

Evaluation Plan

Programme Interreg Austria-Czechia 2021-2027

Version 2

12.03.2026



Research & Innovation



Climate & Environment



Training, Culture & Tourism



Cross-border Governance

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List of changes in the document

<i>Number of amendment</i>	<i>Subject of the amendment</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Annex/ chapter</i>
1	Text reg. interim evaluation added		1.1
2	Text reg. interim evaluation added		2.2
3	Description of the interim evaluation, incl. needs assessment and territorial analysis, added		3.2
4	Inclusion of the interim evaluation (incl. needs assessment and territorial analysis); adjustment of the timetables		3.3

List of abbreviations

AA	Audit Authority
CP	IP Cooperation Programme Interreg VI-A Austria-Czechia (basic programme document, approved by the EC on 16.6.2022)
DMCS	Description of the management and control system
EUMRS	EU Macro-Regional Strategies
Jems	Joint Electronic Monitoring System
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NA	National Authority
RC	Regional coordination body
SFC	System for Fund Management in the European Union
SG	Steering Group
SPF	Small Project Fund
TF	Task Force
ToR	Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

This evaluation plan for the programme Interreg Austria-Czechia 2021-2027 contains the planned evaluations for the programme period 2021-2027. It was developed in compliance with the legal framework according to Article 35 of the Interreg Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

According to this, the Managing Authority (MA) shall draw up an evaluation plan no later than one year after the approval of the Cooperation Programme (CP) and submit the plan to the Monitoring Committee (MC). The programme Interreg Austria-Czechia 2021-2027 was approved by decision of the European Commission on 16th June 2022. Thus, the latest date for the submission of the evaluation plan for the Interreg VI-A Programme Austria-Czechia is 16th June 2023.

The development of the evaluation plan builds especially on:

- Commission Staff Working Document (SWD 2021): Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027, Brussels, 8.7.2021
- Commission Staff Working Document (SWD 202): Better regulation guidelines, Brussels, 3.11.2021
- Interact Evaluation Plan – Briefing Note, Version 1, January 2022.

The evaluation plan presented here is written in English, analogous to the Cooperation Programme. The planned evaluations will also be published in English.

1.1 Coverage and objective

The evaluation plan covers the entire programme period and summarises all corner stones related to the evaluation framework, the process, the reporting and the communication of the evaluations.

The general purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of programmes in the wider context. Evaluations aim to increase knowledge of what works and what doesn't (and in what context), in order to be able to make timely decisions to support programme implementation and draw conclusions for the programme design. In consequence, the implementation of evaluations aims to contribute to the qualitative improvement of the programme in terms of its effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and coherence. Specific recommendations derived from the evaluations will serve to improve the quality and effectiveness of the programme, so that the intervention logic is appropriate to reach the priorities and specific objectives of the programme.

This evaluation plan includes different types of evaluations (see chapter 3.2). The planned interim evaluation comprises of an operational evaluation and a needs assessment and territorial analysis. The operational evaluation aims at supporting the smooth implementation of the programme and is planned in the early stages of programme implementation. A supplementary needs assessment and territorial analysis shall be carried out to provide valuable insights on specific characteristics, challenges, needs, gaps and potentials of the programme area - to provide a valuable basis for both the impact evaluation and the programming 2028+. Evaluations that capture the impact of the programme and its priorities are planned at a later stage, when there is enough evidence stemming from projects to draw conclusions. Both the interim and impact evaluation of the programme are planned to be carried out with the support of external evaluators – tendered and supervised by the MA. The implementation of the Small Project Funds (SPF) in the programme shall also be subject to an

impact evaluation with the support of external experts – tendered and supervised by the bodies in charge of administrating the SPFs.

Furthermore, this evaluation plan lines out the reporting obligations to the European Commission, including the required monitoring measures. In addition, the communication objectives and monitoring of these objectives (according to the cooperation programme) are included.

