EVALUATION PLAN

Final version
as approved by the MC on 14 December 2016

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1 Objectives, coverage and coordination of the evaluation plan

1.1 Regulatory framework

The Cooperation Programme (CP) Interreg V-A Austria – Hungary is set up to contribute to the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union. In line with Article 56 (3) of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), at least once during the programming period an evaluation shall be conducted in order to assess how support from the ESI Funds has contributed to the objectives for each of the programme's priorities. The Managing Authority shall ensure that evaluations are carried out on the basis of an evaluation plan[1] and that each evaluation is subject to appropriate follow-up.

Following the above mentioned regulatory framework, the evaluations shall be conducted in particular to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes as well as to assess their effectiveness, efficiency, impact and their communication strategy.

This Evaluation Plan describes the process and content of all planned evaluation activities for the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Austria-Hungary. In the implementation reports 2017 and 2019 the progress of implementing the evaluation plan will be described. This initial version of the evaluation plan can be modified in the future if necessary.

1.2 Rationale and main objectives

The purpose of this evaluation plan is to create the framework for specific evaluations to be conducted throughout programme implementation and hereby to contribute to the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the CP. Special focus lies on the result orientation and integrated approach to territorial development which are guiding principles of the 2014-2020 programming period. Accordingly, questions in terms of lessons learnt, long term impacts and appropriateness of the intervention logic are crucial. The evaluation plan therefore describes the general evaluation strategy as basis for the specific evaluation measures. Besides those overarching objectives, the scope of the evaluation architecture is naturally determined by budget, time and personal resources available.

Referring to the EC Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans the present document shall

1) improve the quality of evaluations through proper planning, including through identification and collection of necessary data (Art. 52(2) CPR);

2) provide a framework to plan impact evaluations (Art. 56(3) CPR);

3) ensure that resources for funding and managing the evaluations are appropriate (Art. 54(2) CPR) and proportionate in terms of budget or resources

4) enable informed programme management and policy decisions on the basis of evaluation findings;

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[1] Other documents by the European Commission are also providing guidance for the evaluation plan, e.g. „*The programming period 2014-2020. Guidance document on Monitoring and evaluations. European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, Concepts and Recommendations. March 2014*" and „*The Programming period 2014-2020. Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy. European Regional Development, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund. Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans. Terms of References for Impact Evaluations. Guidance on Quality Management of external Evaluations. February 2014*"

5) ensure that evaluations provide inputs for annual implementation and progress reports;

6) facilitate the synthesis of findings from different Member States by the European Commission and the exchange of available evidence;

More specifically the measures defined in the evaluation plan shall clarify whether

- substantial changes of the framework conditions has been occurred,
- the general intervention logic of the programme (Theory of Change) has been appropriate,
- the programme is managed efficiently,
- the communication strategy is likely to achieve its desired results,
- modifications of the programme implementation and corrective actions will be necessary,
- there are relevant conclusions to be considered for designing the next programming period.

1.3 Coverage

The evaluation plan covers the whole programme area with the Austrian NUTS3 regions Nordburgenland, Mittelburgenland, Südburgenland, Niederösterreich Süd, Wiener Umland/Südteil, Wien, Graz, Oststeiermark and the Hungarian NUTS3 regions Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala. The programme area is partly shared with other programmes but since in particular timing and focus of implementation differ from programme to programme, there is no joint evaluation with other programmes foreseen. Some data surveys may possibly be shared between the programme authorities involved.

In terms of content, the plan covers all thematic priority axes of the Cooperation Programme:

- Priority Axis 1: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs (TO3)
- Priority Axis 2: Protecting the Environment and Promoting Resource Efficiency (TO6)
- Priority Axis 3: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Removing Bottlenecks in Key Network Infrastructures (TO7)
- Priority Axis 4: Enhancing Institutional Capacity and an Efficient Public Administration (TO11)
- Priority Axis 5 (Technical Assistance).

