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Item D/2 Interact III evaluation plan

Interact III evaluation plan

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013
DG REGIO	European Commission Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
eMS	electronic Monitoring System
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
ETC Regulation	Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
IR	Interregional
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
MA	Managing Authority
MAWP	Multi Annual Work Programme
MC	Monitoring Committee
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
MRS	Macro-Regional Strategy
QEM	Quality and Evaluation Manager
QG	Quality Group
SO	Specific objective
TN	Transnational
ToR	Terms of Reference

1 About the programme

Interact III is a cooperation programme of the European Territorial Cooperation goal, part of the inter-regional cooperation component (as per point (c) of Article 2(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013). It was set up to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by promoting exchange of experience in the identification, transfer and dissemination of good practices and innovative approaches in relation to the implementation of territorial cooperation programmes. The Interact III programme builds on the successful implementation of the INTERACT I and II programmes. By the end of 2014, INTERACT II had organised approximately 450 events and 240 tailor-made advisory services, and had developed more than 150 tools such as studies, handbooks, templates and other guidance material. It has engaged thousands of participants in its service delivery. Key lessons learned from the implementation of INTERACT II were used for selecting the focus of the Interact III programme.

In particular, lessons learned refer to:

- INTERACT networks enable an effective exchange of good practices among programme stakeholders, and contribute to common approaches and understanding; i.e., to more efficient programme management;
- INTERACT tools, harmonised templates and handbooks enhance common approaches and understanding. They are used as a basis for developing programme documents and they contribute to more efficient programme management;
- INTERACT pilots and innovative approaches support more efficient programme management;
- INTERACT efforts to capture and promote the added value of territorial cooperation as a whole effectively contribute to the overall objective of territorial cooperation;
- INTERACT thematic work (capitalisation, knowledge management, thematic linkages and macro-regions) has great potential to increase the impact of cooperation projects.

The Interact III programme builds on three specific objectives:

- to improve the management and control capacity of ETC programmes;

- to improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results; and
- to improve cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, macro-regional strategies (MRSs), Article 96 of the CPR, ITI etc.)

Interact III supports the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy by supporting territorial cooperation programmes in implementing their activities in more effective ways, helping them find solutions to implementation bottlenecks.

The selection of thematic objectives is linked to one in the case of Interact III; i.e., thematic objective 11 “Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an effective public administration.” The three specific objectives for the programme are linked to investment priority 11e “Promoting exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions, as well as the use of EGTCs”.

The financial allocation for the selected thematic objective is EUR 43.100.133, corresponding to 93% of the total programme budget.

Delivery mechanism

Unlike other cooperation programmes, the Interact programme is implemented through the delivery of events and tools for the benefit of territorial cooperation programmes of all types and strands. The main outputs from the implementation of the programme are events and tools. These two, together with “Participants to Interact events” represent Interact’s output indicators.

A short description of the programme’s investment strategy can be found under Annex 1: Programme Investment Strategy.

2 Regulatory framework and role of the evaluation plan

The evaluation plan has been drawn up in accordance with the provisions set out in the Common Pro-

visions Regulation (CPR), in particular Preamble 54; Article 56 (Evaluation during the programming period); Article 110 (Monitoring and Evaluation. Functions of the Monitoring Committee); Article 114 (Evaluation), and the ETC Regulation, including Preamble 26 and Article 14 (Implementation Reports).

In addition, the evaluation plan builds on the following relevant European Commission guidance documents:

- The programming Period 2014-2020. Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation. European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, Concepts and Recommendations. March 2014.
- The programming Period 2014-2020. Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy. European Regional Development, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund. Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans. Terms of References for Impact Evaluations. Guidance on Quality Management of External Evaluations. February 2015.

Interact's Managing Authority (MA) has the overall responsibility for organising and executing the implementation of the evaluation plan, as well as reporting to Interact's Monitoring Committee (MC) on the findings of evaluation activities, or requesting changes to the evaluation plan, if necessary.