In a nutshell, this evaluation plan aims to support programme implementation by ensuring:

- an appropriate evaluation framework during implementation to ensure good quality of evaluations through proper planning;
- timely and relevant evaluations during implementation regarding the reporting requirements towards the Commission;
- adequate financial and human resources for evaluation activities;
- the implementation of follow up measures to ensure the quality of programme's implementation;
- communication of the evaluation findings/results

The plan presented is indicative as it aims to be as flexible as possible to respond to developments during the funding period. Therefore, this plan should be kept under constant review and updated or adapted as necessary to respond adequately to possible needs. Any changes to the plan will be discussed with the programme partners (especially within the Steering Group Eval) and submitted to the Monitoring Committee.

1.2 Previous evaluations and further & existing evaluation capacities

The evaluation plan builds on evaluation findings collected during the implementation of the previous programme period (2014-2020) and on consultations carried out during the programming phase of the period 2021-2027.

Evaluations 2014-2020

The evaluation of the previous programme, carried out by independent external evaluators and completed in 2020, focused on the assessment of the outreach, the needs of the territory and the intervention logic, the administrative burden and the assessment of the fulfilment of the specific objectives. It also included a summary as well as a specific analysis to assess the contribution of the programme to the thematic objectives, Europe 2020 strategy and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The derived recommendations related to both the implementation of the programme 2014-2020 and the design of the new programme. The findings will also be taken into account in the design of the evaluation framework to continue focus on particular challenges within the programme.

An external evaluation of the SPF was also carried out in the period 2014-2020. The results of this evaluation were taken into account during programming of the Small Project Funds of the new period. The findings of the evaluation shall also serve as a basis for the implementation of future small projects as well as for the planned evaluations of the SPFs.

Programming 2021-2027

The consultation process during the programming phase was threefold (see CP Interreg AT-CZ 2021-2027, p 64-65), starting with thematic stakeholder workshops in the course of 2020 (within the

ConnReg project), which addressed social, economic partners, local, regional and national public authorities as well as NGOs and agencies. Furthermore, one bilateral workshop on health took place virtually. In total 277 stakeholders were involved in the workshops. The aim was to understand the needs, interests and possible actions of stakeholders in the region and to reflect on potential future projects. In total, 9 workshops (in AT and CZ separately) were held to all specific objectives of the programme. The ConnReg stakeholder workshops formed the basis for the programme design and the choice of the specific objectives.

The second step in the consultation process was the stakeholder consultation via an e-survey from 22 December 2020 until 15 February 2021. The survey was distributed via the programme newsletter and social media. In parallel it was actively distributed by the regional coordinators as well as multipliers, for reaching out optimally to relevant stakeholders. A total of 258 participants took part in the survey - balanced on both sides of the border (129 AT and 129 CZ). As expected, the most frequent respondents according to the focus of their activities were public administration entities (especially municipalities). Furthermore, research institutions, educational organisations and organisations involved in tourism activities were strongly represented in the survey. In addition, responses of other actors were gathered, such as rescue organisations, entities related to sports and leisure activities, actors dealing with health care or environmental issues as well as other regional or supra-regional actors. The responses revealed a strong interest in research, education and tourism. Therefore, related specific objectives were more strongly incorporated in the programme strategy.

Finally, as a third step, a public consultation process took place with publishing a short version of the programme including the priorities and specific objectives. Similarly to the aforementioned stakeholder consultation, the public consultation targeted at involving all relevant actors in the region, such as regional, local, urban and other public authorities; economic and social partners; relevant bodies representing civil society and research organisations as well as universities. Therefore, this consultation was again widely distributed, inviting all these actors to react on the future programme strategy. In total, 7 responses were received. The results of the public consultation were incorporated and facilitated reshaping the programme strategy, for instance in the field of research and innovation.

In December 2020, a strategy building process for the Small Project Funds (SPF) 2021-2027 was launched, aiming at rendering the SPF more strategic by building upon the identification of regional needs and potentials. This process was designed in a participatory manner, aiming at involving actors directly acting in the region, particularly at the local level. Furthermore, the SPF is clearly dedicated to enabling people-2-people activities and is intended to contribute to an increased intercultural understanding in the border region, to diminish cross-border (mental) barriers on many levels, and reach as many citizens as possible in the border regions. Small projects often reach out towards associations, NGOs and citizens, thus usually triggering great visibility in situ.

