



MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE JASPERS INITIATIVE IN 2014-2020

Appendix E: Seminar Report

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JASPERS INITIATIVE
IN 2014-2020**

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ABBREVIATION LIST

CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG ECFIN	Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG MOVE	Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
IQR	Independent Quality Review
JASPERS	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions
MA	Managing Authority
PSA	Post-Submission Appraisal

E.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the “Mid-term evaluation of the JASPERS initiative in 2014-2020”, a seminar took place at the DG REGIO premises in Brussels on 19 of September 2019 with the goal to present the evaluation’s interim findings and in order to collect feedback and insights from stakeholders. The outcome of the seminar will be used to deepen the analysis and findings of the study and understand the policy implications.

This report illustrates the results of the seminar and follows its structure, with a first part focused on “**Interim findings from the Mid-term evaluation**” and a second one on “**Future perspectives**”. In the first part, which was organised and chaired by the evaluation team, presentations were delivered by the evaluators, by Member States and by JASPERS on three different types of JASPERS activities (Technical Advisory support; Appraisal; Capacity building and Horizontal/Strategy support). For each type of activity, a debate took place with the present stakeholders (especially Member States) based on open questions (which had been agreed upon by the evaluation team and DG REGIO and sent to the attendees in advance as part of a seminar background paper).

The second part of the seminar was coordinated by DG REGIO services and was aimed to present and discuss the options for the post-2020 period. After an illustration by DG REGIO and JASPERS of perspectives for the post-2020 programming period, the debate was open to the Member States, with the aim to collect information on their needs for JASPERS support as well as feedback on the proposed innovations.

The following presentations were delivered during the seminar’s first part:

- **Introduction**
 - **Presentation 1:** Brief presentation of the objectives of the evaluation (Bettina Rafaelsen, COWI)
 - **Presentation 2:** Brief presentation of the aim of the seminar (Silvia Vignetti, CSIL)
- **First session: JASPERS advisory function**
 - **Presentation 3:** Evaluation findings (Adriana Iliescu, COWI)
 - **Presentation 4:** Presentation of case histories by beneficiary country (Catalin Balan, General Director, Managing Authority for Large Infrastructure Operational Programme 2014-2020 - Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds, Romania)
 - **Presentation 5:** Advisory Support (Alan Lynch, Head of RAM Division, JASPERS)
- **Second session: JASPERS review function**
 - **Presentation 6:** Evaluation findings (Tamas Kiss-Galfalvi, Ecorys)
 - **Presentation 7:** Presentation of case histories by beneficiary country (Monika Stopa, Managing Authority OP Infrastructure and Environment - Ministry of Investment and Economic Development, Poland)
 - **Presentation 8:** JASPERS review function (Luis Hebrero, Head of the Independent Quality Review Division, JASPERS)

• **Third session: JASPERS networking and capacity building activities**

- **Presentation 9:** Evaluation findings (Matteo Pedralli, CSIL)
- **Presentation 10:** Presentation of case histories by beneficiary country (Natalija Šimunović, Head of service, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Croatia)
- **Presentation 11:** Capacity Building and Horizontal Assignments (Ismini Kyriazopoulou, Head of the Networking and Competence Centre Division, JASPERS)

The following presentations were delivered during the seminar's second part:

- **Presentation 12:** REGIO concept for JASPERS 2021+ (Erich Unterwurzacher, Director, Directorate F, DG REGIO)
- **Presentation 13:** JASPERS' offer 2021+ (Antonio Almagro, Director, JASPERS)

Considering that participants could attend either both sessions of the seminar or only the morning or afternoon session, a total of nearly 80 participants took part in the seminar during the entire day. Most of them were Managing Authorities (34) or Project beneficiaries (9) representing a total of 16 Member States. A number of JASPERS experts (13) and European Commission Officials (around 20) also contributed to the discussion during the morning and the afternoon session. The latter were mainly from DG REGIO, but also DG ECFIN, DG ENV, DG CLIMA and DG MOVE were represented. Finally, the evaluation team was composed of a total of 9 experts from the different organisations composing the international consortium responsible for the mid-term evaluation of JASPERS initiative 2014-2020: COWI, the Centre for Industrial Studies (CSIL) and Ecorys.

The agenda of the event, additional information on the list of countries and organisations of participants and the seminar background paper (providing more information about the evaluation study) are attached in Annexes 1-2.