An overview with the key information on the priority axes is given in the following table:

Table 1: Overview on the priority axes

Priority axis	ERDF support (in €)	Thematic objective	Investment priority	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
1	6 979 350	3	3d	Strengthening regional entrepreneurship, the performance of start-ups and the innovation capacities of SMEs with a focus on the development of (internationally) competitive products	Survival rate of enterprises after 3 years
2	7 619 400	6	6c	Improving the protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage through common approaches to sustainable tourism	Overnight stays
	5 690 750	6	6d	Improving the ecological stability and resilience of landscape and ecosystems	Conservation degree A (of all habitat types in the Natura 2000 sites of the programme region)
	11 381 500	6	6f	Improving the management and protection of water bodies	Chemical and ecological condition of border water bodies classified as "good" and "very good"
3	20 071 250	7	7b	Improving cross-border connectivity of regional centres to the TEN-T network	Average travel time (individual transport) to a node with TEN-T network connection
	3 376 000	7	7c	Enhancing sustainable mobility on the local and regional level	Intermodal public transport nodes
4	18 998 758	11	11	Improving institutional cross-border co-operation in order to strengthen the integration Strengthening intercultural capacities and labour mobility of the border population by supporting cross-border education initiatives and vocational training	Level of cooperation quality in the border region Institutions involved in cross-border education schemes
TA	4 730 872			Implementing the Cooperation Programme in a sound and effective way	Not applicable

1.4 Relevant evidence available

For the evaluations described in the evaluation plan the following evidence will be available when conducting the evaluations:

- Data from the electronic Monitoring System (eMS)
- Project reports including indicators
- Guide on indicators
- Ex-ante evaluation
- Annual Implementation Reports
- Evaluations from the former programming period and other material from 2007-2013 (e.g. Interact cross-programme evaluation)
- EC study "Analysis and review on indicators and targets of the Interreg programmes in the 2014-2020 programming period", Evaluation Report for AT-HU, July 2016

1.5 Coordination

The responsibility for implementing the evaluation process described in the evaluation plan lies with the Managing Authority of the AT-HU Cooperation Programme. The responsible person in the MA is: Ms. Tatjana Paar, +43-5 9010-2423, tatjana.paar@rmb.at.

The Managing Authority sets up an Evaluation Steering Group which will be embedded into the already existing Bilateral Working Group (BWG). The Evaluation Steering Group will comprise of the Joint Secretariat, the Regional Coordinators, the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, the Managing Authority itself, as well as the Federal Chancellery as the national coordination body for structural funds in Austria. The group is open to representatives from other stakeholders, if appropriate.

The Evaluation Steering Group will operationally guide and coordinate the evaluation process and hereby in particular

- draft the Terms of Reference,
- coordinate the evaluators and
- prepare discussions with and decisions of the Monitoring Committee (MC).

2 Evaluation framework

2.1 Evaluation process

The evaluation process of the Cooperation Programme focuses in particular on three main interventions:

- an evaluation whether the communication strategy has reached its objectives and results,
- an evaluation, examining the efficiency of the programme´s structures and procedures and
- an impact evaluation, assessing the effectiveness of the programme.

The evaluation of communication strategy and efficiency of structures and processes will be tendered at the same time and shall take place as early as possible (to have enough time to react and adjust if needed). The evaluation of effectiveness and impact of the

Cooperation Programme will be carried out as late as possible (when there is enough evidence for measurement).

2.2 Responsibilities and functions

The Managing Authority bears primary responsibility for the implementation of the evaluation plan, especially for designing the plan and for securing the quality of it´s implementation. The Managing Authority sets up the Evaluation Steering Group which operationally steers and coordinates all evaluations. The Evaluation Steering Group consists of representatives of Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Regional Coordinators, the Hungarian Prime Minister´s Office and of other stakeholders, if appropriate.

The responsibilities of the Monitoring Committee lie respectively in examining and approving the evaluation plan and any possible amendments, as well as in supervising the progress made in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up based on findings of the evaluation (Art. 110 and 114 CPR).

