



Interreg

Slovakia-Austria

European Regional Development Fund



INTERREG V-A Programme
Slovak Republic – Austria 2014 – 2020
Evaluation Plan
Version 2.0
12/12/2018

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Legislative framework of the evaluation	2
3. Objectives of the Evaluation Plan	4
Scope of the Evaluation Plan	5
Brief analysis of the programming period 2007 – 2013 and the resulting requirements for the programming period 2014 - 2020	5
Coordination	6
4. The Programme	6
5. Themes	8
6. Evaluations methods	11
7. Organization of the evaluation process	11
a) External evaluation	11
b) Methods for data collection	12
c) Competences of the Monitoring Committee	12
d) Involvement of partners from outside the public administration	13
e) Building an evaluation culture	13
f) Quality control and assurance	13
g) Use of the evaluation results	14
Annex No 1: Description of the planned evaluations	15
Annex No 2: Data sources for the evaluation process in 2014 - 2020	18

1. Introduction

The Managing Authority (hereinafter referred to as “MA“) of the INTERREG V-A Slovak Republic - Austria 2014 - 2020 Programme (hereinafter referred to as “*Interreg V-A SK-AT*“) is obliged to establish an evaluation plan during the programming period, including evaluations to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme. In line with Article 114 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (hereinafter referred to as “Common Provisions Regulation“), the Evaluation Plan shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as “MC“) no later than one year after the adoption of the operational programme.

In the programming period 2014 – 2020, the emphasis is put on the process of evaluating the programme, mainly regarding verification of programme objectives and intentions. The main aim of the evaluation is to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of activities performed under the programme and their impact on the overall objectives of the European Investment and Structural Funds as well as on the achievement of the objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy to provide for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In the programming period 2014 – 2020, the implementation of the evaluation process will be subject to a permanent monitoring by the European Commission (*hereinafter referred to as “EC“*). During the programming period, the MA shall provide for drawing up evaluations assessing efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the programme. The MA is obliged to submit, on an annual basis, reports on the most important findings of the evaluation as well as on the progress made in implementing evaluation plans, including implemented recommendations. In addition, under the programme, an evaluation report shall be prepared, as a synthesis/summary of the findings of the all evaluations performed, including achieved outputs and results of the programme together with relevant comments.

In line with Article 54 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the evaluation of the programme shall be carried out by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation in line with guidance of the EC.

In drawing up the Evaluation Plan, the experience of the programming period 2007 - 2013 has been taken into account.

Under the Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme, financial resources for implementing the evaluations in the total amount of EUR 60 000 are planned in the budget of Technical Assistance (TA). The evaluation shall be made by an external company that will be selected in the frame of a public procurement.

2. Legislative framework of the evaluation

The Evaluation Plan of the INTERREG V-A SK-AT Programme describes the process of the programme evaluation as proposed in line with provisions and recommendations given in laws and regulations of the EU/SR and in line with supporting documents of the Slovak Republic and EC mentioned in the subchapter containing the EU legislation:

- Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 laying down common provisions of the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (*hereinafter referred to as “Common Provisions Regulation or shortly CPR”*);

- Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European Territorial Cooperation goal
- Guidance Document for the Programming Period 2014 – 2020 on Monitoring and Evaluation of the European Cohesion Policy, the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund;
- Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans (Terms of Reference for Impact Evaluations, Guidance on Quality Management of External Evaluations).

List of abbreviations

CBC	Cross Border Cooperation
CCB	Central Coordination Body
CP	Cooperation Programme
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EC	European Commission
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
HP	Horizontal Principle
MC	Monitoring Committee
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of References

3. Objectives of the Evaluation Plan

The main objective of the evaluation is to continuously monitor the implementation and progress of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme* (*hereinafter also referred to as Cooperation Programme or briefly “CP”*) as well as the changes in its external environment, and on this basis, to analyse the results and outputs achieved as well as the longer-term impacts. When necessary, based on the findings, the evaluation should also include recommendations to implement corrective actions. The Evaluation Plan of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme* contains also a proposal of evaluation actions to be performed at various implementation stages of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme*. The evaluation work should contribute to optimised programme achievements and the effective and efficient use of the Funds.