In 2014-2020 evaluation is seen as a strategic process, which underpins the implementation of a result-oriented approach by the programme. The evaluation plan is a strategic programme document, which provides a framework for implementing sound evaluation activity. It will accompany the programme throughout implementation and will be used as a learning tool to provide evidence on what works and what doesn't. It will support improvement of programme effectiveness and efficiency, and of knowledge sharing. The evaluation plan also allows for conclusions to be drawn on the impact of the programme, in particular with respect to the three specific objectives defined for the programme.

3 Objectives of the evaluation plan

The main aim of the evaluation plan is to define the strategy chosen for evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Interact programme.

Specifically, the main objectives for the evaluation plan are:

- To improve the quality of evaluations (operational and impact) through proper planning, and provide a framework for these, including through identification and collection of necessary data;
- Ensure that resources for funding and managing the evaluations are appropriate and proportionate (in terms of budget/resources);
- Ensure that the outcomes of the evaluation lead to appropriate programme management and policy decisions, feed into decision-making processes, and that they are used for learning and quality improvements, as well as ensuring that evaluations provide inputs for implementation;
- Gather more information about the programme's impact (or the services provided);
- Assure a realistic measurement of the programme's impact.

4 Coverage of the evaluation plan

The evaluation plan covers Interact programme only.

Interact covers the entire territory of the Union, Norway and Switzerland. Focusing on facilitation of exchange of expertise, experience and good practice within the Interreg programmes and their management bodies provides the unique nature of the programme; joint evaluation plans or joint evaluations with other programmes are not considered feasible due to the specific nature of the programme.

5 Analysis of relevant evidence available

To prepare the plan, main evidence from previous evaluations and surveys, which support the design and orientation of the programme were used.

5.1 Mid-term evaluation 2007-2013

The mid-term evaluation of the 2007-2013 programme was concluded in 2011. It covered a wide range of objectives: the strategic relevance, the effectiveness and efficiency, the added value of the programme for territorial cooperation and cohesion. Simultaneously, it focused on a number of operational issues such as the quality of the management of the programme to achieve its objectives. Main recommendations focused on the following three aspects:

- Strategic relevance of the programme - where main recommendations and findings highlighted the flexible approach of reacting to service delivery as a main strength; to enhancing links to other networking programmes; to the need to review the indicators' framework, amongst others.
- Evaluation of the management system - where main recommendations and findings highlighted strengthening the organisational structure, and related to the management and implementation structure for both the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 periods.
- Evaluation of the programme stakeholders - where main findings focused on the relevance of the programme for the practice of the territorial cooperation programmes, the high quality of service delivery and professionalism of staff. Networks and networking events, provision of workshops and seminars, and delivery of written documents were acknowledged by INTERACT's stakeholders.

5.2 Use and satisfaction survey

Between February and April 2015 INTERACT performed a survey on the use and satisfaction with the products and services delivered in 2014. This pilot activity had two main objectives: a) to collect valuable information from INTERACT's main target groups on the use and effect of INTERACT's products; b) to collect information on the satisfaction of the users of INTERACT's products and services with what was delivered to them. There were 79 responses to the survey. 92,3% of the respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the skills and knowledge obtained through INTERACT's activities are (or will be) used in their daily work. 48,8% of the

respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that as a result of participating in INTERACT's activities they can observe changes in their work practices. Respectively, 57,8% either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that as a result there was a change of perception in their work. 83,2% were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the delivery of INTERACT's products and services.

5.3 Needs analysis 2016

In 2015 INTERACT performed the annual needs assessment on the basis of two methods: through an on-line survey and through targeted phone interviews. While 21 programmes responded to the on-line survey, 31 programmes were reached by the phone interviews. A specific feature of the phone interviews was that they were performed on the basis of an initial plan of services developed by the INTERACT team. This was sent to a sample of programmes that were then asked to provide their feedback on the basis of these initial plans. The feedback obtained provided useful information for shaping Interact's services in 2016 and on the satisfaction and usefulness of Interact's service portfolio.