E.2 FIRST PART – INTERIM FINDINGS FROM THE MID-TERM EVALUATION

E.2.1 Opening remarks

The seminar opened with a welcoming address by Mariana Hristcheva (Head of Unit, Evaluation and European Semester, DG REGIO) that pointed out the seminar's objective was to enrich the discussion stemming from interim findings with the experiences of the attendees, in order to learn lessons for the future.

The evaluation team introduced the consortium and the seminar's chairman, Professor Massimo Florio. The first presentations illustrated the study's methodology and approach and provided an overview of the different evaluation tasks with a particular focus on Task 4 (Consultation activities), which foresees both an online targeted consultation and the seminar itself. After inviting the audience to take part in the ongoing online consultation, the team presented the seminar's structure and the two guiding questions for the seminar's first part: "What are the good practices and key challenges of JASPERS functions? What is the added value of JASPERS compared to other services?". In addition, it was noted that for the whole seminar, presentations by the evaluation team were based on the analysis performed on JASPERS' assignment portfolio (under Task 2) and on a sample of 90 assignments analysed in depth (Task 3).

E.2.2 Session 1 – Advisory function

Presentation by the evaluation team

The evaluation team opened the first session on JASPERS' advisory function with a presentation of interim evaluation findings. After offering an overview of JASPERS assignments under the advisory function, it was noted that JASPERS intervenes early in the project cycle (feasibility and pre-feasibility stages) in a majority of cases, which is crucial for its support to be effective. Among the main effects generated by JASPERS support, the presentation singled out the contribution to compliance to EU rules and improvements in project design and scope. The findings on the types of effect relied on evidence collected through documentary analysis and were triangulated with findings emerging from consultation of stakeholders in interviews.

JASPERS assistance to Major and non-Major Projects was found to be comprehensive and conducive to better project documentation. The interim findings from the analysis of databases (DG REGIO) also suggest no significant effect of JASPERS on the timeline of approval but the picture is more nuanced when it comes to the views of stakeholders that most often assess JASPERS had an effect on the timeline of projects. In addition, financial cost-savings (identified based on documentary analysis) were found only in a minority of analysed assignments, corresponding to 25% of the assignments that could deliver cost savings. In conclusion, JASPERS' technical and cross-country expertise as well as its independence were identified as key factors ensuring the added value of Technical Advisory assignments.

Presentation by Member State (Romania)

The perspective of a Member State on JASPERS' advisory function was then presented by the Managing Authority (MA) of the Romanian Large International Projects Operational Programme. Overall, a positive assessment of JASPERS support emerged, especially as concerns improve-

ments in the quality of project documentation and in shaping policy makers' strategic considerations in the transport and energy sectors. In line with the evaluation's interim findings, JASPERS services were deemed most effective when provided at an early stage in the project cycle.

However, some challenges were singled out by the Member State's presentation. In particular, instances of resistance to JASPERS recommendations (at both political and administrative level) were reported, as well as differences in opinion between JASPERS Advisory function and JASPERS Appraisal function, which did not benefit the supported projects (this happened particularly in one specific case, indicated however as not necessarily representative of the JASPERS experience in the country). JASPERS is recognised as an authoritative third party which can facilitate local authorities in the dialogue with the political layer, thus, in the opinion of the MA, it should be possible for JASPERS to stop a project if there are adequate reasons to question its technical and economic feasibility.

Presentation by JASPERS

Welcoming the effort to evaluate its services, JASPERS recalled the internal development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), adopted in order to monitor its performance as part of the process for Quality Management. On administratively closed assignments¹, mentioned as possible indicator of low effectiveness and efficiency, it was pointed out that they are the reflection of the push to focus efforts where this can add value: when it is recognised that projects cannot add value (either because the project is already sound enough and cannot be improved or the counterparts realises that the project is no longer a priority), the assignments are closed. A point was also made on the cost saving issue stressing how, despite a lot of challenges in assessing them in a solid way, in their assessment from 2019, JASPERS reported 320 million Euro of cost savings (verified with the counterparts).

On Technical Advisory Support, JASPERS expressed agreement over the fact that its service adds most value at an early phase in the project cycle, especially in strategic planning and in the preparation of a pipeline of investments. Success factors of Technical Advisory assignments include direct and indirect capacity building, geographical proximity to national counterparts, and continuity of support. Over time, JASPERS has experienced how crucial ownership is (in terms of Member State's responsibility for the projects). Further, ensuring that the Commission is constantly updated on the steps taken enables the development of trust among all parties, within a system of cooperation called "tripartite engagement" (i.e. involving JASPERS, the Member State and the Commission). Finally, in recent years technological innovations as well as cross-sectoral challenges (e.g. the need to meet Paris Agreement targets) have increased the need for a tailor-made and solution-oriented approach to Technical Advisory assignments (e.g. in urban mobility), requiring the combination of different sectoral competences in both strategy and project preparation.