In the programming period 2014 – 2020, the EC puts a major emphasis on evaluating the programme impacts. Following Article 56 (3) of the Common Provisions Regulation, the MA shall, at least once for the programming period, assess how the support from the ESIF contributed to achieving objectives of particular priorities. The impact of the cooperation programmes shall be assessed in connection with the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.

The objective of the Evaluation Plan is to get relevant, valid and reliable information related to the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme*. Evaluations shall be implemented in order to improve the programme and its implementation with the aim to assess its efficiency, effectiveness but also the impact on the development of the programme territory. The most essential part of the evaluation is the assessment of achievements related to the specific objectives of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme*, whereby the evaluation may concern the whole *programme* and its priorities.

In the course of the programming period, a continuous - respectively ongoing - evaluation shall be performed in order to assess the implementation, and/or to evaluate relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the CP, or to evaluate the impacts. More detailed specification of the evaluation questions shall be a subject of the preparation of the evaluation prior to the assignment of the evaluation. The Evaluation Plan shall, in advance, indicate data and their sources; however, prior to each assignment, the assigning party shall make sure that data are available or MA/JS will be able to provide for the availability of the relevant data in the required structure and form, i.e. data have to be suitable for the evaluation purpose. Special attention shall be paid to a suitable setting of the data collection system, to collect data needed for the evaluation through measurable indicators of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme*. The MA shall make sure that the file of data required for particular evaluations is systematically created and available at the time of implementing the evaluations. In the case of evaluation of impacts, also data from other sources, such as monitoring systems, are often required. If necessary, the MA may use also public data registers.

The existence of the Evaluation Plan does not exclude the possibility for additional ad-hoc evaluations, or, if necessary, modifications of the Evaluation Plan based on the decision of the MA, or of the monitoring system, and/or may be related to the financial control or revision of

the CP. If there is an urgent need, the MA may, on an ad-hoc basis, prepare and manage and/or, as needed, modify the evaluations.

Scope of the Evaluation Plan

The actual scope of the evaluation will be determined in the assignment that may specify the scope, e.g. by themes, by call or by reference to specific objectives; the evaluation will focus on the respective evaluation questions. Regarding timing, the evaluation assignment will be split in two phases with distinct objectives and timelines. Regarding financial resources that will be subject to evaluation, in most cases, the range is set by competencies of the assigning party. The evaluations may, however, include also related interventions (interventions of the same type) financed from other sources.

The Evaluation Plan of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT* Programme indicates:

- data required, and data sources,
- expected schedule for the implementation of particular evaluations,
- indicative budget of the evaluations,
- form of the evaluation (internal, external or mixed),
- basic evaluation questions for particular evaluations (evaluation questions will be discussed, updated or completed in more detail as part of the specifications in the assignment which reflects the status of implementation),
- Evaluation methods based on the character of the evaluation and in regard to the subject and objective of the evaluation (methods of the evaluation may be further specified in the ToRs or on basis of the evaluator's proposal).

Brief analysis of the programming period 2007 – 2013 and the resulting requirements for the programming period 2014 - 2020

The planned evaluations reflect the experiences with the implementation of the *Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovakia - Austria 2007 – 2013*, where the following risks have been identified:

Project level:

- deficiencies in public procurement, project management and financial management of projects (errors in public procurement, significant amounts of ineligible expenditures due to errors in public procurement and other reasons);
- significant delays in the implementation of some project activities compared to the original time schedule;
- unforeseeable facts influencing the implementation of projects, such as influences of the environment and climatic conditions, archaeological findings, litigations; problems on the side of big suppliers/contractors;

Programme level:

- comparatively slow process of contracting and absorption of ERDF – thus the challenge to prevent automatic de-commitment due to the n+2(n+3 rule)
- one of the underlying reasons for slow absorption of ERDF have been the long periods required for the verification process of the FLC

The Evaluation Plan of *Interreg V-A SK-AT* takes the risks identified in the programming period 2007 – 2013 into account. The following steps should allow the MA to take adequate and timely action in order to minimize the risks for a successful programme implementation:

- assessing the adequacy of the programme management and control systems in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in the initial and subsequent stages of the implementation in order to support the MA, i.e. to identify shortcomings, risks and weaknesses of the programme management and the related proceedings;
- performing an evaluation of the administrative capacities of the MA and the JS in order to identify shortcomings, risks and weaknesses related to an effective performance of activities and processes;
- assessing the absorption capacity at level of priority axes with the aim to identify potential risks and to propose actions for an improvement of the absorption capacity of particular priority axes;
- evaluating the outcomes of interventions based on the evaluation of impacts;
- using the experience with the programme evaluation in the programming period 2007–2013

Coordination

The process of evaluation at the national level shall be coordinated and provided for by the Central Coordination Body (hereinafter referred to as “CCB“), by the evaluation managers in cooperation with other relevant units of the CCB/MA/coordinators of horizontal principles (hereinafter referred to as “HP coordinators“).

