

Minutes of the expert groups

Porto, 17/09/2021

Minutes

Evaluation Network meeting with MS
DG REGIO
17/09/2021, Alfandega Congress Centre, Porto, Portugal

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The Deputy Head of Unit, REGIO B2, presented the agenda of the meeting. The meeting aimed at collecting feedback from the 9th Conference on the Evaluation of EU Cohesion Policy, held on 16-17 September in Porto, Portugal; updating EvalNet members on the Commission's work on the Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation for 2021-2027; collecting information on the progress of the evaluation activities in the Member States.

Evaluation Network members were informed that the minutes of the meeting of 1 July 2021 were uploaded on CIRCABC for feedback. No comments were received on the minutes.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was organised for members of the Evaluation Network as a follow-up to the 9th Conference on the Evaluation of Cohesion policy.

3. Evaluation Help Desk Summer School

Mr. Terry Ward (Evaluation HelpDesk) updated EvalNet members on the programme for the Evaluation Summer School that would be held on 7 and 8th of October in Tallinn, in-person.

The Summer School would focus on two themes:

- Evaluation design, with focus on the ex-post evaluations to be carried out on 14-20 programmes: drafting Terms of Reference; identification of the scope of the evaluation, structure and timing; evaluation questions; stakeholders involvement; definition of the theory of change; definition of the approach, method and data to be used; budgetary considerations.
- Evaluation plans to be prepared for the 2021-2027 programming period: lessons learned from 2014-2020 programming period; identification of priority areas and measures to evaluate; stakeholders involvement; evaluation strategy.

Q&A

PT, MT, AT asked whether it would be possible to participate online, stressing that it would be important in view of possible travel restrictions. Mr. Ward and REGIO B.2 ensured that measures would be taken to make the Summer School available to as many EvalNet members as possible, while regretting the scarcity of interaction with remote participants.

FR asked whether the Summer School would focus on ERDF only or on ESF evaluations, too. Mr Ward answered that, while designed with ERDF in mind, the topics treated would be applicable to ESF evaluations, too.

4. First reactions / Conference wrap up and EC ex-post evaluation strategy for 2014-2020

REGIO B2 asked EvalNet members to give feedback on the topics discussed during the conference, notably on the evaluation strategy for the Commission ex-post evaluation of 2014-2020 ERDF and CF investments presented during the second day of the conference.

MT expressed interest in being kept up to date with the ex-post findings in light of possible implications for the 2021-27 mid-term review and reprogramming in the Member States. REGIO B2 confirmed that EvalNet members will be kept up to date with the findings of the various work packages. There will also be extended stakeholders events to discuss findings, where all concerned MAs and stakeholders will be invited to participate.

PT expressed concern about the data collection for work package 2, as PT MAs are receiving questions on the monitoring system and on data collection practices, which fall under the competence of the National coordination institution. The PT national coordination institution asked to be kept up to date and involved in these queries. REGIO B2 thanked PT for the feedback and ensured that there would be a follow-up with the contractor managing the data collection to pass it on. In the next EvalNet meeting, colleagues managing each work package will be introduced, so that EvalNet members will know who to contact for any such issue for each WP.

FR asked for details on the “Effects of Funding and Context” work package. REGIO B2 specified that this will be an internal WP consisting of macroeconomic modelling.

ES asked whether the slides using during the Conference will be published, and whether the Commission expects that MS will carry out an impact evaluation by the mid-term review. REGIO B2 confirmed that all slides and videos would be made available on the [Conference website](#). REGIO B2 members stressed that there is no requirement to carry out an impact evaluation by the mid-term review.

PT and FR inquired about the requirement to evaluate REACT-EU, what kind of evaluation the Commission expects to be carried out, and whether they can be carried out at national level. REGIO B2 stressed that the Commission understands that it is difficult to carry out an impact evaluation with such a short deadline. For this reason, the Commission is going to have a separate WP in the ex-post evaluation of 2014-2020 on REACT-EU, that will be commissioned later on in time and will try to build on the findings of MS evaluations. REGIO B2 would expect that Member States’ evaluations on REACT-EU take stock of what was delivered, trying to bring evidence but also reflecting the fact that measures take time to deliver. There is no requirement to carry out the evaluation at programme level, so MS are free to organise their evaluation work as they see fit.

5. SWD on performance, monitoring and evaluation 2021-2027 indicator fiches

The B2 Team leader for monitoring presented B2's work on the Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation and on the 2021-2027 indicator fiches annexed to the document ([link](#)). In the fiches, EvalNet members and Managing Authorities can find a definition of all cohesion policy common indicators. The indicator metadata is also published on the Open Data Platform ([link](#)), where it can be downloaded in electronic format.

In SFC, MAs will find the short name of the indicators, with the most relevant indicators being listed first under each Specific Objective. ESF+ indicators that can be used for the Just Transition Fund will also be included in the indicator metadata and in SFC after a *corrigendum* of the legislation, as ESF+ indicators will be available under JTF priorities. The Staff Working Document was also uploaded on the SFC2021 platform ([link](#)).

Unit B2 stressed that the biggest challenge will be to encourage a wide use of the common indicators. REGIO B2 hopes EvalNet members can be a relay in their Member States to encourage programmes to use the indicators and to explain how they should be used. Upon receipt of draft programmes, REGIO Geographical Units will be looking for a methodological document detailing the basis for the choice of indicators and target setting. It is important that this document is clear and contains all necessary information.

6. Evaluation activities and news from the Member States

REGIO B.2 asked Evaluation Network members to share updates on the evaluation activities in their Member States.

FR, PT and AT reported having intense discussions about the evaluation of the “Do Not Significant Harm” (DNSH) principle. Some Member States understood they have to use the methodology given in the RRF guidance for each Specific Objective. REGIO B.2 specified that the methodology proposed by RRF can be a guide but should not be followed strictly, as it is designed to be used at project level. The SO-level approach seems appropriate.

ES reported that they are at the beginning stages of three ex-post evaluations.

MT reported one ongoing evaluation of TO3, with separate assessment of repayable and non-repayable instruments; upcoming evaluations will concern ESF. The MT evaluation plan will need to be revised in light of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. on tourism).

HU reported the recent launch of the tender for ex-post evaluation. Evaluation activities will last until the end of 2023, to include an analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

PT reported the launch of an online open data portal, on the website [Mais Transparência](#). The portal includes information at project level on EU-funded and national projects, inspired by the Open Coesione website used by Italian colleagues.

7. Conclusions

B2 thanked Evaluation Network members for participating to the Conference in Portugal and stressed the importance of in-person meetings for fruitful cooperation.

8. List of participants

This meeting of the Evaluation Network in Porto was attended by 14 governmental experts from 10 Member States, one external expert from the Evaluation Helpdesk contractor APPLICA and 11 REGIO Unit B2 colleagues.