Open debate

The open debate with stakeholders from the Member States highlighted several positive elements of JASPERS advisory support: large hands-on experience, smooth cooperation, facilitation in the relation of the Member State or beneficiary with the Commission, capacity building role, independence, and focus on quality (regarded as instrumental for countering politically-driven projects). Small-sized Member States (such as Malta and Slovenia) highlighted that JASPERS has successfully bridged gaps in their administrative capacities. Due to these countries' limited size

¹ The administrative closure is the withdrawal of an action without the objectives of the action being met (i.e. the assignment cannot be deemed as completed).

and the restricted number of projects, they do not view the development of internal competences for tasks performed only rarely as an efficient solution. In addition, in smaller countries non-major projects are often a major share of the overall project portfolio.

On the cost-savings issue, it was noted by one national representative from Romania that not only downscaling of projects resulting in cost decrease are to be taken into account as effect of JASPERS support but other aspects of project preparation are also important, for example approval time. If in one project the cost is reduced but the approval time is increased (as it happened in one reported example), it may be less straightforward to assess the net effect. Another representative (from Malta) also mentioned that optimisation might not mean lower investment costs but it is still a relevant achievement in terms of project quality.

Clarifications on the approval process and interruption letter was provided by DG REGIO – Major Projects team, by stating that interruptions are issued only when there are strong concerns based on the application form. Approval time depends also on how responsive Member States are in addressing the critical issues raised in the interruption letters, as usually Member States have two months to address the critical issues raised but in practice it may take longer.

The establishment of a strong relationship between JASPERS and the authorities of the Member State was identified as a key driver, since continuity in support generates efficiency, as well as synergies in combining strategy preparation with a strong project pipeline. Moreover, tripartite coordination was mentioned by a Greek representative as a very useful way to interact with JASPERS and the EC services when needed being JASPERS only an aspect of a wider institutional design.

Large consensus was found over the importance of involving JASPERS at an early phase in the project cycle and, more generally, on the need for a continuation of JASPERS advisory function. For the future, the need to expand the sectors covered by JASPERS beyond its traditional fields of activity was voiced. In addition, JASPERS support on enabling conditions² for the next programming period would be welcomed by Member States.

E.2.3 Session 2 – Appraisal function

Presentation by the evaluation team

The evaluation team's presentation on JASPERS' appraisal function provided an overview of IQR and PSA assignments, presenting their different rationales and objectives (e.g. while the clients of IQR services are Member States, the client in the PSA service is the Commission). Their geographical distribution among Member States shows that, while IQR assignments are evenly performed in different Member States, PSA shows a certain imbalance with Poland in particular showing a high number of PSAs as compared to other countries (which partially also reflects the fact that Poland has the highest number of Major Projects among the Member States).

The added value of appraisal assignments in general was identified in the perception of a "seal of quality" for projects followed by JASPERS, as well as in the fact that JASPERS ensures consistency in the approach (particularly in comparison with alternative schemes used in the past such as framework contracts with different private contractors for the delivery of this activity). The added

² Ex-ante conditionalities have been introduced in 2014-2020 cohesion policy. These are necessary conditions for the effective and efficient use of ESI Funds, whose implementation Member States need to ensure (e.g. linked to policy and strategic frameworks, or institutional capacity). Under the name of "enabling conditions", new requirements have been proposed for the next programming period as well.

value of PSA services in particular was identified instead in the quality standardisation and comparability ensured by JASPERS and the effective identification of critical issues within Major Project applications. In the evaluation's sample of assignments analysed in depth, projects appraised by JASPERS through IQR later experience a smooth approval phase. During appraisal, areas JASPERS typically asks clarifications on include the project description, the CBA and the option analysis.

Presentation by Member State (Poland)

The contribution of a Member State was offered by a MA from Poland, i.e. the Member State having the highest number of Major Projects and the widest experience with appraisal services. The presentation, which focused on IQR, underlined how an initial scepticism towards IQR was gradually replaced by satisfaction as its benefits (in terms of reduction of interruption letters as compared to the Article 102.2 procedure with direct submission of documentation to the European Commission) became apparent. The delivery of this service by JASPERS experienced a learning trajectory, in particular as regards certification of expenditures (which was not possible before 2018 for projects submitted through Article 102.1 procedure with IQR, but is now allowed after the completeness check). On the side of the Member State, experience also showed that involving JASPERS IQR at an early stage in the project preparation ensured a fast approval process. The most common areas of JASPERS IQR's comments reportedly include: CBA, EIA and climate change adaptation, State aid and legal issues, project timetable and indicators.