5.4 Interact ex-ante evaluation

The ex-ante evaluation for the Interact programme focused on the main components identified in the relevant European Commission Guiding Document. It was conducted on the basis of elaborate evaluation questions, desk research and meetings. The general opinion of the evaluators was that the programme was developed to address the needs of the ETC programmes, that it was logical and consistent, and that it contributed to the EU Strategy 2020, macro-regional strategies and the use of innovative approaches.

Specific recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation focused on developing a methodology for counting output indicators, on the number of result indicators, on considering a methodology to interpret "use" of Interact's products and services, on the involvement of relevant stakeholders during the design and planning of the services, etc. Recommendations received have been screened and embedded in the programme design or are re-visited in the development of programme implementation practices.

5.5 Event evaluations

Interact has a well-established practice of collecting participants' feedback following each event organised. The event evaluation forms are a main source of data, capturing the satisfaction with the services delivered. Analysis based on the event evaluation forms was used to set the baseline for the "satisfaction" result indicators in the programme. Two main dimensions (from a customer perspective) were evaluated: meeting objectives for participating in the event, and materials and delivery methods supporting the above objectives.

The practice of event evaluation has been extended into the 2014-2020 period, with the introduction of a refined event evaluation form. Furthermore, the event registration tool incorporates new questions that will allow feedback on the usage and satisfaction with Interact's services. A feedback service on the usage and satisfaction with Interact's publications will also be launched in the first half of 2016.

5.6 Multi Annual Work Programme process

The Multi Annual Work Programme (MAWP) represents an implementation strategy and is a more detailed elaboration of the cooperation programme's intervention logic; structurally linking expected results with concrete long-term activities. It has been developed jointly by the Interact team, based on the recommendations of the MC members. This process provided a platform for discussing the best ways of achieving the results set for the Programme within the available time and resource constraints. As a result, the MAWP will be guiding the team on how they will jointly deliver the expected results, as cooperation within the Interact Offices, MA and Interact Secretariat is the key success factor for the efficient delivery of the Programme. The expected review of the MAWP in 2018 will also be linked to the planned evaluation.

6 Mechanisms of coordination

Interact plans to seek exchange with other European networks (e.g., Evaluation Unit Network for the

Member States), European institutions (e.g. MOT) and with other Interreg programmes:

- Interact participates in the Evaluation Unit Network for the Member States, which is organized by the Evaluation Unit of DG REGIO twice a year. In this network Interact will learn about the Evaluation Unit's new findings, as well as about national evaluation approaches. This will facilitate reflection on relevant approaches to be adopted for Interact's evaluation.
- Interact plans to continue its exchange with other European institutions (e.g. MOT) to learn more about data research models and build up synergies for data collections in order to support the Interreg programmes. Cooperation with ESPON programme in utilising data sets developed will also be advanced.
- Interact will regularly seek exchange with other Interreg programmes, especially with the Inter-regional (IR) programmes which meet twice a year. In these meetings the IR programmes will share - among other things - their evaluation approaches, methods and results of evaluation findings.

In addition, Interact will organise events (trainings, workshops and conferences) for the Interreg programmes to exchange on various evaluation topics such as ToR, evaluation methods, data requirements, methods for data collections, evaluation findings, capitalisation, etc). The aim of these events is to introduce new knowledge, create synergies among these programmes, and share lessons learned. Besides the events, Interact will also set up an online platform 'Results and Evaluation' (using the tool Basecamp) in order to encourage the Interreg programmes to exchange on their challenges and lessons learned in the planning, the implementation and the findings of the evaluations.

7 Evaluation function

The overall responsibility for designing and implementing the evaluation process rests with the MA of the Interact Programme. Within this responsibility, Interact's Quality and Evaluation Manager and Interact's Quality Group will be responsible for the coordination and quality implementation of the process, and for reporting to the MC.

In particular, the following responsibilities are envisaged for the MC, the MA, and the Quality and Evaluation Manager.

7.1 Monitoring Committee

In accordance with Articles 110(1)(b) and 110(2)(c) of the CPR, the MC has to review and approve the evaluation plan as well as review and approve any amendments made to the plan. It also has to review the implementation of the plan and the follow-up actions to the evaluation findings.