4. The Programme

The subject of the Evaluation Plan is the INTERREG V-A Slovak Republic - Austria 2014 - 2020 Programme co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund (hereinafter referred to as “ERDF“). The total allocation for the programme amounts to EUR 89 285 509, of which 85 % is covered from the ERDF totalling EUR 75 892 681).

The programme area consists on Austrian side of the areas of three federal states (*Bundesländer*): Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland; on the Slovak side, the programme area includes the territory of the Bratislava and Trnava Self-Governing Regions. The programme area has approximately 4.7 million inhabitants, which is about one third of the total population of both countries. The cross-border programme area comprises an area of approximately 28 000 km².



Fig. 1. Programme area of the INTERREG V-A Slovak Republic - Austria 2014 – 2020 Programme

The programme priorities are based on the specific characteristics and needs of the programme area as defined in the programming process. The process included consultation with interest groupings as well as the broader cross-border community. In programming of the programming period 2014-2020, also experience and the lessons learned from the previous programming periods were taken into consideration. The financial allocations and objectives of the priority axes are as follows:

Priority axis		Area of support/Specific objective	
1	Contribution to a smart cross-border region (25.90 % of the total allocation) Allocation to PA1 - EUR 19 683 142	1.1	Strengthening of cooperation between key players in the regional innovation system with an aim to improve knowledge transfer, building of capacities and common frameworks, common research and innovation activities, and common research facilities.
		1.2	Improvement of capacities of cross-border education system with an aim to provide for knowledge and skills of human resources, required by the regional innovation system.
2	Protection of natural and cultural heritage and biodiversity (36.7 % of the total allocation) Allocation to PA 2 - EUR 27 820 000	2.1	Strengthening of common methods of recovery of cultural and natural heritage in a sustainable way so that the programme area would further develop as a unique destination of tourism
		2.2	Strengthening of cross-border integration of functional ecological networks and green infrastructure with an aim to protect biodiversity and contribute to the stability of ecosystems

3	Support for sustainable transport solutions (12.7 % of the total allocation) Allocation to PA 3 - EUR 9 655 000	3.1	Improvements of common planning, cooperation and practical solutions for environmentally-friendly, low-carbon and safe transport systems and services in the area of supporting the programme.
4.	Strengthening of cross-border administration and institutional cooperation (18.7 % of the total allocation) Allocation to PA 4 - EUR 14 180 979	4.1	Strengthening of institutional cooperation in the cross-border area through mobilizing players and building of capacities for planning in the regional innovation system with an aim to improve knowledge transfer, building of capacities for planning of the implementation within the multi-degree administration
		4.2	Strengthening of links between the institutions providing pre-school and school education (kindergartens and elementary schools) with an aim to develop and implement education programmes

The management of the cooperation programme *Interreg V-A Slovak Republic – Austria 2014-2020* is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic. On the Austrian side, the tasks of the national body are fulfilled by the federal states (*Bundesländer*) of Austria (Burgenland, Lower Austria and Vienna). The Joint Secretariat (JS) was established at the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, while the Austrian beneficiaries will be served by a branch of the JS in Vienna.

The MA is responsible for the preparation of the Evaluation Plan, which is submitted to the members of the MC. The MA is responsible for the preparation of Terms of References (ToRs) in order to perform the evaluation, and when necessary, the MA is responsible for modification of the Evaluation Plan as well as for monitoring and coordinating evaluations being performed in the course of the whole evaluation cycle.

