusive region</p>	<p>15,102,186</p>	<p>TO 8: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility</p>	<p>IP 8i: Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training</p>	<p>SO 4.1 To encourage the integration of the cross-border area in terms of employment and labour mobility</p>
<p>PA 5: An efficient region</p>	<p>10,787,276</p>	<p>TO 11: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration</p>	<p>IP 11iv: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions</p>	<p>SO 5.1: To increase cooperation capacity and the efficiency of public institutions in a CBC context</p>
<p>PA 6: Technical Assistance</p>	<p>12,944,731</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>

2. Regulatory Context

Regulation (EU) no 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 - **Article 54** - General Provisions, **Article 56** - Evaluation during the programming period, **Article 57** - Ex post evaluation, **Article 110** - Functions of the Monitoring Committee and **Article 114** - Evaluation.

Regulation (EU) no 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal - **Article 14** - Implementation reports.

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) no 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds - **Article 16** - Involvement of partners in the evaluation of programmes.

Section II: OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE AND COORDINATION OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

1. Role and Objectives of the Evaluation Plan

This is the second evaluation plan exercise for Romania-Bulgaria cross-border cooperation programme, since an evaluation plan was already in use for the 2007-2013 programme, even though not imposed by the legal framework on structural instruments.

The current Evaluation Plan has been drawn up by the Managing Authority for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme in close cooperation with the ETC Evaluation Unit established within the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Directorate MA ETC Programmes (further referred to as Evaluation Unit), following closely the Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans issued by the European Commission. It has been submitted for approval to the Monitoring Committee within one year from the adoption of the Programme.

This Evaluation Plan sets out an evaluation strategy for the entire implementation period of the programme, proportionate with its financial allocation and taking into account the expected evolution of the programme and the elements that are to be reported, including the ones related to the performance framework. It represents a **management tool** for the implementation of Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme by supporting quality evaluations to be used effectively by the Managing Authority in order to contribute to the implementation of an evidence-based programme.

The **objectives** of this Evaluation Plan are:

- to improve through proper planning the quality of evaluations carried out during the programming period;
- to facilitate informed programme management and policy decisions on the basis of evaluation findings;
- to provide a framework to plan interim and impact evaluation/s;
- to ensure that evaluations provide inputs for relevant annual implementation reports and other reports and for the 2020+ programming process.

The Evaluation Plan can be later streamlined with the actual evolution of the programme, amendments to it being subject to Monitoring Committee decisions. In case of emerging urgent needs, additional evaluations to the ones clearly indicated in the Evaluation Plan can be carried out, as approved by the Monitoring Committee.

The Evaluation Plan and all its subsequent versions shall be made available to the public on the website of Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme.

2. Coverage of the Evaluation Plan

This Evaluation Plan covers Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme only, co-financed by ERDF under the European Territorial Cooperation goal.

3. Analysis of available evidence

As derived from the Annual Implementation Reports for the 2007-2013 programme and based on the conclusions from the interim evaluation, in the first years of the programme implementation the challenges encountered were mainly related to the delay in starting the programme (derived from the late setting up of the JTS), continued by delays in the implementation of the programme, including the ones caused by the long term of the public procurement process. The programme also faced difficulties in ensuring the payments to beneficiaries, which were later addressed. As well, as the implementation process evolved, an important problem identified related to the capacity of beneficiaries to implement their projects and to submit reimbursement claims on schedule, generating a negative effect both on the financial execution rates of projects and on the achievement of project objectives. The deficiencies identified in the functioning of the management and control system were not major and required corrective measures for a smooth implementation of the programme.

The main points raised by the programme evaluation carried out for the 2007-2013 programme indicate that the evaluation efforts in the 2014-2020 period should concentrate on: efficiency, including as regards the guidelines for applicants, project selection, contracting, monitoring and effectiveness, including addressing the risk of de-commitment, and communication campaigns. The evaluation did not assess the criteria of impact and sustainability and this gap needs to be plugged for the current programming period, both from the accountability and learning perspectives.

No negative aspects derived from the cross-programme evaluation performed by INTERACT in 2010, where Romania-Bulgaria Cross-border Cooperation Programme

2007-2013 was considered as one of the most transparent ETC Programmes in the European Union.

3. Coordination of evaluations

Across successive financial frameworks, including 2014-2020 programming period, the Funds have been allocated and implemented in Member States according to a three layer policy frame, consisting of:

- the macro layer, corresponding to the whole territory of the Country, based on a country strategy, like the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 or the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013;
- the meso layer operationalizing the priorities in the country strategic framework, as operational programmes which set up the specific objectives and actions;
- the micro layer, representing projects that contribute to the objectives of the operational programme.