7.2 Managing Authority

The MA has the overarching responsibility for drawing up the evaluation plan and submitting it to the MC no later than one year following the adoption of the programme. During the implementation of the evaluation plan the MA oversees that all evaluation related processes (both internal and external) follow the plan, and that in cases of deviations these are communicated to the MC and the evaluation plan is subsequently updated.

The MA is responsible for the procurement of external evaluation experts. In accordance with Article 114(2) of the CPR, the MA must submit in 2022 a summary report highlighting the evaluation findings to the European Commission.

7.3 Quality Manager and Quality Group

In Interact, Quality Management is a horizontal function, which is coordinated by a Quality and Evaluation Manager, (QEM) together with a Quality Group (QG). The QG is composed of representatives from each Interact Office.

The MA has delegated the task of coordinating the preparation and implementation of the evaluation plan to the QEM and the QG. More specifically, the QEM is responsible for:

- Coordinating drafting the evaluation plan, including updating the plan when necessary;
- Supporting the preparation of ToR for external evaluators, and participation in the assessment of expert offers;

- Liaising with selected external evaluators in the course of their work;
- Coordinating agreed internal evaluation activities;
- Coordinating drafting reports summarising evaluation findings, assuring (under the supervision of the MA) follow-up to evaluation findings, and transparency of follow-up actions;
- Identification of internal training needs (relevant for carrying out agreed evaluation-related tasks internally), and that these needs have been met by appropriate learning actions utilising the variety of knowledge and capacity-building options.

8 Evaluation process and evaluation methodologies

We propose that an Advisory Group is set up which will be involved in the implementation of the evaluation plan.

The purpose of setting up the Advisory Group is to ensure that the interests of Interact's main partners are represented when discussing the results of the programme. They will be also an important sparring group in discussing and proposing follow-up to recommendations and observations brought about by evaluators, stemming from both operational and impact evaluations.

The size of the group will be representative of Interact's main partners, but will remain proportionate to the task at hand. We would like to involve representatives from European Commission, Member States and from the Interreg programmes (CBC and TN strands). Simultaneously, an internal ad-hoc group including representatives from each Interact Office is also being considered, in order to ensure that evaluations and the results of these are disseminated and used by the team.

9 Sources of evaluation expertise

Interact plans to utilise both internal and external resources in the course of the evaluation process, in order to capitalise on complementary competency and to address the issue of limited financial resources available for evaluation.

9.1 Internal resources

Internal evaluation will be used during the implementation of impact and operational evaluation activities. We place specific value on the use of internal resources for several reasons:

- In Interact we have intimate knowledge of our organisation, processes, activities and people. We have also established very good links to our stakeholders, from whom we obtain both formal and informal feedback in relation to the services we deliver to them.
- By involving internal sources in evaluation activities we also aim to use the outcomes of these evaluations to support long-term institutional learning; this will also help create a “positive” image for evaluation.
- We have a number of staff members who are experienced and knowledgeable in the field of evaluation (see section 10). This knowledge can be used internally to support and guide planned evaluation activities.

Typical tasks foreseen (but not exclusively) to be carried out internally relate to: collection of data from different feedback channels established on a programme level, transfer of data into various programme reports and reporting systems, performing desk analysis (where relevant) with regards to various evaluation tasks, internally monitoring progress towards the achievement of indicators and conducting internal analysis in the case of deviations, collection of process review data and identification of follow-up actions, developing a framework and performing impact case studies under the mentorship of external experts.

9.2 External resources

The use of external resources is considered appropriate in order to secure impartiality of findings and impartiality of recommendations. In some cases, and with regards to specific evaluation questions, such expertise is needed for accountability purposes towards Interact’s stakeholders. There is also little practical knowledge in the use and implementation of impact evaluation methods - the involvement of external sources will secure appropriateness and quality of methods applied, and of outcomes. Given the importance of findings that impact evaluation

will provide, specific attention will be given to the quality of the proposed expert pool and the methodological approach applied.