5. Themes

Evaluations included in the plan

The Evaluation Plan assumes two evaluations performed in the course of the programme implementation, and financed from TA. The obligation to perform an impact evaluation results from Article 56 (3) of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) and refers to the evaluation of programme effects and impacts on the lives of citizens of the Slovak-Austrian border area. The other evaluation considers the existing experience and regulations of EC that relate to the preparation of the programme of the next financial prospect.

Annex No 1 includes a detailed description of the evaluations.

No	Subject of evaluation	Deadline of the implementation	Indicative budget per evaluation phase (EUR)	Intended method	Collection of required data
1	<p>The ongoing evaluation should support the persons working in programme management and implementation as well as the MC. The evaluation should contribute to the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflection of strategic issues and the timely preparation of adjustments if needed • related to Technical Assistance the improvement of procedures and the efficient use of funds, • developing a methodology (conceptualization) in order to capture outcomes and potential impacts at programme level; the methodology should highlight different types of projects and illustrate their major features in terms of partnership and cooperation but it should also allow for aggregate findings for groups of projects • built on this abovementioned methodology an evaluation of the programme achievements <p>Moreover, the evaluation is intended to contribute to the following internal objectives in order to demonstrate that evaluation can be a helpful tool for monitoring and steering the programme implementation; thus, the evaluation process should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to a shared understanding among the implementing bodies and among wider group of 	2018 and 2019	40 000	External evaluation	<p>In accordance with the planned evaluations, the specific requirements for data collection will be presented in the ToRs respectively in the assignment of the evaluator.</p> <p>Monitoring system, monitoring of project management, survey(s) among beneficiaries</p>

	<p>programme stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give room for strategic considerations <p>The following three tasks should be accomplished within the mid-term evaluation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revisiting the programme strategy 2. Investigating options to reduce the administrative burden 3. Evaluating and illustrating key impacts of the programme <p>If possible at this stage the evaluation will seek to build a bridge to the strategic objectives of the forthcoming period 2021-2027.</p>				
2	<p>Second stage of the evaluation focussing on programme impacts and achievements towards specific objectives.</p> <p>In the second stage the achievements will also be assessed from a broader perspective i.e. from the perspective of the strategic EU objectives. (in particular EU 2020, i.e. to provide for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, for increasing employment, productivity and social cohesion in accordance with national priorities).</p> <p>The advanced implementation stage of the Programme will also allow for a deepened impact evaluation of the CP regarding economic, social, regional and environmental impact.</p>	2021 and 2022	20 000	External evaluation	Information monitoring system, evaluations performed in the programme area, monitoring of project management
	Total value of evaluations financed from the funds of TA		60 000		

6. Evaluations methods

In the programming period 2014-2020, the EC recommends a wider application of evaluations focused on an impact analysis of the public intervention on the welfare of the EU citizens in the economic, social and environmental areas (the *impact evaluation*). It is an important change considering the existing model based mainly on evaluating aspects that are related to the process of implementing programmes of support (the *implementation evaluation*)¹.

The methodology of evaluations adopted for the programme of 2014 - 2020 takes into account evaluation methods and techniques which allow for a comprehensive and credible assessment of the programme implementation and its effects and impact on the Austrian-Slovak border area. A detailed methodology will be established for each evaluation task, taking into account the specificities of the evaluated area, the stage in the programme cycle and the objectives of the evaluation. According to the general methodological assumptions, **quantitative methods** will be used for the programme evaluation.

Qualitative evaluations allow for better knowledge of the selected topic through identification of important elements such as attitudes, opinions, knowledge and experience related to a given task. These evaluations will be based on surveys among a relatively small group of respondents including the MA, representatives of the federal states (*Bundesländer*) of Austria, representatives of involved Slovak self-governing regions, the JS and other entities responsible for the implementation and financial management of the programme and projects, as well as a group of beneficiaries respectively applicants.

Qualitative evaluations allow for an assessment of the programme's responsiveness to the needs of the target group(s).

Quantitative evaluations allow for standardized (i.e. quantified) responses to the defined questions and issues in a wider group of respondents. These evaluations will be performed on basis of data for a wider group of beneficiaries.

The evaluations shall be performed on basis of a statistically significant number of representatives of local as well as regional communities.

7. Organization of the evaluation process

a) External evaluation

The evaluation of the Interreg V- A SK–AT Programme will be performed externally, i.e. by a natural or legal person and/or entity acting independently of the MA which is responsible for the programme implementation. It will be sought that the evaluation team combines Slovak and Austrian expertise.