The evaluation of all the three layers facilitates the understanding of the links between the global policy layer (macro), the program layer (meso) and the project layer (micro).

Romania's approach is to design one evaluation plan at the level of the Partnership Agreement and one evaluation plan for each ESI funds co-financed programme, thus continuing the evaluation approach of the previous programming period. While the evaluation plan for the Partnership Agreement includes topics related to macro level effects and horizontal cross-cutting issues, plans referring to each programme focus on specific programme-related issues and the projects financed that contribute to the specific objectives of the programme.

Nevertheless, evaluations carried out for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme benefit from the exchange of knowledge and practice between all Managing Authorities established in Romania, process conducted by the Evaluation Central Unit set up as part of the General Directorate for Analysis, Programming and Evaluation within the institution in charge with the coordination of ESI funds in Romania, the Ministry of European Funds.

According to Romania's Partnership Agreement, a coordination mechanism is set up with the purpose of ensuring the coherence of interventions, complementarities and synergies in the programming and implementation stages. The coordination mechanism will function in parallel with the institutional framework designed for implementation.

The mechanism implies three levels of coordination:

1. Management of Partnership Agreement Steering Committee, which takes place twice a year and involves policy makers at ministry level and social partners.
2. Thematic steering sub-committees, taking place twice a year on different topics and composing decision-makers ministries, responsible MAs, International Financial Institutions, the Ministry of Public Finance, partners of Programmes Monitoring Committees and other socio-economic partners.

3. Functional Working Groups, organized on different topics at each three months (or whenever necessary) and involving experts.

One of the functional working groups, namely the Performance Assessment Functional Working Group is dedicated to evaluation and performance framework and deals, among other things, with the evaluation themes and implementation of evaluation plans of operational programmes, as well as with reporting, statistics and indicators, financial management and forecasting. The representatives of the ETC Evaluation Unit shall participate in this functional working group.

According to the Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Commission, a coordination mechanism is set up to ensure that the complementarity principle is met at the stage of Programmes' management, monitoring, evaluation and control.

In this respect a Council for Coordination of the EU funds Management is established chaired by the responsible Deputy Prime Minister for EU Funds and Economic Policies of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Council members are the ministers responsible for policies subject to support from ESI Funds. Representatives of the competent institutions on horizontal issues also participate in the Council's meetings. The Council, within the scope of its functions ensures at high political level consistency and complementarity of the Programmes' measures in order to achieve an integrated effect from their implementation.

Section III: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

1. Evaluation Function

The evaluation function for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme is ensured by the Evaluation Unit established within the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Directorate MA ETC Programmes.

The Evaluation Unit consists of two full-time expert staff. The staff of the evaluation unit carries out other horizontal tasks as well, having an overview of the programming and implementation of Interreg programmes in Romania. As regards evaluation-related tasks, the staff is partly working for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme and partly for other Interreg programmes. The staff is independent of the staff that fulfil the task of Managing Authority and the functions of Certifying Authority.

The responsibilities of the Evaluation Unit staff as regards the evaluation of Interreg programmes are:

General tasks

- drafting the Evaluation Plan based on the needs identified by the Managing Authority and submitting it to the Monitoring Committee for approval, as well as any other subsequent modifications;
- managing procurements and contracts for evaluation activities;

- supporting evaluation teams for programme evaluations carried out at the initiative of the Commission;
- representing the Evaluation Unit at evaluation coordination events organised by the Evaluation Central Unit;
- participating in training and evaluation capacity building activities organised by the Evaluation Central Unit;
- being the key liaison point with major stakeholders for evaluation purposes;
- drafting the evaluation procedure for Interreg programmes;
- contributing to developing and refining indicators for the Interreg programmes;
- being in charge with the reports summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period and the main outputs and results of the operational programme.