Presentation by JASPERS

JASPERS' presentation on the appraisal function highlighted that the effort of IQR and PSA services is to focus on the project's essential aspects, i.e. on the feasibility and sustainability in all their components and on potential future risks. The rationale behind these services is to ensure that the Commission is in the position to take a confident decision on a project co-financed by EU funds and that for this purpose consistency between sectors and countries in the appraisal approach is instrumental. JASPERS pointed to its openness to cooperation with Member States, which it views as fundamental for avoiding lack of clarity and ensure transparency. In addition, it singled out an implicit capacity building effect of its services, as well as a positive impact on project quality. Ultimately, the added value of IQR and PSA services was identified by JASPERS in the provision of a smooth and consistent high-quality analysis.

Open debate

During the open debate, a trade off emerged between the necessary alignment among Technical Advisory support and the JASPERS IQR Division on one side and the independence of JASPERS IQR on the other side. In fact, the two JASPERS functions should not dialogue with each other in principle, but at the same time convey the same messages to national authorities and beneficiaries. In the opinion of a national representative from Slovenia, independence should be safeguarded at the decision stage, but cooperation during the process should be allowed.

As regards the choice between IQR and PSA, the preference for PSA before 2018 was mainly driven by the possibility to certificate expenditures even before the formal approval. In terms of preference in the procedure however, some Member States (e.g. Croatia) explained their preference for IQR based on the positive experience in the smooth cooperation with JASPERS IQR and the shorter duration of the process. According to the different views expressed during the open debate, project application submissions through IQR procedure were generally assessed positively by Member States, as they are also characterised by smooth communication and an easy process of submission of documentation.

Overall, involving JASPERS IQR is perceived by some Member States as a must for ensuring a smooth approval by the Commission. Its effectiveness in documentation improvement was particularly acknowledged as a crucial benefit deriving from appraisal assignments.

E.2.4 Session 3 – Capacity building and horizontal/strategy support

Presentation by the evaluation team

The presentation by the evaluation team highlighted the relevance and the effectiveness of JASPERS training events in tackling gaps in administrative capacity at national level and achieving knowledge transfer, based on the analysis of available documentation and the perception of participants, national authorities and beneficiaries. JASPERS workshops and trainings ensure uniformity in the approach and contents across the Member States and generate added value particularly through the train-the-trainer model (which has a considerable local multiplier effect). However, the presentation suggested that standard technical training (e.g. on state aid) could be delivered by specialised service providers or research centres, while higher added value of JASPERS stems from the tailored-made approach and reliance on practical experience on projects.

Horizontal/strategy support assignments, in which JASPERS assists national counterparts in the preparation of strategies and plans, were effective as well in meeting their initial goals. According to the evaluation, such support was tailored to the Member States' specific needs and the administrative burden generated by the cooperation with JASPERS was low. These assignments are the ones with the longest duration (even many years in some cases), but the direct involvement of JASPERS experts is usually not intensive during the period the assignment is open (e.g. because of a supervising role). In this case, JASPERS' uniqueness lies in the provision of support in the upstream phase of strategy development, scoping and prioritisation, since such support would be difficult to find on the market with the same level of flexibility. Similar to Technical Advisory, added value in horizontal/strategy support was reported to stem from JASPERS ensuring coherence with the EU legislative framework, as well as from its wide cross-country experience and independence.

Presentation by Member State (Croatia)

A Croatian Managing Authority presented the country's experience with JASPERS capacity building activities, providing a good example of an increasing maturity in national capacity building systems. In this case, the need for a systematic capacity building approach in the field of regional development and management of EU funds had become apparent after audits from the national State Audit Office and the European Court of Auditors, mainly to cope with a low level of knowledge transfer and capacity building, due also to high staff turnover. Following advice from DG REGIO, JASPERS contributed to a gap analysis and is currently developing a capacity building action plan which will include a comprehensive list of trainings, whose delivery is expected in 2019 and 2020. In terms of topics, national authorities rely on JASPERS particularly for cost-benefit analysis, climate proofing and sustainability assessment. Ultimately, the contribution from the Member State underlined the importance of a constant monitoring and strengthening of administrative capacity. In addition, the presentation shed light on JASPERS' independence as a crucial asset and pointed to the fact that advisory and capacity building services by JASPERS are *de facto* interlinked and mutually dependant.