Finally, in accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) accompanying the programming process involving environmental authorities and PG members. Thus, again within the aforementioned public consultation, a wider interested public in the Czech Republic and in Austria had another opportunity to comment on the programme strategy, particularly taking into account the expected environmental impacts of the programme. The comments were taken into account in the environmental report.

Consultations were closely coordinated with core programme stakeholders (Managing Authority, Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic (MMR), Representatives of the 3 Czech Kraje,

Representatives of the 3 Austrian Länder, Czech Embassy in Austria (as observer), European Commission).

This evaluation plan builds on these procedures and is closely linked to the indicator and monitoring system defined in the Interreg VI-A Austria-Czech Republic Cooperation Programme 2021-2027.

1.3 Coordination

Special attention will be given to the possibility of coordination with other Interreg programmes. In this regard, the programme will pursue exchange with the managing authorities of other, geographically close Interreg programmes on the planning and implementation of evaluations as well as on evaluation methodologies and the use of results. Coordination with other relevant actors (European Commission, EUMRS, Interact, other programmes apart from Interreg etc.) is envisaged to be pursued, too.

Coordination in Austria

The Austrian Spatial Planning Conference (ÖROK) office acts as a national contact point for the transnational and interregional ETC programmes (National Contact Point), also involved in the coordination of EU Macro-Regional Strategies (EUMRS). The AG CBC (Working Group Cross Border Cooperation) was set up in 2011 as a permanent working group in the ÖROK office, with the aim of networking the seven cross-border ETC programmes within Austria. In addition to the regional coordinators of the federal states, members include several federal ministries, the CBC managing authorities based in Austria and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism. This platform will also be used for streamlining evaluation efforts and optimally exploiting evaluation results.

Coordination in Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the coordination of complementarity and synergies between other programmes are coordinated by the National Coordination Authority. The National Coordination Authority plays a central methodological and coordinating role for all operational programmes in the Czech Republic. This Authority is performed by the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic. The particular coordination of the programme Interreg Austria-Czechia with other programmes in the Czech Republic is ensured by the membership of the National Authority of the Interreg Austria-Czechia programme in the coordination platforms established in the Czech Republic for the purpose of coordinating support from the ESI Funds.

2. Evaluation Framework

2.1 Evaluation function

The evaluation function in a programme should have a clearly defined responsibility for designing and delivering the evaluation plan, and coordinating, monitoring and promoting the quality of evaluation activities throughout the whole evaluation cycle.

Managing Authority (MA) and Joint Secretariat (JS)

The preparation of the evaluation plan as well as ensuring the implementation of the evaluations according to Art. 35 of Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059 is in the responsibility of the MA of the

programme Interreg Austria-Czechia 2021-2027. The MA works closely together with the JS and relies on its support. The tasks of the MA/ JS include the preparation, coordination and continuous revision of the evaluation plan as well as the implementation or monitoring of evaluations. The MA/JS will ensure the necessary procedures to produce and collect the data necessary for evaluations.

The responsibilities and functions for evaluation are clearly set out in Article 35 of the Interreg Regulation. In accordance with Article 35(1) (Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059) the MA shall carry out evaluations of the programmes related to one or more of the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and Union added value, with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes¹. Evaluations may also cover other relevant criteria, such as inclusiveness, non-discrimination, and visibility, and may cover more than one programme. In accordance with Article 35(7) (Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059) the MA/JS shall publish all evaluations on the website referred to in Article 36(2), Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059.

A member of staff of MA/JS will be appointed as **Evaluation Officer** for the main coordination of activities related to the preparation and implementation of the evaluation plan. This Evaluation Officer will also coordinate the implementation of the evaluations. Another designated member of the MA/JS will support the Evaluation Officer in these tasks.

The MA/JS ensures transparent communication with the Steering Group, Task Force and Monitoring Committee and takes care of the external tendering of evaluations.