Figure 1: Responsibilities and functions
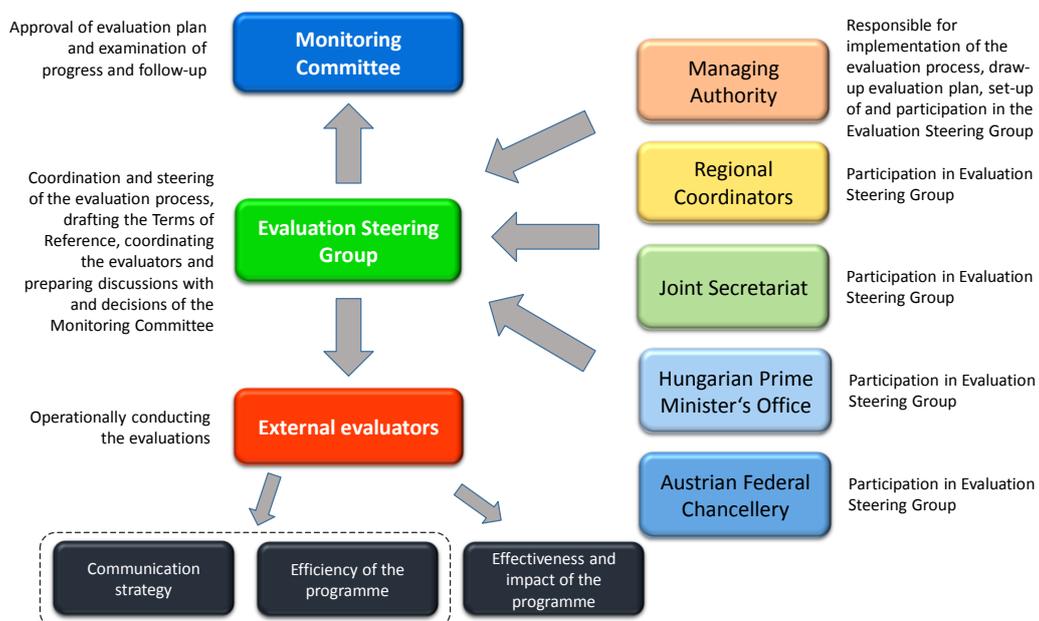
2.3 Involvement of partners

The evaluation process of the AT-HU Cooperation Programme is generally open to partners, which might be involved either within the framework of the Monitoring Committee or in other bodies[2]. When setting up the Evaluation Steering Group the Managing Authority may contact stakeholders for clarification if they are potentially interested in participating.

2.4 Source of evaluation expertise

Due to the fact that evaluators shall be functionally independent from the responsible authorities and since the programme bodies have very limited internal time resources for

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[2] Art. 5(2) and (3)(d) and Art. 49(4) CPR

evaluation, the evaluations will be conducted by external evaluators. The external evaluators will be contracted according to the applicable public procurement rules and can be natural or legal persons. The evaluation of communication strategy and operational efficiency will be tendered at once, for the evaluation of effectiveness and impact of the programme a separate tender is foreseen.

2.5 Strategy to ensure use of evaluation results

The findings of the evaluations serve mainly two purposes:

a) To learn from the evaluations in order to improve the quality of the implementation of the current Cooperation Programme

This relates to expected findings from evaluation of the communication strategy and the efficiency of the programme's structures and procedures. Those evaluations will be conducted in the first half of 2018 in order to possibly adjust structures, procedures or communication measures at a stage of programme implementation where sufficient time is remaining to still benefit from such improvements.

b) to substantiate the programming of the 2021-2027 period

For this purpose, in particular lessons learnt from the impact evaluation shall be considered which will be conducted in late 2018 or early 2019. It is expected to receive findings related to the intervention logic and the impact of the selected topics, as well as related to horizontal issues and overarching EU strategies. Also possible linkages to the new, future EU strategies shall be examined. Generally, it is one of the main ideas of this evaluation plan that the findings of the evaluations deliver concrete inputs, and therefore directly contribute to the planning phase of a following funding period.

Furthermore and in line with the principle of transparency and Article 54 (4) CPR, the results of the evaluations will be made public on the website of the programme. In particular, project beneficiaries will actively be informed about the findings, in order to strengthen their commitment towards the overall programme and their motivation to contribute to the programme's objectives.