Presentation by JASPERS

JASPERS itself reminded that capacity building takes place through several channels, among which the most effective is Technical Advisory. In general, JASPERS highlighted its targeting strategy and encouraged the preparation by Member States of own capacity building programmes. For the future, JASPERS sets out a vision of an increased partnership with Member States and a reorientation of capacity building activities in order to tackle emerging needs. Moreover, JASPERS expressed the ambition to increase effectiveness through activities such as train-the-trainers courses and peer learning initiatives, as well as to maintain its strengths, i.e. a low level of administrative burden for national authorities and beneficiaries taking part in the trainings and strong flexibility in adapting to Member States' needs.

Open debate

During the open debate, the Member States expressed a general satisfaction with JASPERS' capacity building activities and horizontal/strategy support. JASPERS' ability to prepare useful tools that facilitate the tasks of national counterparts and become part of their toolkit emerged as a significant advantage, with the example of tools for Environmental Impact Assessment being particularly pointed to by a Romanian representative. As an additional example of the legacy generated by JASPERS' training events, it was mentioned that the chance to gather together all officials from a Member State who work on a same issue in order for them to attend a training by JASPERS has led to long-awaited clarifications on issues that were perceived as controversial (the actual example referred in particular to Spain and the inclusion of requirements related to climate change in all phases of the project cycle). Train-the-trainers courses, according to Member States' experience, were effective in achieving knowledge transfer amongst authorities and experts' motivation was boosted by this approach.

Further, the suggestion emerged for JASPERS to be more proactive and to organise conferences where stakeholders share examples of both good and bad practices, problems and challenges from different projects and countries. On this point, it was noted by a Maltese representative that pro-activeness is to be achieved through an evolution in the partnership between JASPERS and a Member State, whereby within a well-established relation JASPERS is viewed not as an external service, but more as a partner. The attention was also drawn to specific needs of small-sized Member States, which underlined that in light of their low number of Major Projects Technical Assistance can only marginally contribute to capacity building and that therefore guidance by JASPERS is essential. Furthermore, capacity building activities were deemed to be not sufficiently tailored for non-Major Projects (which are proportionally more relevant in small-sized countries).

On horizontal/strategy support, experiences shared by Polish attendees were of a positive tone and referred especially to the support provided with meeting ex-ante conditionalities and to the preparation of traffic models or sustainable urban mobility plans (representing tasks that were performed for the first time in the Member States and that, due to their strategic nature, are not expected to be performed on a frequent basis).

Largely in line with Member States' and JASPERS' comments, the Commission noted that Technical Advisory support by JASPERS is in itself also a form of capacity building and stressed the need for tailoring of all trainings to specific needs.

E.3 SECOND PART – FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The second part of the seminar was focused on the future activities of JASPERS in the post-2020 programming period, taking into account the innovations included in the draft regulation proposed by the Commission³ and particularly the discontinuation of a specific legislative framework for Major Projects. This represented the first chance for Member States to exchange views with DG REGIO services on the needs for post-2020 JASPERS support.

Presentation by DG REGIO

In the opening presentation, DG REGIO illustrated the proposal of a “JASPERS fit for the future”. Under this proposal, JASPERS will be reduced in size but not in scope and, by being embedded in the InvestEU Advisory Hub, it will benefit from cross-fertilisation of sectoral expertise. In terms of sectors covered, the need for JASPERS is questionable in fields where experience has been accumulated by Member States over the years and where external assistance is available, e.g. in the road sector. In line with the 2019-2024 political guidelines of the new European Commission which support a European Green Deal (under which a new Just Transition Fund will accompany the ecological transition of the economy), JASPERS will address the need for assistance in the preparation of green investments in different sectors.

Presentation by JASPERS

According to JASPERS’ presentation, the proposed changes aim to preserve JASPERS’ strengths, including its upstream involvement in strategy and project preparation, its comprehensive approach and its proximity to beneficiaries and national authorities, which facilitates capacity building. Even in the absence of the EC approval of Major Projects, the need for sound projects of high quality remains. In addition, the financing needs will be higher in the next programming period due to a reduction in the co-funding rates. For these reasons, JASPERS support for the preparation of sustainable and feasible projects will not lose any relevance. At the same time, JASPERS’ involvement will extend to assess and support the bankability of projects, covering financial analysis and the facilitation of co-financing by lenders.