SG EVAL

Previous experience has shown that setting up a Steering Group (SG) specifically dedicated to evaluation issues is a valuable tool/way to ensure sound set-up and implementation of the evaluation plan. Against this background, the SG Eval was established for the preparation of the evaluation plan, for jointly discussing methodological issues, for designing Terms of Reference (ToR) and accompanying the subsequent implementation of evaluations in the programme period 2021-2027. The SG Eval serves as discussion forum, is managed by MA/JS and consists of Member State representatives, i.a. Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic (MMR) and Representatives of the 3 Austrian *Länder*. As an informal body, this SG Eval meets regularly for coordinative and conceptual discussions.

The SG Eval should support in particular:

- Development of the Evaluation Plan
- Subsequent elaboration of terms of References (ToRs) for services of external evaluators
- Selection of external evaluators
- Development of evaluation main questions
- Discussion and approval of drafts evaluation reports
- Proposing and implementing follow-up activities based on evaluation findings
- Coordination with Task Force
- Reporting to the MC

The SG Eval will play a central role in the course of the detailed elaboration of the evaluation questions.

¹ see also Better Regulations Guideline, chapter 3, p. 23-36

The points discussed and the results of the SG are also regularly reported to the **Task Force (TF)**, which furthermore includes representatives of the 3 Czech Kraje and the European Commission. Evaluation results as well as derived improvement measures will be presented to the MC.

Monitoring Committee (MC)

For securing the quality and effectiveness of the evaluation process, the commitment of the MC is crucial as the MC takes a central supervising function. The MC includes all programme's stakeholders of the programme, including representatives of the European Commission. The framework of the MC also allows for the involvement of guests on specific issues, which can bring further thematic expertise. The function in evaluations of the MC is stipulated in the Regulation. In accordance with Art. 30 (2) of Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059, the Monitoring Committee shall adopt the evaluation plan and possible subsequent amendments thereto. In addition (Art. 30 (1), Regulation EU 2021/1059), the Monitoring Committee shall examine: (a) the progress in programme implementation and in achieving the milestone and targets of the Interreg programme; (d) the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings; (e) the implementation of communication and visibility actions.

Involvement of **other stakeholders** is primarily foreseen to be solved via the Monitoring Committee, as the latter is composed according to the partnership principle. Hence, beyond representatives of regional and national authorities, the MC also embraces other stakeholders².

Finally, in accordance with Article 35 (7) of Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1059, as mentioned above, evaluation results will be made publicly available on the programme's website.

2.2 Evaluation expertise

It is envisaged that both external and internal expertise will be used to implement the evaluation plan. According to Article 35(3) of the Interreg Regulation, the evaluation is to be entrusted to internal or external experts who are functionally independent. It is planned to conduct an interim and impact evaluation of the programme with support of external experts. External experts will also support the foreseen evaluation of the SPFs. As lined out above, an important criteria for a good evaluation is the independence of the evaluators – constituting one of the crucial prerequisites for drawing unbiased conclusions and develop coherent evaluation results. In addition to the independence of the evaluator, however, the steering of the evaluation process depends on the commitment of all involved within the evaluation framework.

The elaboration of the Terms of References (ToRs) for services of external evaluators and the selection of external evaluators will be discussed primarily with the SG Eval. The MA/JS will provide the external experts with information on approved projects (particularly stemming from the Joint Electronic Monitoring System Jems), on programme developments and ongoing discussions. The evaluation process is to be carried out independently by the experts in accordance with the contractual agreement and complemented by appropriate data collection methods and analyses.

² i.a. Chamber of Commerce Austria, the Regional Management Upper Austria, NÖ.Regional.GmbH, the Association of Non-Governmental and Non-Profit organizations in the CZ, the Association of villages of Vysočina region, Euroregion Pomoraví, Euroregion Silva Nortica and the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions.

MA/JS evaluations/assessments will – in addition to external services – also be carried out internally, e.g. surveys and analysis of survey results, data research (national, European statistics,...). Data preparation will be facilitated by MA/JS staff. The use of internal and external expertise will be stipulated with the SG Eval.

2.3 Trainings

In order to ensure an appropriate quality of the evaluations and in order to better assess the offers of external service providers, members of MA/JS will participate in relevant trainings. The focus will be put on the principles of impact orientation and intervention logic as well as the structure and use of relevant data sources. Furthermore, the relevant competence is to be expanded through self-study and attendance of thematic seminars. In particular, any training offers on the topic of evaluation from Interact or the EU Commission will be taken up by the responsible MA/JS staff.

Such training activities may refer to:

- Professional planning and implementation of the evaluation activities for MA/JS
- Increased knowledge about methods and approaches to prepare better sets of evaluation questions, better Terms of References (ToRs) with a deeper and more founded knowledge
- Raising awareness for the evaluation as a shared learning exercise with a wider audience including MC members and eventually even project beneficiaries

2.4 Use and communication of evaluations

This evaluation plan enshrines a clear commitment to using evaluation results to improve programme implementation and showcase notable programme achievements. In this context, a close link between assessment, communication and capitalisation is strived for. To this end, a strategy shall be developed that includes, among others, the following aspects:

- How the findings will be followed up;
- How the evaluations will be made public and published;
- How they will be transmitted to the Commission.

The MA/JS will initiate, agree and coordinate adequate responses and follow up measures to evaluation findings. Results/finding will be discussed with the SG Eval and core lessons learned will be unveiled towards the TF members. Far-reaching changes resulting from this process will be submitted to the MC for approval. In addition, the Regional Bodies and other programme partners will be motivated to contributing to the process of optimising programme implementation, within their sphere of action.

Communication & capitalisation

Communication and dissemination of programme implementation and evaluations is of great importance. Results of evaluation reports will be published on the programme website and final reports (at least for the mandatory impact evaluation due in June 2029) will be sent via SFC to the Commission. 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 newsletters), as they are foreseen in the communication strategy and consolidated in the annual communication plans.

Moreover, links between evaluations and capitalisation activities will be strengthened. The results of the analysis of projects or clusters of projects in the impact evaluations should be taken into greater account in the capitalisation activities. On the other hand, evaluation can learn from or even use capitalisation activities to better understand policy perspectives.

2.5 Financial resources

A total budget of approximately € 100.000 is indicatively allocated to external evaluations from Technical Assistance budget of the programme. The overall evaluation budget covers the costs of evaluations (fee rates for external experts), data collection, and any other costs incurred in the implementation of the evaluations (also embracing costs for travel and accommodation).

See also Chapter 3.3: Timetable and basic principles of the planned evaluation

The use of internal expertise brings cost savings. Internal resources of the programme bodies are required, among other things, for the coordination of the evaluations, collection of necessary data, decision making and follow up measures as well as communication of results. Those (mainly staff) resources are covered by the Technical Assistance budget of the programme and are linked to programme implementation tasks.

3. Planned Evaluations

The evaluation plan is a working document and the list of planned evaluations is an indicative list. The evaluation plan is not restrictive: MA/JS may also conduct ad hoc evaluations if needed during the course of the programme life cycle. Moreover, the SG Eval and the MC will review the list on a regular basis.

The plan allows for anticipatory design of the evaluation to make practical arrangements for the organisation of the impact evaluation (number of contracts, timing and coverage) and to ensure that appropriate data will be available. In addition, the requirements of the regulations must also be taken into account, which are briefly described in the following subchapter.

3.1 Measures envisaged in accordance with regulations

For grasping the temporal alignment of evaluations and monitoring measures, the following reporting obligations to the European Commission are taken into account.

Type	Date of delivery	Article
Transmission of data: Each managing authority shall electronically transmit to the Commission cumulative data for the respective Interreg programme by 31 January, 30 April, 31 July and 31 October of each year in accordance with the template set out in	Quarterly (31 January, 30 April, 31 July)	Art. 32, Regulation

Annex VII to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, with the exception of the information required in point (b) of paragraph 2 and in paragraph 3 of this Article that shall be transmitted by 31 January and 31 July of each year.	and 31 October of each year)	(EU) 2021/1059
Final evaluation: According to Art. 35(2), Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, an evaluation for each programme to assess its impact shall be carried out by 30 June 2029	30 June 2029	Art. 35(2) Regulation (EU) 2021/1059
Final performance report: Each managing authority shall submit to the Commission a final performance report on the respective Interreg programme by 15 February 2031. (Article 33(1), Regulation EU 2021/1059). According to Art. 33(4) the managing authority shall publish the final performance report on the website referred to in Article 36(2), Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.	15 February 2031	Art. 33, Regulation (EU) 2021/1059