In any case, we envisage that internal and external resources will work in partnership, and that tasks will be implemented in a collaborative manner.

Experts will be selected within the terms of applicable public procurement rules. The appointment of external resources and expertise is foreseen in two main areas for the evaluation process.

- Evaluation experts as mentors for Interact staff - in this case it is foreseen that their role would be to guide and support Interact staff in elaborating specific evaluation tasks, and in interpreting the results; for example, in relation to the development of case-based evaluation impact studies, where external expertise will play a supporting role.
- Evaluation experts leading on certain evaluation tasks - in cases where sensitivity, objectivity and accountability require this role; for example, in conducting a wider impact evaluation, evaluation of the management structure, etc. In these cases Interact staff will have a supporting role, such as preparing necessary data, etc.

For further information, please see the tables under section 15.

10 Training programme

In Interact there is a very good internal knowledge base regarding evaluation. Interact staff lead on evaluation discussions, engaging Interreg programmes from all strands and experts from the Evaluation Unit of DG REGIO. These provided an excellent opportunity to exchange on various evaluation topics and practices across the Interreg programmes. It is planned to discuss relevant topics along the evaluation life cycle such as preparing of the evaluation plan, preparing the terms of references for evaluations, implementation of evaluations, etc. These events also provide a good opportunity for Interact staff to increase their knowledge about evaluation, and enable internal knowledge and expertise to be used for conducting and supporting the implementation of various activities in the evaluation framework set for our programme.

In order to promote the use of different evaluation approaches during the implementation of the evaluation plan, international evaluation experts will be invited to the events organised by Interact to introduce new approaches and lessons learned in various relevant topics; e.g. How to carry out impact evaluations? What are good methods for data collection? How to set up a good quality survey?

Interact staff members will also participate, where relevant, in evaluation trainings offered by International and European Organisations and Institutions (e.g. Evaluation Network for Member States, etc.) in order to expand their knowledge both for internal purposes and to enrich their on-going work with the programmes.

11 Use and communication of evaluation results

Evaluation results and findings are important means to support improvement of programme performance. They are also “reality check” mechanisms during implementation against the strategy set. Main milestones of the evaluation process and evaluation findings will be presented and discussed during the MC meetings.

In this process, the Advisory Group can be used to spar and define follow-up actions on specific recommendations. These will subsequently be present-

ed and discussed with the MC, who will also observe the implementation of the agreed improvements.

It is also envisaged that a variety of communication tools will be used to communicate and disseminate the results from the evaluations carried out.

Interact’s website will be used, as will Interact’s newsflash, to communicate main findings and recommendations. Other tools, such as various social media, events and relevant publications, will also be used to add further transparency to the results. Programme-specific target groups will also be targeted through specific communication measures in cases where specific recommendations are of relevance for them.

Members of the Advisory Group can also be used to disseminate evaluation results.

The evaluation reports approved by the MC will be submitted to the European Commission through SFC2014.

12 Timetable

The following table shows a preliminary list of planned evaluations and how they will feed into the reporting requirements of the European Commission (in accordance with Articles 50 and 114(2) of the CPR).

Table 1: Preliminary list of planned evaluations

Year	Tentative evaluation time plan	
Second semester of 2018	Operational	Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress towards achievement of indicators Communication strategy Focus is on effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation. Focus is on the implementation of the communication strategy and the progress made towards achieving its objectives.	Case-based impact studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First observation on effect of selected activities (case studies?) First observations on the effects of implemented activities focusing on a sample of activities/fields where the impact can already be established
The results from the above will feed into the 2018 implementation report		
Beginning of 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme design and management structure Focus is on evaluating how programme design contributes to delivery of the programme strategy taking into account the outcomes of the evaluation in 2018. Could feed into the programming of Interact IV.	
The results from the above will feed into the 2019 implementation report		
Second semester of 2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effects of the programme (based on result indicators) Focus on the effects of Interact in terms of the change that can be 'contributed' to the implementation of the programme.
The results will feed into the 2020 implementation report.		
2022 (optional)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update of 2020 on the basis of feedback received Mainly envisaged in cases where bigger changes were proposed to the programme's intervention logic.
Results will feed into the final implementation report.		