As the demand for competent assistance in developing a mature project pipeline will remain high, at its core JASPERS activities will remain focused on strategy and project preparation and project appraisal. However, limited support could be foreseen in the implementation phase as well, although not in the supervision of procurement processes. Implementation support could rather cover the preparation of standard tender documentation until procurement is launched; after that, also in order to avoid conflict of interests, JASPERS would end its support.

With the discontinuation of Major Projects, IQR and PSA services will face modifications as well. On this point, a new framework is currently being developed.

From an operational point of view, different work streams were identified for JASPERS in the next years: after continuing with a business as usual in 2019 and 2020, activities will focus on a quick start of new period in 2020-21, ensuring project readiness and a strong project pipeline. The closure of the 2014-2020 period will be at the core of the 2021-23 services (especially through

³ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument - COM/2018/375 final - 2018/0196 (COD).

IQR, PSA and related advisory). Starting with 2021, the comprehensive support to beneficiaries envisioned under the new JASPERS offer will also become available. JASPERS support will become available through the integration in the InvestEU Advisory Hub and through specific agreements with DG REGIO for ESIF projects.

The policy areas covered by JASPERS in the new programming period will reflect its partial change of scope. They will include:

- Connected Europe (e.g. Completion of rail transport corridors, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans, cross-border investments in transport and energy, digital connectivity);
- Greener, carbon-free Europe (e.g. Sustainable transition from fossil to carbon-neutral energy, from waste management to circular economy, from water supply to smart resource management);
- Europe closer to citizens (e.g. integrated territorial and urban planning, urban regeneration and resilience);
- Smart Europe (e.g. Smart specialisation and clusters, Smart cities).

It was also noted that JASPERS has already started working across sectors, adopting a solution-oriented approach (for example in the areas of urban mobility, smart cities and circular economy, whose importance will increase in the next programming period). As such, fertilisation across sectors can already be observed.

Open debate

Overall, the proposals by DG REGIO and JASPERS were positively received by Member State representatives, although some challenges and critical points were also highlighted.

While a need for support on enabling conditions for the future programming period would be welcomed by authorities from the Member States, such a possibility is currently not envisioned in the proposal for a new JASPERS (as enabling conditions will be under the responsibility of Member States). Further, it was noted that traditional sectors still require support as well. At the same time, attendees voiced the wish for a strengthening of JASPERS capacities in non-traditional sectors (e.g. broadband and smart development in general), which were usually not among JASPERS' main strengths. In addition, Member State representatives emphasised the need to ensure a smooth transition between programming periods.

Member States also communicated future investment goals and their needs for support.

- Authorities from Bulgaria expressed a need for support in the preparation of strategy development and investment selection at regional level, as an instrumental step towards a strong project pipeline (reference was made to policy objective 5 – Europe closer to citizens). In addition, capacity building for project preparation and selection was requested, especially at regional level, pointing to train-the-trainers courses as an opportunity to be seized. In terms of sectors, transport, energy efficiency (particularly in relation with new sources of energy), circular economy and social housing were identified among the most crucial ones for 2021-2027. Specifically in the field of science and education, the country expressed the wish for support in project pipeline preparation, financial analysis, financial sustainability analysis, commercialisation of results and combination of financial instruments with grant support.