The programme bodies will not only be informed about the findings but rather be involved in the evaluation process as much as possible. The Monitoring Committee will formally discuss and approve concrete recommendations for improvements of the programme.

2.6 Proposed schedule

The schedule follows the consideration that the evaluation of effectiveness and impact requires a certain amount of implementation experience and data from the projects. As the start of the first projects in this programming period dates from mid 2016 (first implementation milestones even later) it seems reasonable to assume that sufficient data will be available in the second half of 2018, or latest in the first half of 2019. In either case the evaluation can still

a. deliver valuable findings and lessons learnt to be considered for improving the current programme and
b. contribute to the programming process for the 2021-2027 period, even if both processes overlap.

The evaluation of the communication strategy and of the operational efficiency can take place before evaluating the impact because respective data will be available earlier. It can be assumed that at the beginning of 2018 enough implementation experience will have been gathered. A duration of max. 6 months is planned for each evaluation.

2.7 Proposed budget

The overall budget for implementation of the evaluation plan includes the costs for the external evaluators and data collection and amounts to € 80.000. A share of approximately 60% is foreseen for the evaluation of effectiveness and impact, the remaining budget is shared between the evaluation of efficiency and the evaluation of the communication strategy.

2.8 Quality management strategy for evaluation process

The quality management of the evaluation process lies within the responsibility of the Managing Authority which is working on the respective operational tasks together with the Evaluation Steering Group. The main elements to ensure a high quality of the evaluation process are in particular:

- drafting detailed Terms of Reference for external evaluators,
- selecting the evaluators based on clear award criteria and quality requirements,
- having close contact with external evaluators throughout the whole evaluation process and, in addition to regular reporting, to regularly exchange with them on interim findings,
- steering the evaluation process in a well-coordinated and transparent manner and
- placing emphasis on methodological standards.

3 Planned evaluations

3.1 Overview about planned evaluations

The following table gives an overview about the evaluations planned in terms of timing, budget, method and data used.

Table 2: Overview evaluations

No	Subject of evaluation	Timeframe	Indicative budget	Intended method	Collection of required data (indicative list)
1a	Communication strategy	First half of 2018	€ 30.000	External evaluation	- Joint Secretariat data collection - Data from eMS - Project reports - Counter on website - Interviews - Questionnaires - Focus groups
1b	Efficiency of the programme´s structures and processes				- Desk research - Observations - Data from the eMS - Programme documents - Project reports - Interviews - Questionnaires - Focus groups
2	Efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the programme	Earliest second half of 2018 – latest first half of 2019	€ 50.000	External evaluation	- Literature review - Focus groups - Comparison groups - Surveys - Interviews - Quantitative or qualitative data collection - Monitoring system (indicators) - Experimental and statistical methods - Expert panels

3.2 Evaluation of the communication strategy

Theme, scope, subject and rationale

The communication strategy of the AT-HU Cooperation Programme guides all responsible actors in the programme for a coherent approach towards communication. The strategy shall in particular support the visibility of results and demonstrate the added-value of funding. Communication is regarded as shared responsibility of all programme bodies with the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat bearing the main responsibility. In the Joint Secretariat a communication manager is appointed who acts as a central contact point in communication issues both for programme bodies, for potential applicants and beneficiaries of the programme. The Monitoring Committee monitors and assesses the implementation of the communication strategy. The communication strategy includes the following communication objectives:

CO 1: To ensure the quality of cross-border cooperation projects and its strong impact on the programme area

    CO 1.1   To strengthen internal communication between the programme bodies for a smooth programme implementation
    CO 1.2   To raise awareness and knowledge of project applicants in order to get high-quality applications
    CO 1.3   To support beneficiaries in all phases of project implementation to guarantee the best possible outcome
    CO 1.4   To strengthen cooperation with other Interreg programmes to share information and best practices

CO 2: to attract wide interest towards the benefits of cross-border cooperation

    CO 2.1   To support and encourage beneficiaries in communication activities
    CO 2.2   To disseminate the benefits of cross-border cooperation for different stakeholders in the programme area

and addresses the following target groups with their specific information needs:

-    Internal target groups: Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Regional Coordinators, Monitoring Committee, Control bodies, National bodies responsible for coordination of ESI fund programmes, European Commission (DG Regio Desk Officer of the programme)
     Information needs: e.g. changes in manuals, decisions of the Monitoring Committee, progress in programme implementation.
-    External target groups: applicants and potential applicants, beneficiaries, other Interreg-programmes, stakeholder institutions, general public, European Commission
-    Information needs: e.g. description of technical procedures, information on eligibility rules, success stories.

The focus of this evaluation is the general question whether and in how far the communication objectives above have been achieved and to what extent the different communication activities and tools[3] have been contributing to those objectives.

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[3] Corporate design, website and newsflashes, publications (folders, manuals), events and trainings (Kick-off and annual events, project trainings), …

Table 3: Indicative evaluation questions for the evaluation of the communication strategy

Indicative evaluation questions	Communication objectives	Topics to be covered
- Did the communication activities affect quality of the cross-border projects? If yes, to what extent and which activities have been most useful?	general objective	- Effectiveness and efficiency of specific activities and tools of the communication strategy
- Did the implementation of communication activities improve the internal communication of programme bodies and thereby the quality of programme implementation?	CO 1.1	- Communication of programme bodies
- Did the programme's communication activities raise awareness and knowledge of project applicants?	CO 1.2	- Awareness and knowledge of applicants
- To what extent did the communication activities support the beneficiaries in their project implementation?	CO 1.3	- Support to project beneficiaries
- Has the cooperation with other Interreg programmes (sharing of information and best practices) been strengthened?	CO 1.4	- Cooperation with other Interreg programmes
- Did activities defined in the communication strategy support and encourage beneficiaries in their own communication activities?	CO 2.1	- Support of communication activities of beneficiaries
- Do the different stakeholders in the programme area feel well informed about the benefits of cross-border cooperation?	CO 2.2	- Involvement of stakeholders

Methods to be used and their data requirements

The communication strategy defines result indicators and respective sources of data. Accordingly data will be collected either by the Joint Secretariat (e.g. number of meetings, number of participants), through the electronic monitoring system (e.g. % of approved applications) or counter on the website or via project reporting. This data will be provided for the evaluators. For the evaluation additional methods will be needed such as interviews of programme body representatives and beneficiaries, questionnaires and possibly focus groups to qualitatively asses the connection between measured indicators and achieved results. If feasible also counterfactual methods[4] might be applied in order to measure the effectiveness of the different communication activities.

Duration and tentative date

The evaluation of the communication strategy is planned to be conducted in the first half of 2018.

Indicative budget

The indicative budget for the evaluation of the communication strategy amounts to € 30.000 (together with the evaluation of the efficiency of the programme).

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[4] Comparison of target groups with other groups which were not reached by the activities of the communication strategy

3.3 Evaluation of the efficiency of the programme´s structures and processes

Theme, scope, subject and rationale

The Cooperation Programme is implemented through a joint implementation structure built on several programme authorities and bodies. The Monitoring Committee is the central decision-making body of the Cooperation Programme constituted of both representatives of the national level and the regions. The Monitoring Committee meets at least once a year, generally reviews the implementation of the programme and examines all issues that affect the performance of the programme. The Managing Authority (Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH) - also responsible for the functions of the Certifying Authority - is responsible for the management and implementation of the Cooperation Programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management. The Managing Authority has already set up a Joint Secretariat which is based in Sopron and assists Managing Authority and Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions. The Regional Coordinators network is constituted of the representatives of the regions participating in the programme who are performing tasks on project and programme level.