Tasks related to the evaluation projects, commissioned externally

- convening the Evaluation Steering Committee and participating in its decision-making process;
- attending and reporting to meetings of the Monitoring Committee, if required by the Managing Authority;
- commissioning of evaluation contracts (preparing tender documentation, drafting Terms of Reference, participating in the Evaluation Commission for choosing successful tenderers, liaising on contracting procedures with the Managing Authority);
- once contracted, monitoring and supervising the activities undertaken during the evaluation exercise (organising the meetings of key stakeholders and the evaluators, liaising with all evaluators contracted to provide evaluation services, facilitating suitable levels of access for consultants to key stakeholders during the course of their evaluation work, ensuring proper access for evaluators to all relevant monitoring and other data, managing the Unit repository, which should hold all relevant evaluation materials);
- quality controlling all evaluation reports submitted to the Evaluation Unit under the terms of an evaluation contract (endorsing inception reports, where produced, and submitting them to the Evaluation Steering Committee for approval, ensuring evaluators meet deadlines for report submissions, commenting on draft reports, assessing and grading draft and final evaluation reports).

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

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

drawing up final evaluation report, submitting the evaluation reports to the Evaluation Steering Committee for consideration.

Dissemination of evaluation findings

- disseminating evaluation reports to all key stakeholders and making sure they are made available to the public;
- tracking progress on the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations, through setting a schedule for implementing authorities to report on this issue.

2. Evaluation Process

Evaluation Steering Committee

An Evaluation Steering Committee shall be convened for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme and shall oversee implementation of this Plan and corresponding evaluations. The Evaluation Steering Committee shall convene for each evaluation exercise. The core membership of the Committee will remain the same for the duration of its existence, and will include:

- The Head of the Managing Authority (or his/her designate);
- A representative of the Bulgarian National Authority of the programme;
- The Evaluation Unit staff;
- A representative of DG Regio;
- A representative of the Evaluation Central Unit.

Additional members may be invited for each evaluation as decided by the Managing Authority and the National Authority, based on the partnership principle. The Managing Authority may also invite independent sectorial experts for evaluations of specific objectives with technical nature.

Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee shall analyse and approve the current Evaluation Plan and any other subsequent amendments to it. The Monitoring Committee may make observations to the Managing Authority regarding the evaluation of the programme and monitor actions taken as a result of its observations. If deemed necessary during the implementation period of the programme, a specific working group for evaluation may be established by the Monitoring Committee.

3. Involvement of Partners

Relevant partners shall be involved in the evaluation of programmes within the framework of the Monitoring Committee meetings and in the specific working group for evaluation, in case a dedicated one is established by the Monitoring Committee. 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.

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.

4. Evaluation expertise

According to European Commission's Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation:

“The Commission services consider it as best practice to assign the evaluation to external experts or to a different organisation from that responsible for implementing the programme and any of the intermediate bodies reporting to it.”

“A good practice is to assign the implementation of the programme and the evaluation to different departments within the same organisation.”

As a general rule, evaluations carried out for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme shall be commissioned to external experts in line with the programme's eligible expenditures and public procurement applicable rules. These evaluations shall be commissioned, monitored and supervised by the Evaluation Unit. The Evaluation Unit staff may carry out additional evaluations, if needed.

Planning for the evaluations that will be carried out by external experts shall begin at least 4-6 months in advance of their intended start date. The first stage in the process will be the drafting the Terms of Reference, that shall build upon the information included in this Evaluation Plan. Once the Evaluation Steering Committee has approved the draft Terms of Reference and once funds have been secured in order to finance the evaluation, the tendering process can begin, following the internal procedure of the contracting institution.

5. Training programme

Training activities that assist a qualitative evaluation process for the Managing Authority, National Authority, Evaluation Unit, Monitoring Committee representatives shall be taken into account and organised if deemed necessary.

Such 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 Evaluation Unit staff.

The budget for these activities shall be ensured under the technical assistance budget of the contracting institution.

6. Use and Communication of Evaluations

As part of the final evaluation report, the evaluator shall prepare a table of recommendations as a stand-alone document to be distributed with the report. The Monitoring Committee shall decide whether to accept, reject or adapt each recommendation. A systematic follow up will then be put in place for recommendations that are approved by the Monitoring Committee to ensure that the report's recommendations are taken up.

This shall require:

- A debriefing meeting organised by the Managing Authority, to focus on the means and the timing of implementing the recommendations;
- Submission of the follow-up table to the relevant institutions;
- Examination of implementation progress at the following Monitoring Committee meeting.

Final evaluation reports should be distributed to:

- the Monitoring Committee;
- the Bulgarian National Authority of the programme;
- European Commission - DG Regio via SFC;
- other units of the Managing Authority;
- the Joint Secretariat;
- the Evaluation Central Unit.

As concerns the availability to the public of the evaluation results, the final evaluation reports will be published on the website of Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme after examination by the Monitoring Committee and submission to the European Commission.