For the sake of completeness, attention should also be paid to Article 31(1), Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, which states that the **European Commission** will examine the performance of Interreg programmes. According to Article 31(2), Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, at the request of the Commission, the MA shall, within one month, provide the Commission with concise information on the elements listed in Article 30(1), Regulation (EU) 2021/1059. That information shall be based on the most recent data available to the Member States and, where applicable, third countries, partner countries and OCTs. In this context, the evaluation plan also takes into account Art. 45, Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, which states that the Commission shall carry out a mid-term evaluation (by the end of 2024, accordingly Art. 45(1), Regulation (EU) 2021/1060) and retrospective evaluation (by the 31 December 2031, accordingly Art. 45(2), Regulation (EU) 2021/1060) to examine the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and Union added value of each Fund.

With reference to Art. 30, Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, this evaluation plan envisages an (at least) annual communication by the MA/JS to the Monitoring Committee on the progress of the programme implementation in achieving the **milestones and targets** of the Interreg programme (Art. 30, 1a) and on the communication and visibility actions (Art. 30, 1e).

3.2 Types of planned evaluations

The following evaluation packages (EP) are foreseen (timing see table below):

Interim evaluation (EP 1)

EP1.1: Operational evaluation

An operational evaluation is envisaged to be carried out at an early stage of programme implementation to assessing the delivery system of the programme. The aim is to ensure proper functioning of the programme management at an early stage in the programme cycle. The evaluation procedure foresees a mixed approach, blending external and internal expertise. Data which is collected through constant monitoring will be provided by the MA/JS. External experts will conduct further data collection in form of interviews, surveys, etc. An independent view from the outside seems to be particularly important, in order to be able to derive possible improvements with regard to an efficient

and high-quality programme implementation. Therefore, in the operational evaluations, the experts should be granted enough freedom in the framework and implementation of the operational evaluation. The evaluation questions shall cover the key criteria of effectiveness and efficiency.

EP1.2 Needs assessment and territorial analysis

The evaluation process should be accompanied by a parallel needs assessment and territorial analysis, primarily focussing on Interreg-specific aspects and potentials to provide a valuable basis for both the impact evaluation and the programming 2028+.

The aim of this analysis is to scrutinize the context-related characteristics of the programme area in order to identify future priorities where Interreg-specific themes may have the greatest impact in the AT-CZ programme area, as well as yet untapped potentials. The collection and analysis of relevant cross-border data should provide territorial evidence to identify thematic areas where the programme can deliver the greatest added value. Against the backdrop of the broader policy context and overarching European strategies, as well as the upcoming/ future legal framework, emerging policy objectives and associated documents (see particularly MFF proposal & draft regulations), the analysis is suggested to apply a place-based approach that best prepares the programme for future challenges and strategic adjustments to the overarching Interreg objectives.

Impact evaluation (EP 2)

The operational evaluation will be supplemented by an impact evaluation. The implementation (data collection and analysis) will take place at later stage, since the values captured by monitoring will be low in the early years of programming. A comprehensive impact evaluation therefore is more useful at a later stage in time of programme implementation. The impact evaluation by external experts is to be awarded as one combined contract with the operational evaluation, in order to be able to create efficient synergies in the course of evaluations. The MA/JS will contribute to data collection and provide with data for the independent analysis by the external experts. The impact evaluation should have a theory-based focus and should be conceptualized on an appropriate mix of methods. This evaluation is expected to examine whether and to what extent the intervention logic of the programme works, in order to secure a high quality of project results. The evaluation questions shall cover the key criteria of relevance, effectiveness, coherence, EU added value

The implementation of the SPFs will also be subject to an impact evaluation – coordinated by the SPF administrators.

