



DRAFT EVALUATION PLAN FOR THE GIBRALTAR ERDF AND ESF INVESTMENT IN GROWTH AND JOBS 2014-2020 ESI FUNDS

1. Objectives and purpose

A statement of the objectives and purpose of the evaluation plan, based on ensuring that sufficient and appropriate evaluation activities are undertaken, in particular to provide the information needed for Programme steering, for the annual implementation reports in 2017 and 2019 and the ex-post evaluation, and to ensure that the data needed for evaluation are available.

The evaluation plan describes the strategy for conducting the evaluation of both the Gibraltar ERDF and ESF Investment for Growth and Jobs 2014-2020 Programmes.

Due to the size, structure and allocation of the Gibraltar OP's and the limited resources at their disposal, the EU Programmes Secretariat of H.M Government of Gibraltar will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the EU Structural Funds Programmes in Gibraltar. Major evaluation work will be out sourced to independent evaluators e.g. mid-term and the ex-post evaluation. The independence of the evaluators from actual Programme activity will be ensured. The contracted evaluator will be asked to sign a declaration of independence.

The primary purpose of the evaluation plan is to ensure that monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken during the programming period provides a basis for demonstrating the impact of Structural Funds and enables the Programmes to be reviewed and, where appropriate, modified or changed to reflect lessons learned from delivery.

Evaluation activity needs to be both sufficient and appropriate. In particular, it is important that:

- Monitoring and reporting data is available to support interim and final assessments of the progress of the Programmes, in particular supporting the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs); enhanced AIRs in 2017 and 2019; and the mid-term and ex-post evaluation;
- Data required for evaluation is provided at relevant intervals and in the most appropriate format;
- Sufficient evidence is collated to determine whether the interventions funded through the Programmes are achieving their intended purpose;
- The evidence resulting from evaluation activities is used to both steer the 2014-2020 Programmes and inform development of future Programmes.

Four main types of monitoring and evaluation activities will be undertaken to enable this:

1. Monitoring of spend and achievement of outputs for each investment priority.
2. Monitoring of changes in context, result and impact indicators.
3. Evaluation of the **impact** of the Operational Programmes (OPs) interventions to ensure they meet their intended socio-economic and environmental objectives.
4. Evaluation of delivery **processes** to ensure resources are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The evaluation plan considers all elements of the system within which evaluation activities takes place. These include:

- Describing the framework of governance necessary for oversight and ownership of Programme evaluation;
- The roles and responsibility of those involved;
- The mechanisms for capturing data within the operational databases and IT systems to enable reporting on key evaluation metrics;
- A summary of evaluation activities planned;
- The mechanisms through which the results and conclusions obtained will be disseminated to the relevant audiences.

The plan constitutes the activities which the Managing Authority considers to be practically deliverable within the timeframe of the Programmes and with the resources available.

2. Governance and coordination

Brief description of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the OPs, identifying the main bodies involved and their responsibilities. Explanation of how evaluation activities are linked with OPs implementation in terms of content and timing.

Managing Authority: The EU Programmes Secretariat (EUPS) of H.M. Government of Gibraltar has the overall responsibility for drawing up an effective and deliverable plan for monitoring and evaluating the 2014-2020 Programmes. This includes:

- Ensuring that effective systems are in place for Programme management and reporting;
- Ensuring that monitoring and evaluation activities are coordinated with other European Structural Funds through cross membership of committees;
- Ensuring that IT systems capture requisite indicator data as required by the Commission in the AIRs, enhanced AIRs and ex-post evaluation;

- Ensuring the quality of Programme implementation through the monitoring of indicators;
- Commissioning evaluations as required;
- Ensuring that the products of evaluations are disseminated in a timely manner to the appropriate audience;
- Establishing a Monitoring Committee (MC) and providing a Secretariat to it;
- Ensuring appropriate guidance, resources and support are available to support the evaluation of the Programmes.

Monitoring Committee: This will comprise representatives from the EUPS, partner organisations, stakeholders, delivery bodies and representatives of equality and environmental organisations. The MC will:

- Provide a high level oversight of the Programmes' delivery as determined by assessment of evaluation findings;
- Ensure Programme evaluation activities are managed efficiently and effectively to provide the best value-for-money;
- Assess, approve and provide feedback on the AIRs before they are sent to the Commission;
- Monitor all evaluation activities and outputs and provide recommendations to the Managing Authority on Programme implementation and evaluation;
- Review progress and advise on any necessary changes to the evaluation plan;
- Review progress on key output, result, impact and context indicators;
- Recommend potential evaluation activities to be undertaken during the programming period.

Delivery Bodies: Delivery bodies will be responsible for collating data for their areas of responsibility. They will also have responsibility for ensuring that the data collected is quality assured and consistent with the needs of the Managing Authority and the Commission. They will have a role in the MC providing it with regular updates on delivery and advice and support on monitoring and evaluation activity.

Certifying / Paying Authority: The Treasury Department of H.M. Government of Gibraltar is the Certifying and Paying Authority of the Gibraltar Structural Funds Programmes. It will provide advice and support on delivery and monitoring and evaluation activity at the MC.

Other data providers: These could include governmental departments/agencies, NGOs, special interest groups, etc. These bodies will have no direct responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the OPs. However they may be represented on the MC and data they obtain may be relevant to the overall evaluation aims and objectives of the Programmes. Information collected by these bodies will be integrated by the Managing Authority as necessary.

Lessons learned from 2007-2013 Programmes

One of the main challenges encountered in evaluating previous Programmes was the obtaining of information/statistics which was in a format compatible with that requested by the Commission. A large amount of project information was available but not necessarily in a manner which was easily transmittable.

New databases have been commissioned which will ensure that the appropriate data is captured from projects.

3. Evaluation topics and activities

Indicative description of evaluation topics and activities anticipated, including, but not limited to, fulfilment of evaluation requirements provided for in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Regulations (EU) No 1301/2013(ERDF) and (EU) 1304/2013(ESF).

Programme Priorities

The main priorities for support within this Programming period, as identified by the relevant SWOT analysis and needs assessments are:

Under ERDF:

- **Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs:** (d) Supporting the capacity of SMEs to engage in growth in regional, national and international markets, and in innovation processes; and
- **Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors:** (a) Promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources.

Under ESF:

- **Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility:** (i) Access to employment for job-seekers, including long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility; and
- **Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning:** (iv) Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.

Three horizontal principles have also been identified for both Programmes. They are:

1. Sustainable development;
2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination; and
3. Equality between men and women.

Evaluation strategy

The evaluation strategy has several aims:

- To put in place evaluation methodologies which are suitable, efficient and robust.
- To assess the impacts of the Programmes.
- To evaluate cross-cutting impacts and synergies between activities.
- To evaluate the efficiency of the Programmes administration, delivery and management.
- To evaluate any changes in the context within which the Programmes operate.
- To provide data on indicators required by the Commission and the Managing Authority.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations which will effectively feed into the steering of the Programmes.
- To disseminate evaluation findings efficiently and effectively.

Evaluations are undertaken to answer questions about a project, scheme or the Programme. Some of the questions which the evaluations will try and answer during the Programming Period include:

1. Are the interventions funded by the Programme having an impact?
2. What type of businesses is the ERDF Programme supporting?
3. What types of jobs are being created in supported projects/schemes?
4. What types of skills training are being delivered to supported individuals?
5. Are the Programmes on track to meet the performance reserve targets?
6. Are the implementation processes put in place by the MA effective for managing the Programmes?
7. How effective is the communication strategy?
8. Are there any other achievements which can be attributed to the Programmes?

4. Data and information

Brief description of the system to record, maintain, manage and report statistical information on the OPs implementation and provision of monitoring data for evaluation. Identification of data sources to be used, data gaps, potential institutional issues related to data provision, and proposed solutions. This section should demonstrate that appropriate data management systems will be operational in due time.

Lessons learned from previous Programmes

The previous Programmes systems of internal data management were maintained by the EUPS, who were responsible for collecting data from all sources including beneficiaries.

The Managing Authority obtained information by submitting requests to the pertinent delivering bodies. However, there were some issues with the format that the data was received and the time lag which at times arose.

The new databases are designed to address these problems and can be enhanced to capture new data in the future, should the need arise.

Data sources

For the purposes of reporting for the AIRs, mid-term and ex-post evaluations, the fiches released by the Commission for the EU Common set of indicators sets out which European level database contains the data required e.g. Eurostat. Where information is available from a more up-to-date national source, however, the Managing Authority will use these instead.

The main source of this data will be the Statistics Office of H.M. Government of Gibraltar.

Data collection

All data for the Programmes will be collected by the EUPS and stored in their database. The database will contain all the data required by the ESI regulations. All projects/schemes will be required to collect data against their indicators and for every business/individual that they assist, the pertinent information transferred to the EUPS. These data requirements will be set out in the projects grant offer letter. Any collection forms and consent statements must ensure that data protection requirements are satisfied. Businesses and individuals must be made aware that their data will be shared with the EUPS and contractors appointed by the same, for the purposes of evaluation and verification checks.

The EUPS will work with project sponsors and scheme managers to ensure the quality of the monitoring data gathered. In addition to the data that will be required from projects and schemes, the EUPS will also collect additional data that will assist with project management and evaluation, including sufficient baseline data to enable them to robustly track progress of beneficiaries.

Indicators

The monitoring indicators are set out at Investment Priority level in the Operational Programmes. The indicators are based on the core common indicators set out by the European Commission and any Programme specific indicators were developed by the EUPS, Programme stakeholders and the European Commission.

The European Commission requires each Fund to have a slightly different approach to implementing the indicator system. For ESF, there is a set of “common” indicators which all MA’s are required to report against. These indicators are broken down into three categories of indicators:-

1. **OUTPUTS:** what is directly produced/supplied through the delivery of a project.
RESULTS: capture the expected effects of projects (at participant level).
2. **IMMEDIATE:** recorded when a participant leaves a project.
3. **LONGER-TERM:** recorded 6 months after the support for the participant has ended.

Data for immediate result indicators will be collected through the monitoring system whilst data for longer-term result indicators will be collected from a representative sample through a “Leavers Survey”.

For ERDF there is a set of “core” output indicators which are required to be reported upon.

1. **RESULTS:** relate to the situation in the Programme area NOT at participant level.

Data for output indicators will be collected through the monitoring system whilst data for the result indicators will be collected through project and Programme evaluations.

Across all Programmes a small number of non-core common indicators have been developed to allow the MA to fully monitor the progress of the Programmes. These are “Programme specific” indicators.

Each project/scheme will need to achieve indicators from the Investment Priority which they are funded under. All projects/schemes will have a profile of expected delivery which will include expenditure and indicators.

The EUPS will use the indicators selected for each project/scheme to monitor the progress of the same. This data will be aggregated up to Programme level in order to monitor the progress of the Programmes.

The EUPS will provide advice and guidance to project sponsors and scheme managers in order to ensure that indicators are being reported correctly and that appropriate evaluations are being carried out on their project/scheme.

At Programme level, an external evaluator will be commissioned to undertake the required evaluation due to the independence and expertise provided by such an arrangement. These will include the mid-term and ex-post evaluations.

5. Timeline

Major milestones of the programming period, and indicative outline of the timing needed to ensure that results are available at appropriate times.

Lessons learned from previous Programmes

The timeline for evaluations of the Programmes impacts must track the actual delivery of the Programmes themselves, recognising the impact (if any) the delay in agreeing and commencing the Programmes has had.

The timeline for the new Programmes must be sufficiently flexible to allow the timing of evaluations to reflect progress in delivery.

The following specific aspects will be accounted for:

- The schedule of delivering annual reports, in particular noting that the timing of enhanced AIRs, mid-term and ex-post evaluation reports are fixed.
- Accounting for lag effects in evaluating the impacts of funding on outcomes.
- Determining from previous evaluation activities the likely contribution of current Programmes interventions, relative to previous Programmes interventions.

Timeline

An indicative draft of the timeline for key evaluation activities and governance events for the Programme is given below:

- 2014 : Programming period begins.
- 2015 : New Programmes commence.
- 31 May 2016 : Submit 2014/15 AIR.
- 30 June 2017 : Submit first enhanced AIRs.
- 31 May 2018 : Submit 2017 AIR.
- 2018 : Commission and publish mid-term evaluations.
- 30 June 2019 : Submit second enhanced AIRs.
- 2020 : Programming period ends.
- 31 May 2020 : Submit 2019 AIR.
- 31 May 2021 : Submit 2020 AIR.
- 31 December 2024 : Ex-post evaluations complete and submitted to Commission.

MID-TERM: A mid-term evaluation will be carried out on the Programmes during 2018. This evaluation will assess how support from the Funds has contributed to the objectives of each Programme. The mid-term report will also have an impact on the performance reserve, as it will provide an indication on Programme progress and if the pertinent milestones will be achieved which will trigger this payment.

EX-POST: An ex-post evaluation will be carried out to gauge the impact the Programmes, as a whole, have had. It will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the Funds and their impacts in areas like the economy, the environment and in social cohesion. The ex-post evaluation will also gauge influence the Funds have had in contributing towards the EU's priorities of Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.

6. Communication

Description of how evaluation findings will be disseminated to target recipients, including a description of the mechanisms established to follow-up on the use of evaluation results.

Strategy and governance

The communication strategies for both Programmes will be written by the EU Programmes Secretariat and ratified by the MC. The information needs of the target audiences will be assessed on an ongoing basis with relevant parties to elicit their particular needs. All suggestions received will be evaluated and the feedback received will be incorporated into the strategies.

Customers

The key customers and their expected evaluation needs/interests are listed below:

European Commission: The AIRs, enhanced AIRs and the ex-post evaluation of the Programme will be submitted to the Commission by the Managing Authority via established channels of communication (e.g. SFC).

Where the Managing Authority requires advice and guidance on regulatory requirements this will be sought from the Commission and/or from other sources e.g. European Evaluation Helpdesk.

Within the Managing Authority: The communication of results to senior management in the MA (e.g. Accountant General, Ministers, etc.) will be managed using traditional routes (e.g. ministerial submissions, submission papers, etc.)

Where evaluation studies are commissioned externally by the MA, the results will be communicated using traditional channels (e.g. making reports available to social partners, meetings, etc.)

Programme beneficiaries/stakeholders/general public: There are a range of approaches to communicating relevant evaluation results to beneficiaries, stakeholders and the wider public. These include: the EU Funding website (www.eufunding.gi), seminars, meetings, etc.

7. Resources

Description of the resources needed and foreseen to implement the plan, including an indication of administrative capacity, data, financial resources, IT needs. Description of capacity building activities foreseen to ensure that the evaluation plan can be fully implemented.

All evaluations will be funded by Technical Assistance. The total evaluation budgets for the OPs are: ERDF €46,800 and ESF €38,640. It is estimated that each evaluation to be carried out (i.e. mid-term and ex-post) will be in the region of €10,000.

In the MA there is a total of 6 FTE staff engaged in overseeing all 4(four) EU co-funded Programmes Gibraltar participates in. Of these 4 FTE are engaged at some time in monitoring and evaluation activities. Members of staff will receive training as and when required. These activities will also be funded by Technical Assistance.

Lessons learned from previous Programmes: In the previous Programmes, evaluators were not given sufficient instructions on monitoring and evaluation at the start of the Programmes. For the current Programmes a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan (ratified by the MC), and all Commission guidance, will be distributed to all parties involved in monitoring and evaluation.