In addition, the Managing Authority shall submit to the European Commission, by 31 December 2022, a report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme and the main outputs and results of the programme, building upon the evaluation results.

7. Quality Management Strategy

Building upon the experience in evaluation gained so far by the Managing Authority and Evaluation Unit, the following steps are envisaged to be taken in order to ensure qualitative evaluation results:

- adequate planning of evaluations, including as regards data availability and drafting of detailed ToRs, endorsed by the Evaluation Steering Committee;
- setting out clear award criteria and quality requirements;
- wide advertising of tender;
- appointing a selection committee responsible for evaluating the bids against the criteria set out in the ToR;
- including in the evaluation contract a procedure for the early termination of the contract conditional on the quality of the work provided;
- organising a kick-off meeting with the contractor to clarify all aspects of the Terms of Reference and Technical Offer;
- requesting an inception report and monthly progress reports;
- involving the Evaluation Steering Committee in endorsing draft reports and approving final reports;
- using a thorough quality assessment grid for assessing the quality of final deliverables.

Section III: PLANNED EVALUATIONS

Assumptions regarding the evolution of the programme

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

Call for proposals	Call budget (ERDF)	Launching	Deadline	Estimated contracting time	Maximum duration of projects	Estimated end date of projects
1 st Call - soft projects (axes 1,2,3)	23.084.771	25 March 2015	30 June 2015	December 2015	24 months	December 2017
1 st Call - hard projects (axes 1,2,3)	153.826.550	25 March 2015	30 September 2015	May 2016	36 months	May 2019
2 nd Call (axes 4,5)	25.889.462	October 2015	March 2016	December 2016	24 months	December 2018

Summed up, the allocation for these calls for proposals matches the entire allocation of the programme available for projects, therefore no further calls for proposals are expected.

Estimated evaluations during the programming period

Having regard to the size and scope of the programme, as well as to the need of sufficient physical progress to serve as basis for evaluation, no evaluations are planned before 2018.

Therefore, there will be no progress on the implementation of the evaluation plan to be reported in the annual implementation report to be submitted in 2017 regarding the implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations.

The estimated timing for carrying out the evaluations for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme also takes into account that the evaluation results should later be used during the programming and ex-ante evaluation process for the next cross-border

cooperation programme between Romania and Bulgaria, for the programming period 2021+.

Planned evaluation	Timetable ¹	Feeding into
<u>I. Implementation evaluation</u>	October 2018 - April 2019	Annual implementation report to be submitted by 30 June 2019
<p>➤ A. Evaluation of the management and implementation of the programme Short description: assessment of the system functioning and management of the programme, carried out in order to improve the quality of its delivery</p>		
<p>➤ B. Evaluation of the design and relevance of the programme and its physical and financial progress Short description: operational evaluation of the relevance and effectiveness of the programme, assessing the need of fine-tuning and recommendations for designing the future programme; assessment of the physical and financial progress of the programme and the lessons learnt in this respect</p>		
<p>➤ C. Evaluation of communication strategy Short description: evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the communication strategy</p>		
<p>Rationale: To produce specific knowledge on the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness on the programme and to contribute to the drafting of the next programme</p>		
<u>II. Impact evaluation</u>	April 2019 - October 2019	The report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period and the main outputs and results of the operational programme to be submitted by 31 December 2022 Final implementation report
<p>Evaluation for capturing the effects of the programme as a whole and its performance as regards each specific objective Short description: assessment of the programme’s performance as regards each specific objective and of its impact as a whole, taking into account how support from ERDF has contributed to the objectives of each priority, in line with the result-focus of cohesion policy Rationale: To produce specific knowledge on the impact and sustainability of the programme and to contribute to the drafting of the next programme</p>		

¹ From kicking-off the evaluation to receiving final deliverables

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

Detailed information on the evaluations planned for Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme can be found in the Annex to this evaluation plan.

Additional evaluations

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

These additional evaluations can address either issues regarding the entire programme or one or several Priority Axes or Specific Objectives.

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

Specific objectives, evaluation questions, tasks and expected results of evaluations will be defined separately for each such evaluation to be conducted.

The ex-ante and SEA evaluations for the next cross-border cooperation programme between Romania and Bulgaria, for the programming period 2021+, shall also be performed under Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme, starting with 2020.

Ex-post evaluation

Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme will be subject to ex-post evaluation carried out by the European Commission, or by Romania and Bulgaria in close cooperation with the European Commission.