13 Budget for evaluation

The overall available evaluation budget is estimated at EUR 70,000 from the programme's Technical Assistance budget and approximately EUR 40,000 from the budget earmarked for the implementation of the programme's communication strategy. This EUR 70,000 can be seen to be roughly split, with EUR 20,000 for operational and EUR 50,000 for impact evaluation.

At present, Interact is checking further options for raising the budget for evaluation (particularly for impact evaluation).

14 Quality management strategy

The overall responsibility for steering and quality management of the evaluation process, from planning, through implementation and dissemination of results, is with the MA/QEM of Interact.

In this process the following quality steps will be observed:

- Preparatory phase
 - Adequate planning of evaluations and ensuring availability of data;
 - Draft ToR and consult draft ToR with MC;

- Agree on assessment criteria which takes into account the specific nature of the programme;
- Announce tenders through relevant communication channels and secure relevant response time;
- Select evaluation experts against clear/transparent competence criteria;
- Involve (relevant) parties in the assessment of offers submitted;
- Include termination (early) clause of contract on the basis of quality of work provided.
- During implementation
 - Organise inception meeting with selected expert (or consortia) in order to discuss and agree on the process and work flow of each evaluation exercise, including milestone setting;
 - Agree on delivery of inception, mid-term and final reports by expert, and necessary regular updates;
 - Engage Advisory Group in reviewing intermediate reports submitted;
 - Secure early discussion of initial findings and how data is to be used and communicated later on;
 - Assure that all evaluation reports are shared with the programme's MC for approval. If deemed necessary, evaluators may be requested to participate in MC meetings in order to present and discuss evaluations findings.
 - Secure transparency and visibility of evaluation findings by utilising various communication channels (as outlined under point "Use and communication of evaluation results").

15 Planned evaluations

Interact will carry out two types of evaluation: operational evaluation and impact evaluation. The Interact III programme started implementation of activities on 1 January 2016. In order to be able to make statements on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme, Interact needs to have carried out a certain amount of activities, which will justify recommendations made. Interact will initiate the process in the second half of 2018 with two aspects of operational evaluation: progress towards

achievement of programme's indicators, and evaluation of the communication strategy.

Impact evaluation will also be initiated in the second half of 2018 with targeted case-based impact studies, followed by in-depth impact evaluation in 2020.

15.1 Operational evaluation

Under Operational evaluation we consider the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme management and implementation, including the evaluation of the communication strategy.

The main purpose would be to understand whether the programme is performing as planned in order to reach its objectives and results. Subsequently, it is also about whether the management structure is fit-for-purpose to support effective and efficient implementation of the programme strategy.

We will kick-off the evaluation process with operational evaluation in the second semester of 2018, where the main aim would be to draw conclusions on the robustness of our intervention logic, specifically on the progress towards achievement of programme indicators. In cases where deviations exist (either positive or negative) - evaluation will focus on uncovering the causes and, if necessary, on proposing changes to the identified indicators.

Operational aspects related to implementation of the communication strategy (for example, efficiency of flow of information, reach of target groups with the planned strategy, etc.) will be addressed under operational evaluation, while aspects related to contribution of communication activities to achieving programme's objectives, use of communication tools, etc. will represent part of the 2020 impact evaluation.

Taking into account the results from the above-mentioned evaluation exercises, an evaluation of the efficiency of Interact's design and management structure will take place in 2019. The main purpose of this evaluation will be to assess how the design of the programme supports the implementation of the programme strategy. Furthermore, it will assess Interact's management and control systems, efficiency of decision-making, how the management system, including processes, supports implementation of

activities, feedback loops, main challenges, split of responsibilities, etc. This is also about verification of the logical links established in the cooperation programme and how these are translated into activities (e.g., looking at interim strategies, work packages, etc. - i.e. link to MAWP).

Results from this evaluation will be used for programming Interact IV.