¹ European Commission, *The Programming Period 2014-2020, Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation – European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund – Concepts and Recommendations*, March 2014.

The external evaluation will be coordinated by the managers of the department of CBC programme management and implementation which is part of the Section of cross-border cooperation programmes of the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.

External evaluators will be procured in line with the Slovak Act on Public Procurement. The ToRs will also define requirements related to references, i.e. that the selected bidder demonstrates relevant evaluation expertise in ESIF in order to safeguard a sufficient quality of the evaluations.

b) Methods for data collection

In line with Articles 54 and 56 of the CPR, the Member States shall provide adequate staffing, organizational and financial resources necessary for carrying out evaluations. In the course of the evaluation, the following entities involved in the programme implementation will support the provision of an adequate scope of data: the MA, the federal states (*Bundesländer*) of Austria (Burgenland, Lower Austria, Vienna), the JS and its branch office in Vienna, and the beneficiaries themselves. With regard to the above mentioned:

- **MA/JS and the branch of the JS in Vienna** shall provide all necessary programme documents which are required for the specific evaluation purposes,
- **JS and its branch in Vienna** shall provide contacts of Applicants and Beneficiaries,
- **Lead Beneficiaries** shall provide the evaluator all documents at the level of the project which are relevant for the evaluation purpose (payment requests, monitoring reports, financial documents, promotional materials, technical documentation, photographs, etc.) to the extent required for a particular evaluation,
- **Representatives of the afore mentioned institutions (MA/federal states (*Bundesländer*) of Austria - Burgenland, Lower Austria, Vienna /JS, Lead Beneficiaries)** shall be informed about evaluations which are being carried-out and shall participate in quantitative as well as qualitative evaluations. The representatives of Bratislava and Trnava self-governing regions will be informed and will be asked to participate in the process.

In order to ensure a smooth provision of information from the respondents involved in the evaluation as well as in order to ensure the credibility of the evaluator, the MA shall draw up an outline of the evaluation informing about the objectives of the evaluation, its scope and the entity carrying out the evaluation. The MA shall also draw up a request for participation to be timely sent to selected respondents.

c) Competences of the Monitoring Committee

The task of the Monitoring Committee (hereinafter referred to as “MC“) within the evaluation results directly from the provisions of Articles 49 and 110 of the CPR and the Rules of Procedure RoP) of the MC². The documents set out the role of the MC in the evaluation process which is as follows:

- approving the Evaluation Plan as well as any changes to the document,

² See Article 1 (Tasks and Competencies)

- monitoring the evaluation processes;
- recommending areas and topics that should be subject of the evaluation;
- examining the results of the evaluation, and if necessary, deciding in close cooperation with the MA on corrective actions
- submitting the MA comments that refer to the programme performance, including actions related to the reduction of administrative burdens for the beneficiaries;
- monitoring follow-up actions based on its proposals

d) Involvement of partners from outside the public administration

In line with Article 5 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the participation of organisation which are not part of the public administration in the MC is guaranteed. The representative of the NGO from the Austrian side is a member of the MC with full voting right.

e) Building an evaluation culture

In line with Article 56 (2) of the CPR, the Member States shall ensure that appropriate evaluation capacity is available, and also take actions to strengthen it and to develop a culture of evaluation. Strengthening of the evaluation culture will be ensured by actions covering:

- support to increased knowledge of the MA's staff about the evaluation process (participation in training, workshops and conferences devoted to evaluation)
- exchange of experience and information on evaluations with other ETC programmes, including the resources and options provided by INTERACT.
- broadening the knowledge about evaluation and the possibilities to use its results.
- regular strategic information on the evaluation steps taken and their results to the members of the MC.
- cooperation with external evaluators in the preparation of documents and guidance related to the evaluation process.

f) Quality control and assurance

The main task of the evaluation is to provide reliable and accurate evidence related to the efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out in the framework of the programme. Important mechanisms to assure the quality of the evaluation include the following:

- careful planning of the evaluation process, taking the information requirements into account,
- see that the evaluation is based on adequate staff capacities and financial resources (the purpose of this plan is to introduce this mechanism);
- systematic collection and use of reliable and complete data in particular those that result from the process of programme monitoring;
- ensure a high quality of the ToRs for the evaluation processes – an accurate and clear definition of the expected outcomes is crucial to ensure a high quality of external experts' work;