Section IV: INDICATIVE BUDGET

The estimated budget for carrying out the indicative list of evaluations during the programming period defined in this Evaluation Plan is EUR 250.000.

Annex: Evaluation questions, stakeholders, methods, available data, expertise

No.	Theme	Indicative evaluation questions	Stakeholders	Indicative methods and tools	Data available	Expertise
I.A.	Evaluation of the management and implementation of the programme	<p><u>Programme level</u></p> <p>Did the applicant’s guide and pack enable the potential beneficiaries to prepare well written applications? What can be improved?</p> <p>Are the project assessment, selection and contracting systems efficient? Can project assessment, selection and contracting be accelerated?</p> <p>Is the project monitoring system efficient? What can be improved?</p> <p>Is the overall management and control system efficient? What can be improved?</p> <p>Did the use of simplified cost options prove to be efficient? What can be improved?</p> <p>Are there any specific factors hindering the effective use of TA funds? Are there any steps in the use of Technical Assistance funds that could be made more efficient?</p> <p>Is the right balance of relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of the programme, including as regards their participation in</p>	<p>Managing Authority</p> <p>National Authority</p> <p>European Commission</p> <p>Joint Secretariat</p> <p>Ministry of European Funds/EUCU</p>	<p>Literature review</p> <p>Data collection and analysis</p> <p>Desk research</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Questionnaire</p> <p>Sampling</p> <p>Stakeholder analysis</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Benchmarking</p>	<p>Relevant programme procedures</p> <p>Description of the management and control system</p> <p>Relevant provisions of Audit Reports</p> <p>Technical Assistance Strategy</p> <p>Monitoring Committee composition and Rules of Procedure</p> <p>Applicant’s Guide and Applicant’s Pack</p>	<p>Experts in evaluation methods and tools</p>

Evaluation Plan for Interreg V-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme

		<p>the Monitoring Committee, from the point of view of applying the partnership principle?</p> <p><u>Project level</u></p> <p>Are there any patterns that could be identified for successful project implementation?</p> <p>In case weak points (e.g. irregularities, budgetary corrections, breaches from the application of the Project Implementation Manual) have been detected within project implementation, could a pattern be identified in relation to their cause and their influence on the overall implementation of the programme’s specific objectives?</p> <p>What are the major difficulties faced by the beneficiaries? What measures could be taken to overcome them?</p> <p>Are the beneficiaries sufficiently supported to prepare projects and implement them?</p> <p>Are the actions taken in order to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries working? What can be improved?</p>			Project Implementation Manual	
I.B.	Evaluation of the design and relevance of	<p><u>Programme relevance</u></p> <p>Is the use of funds properly addressing the current development needs of beneficiaries</p>	Managing Authority National	Data collection and analysis	Programming document Financial data	Macroeconomic experts

	<p>the programme and its physical and financial progress</p>	<p>in the programme area?</p> <p>Are there more stringent uncovered needs that could be tackled under a future cross-border programme?</p> <p><u>Physical and financial progress</u> - cut-off date: 31 December 2018</p> <p>Which is the actual implementation progress as regards each specific objective? Which is the achievement level of programme indicators? Which is the achievement level of performance framework indicators as compared to the milestones for 2018?</p> <p>Will the progress to date (given the current trends) lead to the achievement of target values of programme and performance framework indicators?</p> <p>In case of nonachievement risk for the performance framework indicators target values, which are the main causes and how can they be addressed?</p> <p>Is there any de-commitment expected to take place at programme level? What specific actions should be taken in order to minimize the de-commitment risk?</p> <p>Are there any risks/unsolved problems hindering the smooth programme</p>	<p>Authority European Commission Joint Secretariat</p>	<p>Forecasting Desk research Interviews Focus groups Questionnaire</p>	<p>at programme level Available Annual Implementation Reports List of projects funded and project description up to the cut-off date Monitoring data</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Evaluation Plan for Interreg V-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme

		<p>implementation that are emerging both in programming period 2007-2013 and the current one and what could be done, in order to mitigate/ overcome them?</p> <p><u>Project level</u></p> <p>To what extent have the objectives of the projects financed under this programme been achieved or are about to be achieved? What are the possible internal and external factors affecting the achievement of the objectives (e.g. human resources, financial capacity)?</p> <p>How do the financed projects contribute to the application of equal opportunities and non-discrimination horizontal principle, especially as regards the equality between men and women?</p>				
I.C	Evaluation of Communication Strategy	<p>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?</p> <p>Could more effect be achieved by using different instruments or actions? Which actions or tools were the most successful in spreading the information about the Programme and which could be considered</p>	<p>Managing Authority</p> <p>National Authority</p> <p>Joint Secretariat</p>	<p>Data collection and analysis</p> <p>Desk research</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Questionnaire Survey</p>	<p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Annual Communication Plans</p> <p>Annual Implementation Reports</p>	<p>Experts in evaluation methods and tools</p> <p>Experts in communication</p>

		as excessive or ineffective? Do communication activities have sufficient impact on the awareness of the beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries of the Programme?		Case studies		
II.	Evaluation for capturing the effects of the programme as a whole and its performance as regards each specific objective (impact) (including lessons learnt, administrative capacity, best practices)	<p><u>Specific objective 1.1</u> - Cut-off date: 31 May 2019</p> <p>What is the progress in improving the secondary and tertiary nodes connections to TEN-T infrastructure in the cross-border area?</p> <p>What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to this progress?</p> <p>What are the factors facilitating that contribution?</p> <p>Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?</p> <p><u>Specific objective 1.2</u> - Cut-off date: 31 May 2019</p> <p>What is the progress in increasing Danube navigation safety for freight and passenger traffic in the cross-border area?</p> <p>What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to this progress?</p>	<p>Managing Authority</p> <p>National Authority</p> <p>European Commission</p> <p>Joint Secretariat</p> <p>Ministry of European Funds/ECU</p>	<p>Theory-based evaluation (the exact combination of methods to be used for each evaluation question shall be proposed by the external evaluators in the technical offer)</p> <p>Desk research</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus Groups</p> <p>Expert Panels</p> <p>Surveys</p>	<p>Programming document</p> <p>Financial data at programme level</p> <p>Available Annual Implementation Reports</p> <p>Results of the Implementation Evaluation as regards the physical and financial progress of the programme and of the projects</p> <p>List of projects funded and project description up</p>	<p>Macroeconomic experts</p> <p>Experts in impact assessment</p> <p>Experts in statistics</p>

Evaluation Plan for Interreg V-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme

		<p>What are the factors facilitating that contribution?</p> <p>Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?</p> <p><u>Specific objective 2.1</u> - Cut-off date: 31 May 2019</p> <p>What is the progress in using sustainably the natural and cultural heritage and in improving the tourism in the cross-border area?</p> <p>What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to this progress?</p> <p>What are the factors facilitating that contribution?</p> <p>Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?</p> <p><u>Specific objective 2.2</u> - Cut-off date: 31 May 2019</p> <p>What is the progress in improving the management and protection of NATURA 2000 sites in the cross-border area, especially as regards joint solutions?</p> <p>What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to this progress?</p>			<p>to the cut-off date</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	----------------------------	--

		<p>What are the factors facilitating that contribution?</p> <p>Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?</p> <p><u>Specific objective 3.1</u> - Cut-off date: 31 May 2019</p> <p>What is the progress in preventing and managing the capacity of mitigation and disaster resilience in the cross-border area, especially as regards joint solutions?</p> <p>What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to this progress?</p> <p>What are the factors facilitating that contribution?</p> <p>Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?</p> <p><u>Specific objective 4.1</u> - Cut-off date: 31 March 2019</p> <p>What is the progress in integrating the cross-border area in terms of employment and labour mobility?</p> <p>What is the current and expected contribution of the interventions under the programme to this progress?</p> <p>What are the factors facilitating this</p>				
--	--	---	--	--	--	--

Evaluation Plan for Interreg V-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme

		<p>contribution?</p> <p>Are there any unintended effects of the programme in this field?</p> <p><u>Specific objective 5.1</u> - Cut-off date: 31 March 2019</p> <p>Have the interventions under this priority axis led to the achievement of any effects, intended or unintended?</p> <p>How much of the effects identified are directly attributable to interventions under the programme?</p> <p>What are the factors facilitating this direct effect?</p> <p><u>General questions</u></p> <p>To what extent does the programme add benefits to the cross-border regional development and complement and enhance the effect of other related policies or strategies? How does this mechanism work and what can be improved?</p> <p>What is the current and estimated aggregated effect of the programme in the eligible area?</p> <p>Are the programme's outputs and results sustainable on long term?</p> <p>How can future programming be</p>				
--	--	---	--	--	--	--



Evaluation Plan for Interreg V-A Romania – Bulgaria Programme

		streamlined in order to achieve higher impact and ensure sustainability of the financial assistance provided?				
--	--	---	--	--	--	--