MINUTES

Welcome and opening remarks

Yiannis Firbas, from the Hellenic Ministry for Development welcomed the participants of the joint meeting of REGIO Evaluation Network and ESF Evaluation Partnership. On behalf of the Commission, Veronica Gaffey (REGIO) thanked the Hellenic authorities for inviting both networks to Athens and presented the agenda for the day.

Morning Session: Specific objectives / Intervention logic, Performance Frameworks

The session started with a presentation by Kai Stryczynski (REGIO) on the experience so far in the draft operational programmes submitted by the Member States. He focused on some first examples of programmes, where the link of specific objectives with result indicators and actions was missing. He stressed that, while the first version of the programmes is very often rejected, the subsequent versions tend to show progress and take into consideration the observations made.

Showcasing the practical side of designing operational programmes and going through the informal negotiations, Andrew Winter from the Department for Enterprise, Trade & Investment in Northern Ireland presented their experience with the new intervention logic. The initial approach – business as usual – resulted in a multitude of activities with resources thinly spread throughout the programme which would lead to questionable impact. In order to conform to the new requirements, difficult decisions had to be made, including a detailed analysis of the needs, a further prioritisation (dropping several activities) and finally a public consultation. This encouraged a more pro-active involvement from all stakeholders, and the overall reception was positive. All involved in the process in Northern Ireland welcomed the process of setting clear and ambitious objectives.

K. Valica (EMPL) also intervened, and presented first comments on the ESF OPs submitted (text to be completed by EMPL).

In discussion, several points were raised:

- In the case of multi-fund programmes, closer cooperation among stakeholders will be required and a greater effort for overseeing delivery and implementation.
- The challenge in 2014-2020 is the change in approach as regards programming. In place of expressing an objective as vaguely as possible to allow for full flexibility,
programmes now have to be specific: what is the change envisaged? What is the objective that reflects this?

- Actions relating to one specific objective should follow a similar description, so that there is a logical link among objectives – results – actions.

Veronica Gaffey introduced the point on the Performance Frameworks. She shared her reflections on the progress made on the versions received to date. MS are asked to provide background information as they develop the performance frameworks, as this will be requested by the Commission services:

- Calculation for output indicators covering at least 50% of expenditure
- Basis for setting milestones / targets (% of target must not be used as milestone value)
- Ex ante evaluator should comment on appropriateness of indicators / milestones.

Following this introduction, two further presentations were made with practical examples. Patty Simou (REGIO) presented the state of play with regard to the Guidance on performance frameworks, now published on Inforegio site (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/guidance_performance_framework.pdf) and the adoption of the delegated act on setting the level of financial corrections (in force as of 14.05.14). She went on to present examples of performance frameworks already received, focusing on the links between milestones and targets as well as key implementation steps and milestones.

E. Meletiou (EMPL) also intervened with a presentation on the differentiations as regards the requirements set out for the ESF (text to be completed by EMPL).

In discussion, several points were raised:

- There is no requirement for a specific format in which to present the information on the performance framework. It can be one document for all OPs, but within OPs a split by priority axis / type of region is required.
- Similarly, it is up to the MA to decide on the administrative body that will ensure consistency across performance frameworks
- Key implementation steps must complement output indicators and refer to the same actions as the output indicators

Afternoon Session: Evaluation plans / Impact evaluation / 2007-2013 ex post evaluation

The first part of the session was devoted to the preparation of evaluation plans, in particular from the Member State's perspective. Dr. Oliver Schwab from Institut für Stadt­forschung und Strukturpolitik (IfS) in Germany explained the structure the evaluation plan takes in the case of the Berlin ERDF OP. Starting from the intervention logic the process for developing the corresponding evaluation plan started already in 2012, with a draft strategy outline together with concrete proposals for implementation. A consultation on the draft programme structure provided the first steps towards clear definition of objectives and result indicators. The plan is now at the final stage of completion, in terms of:

- Defining the concrete evaluation questions
- Selecting the focus for the studies
- Defining data sources
- Determining methods for evaluation
- Verifying processes of evaluation and discussion of results

Also with regard to arrangements for the evaluations, two further presentations were made: Bruce Byrne from the England ESF evaluation team, UK, presented the state of play of the relevant evaluation plan and Michal Sulkowski and Tomasz Kot from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development, Poland presented the experience so far as well as the challenges ahead for the evaluation plans for 2014-2020 in Poland (text to be completed by EMPL).

In the second part of the session a presentation was made with regard to impact evaluation from Paolo Paurolo from the Joint Research Centre (CRIE) (text to be completed by EMPL).

The afternoon session came to a conclusion with presentations on the state of play of both the ERDF/CF and the ESF 2007-2013 ex post evaluation.

**Closing Remarks**

**Santiago Loranca Garcia** (EMPL) closed the meeting with summaries of the morning and afternoon sessions. The day had been rich and provided a great source of inspiration. He thanked the members of both networks for their active participation in the meeting and the Hellenic authorities for hosting the event.