Table 4: Overview of the programme bodies

Authority / body	Name of Authority / body
Managing Authority	- Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH
Certifying Authority, where applicable	- merged with Managing Authority
Audit authority	- Federal Chancellery of Austria Department IV/3 – Financial Control of the ERDF
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	- Széchenyi Programme Office Consulting and Service Nonprofit Limited Liability Company - Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH, Department Accounting and Controlling - Office of Government of Lower Austria, Division of Spatial Planning and Environment - Office of Government of Styria, Department for Regional and Local Development - Office of Government of Vienna, Municipal Department for European Affairs
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	- DGAEF - Directorate General for Audit of European Funds Audit Directorate of Economic Development and Other European Programmes

The evaluation of the operational efficiency of the Cooperation Programme is focusing on the assessment whether the programme structure and its processes are functioning appropriately and if the inputs made are in proportion to the actual outputs. Specifically it examines if all measures necessary for implementing the Cooperation Programme have been sound and timely executed (such as organisation of calls, selection of projects, monitoring, etc.). The evaluation also verifies whether the programme's structures and processes are efficient in relation to the outputs defined

Table 5: Indicative evaluation questions for the evaluation of the efficiency of the pro-gramme's structures and processes

Indicative evaluation questions	Topics to be covered
- Are structures and processes of the Cooperation programme efficiently contributing to achieving the desired outputs of the programme?	- Overall efficiency
- Are the individual processes defined on the level of the pro-gramme bodies functioning and working efficiently? Do the programme bodies have sufficient administrative capacities and are financial allocations efficiently contributing to pro-gramme implementation?	- Efficiency and processes of programme bodies
- Is the interaction between the programme bodies well organ-ized and functioning?	- Coordination processes
- Are the decision-making processes clear and transparent?	- Decision-making
- Are the programme processes related to the project cycle organized and supported in an efficient way?	- Elements of the project cycle: - Application - evaluation and selection - contracting - implementation - reporting - monitoring - reimbursement of costs.
- In how far could the reduction of administrative burdens for core management, programme bodies and beneficiaries be accomplished?	- Reduction of administrative burdens (sim-plification of procedures)

Methods to be used and their data requirements

For the assessment of the efficiency of the programme's structures and procedures, out-put and financial indicators of priority axis 5 will be examined as well as those processes which are supporting and guiding the projects of priority axes 1-4. Therefore observa-tions, data from the eMS, programme documents and project reports will be needed as well as assessments of applicants and beneficiaries on the quality and efficiency of the services provided by the programme bodies. Data therefore will be collected through desk research, data analysis from eMS, interviews, questionnaires and possibly focus groups.

Duration and tentative date

The evaluation of the efficiency of the programme's structures and procedures shall be conducted in the first half of 2018.

Indicative budget

A total sum of approx. € 30.000 is foreseen for this evaluation and the evaluation of the communication strategy.

3.4 Evaluation of efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the programme (impact evaluation)

Theme, scope, subject and rationale

The Managing Authority shall ensure[5] that evaluations assess efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the respective programme. The Cooperation Programme Austria – Hungary has developed a strategy in order to achieve specific impacts in the programme area. This approach (theory of change) starts with an analysis of the situation in the pro-gramme area and the description of main characteristics:

- Broad variety of urban agglomerations, small and medium-sized towns and rural agglomerations,
- Distinct north-south divide,
- Positive demographic trends in the north of the region,
- Decreasing population in the south of the region (aside from Graz),
- Low accessibility levels in Mittel- and Südburgenland and in the countries of Vas and Zala,
- Demographic trends and spatial structure is also reflected in the economic per-formance: strong regions in the north (+ Graz) and other regions with GDP of less than 80% of European average,
- Great variety of ecosystems and considerable number of nature parks and na-tional parks,
- Cross-border cooperation comprises also territorial supply chain systems (logis-tics).

As each other Cooperation Programme, the AT-HU programme chose its interventions from the list of thematic objectives given by the European Commission[6]. Accordingly, the programme area has been analysed along the selected thematic objectives (3, 6, 7, 11) and with regard to policy contexts on European, national and regional level as well as characteristics, challenges and needs for cooperation. In each thematic objective one or more investment priorities have been chosen (3d, 6c, 6d, 6f, 7b, 7c, 11 CBC) and the respective choice as well as the financial allocation for each priority axis well justified.

Table 6: Interventions of the programme

Priority axis	% share of ERDF allocation	Thematic objective	Investment priority
1	9%	3	3d
2	31%	6	6c, 6d, 6f
3	30%	7	7b, 7c
4	24%	11	11

For each of the Investment priorities a specific objective has been defined as well as a corresponding result indicator.

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[5] Art. 56 (3) CPR
[6] Requirement for thematic concentration: Art. 5 ETC

Table 7: Specific objectives and result indicators

Investment priority	Specific objective	Result indicator
3d	Strengthening regional entrepreneurship, the performance of start-ups and the innovation capacities of SMEs with a focus on the development of (internationally) competitive products	Survival rate of enterprises after 3 years
6c	Improving the protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage through common approaches to sustainable tourism	Overnight stays
6d	Improving the ecological stability and resilience of landscape and ecosystems	Conservation degree A (of all habitat types in the Natura 2000 sites of the programme region)
6f	Improving the management and protection of water bodies	Chemical and ecological condition of border water bodies classified as "good" and "very good"
7b	Improving cross-border connectivity of regional centres to the TEN-T network	Average travel time (individual transport) to a node with TEN-T network connection
7c	Enhancing sustainable mobility on the local and regional level	Intermodal public transport nodes
11	Improving institutional cross-border cooperation in order to strengthen the integration Strengthening intercultural capacities and labour mobility of the border population by supporting cross-border education initiatives and vocational training	Level of cooperation quality in the border region Institutions involved in cross-border education schemes

The Cooperation Programme will evaluate the effectiveness (impact) to find out if the defined objectives have been reached and in how far the interventions (projects) of the programme have contributed to the desired change in the cross-border region. A focus on the efficiency should unveil, if the chosen intervention logic shows the most cost-efficient way of reaching the objectives. The impact evaluation examines the long-term changes resulted from the programmes activities. Furthermore the consideration of horizontal principles and the contribution to EU2020 and to macro-regional strategies will be assessed.

As the investment priorities are covering different thematic fields with various types of interventions, the evaluation of effectiveness and impact of the cooperation programme will have to work with different methods and evaluation questions for each of the priority axes.

Table 8: Indicative questions for the impact evaluation

IP	Specific objective	Result indicator	Indicative evaluation questions
3d	Strengthening regional entrepreneurship, the performance of start-ups and the innovation capacities of SMEs with a focus on the development of (internationally) competitive products	Survival rate of enterprises after 3 years	In how far have the projects under this priority axis contributed to the survival rate of enterprises after three years? Have Hungarian counties gained best practices and know-how from cooperating with Austria? Have clusters, innovation centres and regional innovation networks been linked to SMEs? Has the individual capacity of SMEs to cooperate been enhanced? Have joint measures of intermediate organizations been implemented? Have universities and research institutions been embedded in the innovation system? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?
6c	Improving the protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage through common approaches to sustainable tourism	Overnight stays	In how far have the projects under this investment priority contributed to an increased number of overnight stays in the AT-HU border region? Has cross-border cooperation and capacity building lead to common understanding and integrated, coordinated approach to green tourism and the development of cross-border destinations? Have common strategies and standards for cross-border model regions been developed? Have coordinated approaches to valorising natural and cultural heritage for green tourism been developed? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?
6d	Improving the ecological stability and resilience of landscape and ecosystems	Conservation degree A (of all habitat types in the Natura 2000 sites of the programme region)	In how far have the projects under this investment priority contributed to raising the conservation degree in the Natura 2000 sites in the programme region? Has cross-border cooperation resulted in common approaches and the implementation of joint protection measures which lead to a better resilience of the ecosystems on both sides of the border? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?