15.2 Impact evaluation

The Impact evaluation will assess how the ERDF funding contributed to the objectives of each priority of the programme. The impact evaluation should outline what change the programme has contributed to through its interventions, and disentangle the effects of the programme implementation from the contribution of other factors.

Interact's impact evaluation consists of two main blocks: case-based impact studies which will focus on selected specific activities implemented by Interact, and programme-wide impact evaluation which will address the breadth of services delivered by the programme.

This approach will prove proportionate to the resources available.

The purpose of the case-based studies will be two-fold:

- To complement operational evaluation where progress towards achievement of indicators will be assessed;
- To address stakeholder needs expressed during the evaluation plan preparation process calling for early feedback and assessment of the quality and use of specific Interact services.

The follow-up programme-wide evaluation will look at the results from the implementation of the whole service portfolio. Impact evaluation activities will take place in 2018, 2020 and 2022 (where the latter represents an optional update, depending on the findings of the first two exercises).

In the course of this process the following aspects will be kept in mind:

- Selection of sample services as part of the case-based studies

Only services that are well advanced will form part of this sample. This means that the sample will focus on long running services where a link can be established between service implementation and programme practice. We are considering having 3-4 case studies representative of each programme specific objective. The cases will be selected internally and focus on services which have been resource intensive (i.e. in terms of human resources time - both Interact staff and stakeholder), and where the "use" of the service can be linked to the start of 2016.

- Link between Interact III and INTERACT II

It is important to keep in mind that some activities in Interact are not specific to the Interact III period - i.e. main development work has been carried out during INTERACT II. Such activities are seen as long-term processes aiming at providing continuous support to programmes and their management bodies. Thus it is very difficult to stipulate the effect of these processes on the basis of Interact III only. This is particularly relevant for the case studies to be developed in 2018.

- Contribution to change

One of the main challenges in evaluating change of behaviour due to knowledge acquired is to create a compelling chain of evidence between the change and the result achieved by the programme. In practical terms this is about disentangling the effects of the programme implementation from the contribution of other factors to the change. In the case of Interact this implies that change of practices cannot be exclusively *attributed* to usage of Interact's products or service or the satisfaction with these. In our case we will aim to demonstrate that Interact's products and services have *contributed* to these changes by employing various evaluation methods to gauge the contribution to the change.

For example, it is about understanding in principle if the change of practice in the management and control capacities of the programmes (spe-

cific objective 1) can be associated to service delivered under the Interact programme, and what other factors have contributed to the change, if such change occurred.

- Evaluation approach

The main evaluation questions will be reflected upon through “theory-based” impact evaluation methods. They will follow the intervention logic of the programme in order to lead to a qualitative assessment about the programme’s impact.

Impact evaluation will look at the results associated with the implementation of the programme along the three specific objectives identified. It will assess the plausibility of links that lead to these results through a qualitative estimate of these results. Review of the result indicators and the intervention logic will provide the main framework for estimating the impact. In the case of the Interact programme this is related to usage of and satisfaction with our products and services.

The Interact III Monitoring Committee is kindly requested to:

- a) Approve the Interact III evaluation plan.

Table 2: Evaluation of progress towards achievement of programme indicators

Indicative evaluation questions	Indicative source(s) of data	Indicative methods	Data collection / analysis	Evaluation implementation
a) How much has the programme done? Where are we in terms of achieving our indicators?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation sheets Participant lists eMS Progress reports Annual implementation reports Cooperation programme Multi Annual Work Programme Joint Annual Work Plan Needs assessment Guidance documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection and analysis Desk analysis Quantitative analysis of outputs and results Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal External (could be in the role of a mentor)
b) If there are deviations, what are the reasons?				
c) Are the indicators and measures clearly defined?				
d) Are baselines and targets realistic?				
e) Do we do the right things?				

Table 3: Evaluation of communication strategy

Indicative evaluation questions	Indicative source(s) of data	Indicative methods	Data collection / analysis	Evaluation
a) Does Interact have an efficient communication flow within Interact and with external stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme document Visitor rates of websites Surveys, interviews Social media statistics Rating/sharing/commenting to Interact publications Event evaluation forms Reporting Focus group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys/ questionnaires Interviews Desk analysis Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and external sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External
b) Have the programme communication measures reached the relevant target groups efficiently?				
c) What obstacles were encountered in reaching target groups?				

