

5-6 November, 2019 Budapest, Hungary

Introduction

- To explore the links between evaluation-capitalisation-communication
- To use the evaluation results for the programming process for the post 2020 period.
- To exchange on the status quo of the evaluation process, in the operational as well as the impact evaluations
- To exchange on evaluations of the communication strategy

Evaluation-Capitalisation- Communication' are tools to work with our programme/project results and achievements:

- Through an evaluation you will be able to learn more about your programme and projects results.
- Through capitalisation you build on the previous experiences of your programme and projects results.
- Through communication you will be able to sell your projects' and programme's results – to show what you achieved.



Evaluation

Lessons learned from the current evaluations, David Alba, Evaluation Unit, DG Regio, see ppt <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

Key messages:

- **Evaluation library**
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/member-states/
A new library of evaluations carried out by Member States is now accessible. It contains a selection of completed evaluations since 2007, which can be browsed by country, by fund, by evaluation type/method and by thematic objective. The findings of a number of evaluations are summarised and presented in an abstract, along with the full final report. The unit respectively the help-desk updates the library when new evaluations become available.
- **Overall progress in implementation of evaluations**
 - ✓ major delays in the implementation of the evaluation; due to the evaluation plans twice as many evaluations should have been carried out; this is a general lag across the ERDF most probably owing to the lag in programme implementation (ESF performs better in this regard);
 - ✓ most of the reports available are on procedures;
 - ✓ most are done on programme level – there are hardly any evaluations along Thematic Objectives (TOs) in Interreg; this approach limits to some extent the scope of the evaluations – since it allows for less detailed approaches to each of the TO
- **General issues with evaluations questions and methods, data and evaluations methods**
 - ✓ Objectives of the evaluation are usually clear but are often not turned into evaluation questions
 - ✓ Usually the scope is quite ambitious but the methods applied are very limited; it is important that not all questions can be answered in interviews – the chosen methodological approach is often not suitable!
 - ✓ Due considerations on possible and likely reasons for failure or success along the intervention logic are often lacking
 - ✓ The differentiation between evaluation design¹ and the evaluation context² is often blurred
 - ✓ Often the evaluation is restricted to a series of single source research interventions; triangulation³ is not the rule; it is clearly recommended to combine different methods
 - ✓ When it comes to effects and impact the differentiation between programme and external factors / effects is often not clear

¹ The design depends on what kinds of questions your evaluation is meant to answer. *Every evaluation is essentially a research or discovery project. Your research may be about determining how effective your program or effort is overall, which parts of it are working well and which need adjusting, or whether some participants respond to certain methods or conditions differently from others. If your results are to be reliable, you have to give the evaluation a structure that will tell you what you want to know. That structure – the arrangement of discovery- is the evaluation's design* (see: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluate-community-interventions/experimental-design/ma>)

² E.g. Cohesion Policy or CLLD or Interreg as rather specific elements of Cohesion Policy, RDTI etc.

³ Triangulation (psychology, social science), the use of multiple cross-checked sources and methodology

- ✓ Mostly qualitative methods are used and one has to acknowledge that there are limits to triangulation ... but Monitoring Systems work! And these systems provide data – in particular financial data – which might help to provide a more comprehensive view on achievements or allow for considerations on efficiency or certain types of intervention etc.
- ✓ Data reference are usually included in the evaluation report but there is rarely concise information on data collection method (survey method, numbers, response rate) – such ancillary information is useful to put the findings into the context
- ✓ The likely issue of biased⁴ opinions is hardly ever openly addressed (e.g. when doing surveys on e.g. programme communication solely among (potential) beneficiaries instead of including more diversified groups)
- ✓ In many cases the reports do not provide sufficient evidence on the outcomes

Question & answer (Q & A)

Q: Is it required to justify methods which have not been used?

A: Yes – please do so briefly on a general level.

Q: Is there a general line of argument related to priorities for the evaluation work?

A: You have to set your own priorities. You should know from experience what is your main concern. When designing and planning the evaluation do consider your capacities! Proper evaluation work takes time and requires resources: it is an interactive dialogue! It is also important to see that different contexts exist: Evaluation in RDTI will differ from evaluation in Cohesion Policy people (evaluators will have a different focus, people working in programmes in Cohesion Policy will be rather generalists than experts etc.)

Q: Is the counterfactual approach a suitable method for ETC?

A: It is even hard to find such approaches in ERDF; counterfactual evaluation is mainly used in ESF; means to refer to statistical methods but some pillars of the concept can be used meaning that a proper consideration of the following aspects should be done:

- Natural trends
- External factors

Qualitative methods should also include data analysis! It is always best to go for a mix of methods (in order to increase the likelihood that basic principles of triangulation are respected).

The programme CZ-PL planned to work for some intervention areas with a counterfactual approach but the initial plan to use counterfactual method for a pilot intervention area was dropped. The consultant proposed to do a Cost-Benefit-Analysis (CBA) but upon a closer look the shared conclusion was that data are also insufficient for a CBA.

Q: What are the experiences with evaluation of communication? What works in terms of outreach? Do specific evaluations on that exist?

⁴ A biased opinion is based on a preconceived notion or idea about a thing, person or group of people based on personal beliefs. In psychology, a bias is known as a "cognitive shortcut." It is based on the idea that the human brain, in order to conserve energy, naturally looks for shorter paths to conclusions by using what has been ingrained to draw speedy conclusions (see: <https://www.reference.com/education/biased-opinion-a1a8de7276286e>).

A: Not aware of it in detail but the underlying evaluation approach is always the same. Take a close look at the intervention logic, define your success rate and take literature into account. An important aspect for Interreg – where programmes usually include a wide range of interventions – is the coherence of projects. The added-value should be considered rather as an ex-ante question. Many evaluation reports refer to a 'lack of strategic approach' but hardly ever provide a more detailed analysis on that.

Capitalisation: How to use the evaluation findings for capitalisation?

Introduction, Interact

Pascal Chazaud, Interact expert on capitalisation practices: see ppt

<http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

Rita Fiorese, Interreg Med NCP Italy see ppt

<http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

The interest onto the implementation of this management practice has raised in order to shape and improve, as much as possible, the understanding of programmes' and projects' results.

Of course, since it is not a mandatory process or activity, it needs a strong support and commitment in order to understand and re-use the knowledge generated by projects, especially in order to enhance impacts and the positioning of future activities.

Indeed capitalisation has strong links with both communication and evaluation: whilst communication has the overall scope of show casing and promoting the added value of cooperation projects' activities, evaluation is relevant to capture this relevance and value especially towards the improvement of regional policies.

In this light, capitalisation may allow a continuous understanding and improvement of programmes' and projects' orientation and quality.

Main Key messages

- Capitalisation of experience is important because 2014-2020 programmes are more-result oriented, paying much more attention on the quality of projects – it is essential to maximise the funding on these valuable results for other actors/territories – moreover, financial resources could be scarcer in the future, meaning that the re-use of valuable resources is even more fundamental
- Not every project result need/can be capitalised; there is a need to reflect upon what deserves to be capitalised (with a strong potential for re-use/replication)
- Focus on a demand-oriented approach; pay due attention to the targets groups of potential re-users; create communities of givers and takers of experience; make sure that there is a real support in the process
- Who should carry out capitalisation? Done by each project, stirred by a specific type of projects that have assigned tasks in terms of capitalisation, by the programme bodies (MA/JS) and/or by national authorities/ NCPs; to be clarified in the future

For programming post2020, capitalisation approaches could indeed support the better orientation and thematic specialization of the new Interreg programmes as well as supporting the evaluation tasks for defining and deepening the quality and impact of projects activities and results.

Communication: How communication can contribute to make evaluation a learning exercise?

Evaluations as a base for programme communications – how to make use of the evaluation results for the promotion of cooperation?

Linda Talve, Interact
Fiona Woo, Baltic Sea Region Programme
Ari Brozinski, Central Baltic Programme

The session can be concluded around the following points, highlighting the importance of involving the communication manager of the programme into planning of the evaluation. This way the target audiences of the eventual evaluation report will be considered from an early stage and the findings can be made most use of through effective communication measures.

The operational evaluations are used in programmes for improving the implementation processes and there is very little interesting data for external target audiences outside the programme bodies (MA, JS, MC, applicants and beneficiaries).

- The Baltic Sea Region Programme shared their example of a plan of how to make most use of their operational evaluation findings. The plan included the main target groups and initial messages for them and was made with a strong involvement of the Communication Manager. The plan was considered a good internal tool to identify the needs for information amongst the close programme stakeholder groups.

The (eventual) impact evaluations can provide fruitful information for also other target groups, showing the actual benefit of cooperation and the - even if partial - impact on positive trends in regional development under different topics. However, the information is not in a ready-made format in the evaluation report and requires therefore a communication professional to find out the relevant information and to turn it to selling messages using the right communication tools to reach out to the well-defined target groups. In order to make the evaluation in a way that the report is useful for this purpose, it is strongly advisable to include the programme's communication manager already at an early stage of the evaluation planning process.

- The Central Baltic Programme shared an example of how they had recently used their evaluation report as a basis for an interactive panel discussion at their Annual event. They presented the current state of play of the programme achievements in all thematic fields (TOs) to an audience of past, current and potential project partners as well as some other people interested in the programme. The Communication Manager was responsible for the design of the session and of how the evaluation findings were presented in an attractive and active way.

I always wanted to know

SEA:

Q: What is the purpose of strategic environmental assessment (SEA)?

A: It is laid down in the Directive 2001/42/EC⁵: *'The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.'* (Directive 2001/42/EC Article 1)

Q: Is a SEA legally required in 2020-2027?

A: Yes a SEA is legally required – the Directive does not include any exception for Interreg; thus also the programmes post2020 have to provide it. Please also note that according to Article 22 of the Draft ETC Regulation prior to selection the environmental impact of infrastructure projects with an expectable life-span of more than 5 years should be briefly assessed. This is an aspect where the SEA could provide methodological input (as a carrot to make the work related to SEA more interesting for programme people).

Ex-ante evaluation:

Q: Is a ex-ante evaluation legally required?

A: No, an ex-ante evaluation is no more required according to the draft legislation; Article 34 reads as *'Evaluations during the programme period'* in the title and thus not provide any further specifications on the timing of evaluations.

Q: Could an ex-ante evaluation still make sense?

A: To hire an external evaluator in the role of a critical friend could make sense in order to ensure that the programme is coherent and readable for the outside world (which could also be a task for communication officers). Such an ex-ante check or evaluation could be considered by the programme in order to safeguard an external perspective during the preparation of the new Programme. The ex-ante evaluation could play a practical role in relation to the planning, implementation and evaluation of the programme. External view provided by the ex-ante could:

- help to ensure that what is proposed in the programme is logical, coherent and justified (the intervention logic)
- check if the needs assessment is comprehensive and balanced and in line with the needs identified
- check that the allocations of resources are appropriate in order to respond to the needs identified through the needs assessment
- to make recommendations to improve the draft programme.

Programming:

Q: As an Interreg programme, do I need to choose the Interreg specific Objective (ISO)?

A: First of all the 'Better Governance' Objective is for inter-EU programmes and the 'Safer Europe'-Objective is for external cooperation programmes. In blunt words, the basic underlying rationale of 'Safer Europe' is that CBC makes sense only if people can cross the border. The Commission proposal states that each programme should allocate a minimum of 15% to one of

5 Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment

the ISO. Member States (MS) have rejected the obligation in their proposal. Trilogue will show if the obligation remains, or percentage is lowered or if there is no obligation at all.

Q: Do I need to carry out Financial Instruments if I choose Policy Objective 5?

A: No! The choice of Policy Objective 5 is by no means linked to financial instruments. Recent statements of DG representatives have pinpointed the following key elements related to Policy Objective 5:

- strategy-based (not necessarily CLLD or ITI but territorial tool – see below)
- multi-sectoral (since it is about integrated territorial development)
- in accordance with the principle of multi-level governance meaning the sub-national levels should be involved in strategy-building and decision-making

Draft CPR as well as draft ERDF-Regulation frame the approach to Policy Objective 5. Recital 24) to the Draft ERDF Regulation stipulates:

(24) In order to maximise the contribution to territorial development, actions in this field should be based on integrated territorial strategies including in urban areas. Therefore, the ERDF support should be delivered through the forms set out in Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2018/xxxx [new CPR] ensuring appropriate involvement of local, regional and urban authorities.

Article 22 of CPR in the post-COREPER version states:

Where a Member State shall supports integrated territorial development, it shall do so through territorial and or local development strategies in any of the following forms:

- integrated territorial investments;
- community-led local development;
- another territorial tool supporting initiatives designed by the Member State for investments programmed for the ERDF under the policy objective referred in Article 4(1)(e)

DAY2:

Update on operational/impact evaluation (IE)

Introduction: Interact

In this session, four Interreg programmes introduced their approaches to impact evaluations. They explained the methods they used and highlighted the main challenges and some lessons learned from undertaking an impact evaluation. Based on their experiences they summarised some tips and recommendation for programmes starting their IE now.

2007-2013:

- Socio-economic challenges, potentials and impacts of transnational cooperation in central Europe, Central Europe Programme
Evaluator: Roman Römisch, the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw)
Monika Schönerklee-Grasser: Central Europe Programme: see ppt
<http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

2014-2020

An impact evaluation of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020
Evaluator: Heidi Vironen, Irene MC Master Nathalie Wergles, European Policies Research Centre; University Strathclyde Glasgow
Nathalie Wergles (evaluator, EPRC associate researcher:) see ppt
<http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

Evaluation of priorities and specific objectives implementation and verification of changes in development priorities of the program Interreg V-A Czech Republic - Poland
Evaluator: KPMG, NAVIGA
Jan Pikna: Interreg CZ-PL: see ppt
<http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

4. First evaluation of the implementation and impacts of the IPA CBC Programme 'Greece – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020

Evaluator: plan 02

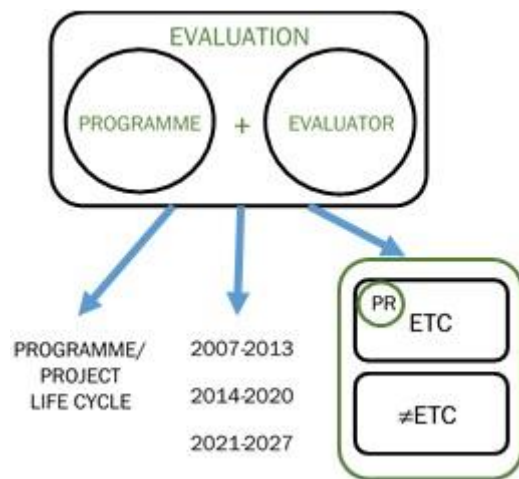
Naxhi Ismaili: IPA CBC GR-RONM

The four presented impact evaluations used different evaluation processes and methods (see for more details in their presentations). However, there are some general lessons learned:

- Evaluation provides a snapshot in time, whereas impacts develop over time.
- Data collection and availability: timely collection is important: use of full monitoring systems (including reports); surveys help you to identify trends (although the feedback rate might be quite low)
- High relevance of qualitative feedback from programme stakeholders: consider to use narratives from the end users in order to make the results more tangible
- It is difficult to distinguish between programme effects and external factors (to disentangle the external factors from the programme change)

- Presentation of the report is important: consider visual presentation, readability and the different target groups. It is recommended to also prepare also short summaries or briefs
- A continuous exchange with the evaluator throughout the evaluation helps to create a common understanding and also to improve the quality of the outcome of the evaluation.