6f	Improving the management and protection of water bodies	Chemical and ecological condition of border water bodies classified as "good" and "very good"	In how far have the projects under this investment priority contributed to an improved water quality of surface water and groundwater bodies? Has the cross-border cooperation reduced natural risks in the field of water management, maintained and further improved the high quality of protection and sustainable use of the natural resources and prepared for potential climate change impacts? Has environmental protection and flood risk management been better coordinated especially along the rivers Raab/Rába and Leitha/Lajta? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?
7b	Improving cross-border connectivity of regional centres to the TEN-T network	Average travel time (individual transport) to a node with TEN-T network connection	In how far have the projects under this investment priority contributed to decrease the average travel time (individual transport) to a node with TEN-T network connection? Has permeability of the border increased and lead to shorter and faster connections between the municipalities directly affected by the investments? Have accessibility levels in the southern part of the region improved? Has the capacity of cross-border transport systems in the northern part of the region increased? Have the actions under this priority lead to a better quality of life for the inhabitants of the region as they can reach the regional centres easier and quicker? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?
7c	Enhancing sustainable mobility on the local and regional level	Intermodal public transport nodes	Have the planned infrastructure investments been accompanied by a set of additional measures in order to increase the share of people using sustainable means of transport? Have negative environmental impacts of the overall transport system been prevented or reduced? Has the construction of new or extension of existing park and ride facilities a) relieved roads which are reaching their capacity limits? b) Improved the interoperability between the road and the public transport system and encouraged car drivers to change to train or bus? Has the provision of bike and ride facilities at railway stations and bus stops a)further increased the catchment area of the public transport system and b) facilitated the access to the stations by environmentally friendly means of transport? Have similar results been achieved from the development of flexible public transport services on the local level? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?

11	Improving institutional cross-border co-operation in order to strengthen the integration	Level of cooperation quality in the border region	In how far have the projects under this investment priority contributed to intensifying the cooperation intensity/quality in the border region? Has support of the cross-border cooperation of public administration balanced governance capacities at regional level in the AT-HU border region and eventually lead to more harmonized cross-border strategies and processes? Has implementing and strengthening of people-to-people activities and of new and existing networks and cooperation platforms on local and regional level resulted in joint regional strategies, processes, services and activities? In how far have the projects under this investment priority contributed to an increased intercultural understanding and knowledge as well as to an enhanced labour mobility of the border population?
	Strengthening intercultural capacities and labour mobility of the border population by supporting cross-border education initiatives and vocational training	Institutions involved in cross-border education schemes	Has vocational training positively influenced the region´s challenges with regard to the labour market like brain drain and lack of qualified personnel? Concerning the intervention logic: Would there have been a more cost-effective way to reach the specific objective?
			General evaluation questions and input to post2020
			In how far has the chosen strategic approach (Theory of change respectively intervention logic) been appropriate? (Looking also at e.g. the degree of thematic concentration, selected topics, used and unused synergies between topics, new needs in the border region not tackled by the programme…) Have the integrated approach and horizontal principles been considered as planned? In how far has the programme contributed to EU2020 and macro-regional strategies? Are there links identifiable between the programme's topics and/or achievements and the new overarching EU frameworks for a period post2020 (e.g. EU2030)?

Methods to be used and their data requirements

Since at the time of the evaluation many projects will still be running and neither final results nor long-term impacts can be fully measured, the evaluation will follow mainly a theory-based approach. This means that interim results and chosen approaches will be examined whether they follow a traceable strategy and are likely to achieve the desired results. Hereby the assessment in how far the output indicators as defined in the performance framework have been reached or are likely to be reached is the first step. Counterfactual methods might also be applied but this will in particular depend on whether sufficient data is available and if it will be possible to compare target groups with other groups who were not benefiting from the interventions of the project. The following methods are likely to be applied:

- Literature review
- Focus groups
- Comparison groups
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Quantitative or qualitative data collection
- Monitoring system (indicators)
- Experimental and statistical methods
- Expert panels

Quantitative data is available mainly from the eMS and from public statistical sources, qualitative data is to be collected mainly be the external evaluators.

Duration and tentative date

It is foreseen to conduct this evaluation earliest in the second half of 2018 and latest first half of 2019. With duration of approximately half a year it will enable the programme bodies to use the lessons learnt for concrete measures of programme adjustment as well as for programming of the period 2021-2027.

Indicative budget

An indicative budget of € 50.000 is foreseen for this evaluation.

List of tables

List of figures