Table 4: Evaluation of the management structure

Indicative evaluation questions	Indicative source(s) of data	Indicative methods	Data collection / analysis	Evaluation
a) Does the management structure established support service delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation programme Programme Guide Guidance documents Annual implementation reports Stakeholder surveys Interact processes Interact Offices' guidelines Process review Evaluation sheets and direct feedback Needs assessment Stakeholder feedback Interviews with Interact staff Multi Annual Work Programme Joint Annual Work Plans Progress reports Quarterly spending estimates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection and analysis Desk research Interviews Questionnaires/surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly internal Could involve external for e.g. in question 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly external Could involve internal - e.g. for last question
b) Do processes and procedures support effectiveness, efficiency and quality of service delivery?				
c) Is internal/external feedback ensured and embedded in everyday activities?				
d) Does the internal split of responsibilities ensure efficient implementation?				
e) Do we face de-commitment?				

Table 5: Impact evaluation based on case-based impact studies

Indicative evaluation questions	Indicative source(s) of data	Indicative methods	Data collection / analysis	Evaluation
<p>a) How has Interact contributed to programmes being better off and to improving/changing practices?</p> <p>b) Examples of cases:¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the Harmonised Implementation Tools package used by programmes? (Case study under specific objective 1) • How was eMS used? (Case study under specific objective 1) • How was KEEP used? (Case study under specific objective 2) • How was the macro-regional strategy support used? (Case study under specific objective 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Interviews • Evaluation forms • Desk research • Focus/user groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Interviews • Desk research • Questionnaires / surveys • Focus groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal with external mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External
<p>c) Case studies will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution of services to Interact specific objectives • Target groups reached • The change of practice observed (including effects) • Lessons learned • Testimonials from users 				

¹ The list is indicative. On the basis of available resources more studies can be performed.

Table 6: Programme-wide impact evaluation

Indicative evaluation questions	Indicative source(s) of data	Indicative methods	Data collection / analysis	Evaluation
<p>a) Overarching question: How has Interact contributed to programmes being better off? More specifically, for each specific objective</p> <p>SO1: To improve the management and control capacity of ETC programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was Interact able to contribute to improvement of the management and control capacity of territorial cooperation programmes? <p>SO 2: To improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was Interact able to contribute to improvement of the capacity for capturing and communicating the programme results? <p>SO 3: To implement innovative approaches (EGTC, revolving Funds, macro-regional strategies (MRSs), Article 96 of the CPR, ITI etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was Interact able to help programmes implement innovative approaches? <p>Communication strategy related questions:</p> <p>b) Did communication activities help in achieving the specific objectives of the programme?</p> <p>c) Have programmes used the harmonised communication tools produced by Interact?</p> <p>d) Have programmes made use of the communication tools and services developed by Interact?</p> <p>e) Are programmes aware of innovative approaches to cooperation, based on Interact communication activities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys Interviews Event Evaluation forms Desk research Focus/user groups Feedback on Interact tools and publications Internal assessments of use of Interact's products and services Results from operational evaluation Stakeholder feedback Reporting Results from case-based studies 	<p>Theory based evaluation on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk research Interviews Surveys Sampling User groups Observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal with external mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External

Annex 1: Programme investment strategy

Annex 1, Table 1: Programme investment strategy

Priority axis / ERDF support	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Programme specific objective	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objectives
1 Service delivery Allocation: EUR 36,635,113.00	11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration	11e Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions, as well as the use of EGTCs pursuant to point (3)(c) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the management and control capacity of ETC programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with Interact products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes % of ETC programmes using Interact products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with Interact products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results % of ETC programmes using Interact products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, macro-regional strategies (MRSs), Article 96 of the CPR, ITI etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with Interact products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches % of ETC programmes using Interact products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches