



**Multi-Annual Evaluation Plan
for the
Romania - Bulgaria
Cross-Border Cooperation Programme
2007 - 2013**



Section I: Introduction

1. OP Context

a) Overall objective of the programme

“To bring together the people, communities and economies of the Romania-Bulgaria border area to participate in the joint development of a cooperative area, using its human, natural and environmental resources and advantages in a sustainable way.”

b) Eligible area

The eligible areas (NUTS III regions) - 16 counties/districts:

- *Romania*: the counties of Mehedinti, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Calarasi and Constanta
- *Bulgaria*: the districts of Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Ruse, Dobrich and Silistra; Razgrad (the latter under the 20% flexibility rate provided by Art 21(1) of the ERDF Regulation).

c) Programme budget

| | Community Funding (a) | National Public funding (b) | National private funding (c) | Total funding (d) = (a)+(b)+ (c) | Co-financing rate (e) = (a)/(a+b) |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Total (euro) | 217,823,757 | 42,611,452 | 1,568,332 | 262,003,541 | 83.14 % |

d) Priority axes

1. Accessibility - Improved mobility and access to transport, information and communication infrastructure in the cross-border area
2. Environment - Sustainable use and protection of natural resources and environment and promotion of efficient risk management in the cross-border area
3. Economic and Social Development - Economic development and social cohesion by joint identification and enhancement of the area's comparative advantages
4. Technical Assistance

2. Regulatory Context

The Regulations governing the Structural and Cohesion Funds for 2007-2013 programming period introduce, for the first time, the concept of an evaluation plan. Specifically, Art 48(1) of the Council Regulation (8216/06) provides that the Member States:

“... may also draw up, where appropriate, under the Convergence objective, in accordance with the principle of proportionality set out in Article 13, an evaluation plan presenting the indicative evaluation activities which the Member State intends to carry out in the different phases of the implementation”.

According to the Commission Guidance Paper on ongoing evaluation: **“the establishment of an evaluation plan is recommended not only under the Convergence Objective (as referred to in Article 48[1]) but also under the Regional competitiveness and employment objective and the European territorial co-operation objective**, taking into account the proportionality principle (Article 13)”.

Even though it is not mandatory, the drawing up of such Evaluation Plan represents good practice in evaluation management. The task of organising the evaluation of an operational programme over a seven years period demands a planning instrument to identify evaluation priorities and to ensure that evaluation is integrated into the programme implementation system in an effective manner.

Section II: Co-ordination and Management of the Evaluation Plan

1. Role of multi-annual Plan

This Multi-annual Evaluation Plan has been elaborated by the Evaluation Unit established within the Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing, the Directorate for International Territorial Cooperation, Managing Authority for the Romania - Bulgaria CBC Programme.

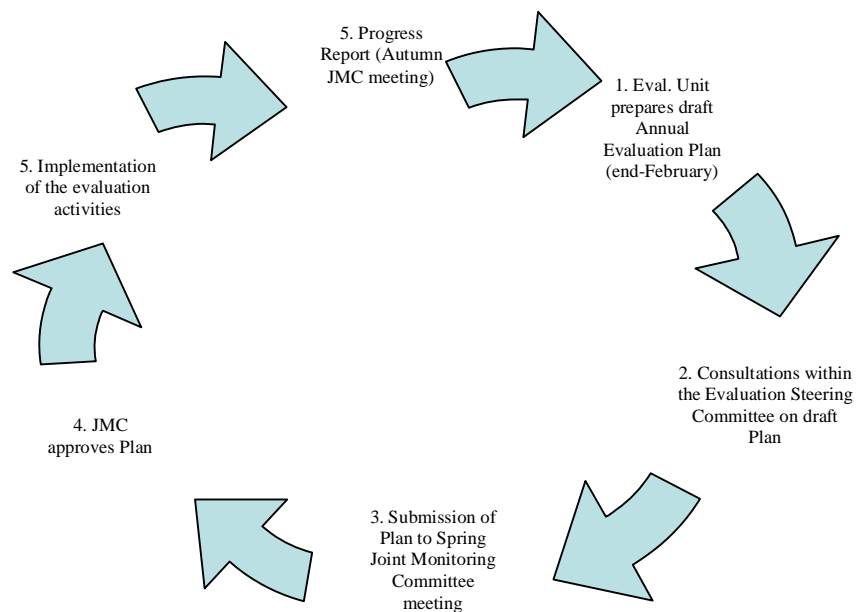
It represents a management tool for the implementation of the programme. It will be included as an annex to the Romanian National Strategic Reference Framework Evaluation Plan.

It sets out an evaluation strategy for the Romania - Bulgaria OP implementation period, with a provisional character, proportionate with the financial allocation. The nature of this multi-annual plan is indicative (given the obvious

difficulty of specifying evaluation priorities so far in advance). Therefore, the effective management of the evaluation process is best organized around a more specific and detailed Annual Evaluation Plan, which will be coordinated with the implementation of the programme TA Priority Axis. For those years where evaluations are foreseen, separate Annual Evaluation Plans shall be drafted and shall be discussed in the Joint Monitoring Committee for approval at the Spring Meeting. The Annual Evaluation Plan shall detail evaluations that the MA intends to carry out that year, whereas the Multi-Annual Evaluation Plan is a forward-looking document, in the sense that it identifies in advance evaluations that the MA intends to carry out in future years.

However, both the Multi-annual Evaluation Plan and the Annual Evaluation Plan will be submitted for approval to the Joint Monitoring Committee.

FLOW OF ANNUAL EVALUATION PLAN ACTIVITIES



2. Role and Functions of Evaluation Unit

According to the Commission working document on ongoing evaluation:

“In undertaking their evaluation tasks, the managing authorities should use, where appropriate, external expertise through evaluation contracts or their own internal evaluation capacity (e.g. evaluation units)”

The most part of the evaluations carried out for the Romania - Bulgaria CBC OP shall be commissioned to external evaluators as per Romanian public procurement guidelines. The Evaluation Unit may carry out additional evaluations, if needed.

Planning for the evaluations that will be carried out by external experts shall commence at least 4-6 months in advance of their intended start date. The first stage in the process will be the drafting of the Terms of Reference, which shall clarify both the scope of the evaluation and the exact evaluation questions that need answering. Once the OP Evaluation Steering Committee has approved the draft ToR, and once funds have been secured in order to finance the evaluation, the tendering process can begin.

The Evaluation Unit contains a full-time expert staff complement of two. The staff of the Evaluation Unit will be partly working for the Romania - Bulgaria Programme and partly for other 3 territorial cooperation programmes.

The responsibilities of the Evaluation Unit experts are:

Current tasks

- representing the Evaluation Unit at meetings of the Evaluation Working Group, and participate in any other evaluation coordination events as organised by the Evaluation Central Unit established within the Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments;
- drafting the OP Multi-Annual Evaluation Plan and Annual Evaluation Plans and submitting them to the OP Joint Monitoring Committee for approval;
- financing of evaluation activities - applying for evaluation projects from the Managing Authority;
- participating in training and evaluation capacity building activities as organised by the Evaluation Central Unit.
- being the key liaison point with major stakeholders for evaluation purposes;
- drafting the evaluation procedure for operational programmes.

Tasks related to the evaluation projects, commissioned externally

- convening the OP Evaluation Steering Committee;
- participating in the Evaluation Steering Committee;
- attending and reporting to meetings of the OP Joint Monitoring Committee;
- commissioning of evaluation contracts, with specific tasks related to:
 - preparing tender documentation, drafting ToRs;
 - convening and participating in the Evaluation Commission for choosing successful tenderers;
 - presenting recommendations to the Evaluation Commission on the basis of the tenders received, and;
 - liaising on contracting procedures with the Managing Authority;
- once contracted, **monitoring and supervising the activities undertaken during the evaluation exercise**, through a process of:
 - organising the meetings of key stakeholders and the evaluators;
 - liaising with all evaluators contracted to provide evaluation services;
 - facilitating suitable levels of access for consultants to key stakeholders during the course of their evaluation work;
 - ensuring proper access for evaluators to all relevant monitoring and other data.
 - manage the Unit repository, which should hold all relevant evaluation materials
- **quality controlling** all evaluation reports submitted to the Evaluation Unit under the terms of an evaluation contract, through a process of:
 - endorsing inception reports, where produced, and submitting them to the the Evaluation Steering Committee for approval;
 - ensuring evaluators meet deadlines for report submissions;

- commenting on draft reports;
- assessing and grading draft and final evaluation reports.

Tasks related to the evaluations carried out internally

- Drafting the Evaluation scope and timing and submitting them to the Evaluation Steering Committee for consultation and endorsement;
- Carrying out the evaluations. In this respect, the Evaluation Unit will:
 - undertake activities to support the evaluation project (collection of relevant data, including desk research, consultations with relevant stakeholders within the evaluation scope, etc.)
 - draw up draft evaluation reports (following the above point) and submit them to the Evaluation Steering Committee;
 - draw up final evaluation report;
 - submit the evaluation reports to the Evaluation Steering Committee for consideration

Dissemination of evaluation findings

- Disseminating evaluation reports to all key stakeholders;
- Tracking progress on implementation of evaluation recommendations, through setting a schedule for implementing authorities to report on implementation progress.

3. Evaluation Steering Committees

An OP Evaluation Steering Committee will oversee implementation of this Plan. The Steering Committee shall convene for each evaluation exercise. The core membership of the Committee will remain the same for the duration of its existence, and will include:

- The Head of the OP Managing Authority (or his or her designate);
- A representative of the Programme National Authority from Bulgaria
- The Evaluation Unit;
- A representative from DG Regio;

- A representative of the Evaluation Central Unit;

Additional members shall be invited onto the Committee for each evaluation as the MA decides, based on the partnership principle. The Managing Authority could also invite independent sectoral experts on to the Steering Committee for evaluations of Priority Axes or Key Areas of Intervention of a technical nature.

4. Utilisation of Evaluations (publication and availability of evaluation reports, presentation and distribution of results, monitoring the use of recommendations)

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

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

Evaluation reports should be distributed to:

- the OP Joint Monitoring Committee;
- the Programme National Authority from Bulgaria
- DG Regio;
- other units of the Managing Authority;
- the Joint Technical Secretariat;
- the Evaluation Central Unit.

As concerns the availability for the public of the evaluation results, **the evaluation reports will be published on the website of the OP.**

Section III: Indicative Evaluation Activities

Interim evaluations

The OP will be subject to two interim evaluations, one in 2009 and one in 2012. Their aim is to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance and the strategy and implementation of the OP. They will analyse problems that occur during the implementation and propose solutions to improve the operation of the system. The first interim evaluation will examine progress to date in implementing the programme and will focus primarily on issues such as programme management and system functioning. The 2012 evaluation will examine the implementation of the OP, of a broader nature, against the traditional criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability. It will look towards the following programming period with a view to identifying priorities for funding on the basis of the experiences of implementation of the OP.

The interim evaluations will also focus on assessing the significant effects of the projects, financed under the programme, on the relevant environmental objectives established at EU level or national level.

These evaluations will be commissioned to external experts.

Ad-hoc evaluations

Ad-hoc evaluations will be carried out where programme monitoring reveals a significant departure from the goals initially set **(this will be the case when more than half of the indicators of a priority axis are over 30% below target)**, or where proposals are made for the revision of the Programme.

Ad-hoc evaluations will address issues regarding the entire Programme or one or several Priority Axes or Key Areas of Intervention.

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

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

Capacity Building and Other Activities

Besides the activities already mentioned under Section II of this Multi Annual Evaluation Plan, the Evaluation Unit should be involved in following activities:

- Participation in training and other capacity-building activities organised by the Evaluation Central Unit

- Work in developing and refining indicators for the OP