- adequate scheduling of all steps in the evaluation process from preparation to implementation;
- introduction of evaluation criteria which verify the correctness of the evaluation concept, focussing on the consistency of all elements (objectives of the evaluation (including survey questions), data sources, methods and techniques, instruments and analyses and expectations related to conclusions); this should also include proposals to extend methods and scope;
- close cooperation with the evaluators;

g) Use of the evaluation results

The EC Guidelines for 2014-2020 put more emphasis on an extended use of the evaluation results as the most important follow-up of the evaluation process: it is a key task of the MA. Conclusion and recommendations resulting from the evaluations should support the decision-making process providing reliable useful and timely information on the effects of the Cooperation Programme. The members of the MC shall be informed about the evaluation results (in line with Article 56 of the Common Provisions Regulation). The MC shall review all evaluations (main reports are intended to be delivered in English, executive summaries will be provided in Slovak and German). The MA shall present the key conclusions of the evaluation together with the recommendations upon completion of each evaluation (step) in the subsequent meeting of the MC.

The most effective way to inform the public about the results of the evaluation is to publish the final report of the evaluation on the programme website. The evaluation results shall be presented at the final conference of the programme, and/or at seminars. Further on – due to the bilingual character of the Programme the Final Report will be done in English and the presentation of the main evaluation findings shall be made in Slovak and German, and - if necessary - also in English. In line with Article 56 of the Common Provisions Regulation, the Final Report of the evaluation will be submitted to the EC.

Annex No 1: Description of the planned evaluations

The description of the planned evaluations contains information on the intended scope, a tentative proposal for evaluation questions, a basic methodological grid which specifies data sources and the indicative time schedule as well as the proposed budget. The description may be updated, amended or adjusted in accordance with the needs related to programme implementation and evaluation.

Impact evaluation based on the interventions and the specific objectives of the INTERREG V-A SK - AT 2014-2020 Programme

General description of the evaluation	
Basis of the evaluation: Article 56 (3) and Article 50 (4) of the CPR	
Scope of the evaluation	
The whole <i>Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme</i>	
Evaluation type	impact evaluation
Time of the implementation	mid-term and closing phase of the programme
Evaluation objective	
The aim of the evaluation is to assess the impact of interventions along the specific objectives defined for each priority axis. (in the 4 th quarter of 2018 up to the 4 th quarter of 2019, and in mid-2022). It will review the efficiency and effectiveness of activities and analyse the impacts and socio-economic effects on the people living in the programme area. In addition, the evaluation objectives include also identification of driving factors and achievements related to specific programme objectives at a time when it is still meaningful to take corrective actions in order to improve the programme performance. The evaluation should also cover the contribution to the horizontal principles as well as the information and communication activities.	
Justification of the evaluation	
In line with Article 56 of the CPR, the MA is obliged to provide in the evaluation plan for evaluations with the main objective to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and impact of the European Union's support related to the specific objectives of the programme. The evaluation will be carried out in two phases.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first phase of the evaluation (start of the evaluation in the 4th quarter of 2018 and completion of the evaluation in December 2019) will allow to analyse the major achievements in respect of the performance framework in 2018, at that stage of implementation it will still be possible to take corrective actions. The conclusions of the first stage of the evaluation should result in recommendations to be submitted to 	

the MA/MC.

2. The second phase of the evaluation (start of the evaluation in the 4th quarter of 2021 and completion of the evaluation in April 2022), one and half year prior to the financial closure of the programme, will point out weaknesses and strengths of the implementation of the *Interreg V-A SK-AT Programme*, and will underline new needs and challenges in the programme area for the subsequent period.

In addition, one of the elements of both stages of the evaluation will be the evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the information and communication activities carried out. The conclusions and recommendations from the mid-term evaluation will also be the basis for introducing changes in the communication strategy, if required.

Another element of the evaluation – the evaluation of the contributions to the horizontal principles - results from the provisions of Article 50 (4) of the CPR; the information should be an input for reports on the programme implementation. The focus is on the following horizontal principles:

- Sustainable development
- Gender equality and non-discrimination

Conclusions and recommendations from the second stage of the evaluation (2022) will be used to determine the impact of the programme on the lives of citizens in the border region. The results of the evaluation (together with results of mid-term evaluation) will be taken into account when determining the intervention logic for the subsequent programme.