3.3 Timetable and basic principles of the planned evaluation and monitoring measures

Title	Subject & rationale	Methods & data requirements	Data availability	Timing (start, duration)	Implementation
Interim Evaluation	Operational evaluation to ensure proper functioning of programme management at an early stage in the cycle Key criteria: Effectiveness and efficiency Key questions: - Quality & customer-orientation of services - Communication & outreach (e.g. website, project catalogue, social media...) - Attraction of new applicants	Mixed approach blending external and internal expertise Potential methods: - Desk research - Survey among beneficiaries - Interviews with programme stakeholders	Data on applications and projects ensured by the monitoring system Jems and documentation of MC and other relevant meetings + Primary data collection in form of surveys, interviews, etc. + Previous evaluations	2025 (start preparation of ToR) 2026: launch End 2026: expected date of delivery	External, internal support and coordination (approx. budget: 50.000 €)
	Needs assessment and territorial analysis on needs, gaps and potentials in the programme area Key criteria: Relevance, effectiveness, coherence, EU added value Key question: What are the main strategic needs, gaps, challenges and potentials for cross-border cooperation in the programme area?			2025 (start preparation of ToR) 2026: launch Beginning 2027: expected date of delivery	
Impact Evaluation³ incl. Final Evaluation Report	Impact evaluation to show-case major achievements learned for the	Mixed approach blending external and internal expertise	Data on indicators, projects, project reports	2025 (start preparation of ToR)	External, internal

³ **Note:** The implementation of the SPF's will also be subject to an impact evaluations. The implementation of these evaluations will be coordinated independently by SPF managers.

	forthcoming period, mandatory element Key criteria: Relevance, effectiveness, coherence, EU added value Key question: Assessment of the intervention logic (relevance and coherence of the programme) on the priorities and specific objectives of the programme.	Potential methods: - Desk research - Surveys - Interviews - Case Studies	available in the monitoring system Jems + Primary data collection in form of surveys, interviews, empiric case studies, etc. + Previous evaluations	2026: launch End 2027: expected date of delivery <i>(due date June 2029 acc. to Art. 35 (2), 2021/1059)</i>	support and coordination (approx. budget: 50.000 €)
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Evaluation reports of the period 2014-2020 as well as capitalisation efforts will be taken into account whenever appropriate and possible. All evaluation measures will be discussed in SG Eval, where the corresponding framework conditions for evaluation in the course of the implementation of the plan will be specified, including the elaboration of the evaluation questions.

Timetable of monitoring measures

Title	Subject	Data	Timing	Implementation
Monitoring of communication	Monitoring of criteria as set out in the Communication Strategy, basis for eventual update of Communication Strategy Key criteria: progress of implementation Key questions: Achieving the communication goals (communication indicators)	Monitoring & analysis of data	Ongoing during programme implementation	Internal
Monitoring for transmission of data	Transmission of data to the Commission - by 31 January, 30 April, 31 July and 31 October of each year	Monitoring (Jems)	Ongoing during programme implementation , acc. Art. 32, 2021/1059	Internal
Final implementation report	Submission of the final performance report to the Commission by 15 February 2031	Monitoring & analysis of data	Due date 15 February 2031 acc. Art.33, 2021/1059	Internal

Monitoring of communication

The programme set up a communication strategy, where the main communication goals and activity measures to promote the programme are defined. The strategy will be approved by the MC, which will be informed about the progress made in implementing the communication strategy as well as about the planned measures to be carried out in the subsequent year by the communication plan. The communication goals are linked to the programme goals and contribute to their achievement. Communication and programme visibility will also be integrated in the accompanying evaluations, i.a. in the impact evaluations and in the final performance report – they are also subject to internal evaluations.

Communication indicators will be used to evaluate the achievement of the communication goals. Output indicators will measure the outputs produced by communication actions (e.g. no of participants events, visitors, etc.); output indicator data will be collected with project reports, internal statistics and web analysis.

Result indicators will measure the specific changes achieved in response to communication outputs (perception of participants -/ beneficiaries, communication quality, quality of the guidelines, efficiency in project implementation, visibility of project results, etc.); Result indicators will be collected internal statistics and via interviews and surveys during the process evaluation of the programme.

The definition of the target values is laid down in the communication strategy.