- Croatian post-2020 Operational Programmes will feature a large number of investments in traditional sectors (especially wastewater and transport), but also projects in digitalisation, R&D, smart specialisation, circular economy and urban mobility. For projects in smart cities and smart islands, they identified large and cross-sectoral investment needs. In addition to project preparation, support from JASPERS in the implementation phase could prove useful in order to streamline bottlenecks and suggest good practices.
- Representatives from the Czech Republic confirmed the need for Technical Advisory and appraisal by JASPERS in the next period. In addition, they expressed a willingness to consult JASPERS on the development of transport masterplans and on state aid issues.
- Greek stakeholders identified JASPERS' main contribution in the familiarisation of executives and beneficiaries with proper planning of project and with how the projects should be implemented. JASPERS is seen as well-positioned for this task in light of its expertise and of its link to EIB and Commission. Further, in light of a lack of an official systematisation for CBA on rail projects, the preparation of a handbook on how to prepare rail projects was suggested. Assistance to national authorities in updating the requirements for technical studies regarding climate change was also requested. More generally, the need for familiarising MAs and other national authorities with the opportunities offered by new technologies was identified (e.g. on ITS projects or transport infrastructure projects).
- Authorities from Hungary communicated that urban transport projects will be strongly featured in the next programming period and asked for JASPERS assistance to find digital solutions in transport projects and support innovative projects. In addition, they acknowledged that, since co-financing will represent an increasing challenge, JASPERS support on the issue would be well received. Continuation of capacity building activities, e.g. on environmental issues, is expected to remain crucial in the future.
- An Italian representative underlined the importance of result-oriented investments and expressed the need for a smooth framework for financing projects in different programming periods (which is particularly relevant in Italy, where Major Projects typically take more than ten years to be implemented and therefore are split among different programming periods). In terms of policy areas, the Italian representative welcomed the addition of new fields to the traditional ones, but added that traditional investments are still a priority in the country, as pointed out by the Commission itself in the Country-specific recommendations, which call for improvements in the national road network.
- For authorities from Lithuania, JASPERS' shift in scope represents a positive development. As regards needs by national authorities, JASPERS support will remain relevant especially for ensuring the maturity of projects and for capacity building. Financial instruments and social impact bonds are additional areas where JASPERS could provide useful support in the future.
- A representative from Malta welcomed the idea of having one Advisory Hub to simplify the usage of JASPERS support and similar services. However, attention was drawn to the need to avoid changes consisting in a restriction of the timeframe in which JASPERS assignments need to be closed.
- Polish authorities stressed the importance of ensuring a smooth transition period and of establishing a solid framework for phasing projects. Assistance from JASPERS would be welcome with regard to capacity building on horizontal issues, where the country still lacks capacities, e.g. state aid and environmental legislation. In terms of sectors,

transport will safely remain the most significant sector of investment in the country and the importance of green investments and circular economy is expected to increase.

- Representatives from Romania endorsed the extension of policy sectors covered by JASPERS and voiced the need for a continuation of capacity building activities.
- Slovakian stakeholders expressed a need for support in project preparation and in feasibility studies for the future and highlighted that institutional memory of JASPERS is of particular value, as they quickly identify potential problematic issues in projects and are able to counteract (on this point, reference was made particularly to the stability of the team at JASPERS' office in Vienna).
- Slovenian authorities identified transport, energy and broadband as sectors whose importance will remain high in the next programming period. New areas for project development are expected to include circular economy and smart cities: in light of this, the cross-sectoral approach characterising the future JASPERS activities is seen favourably.

In response to a question by DG REGIO on which Member States would be willing to pay for JASPERS services, representatives from about five Member States (among which Croatia, Malta and Poland) expressed their readiness to do so. The Commission informed the attendees that the development of schemes of payment against results is currently being considered, although no decision has yet been taken. In order to continue the discussion on future needs for developing the future framework and budget for JASPERS, some Member States will also be contacted by the Commission to follow up on their requests and collect additional details. JASPERS itself, in conclusion, encouraged stakeholders to submit soon requests for assignments especially for pipeline development, as this would be important for the understanding of which competences and expertise will be most needed in the future.

E.3.1 Closing remarks

As a conclusion of the seminar's first part, a brief reflection on the complexity of the evaluation was offered by Professor Florio. While in fact the evaluation study concerns JASPERS, due to the institutional settings and the so-called tripartite engagement it needs to cover also the roles of Commission and Member States in their cooperation with JASPERS. Further, considering the different types of activities, the set of evaluation criteria, the different Member States in which JASPERS is active and the several sectors covered, the resulting picture may be particularly complex.

ANNEX 1 – AGENDA OF THE SEMINAR

Stakeholder seminar

Mid-term evaluation of JASPERS activities in 2014-2020 and future perspectives

19 September 2019 from 08:30 to 17:00
European Commission, DG REGIO
Avenue de Beaulieu 1 -VIP room, 1160 Auderghem, Brussels

Morning session – Interim findings from the mid-term evaluation	
8:30 – 9:00	Welcome coffee and registration
9:00 – 9:15	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Welcome address, <i>Mariana Hristcheva, Head of Unit of Evaluation and European Semester, DG REGIO</i> ✓ Brief presentation of the objectives of the evaluation, <i>Bettina Rafaelsen, COWI</i> ✓ Brief presentation of the aim of the seminar, <i>Silvia Vignetti, CSIL</i>
9:15 – 10:15	<p>First session: JASPERS advisory function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presentation of evaluation findings, <i>Adriana Iliescu, COWI</i> ✓ Presentation of case histories by beneficiary country, <i>Catalin Balan, General Director, Managing Authority for Large Infrastructure Operational Programme 2014-2020 - Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds, Romania</i> ✓ Discussant: <i>Alan Lynch, Head of RAM Division, JASPERS</i> ✓ Open discussion with participants
10.15 – 10:30	Coffee break
10:30 – 11:30	<p>Second session: JASPERS review function</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presentation of evaluation findings, <i>Tamas Kiss-Galfalvi (Ecorys)</i> ✓ Presentation of case histories by beneficiary country - <i>Monika Stopa, Managing Authority OP Infrastructure and Environment - Ministry of Investment and Economic Development, Poland</i> ✓ Discussant: <i>Luis Hebrero, Head of the Independent Quality Review Division, JASPERS</i> ✓ Open discussion with participants
11:30 – 12:30	Third session: JASPERS networking and capacity building activities