Finally, the results of the performed evaluation will be an important basis for the preparation of the Final Report on programme implementation³.

Evaluation criteria

1. consistency,
2. efficiency and effectiveness,
3. usefulness,
4. sustainability (ex post)

Main evaluation question/problem areas

Proposed basic questions of the evaluation:

1. Whether and to what extent have the specific objectives of the priority axes and the intended results been met? To what extent did the implemented interventions contribute to the fulfilment of objectives at priority level?
2. What results have been achieved with the implementation of the projects – did the projects contribute to common solutions? Have the interventions been efficient and effective with regard to the impact on the programme area and the beneficiaries? Did the achievement differ significantly between the priority axes (in geographical and topical terms)? If so – what have been the reasons?
3. Have the project outcomes been sustainable? Are the effects of the projects visible

³ In line with Article 50 of the CPR

also after their completion?

4. Did the information and communication activities mentioned in the communication strategy efficiently and effectively contribute to increasing the awareness of the programme, and to strengthening a positive image of the EU among the inhabitants?
5. What has been the impact of the projects for the development of the programme area in terms of sustainable development?
6. What has been the impact of the implementation of the activities in terms of gender equality and non-discrimination?
7. What has been the impact of the projects that were implemented in Natura 2000 areas (European network of protected areas)?
8. What has been the impact of the programme cooperation in connection with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.e. to provide smart, sustainable and inclusive growth)?
9. Did the administrative burdens discourage potential applicants from submitting an application?

Answers to each of the questions shall consider the following aspects:

- a) subjective (i.e. seen from the perspective of the beneficiaries and project stakeholders),
- b) objective (i.e. seen from the perspective of the programme as framework).

General draft of evaluation methodology

Used methodological approach

Proposed methodology:

1. Analysis of documents and historical data, particularly programme and project documentation.
2. Interviews with representatives of local and regional self-governments, associations and NGOs, Lead Beneficiaries, Main Slovak Cross-Border Partners and Project Partners of the projects.
3. Interviews and survey among Slovak and Austrian residents in the programme area.

Data scope and requirements

All data available to the MA and the JS (at programme level: monitoring and implementation documentation, evaluation reports; at project level: project data and documents, including the request for payment (in 2014-2020 interim and final monitoring (activity) reports etc.).

Organization of the evaluation

Time schedule

It is intended to carry out the evaluation in two phases:

4th quarter of 2018 – December 2019

4th quarter of 2021 – April 2022

Indicative budget

EUR 60 000 (in total for both stages of the evaluation)

Responsibility for operative evaluation work
External body
Possible comments/doubts
External evaluation.

Annex No 2: Data sources for the evaluation process in 2014 - 2020

Name of the source	Description
Information and communication system	An information system that includes standardized processes of programme and project management. It contains data needed for a transparent and effective management, financial control and control of providing funds.
Database of projects	A database gathering information in the field of receiving and assessing the applications. It will be a source of information on Calls for Projects, containing information and data on the submitted applications, project assessment and selection.
Database related to the programming period 2007-2013	Historical data related to the implementation of the programme in the previous programming period 2007-2013 (Monitoring System ATMOS, project data base)
Previous evaluations	Previous evaluations for the current as well as the previous programming period (meta-evaluation). Extremely important in terms of the programming period 2014-2020 will be the results of the ex-post evaluation that will enable to assess the efficiency and effectiveness and impact of the interventions in the framework of the ETC programmes in 2007-2013.
Strategic documents	All documents at programme level (e.g. SEA, Ex-ante Evaluation), strategic documents at the regional and national level (e.g. Strategy of Adaptation to Climate Change, Slovak Water Management Plan, local, regional and national Austrian strategies etc.) as well at the European level (e.g. DG Regio) which might be relevant in terms of the selected interventions, the programme area etc.
Scientific papers, literature etc.	Papers, books, articles and other sources devoted to relevant themes such as the intervention priorities, the programme area – in short all sources which might support the evaluation results, i.e. comments, proposals and recommendations by the evaluation team.