Minutes
Meeting of the Evaluation Network meeting with the Member States
Brussels, 27 April 2017

1. Introduction by Eric Von Breska, Policy Director of DG REGIO

In his introduction to the network meeting, E. von Breska highlighted the role of evaluation in the current programming period, but also informed participants of the first ideas with regard to Cohesion Policy in the period post-2020. In the discussion that ensued, Member States welcomed the idea of already reflecting on this issue, maintaining the good features of the current system while also leaving room for further improvement in it, so as to make it more understandable not only for the policy makers but also for the citizens.

2. Opening remarks: Approval of the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting

Agenda approved.

Approval of the minutes of previous meeting: Delegations were asked to send their comments by the end of the week.

3. Open Data Platform

John Walsh gave a presentation about the last developments of the platform, focusing on the different sections of the Catalogue where all the complete datasets are stored.

Clarifications:

- the financial information is refreshed on a daily basis.
- In July, new visualisations will be added.
- End of 2017, information on Major Projects and time series (AIR 2017) will be added.

REGIO.B2 has a new Twitter account - @RegioEvaluation – and would like the MS Evaluation units to be a key partner communicator, as well as providing feedback to the improvement of the services and include datasets they can provide.

In the discussion that ensued, the following points were made:

- Agricultural information (the graphs show selected figures but not spent values): This is due to a difference in the reporting system of AGRI. For the next refresh, the information will be different because they have changed the way of reporting.

- Information from 2007-2013 into the Open Data Platform: some data sets are already included in the catalogue but the visualisations will be exclusively for the current period.

4. Exploratory Work on Common Indicators

Unit B2 is conducting the discussion with the other ESIF DGs to understand all indicator systems’ logic and the possibility to create a single or harmonized system of indicators. For the moment there is no
The policy guideline for such a change, but there is discussion inside the EC that reflects this possibility. The idea behind the launch of these talks is to prepare and to have the time to discuss with all stakeholders, and mainly the evaluation network.

In the previous discussions, a conclusion was reached in terms of the main types of indicators:

- **Policy Result Indicators:** The intended outcome in terms of economic and societal challenges addressed by the policy interventions. Exploratory work on the identification of common policy indicators.
- **Direct Result Indicators:** The immediate results linked to interventions. Exploratory work for the feasibility of common direct result indicators.
- **Output Indicators:** Specific deliverables of the policy interventions. Exploratory work for refinement and wider coverage (although not 100%).

In the discussion that ensued, some of the points raised by MS experts were the following:

- A discussion should be held on the intervention logic of each fund and their definitions. Some of the direct result indicators are hidden in some common indicators. For Output indicator it would be better to select a core of common indicators in which MS can provide reliable and comparable data.
- It may be necessary for ERDF to define the target group for the direct result indicators (as in the ESF).
- Even though it would be a good improvement to harmonise indicators, it is important to understand that it may prove to be expensive and might increase the burden on MS.
- It will be necessary to have clear definitions of all concepts and make sure that the statistical systems are able to deliver the right data.
- The time lag between the implementation of the policy, the result and the data on this should be taken into consideration.

Mariana Hristcheva closed the discussion explaining the context in which this initiative was created. The Commission has received a strong message from different stakeholders, including MS and the ECA, that huge differences in this area exist and that there is a need to streamline and harmonise the indicator systems used to monitor and assess EU policies in the context of the post-2020 MFF.

**5. Performance Framework**

Performance framework is about implementing the programme efficiently and the way it has been planned. Jan Marek Ziolkowski presented a brief overview of recent developments with regard to the performance framework, including state of play on amendments to the performance frameworks.

In the discussion that ensued, the main topic was whether reporting of outputs in relation to operations, which have not been implemented in full, is possible for the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. Mariana Hristcheva informed the participants that several delegations had already flagged this point and that the Commission has started discussing it with other services and the Legal Unit. The CPR does not prevent the MS from reporting on outputs delivered by operations, which have not been implemented in full, but the model of the implementing report, defined in the separate
implementing regulation, specifically mentions operations implemented in full. In this context, the Commission intends to present a proposal for amending the relevant implementing acts to include reporting on partial operations with a view of having those in force in 2018.


- **Closure Report**: the information was received in due time and some preliminary analysis is already carried out. This is a crucial element to give the complete picture of what the policy has accomplished in 2007-2013. 90% of the figures are plausible but there are still some indicators that show inconsistent values because of possible clerical errors, use of measurement units, etc.
- **Evaluation Plans**: all the plans are expected by the end of the year.
- **Activities during 2017**:
  - Summer School, 21-23 June, Athens: The summer school will focus in theory-based evaluation and the process involved in carrying them out. The objective is to enhance the capacity to manage this kind of evaluations.
  - **Peer reviews evaluations – Next steps**: The primary goal of the Helpdesk is to improve evaluations carry out on cohesion policy programmes. In this sense, it provides expert support and undertakes peer reviews to identify strengths and weaknesses and ways of improvement. The purpose is to encourage managing authorities to undertake good quality evaluations and to demonstrate how to do so.
  
  Next steps: To open up peer review meetings to MAs and to involve evaluators so that they can learn directly from the experts’ comments and advice.

7. Quality of Information: Regionalisation of payments

Daniele Vidoni presented the initiative of B2 to create a database to offer information on regionalisation of payment information. This includes 2 projects:

- Establishment of consolidated financial data 1989-2013: development of the dataset with the information coming from payments. Problem: time lag between the project was implemented and the moment of payment.

8. Exchange of Information

REGIO.B2 planned activities (M. Hristcheva)

- 2 evaluation projects
  - Ex-post evaluation on Major Projects
Ex-post evaluation EU Solidarity Fund (link to the roadmap: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2017-1996296_en)

**MS**

- **HU:**
  - 19-20th Oct 2017 Evaluation –Monitoring Conference in cooperation with EC
  - 5th May – Closure of previous periods (N. Popens will participate+DG EMPL) (web streamed).

- **CZ:**
  - Late November - Annual Evaluation Conference
  - In the process of designing the ToRs for the 2007-2013 ex-post evaluation

- **LT:**

- **PL:**
  - 21-22th June 2017 International Conference

**Closing:**

The next evaluation network meeting is foreseen for September 2017.