Evaluation and programming



A good programme evaluation starts with an internal discussion and agreement among the programme authorities and bodies on what is the main objective in doing the evaluation (programme circle). It is then not enough to kick-off the evaluation by contracting an evaluator (evaluator circle) and waiting for the final evaluation report. It is rather a process, which requires constant contact between the programme and the evaluator (evaluation circle). There are three other dimensions which can significantly contribute to the quality and added value of your programme evaluation for this programme period, but also and especially for designing your post-2020 programme.

1. Programme/project lifecycle: When designing the 2021-2027 programme and project life cycles, take into account which information and data the 2021-2027 evaluator will later need. Build the information and data collection into the programme and project lifecycle (e.g. by including relevant questions in the projects' final reports).

2. Programming periods: Especially for an impact evaluation, it makes sense not to stick to one programming period, but to look at interventions, which actually continued from the past to the present programming period. Especially if you aim at continuing there intervention also in the next programming period.

3. Interreg and beyond: When evaluating your programme, you can of course totally focus on the programme and its projects. However, this way the benefit of your programme evaluation is relatively limited to those directly involved and directly benefiting from your programme. It actually provides added value evaluating your programme, its interventions and its impact in the overall ETC/Interreg context and even beyond that in connection with the funding world beyond Interreg.

Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) of policy interventions:

After the introduction of the four different impact evaluations and the following panel discussion, the Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) method was shortly presented: as a method for an assessment of your programme (Ex-post Territorial Impact Assessment)as well as a method to support your programming process (Ex-ante Territorial Impact Assessment of policy interventions)

Bernd Schuh (evaluator, ÖIR), see ppt,

<http://www.interact-eu.net/library#2741-presentations-evaluation-capitalisation-and-communication>

- **Ex-post Territorial Impact Assessment :**

The methodology allows policy makers and practitioners to obtain evidence on the territorial impact of CBC programmes and help on developing better-informed cross-border policies. The activity improves understanding of the data needs to carry out ex-post territorial impact assessment of CBC programmes. A test of the methodology was performed in five stakeholder territories by providing evidence on how the elaborated methodology works in practice. Data mostly from the 2007 – 2013 programming period was used. Germany – the Netherlands, Sweden – Norway, Romania – Bulgaria, United Kingdom - Ireland (Ireland-Northern Ireland-Scotland), Spain-Portugal (POCTEP).

In a nutshell ex-post TIA is about:

- Assessing actual effects of the policies in the territory – „comes awfully close to evaluation“ – i.e. detecting success/ failure of the policy
- Self-learning loop – visualising where effects (i.e. with respect to sub-regional units) have been induced by policy – i.e. learning for future programmes

The report of TIA CBC has been finalized and the final documents are published on the ESPON website under the following link: <https://www.espon.eu/TIA-CBC>

- **Ex-ante Territorial Impact Assessment of policy interventions**

In a nutshell ex-ante TIA is about:

- Territorial analysis of potential effects of the policies
- Deduction of policy targeting and objectives
- Establishing of baselines through territorial sensitivity

Update on communication matters

Introduction: Interact

Helena Järviste: Estonia-Latvia Programme

Gómez Girón Eloy, Danube Programme

Petra Polaskova, Interreg Europe Programme

In this session the topic was the evaluations done on programme communication strategies. Three programmes were interviewed about their experiences and the findings they had received from the evaluators regarding their implementation of the communication strategy.

In general, the communication objectives of programmes are very similar. They focus on ensuring the good operation of the programme (internally and towards applicants and projects) as well as making the benefits of cooperation visible and recognized. The evaluation questions should always be focusing on the stated objectives and ask how well the objectives have been reached. Sometimes the programme evaluation questions are somewhat disconnected of the objectives in the strategies, although they ask interesting questions and provide interesting answers.

It was brought up that - potentially - as there will be no requirement of a capitalisation plan in the next period, one way to address the need to put more emphasis on capitalising on project results could be to include a third "pillar" of communication objectives into the programmes' communication strategies: to increase the uptake of projects' results.