Mid-Term Evaluation of the Jaspers Initiative in 2014-2020

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presentation of evaluation findings, <i>Matteo Pedralli (CSIL)</i> ✓ Presentation of case histories by beneficiary country, <i>Natalija Šimunović, Head of service, Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Croatia</i> ✓ Discussant: <i>Ismeni Kyriazopoulou, Head of the Networking and Competence Centre Division, JASPERS</i> ✓ Open discussion with participants
<i>12:30 – 14:00</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>
<i>14:00 – 14:30</i>	<i>REGIO concept for JASPERS 2021+, Erich Unterwurzacher, Director, Directorate F, DG REGIO</i>
<i>14:30 – 15:00</i>	<i>JASPERS' offer 2021+, Antonio Almagro, Director, JASPERS</i>
<i>15:00 – 15:15</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>
<i>15:15 – 16:30</i>	<i>Round table discussion with MS on JASPERS services for post 2020, Erich Unterwurzacher, Director, Directorate F, DG REGIO</i>
<i>16:30 – 17:00</i>	<i>Concluding remarks, Erich Unterwurzacher, Director, Directorate F, DG REGIO</i>

ANNEX 2 – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**Stakeholder seminar*****Mid-term evaluation of JASPERS activities in 2014-2020
and future perspectives***

19 September 2019 from 08:30 to 17:00
European Commission, DG REGIO
Avenue de Beaulieu 1 -VIP room, 1160 Auderghem, Brussels

List of participants**Member States' representatives**

Country	Affiliation	Number of participants	Type of stakeholder
Bulgaria	Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications	1	Managing Authority
	Ministry of Education and Science	1	Managing Authority
	Ministry of Regional development and Public Works	1	Managing Authority
Croatia	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds	2	Managing Authority
	Dubrovnik Airport	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
Czechia	Ministry of Transport	2	Managing Authority
	Ministry of the Environment	2	Managing Authority
	Ministry of Regional Development	1	Managing Authority
France	Commissariat général à l'égalité des territoires (CGET)	1	Managing Authority
Greece	Management Organisation Unit (MOU)	2	Managing Authority
	Hellenic Cadastre	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
Hungary	Ministry for Innovation and Technology	2	Managing Authority
Italy	Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale	1	Managing Authority
Latvia	Permanent Representation of Latvia to the European Union	1	Managing Authority
Lithuania	Ministry of Finance	1	Managing Authority

Malta	Ministry for European Affairs and Equality	1	Managing Authority
Poland	Aquanet SA	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
	Wodociągi Miejskie w Radomiu Sp. z o.o.	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
	Ministry of Investment and Economic Development	4	Managing Authority
	PROCHEM SA	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
Portugal	Management authority for thematic Operational Plans (POSEUR)	1	Managing Authority
Romania	Ministry of European Funds	7	Managing Authority
	Aries Water Company	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
Slovakia	Ministry of Transport and Construction	1	Managing Authority
	National Motorway Company	1	Project promoter/beneficiary
Slovenia	Ministry of Economic Development and Technology	1	Managing Authority
	Ministry of Infrastructure	1	Managing Authority
Spain	Administrator of Railway Infrastructures (ADIF)	2	Project promoter/beneficiary
TOTAL		43	

JASPERS experts

Affiliation	Number of participants
JASPERS – European Investment Bank	13

Evaluation team

Name	Number of participants
Centre for Industrial Studies (CSIL)	4
COWI	3
Ecorys	2

European Commission

Affiliation	Number of participants
DG ECFIN – European Commission	2
DG MOVE – European Commission	1
DG CLIMA - European Commission	1

Mid-Term Evaluation of the Jaspers Initiative in 2014-2020

DG ENV - European Commission	1
DG REGIO – European Commission	15

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