The Estonia-Latvia programme stated that the main learning points of their communication evaluation process were to do the planning in a more coherent way and ask more demanding questions. They had still received valuable inputs from the report, e.g. that the involvement of the SMEs in projects was on a good level partly due to successful communication.

For the Danube Transnational Programme the evaluation of communication was done by a communication expert – which is rarely the case in evaluations. Thus the report is of high quality and to the point. An interesting feature in the report is the benchmarking with the communication activities of Central Europe and Alpine Space. A major concern for large transnational programmes is the uneven participation of MS and regions: communication efforts will be reinforced but working with a network of National Contact Points poses specific challenges to establish convincing and shared narratives.

For Interreg Europe the external evaluation did not provide specific added-value for the communication activities. The programme has developed an in-built approach to the monitoring and evaluation of communication activities. The digital communication strategy for the programme provides a comprehensive, well-structured and targeted approach to 'online' communication.

Outlook – next steps

EVAL-CAP-COM practicalities – below you have a list of ‘one message’, which participants will take home:

- Include communication officer
- The importance of evaluation of communication strategy
- E + C + C – we are one but not the same – or is it so?
- The importance of synergy between evaluation & communication
- More attention should be paid to capitalisation. However, it is important to find a right balance vis-à-vis EVAL-CAP-COM and overall programme implementation
- Without capitalisation evaluation doesn't make sense!
- Capitalisation is the bridge EVAL-COM
- Evaluation is the cornerstone of successful strategic communication
- Check impact evaluations from communication perspective
- Evaluation & communication should go hand in hand
- Interlinkage between evaluation, capitalisation and communication
- Ask evaluators for COM-tailored content (case studies, key stats)
- To focus on demand – not every project's results need to be capitalized
- Not every programme can capitalize
- Some remarks for external evaluators to get better result
- How to efficiently and effectively have a capitalisation plan for next programming period
- Refining and updating ToR on impact evaluation
- Upload evaluation to SFC!
- Evaluation: important to make clear to evaluators that there is room for critical findings + MA/JS welcome suggested improvements
- Capitalisation: crucial to identify target groups & how to reach before launching capitalisation strategy
- Defined target groups are important in EVAL-CAP-COM
- More attention to quality
- How evaluation will help/contribute the best for future work
- For programming 2020+: not to look only on the programme area, but bigger regions, functional areas, part of a bigger picture
- Evaluation already starts with your intervention strategy
- Include capitalisation in new OP description in communication section

Events/support planned related to following topics:

2014-2020

- Exchange on impact evaluation (event, share examples on the platform)

2020+

- Follow up on the common indicators discussion
- Harmonisation of programme-specific indicators
- Develop together intervention logic in different TO/ISO (events and webinar)
- Consistency check: SEA, ex-ante check,

ANNEX:

Links to evaluation reports or relevant documents referring to EVAL-CAP-COM:

- Impact evaluation from 2007-2013: Interreg Central Europe: Socio-economic challenges, potentials and impacts of transnational cooperation in central Europe: The executive summary of the impact evaluation is attached and the policy brief & full report can be found under:
<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/discover/programme.html>
- Impact evaluation 2014-2020: Northern Periphery and Arctic programme: The added value overview is attached and more documents about the impact evaluation can be found under: <http://www.interreg-npa.eu/projects/project-outcomes/>
- [Mid-term \(operational\) evaluation of the Baltic Sea Region Programme](#)
- [Impact evaluation report of the Central Baltic Programme](#)
- [Performance evaluation report of the Estonia-Latvia Programme, focus on communication](#)
- ToR of impact evaluations can be found on the Interact thematic network on results and evaluation: https://connections.interact-eu.net/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUuid=459319b7-7414-4ff9-b781-9762c40cc278#fullpageWidgetId=W20e09d1aa394_46a9_89d2_842d5356e71d&folder=ae7197ea-9838-4df2-9b8f-02d5a4afeb47
- http://www.interact-eu.net/library?title=capitalisation+plan&field_fields_of_expertise_tid=All&field_networks_tid=All