



Monitoring Systems Networking Meeting

8 - 9 September 2010 | Budapest, Hungary

Summary of the main discussion points

Each programme co-financed by the European Union is obliged to develop a computerised Monitoring System. Some programmes are building upon experience gained from INTERREG III perspective, some are starting from the scratch. Each programme is adapting the system to its own specificity and requirements, which is why we would risk saying that there are as many Monitoring Systems as there are programmes. However all of them must fulfil minimum requirements set by the regulation.

The idea of the Monitoring Systems network came from our Hungarian colleagues, who wished to share their monitoring system experience and initiated a discussion on good practices and challenges with other programmes. Following this initiative INTERACT organized the first Monitoring Systems Networking meeting, which took place in Budapest on 8-9 September 2010. 43 representatives of 19 programmes participated in the meeting.

In order to get an overview of different kinds of monitoring systems currently used in the programmes, 4 different Monitoring Systems were presented which served as an introduction to the networking meeting:

- IMIS 2007-2013, Monitoring System used in SEE, HU-SK, HU-RO, HU-HR, HU-SRB IPA CBC and HUSKROUA ENPI CBC programmes
- Monitoring System used in the Baltic Sea Region transnational Programme
- Monitoring System used in the Lithuania Poland Cross-border Cooperation programme
- Monitoring System used in France



The presented systems varied in terms of functionalities, complexity and solutions. Also budgets necessary to develop the systems differed significantly. This showed that also for small programmes with limited TA budget it is possible to develop a functional Monitoring System - as one of the participants summed up - some systems are Ferrari and others are Cinquecento, but maybe not everyone needs a Ferrari...

As a next step the participants were divided into 2 groups (financial and content oriented) and discussed more in detail various aspects of the use of programme Monitoring Systems. Several discussion topics were proposed. Below one can find short summary of main outcomes of the workshops.

CONTENT GROUP			
WHAT?	HOW IT IS DONE?	CHALLENGES	WHAT TO AVOID?
	GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED		
Project application data	<p><u>AF in Excel</u>: Easy to control, can be changed by users and JTS.</p> <p>Good practice on uploading the AFs: a tool to upload more applications at once - all AFs can be uploaded over one night.</p> <p><u>On-line AF</u>: flexible, auto check report, applicant cannot go to another stage if he hasn't finished previous one. Whole process can be monitored - system keeps track of all applications filled out online. No discussion about deadline.</p>	<p>Rounding of digits problem</p> <p>Security of data</p> <p>Guidance to applicants</p> <p>Size limit (of one filed/of whole application)</p> <p>Changes/adaptations of the AF/cells</p> <p>New support needed, time consuming for JTS, problems by client side,</p>	Major modifications



	<p>Electronic templates are the best but paper version with signatures is needed in many programmes.</p>	<p>network connection problems</p> <p>Dealing with applicants 24/7</p> <p>Help desk is necessary</p> <p>Cost for setting up and maintaining the system</p>	
<p>Selection and assessment tools process?</p>	<p>Checklist incorporated in the system - assessment done directly in the Monitoring System. It can be accessed by several users at the same time.</p> <p>Auto-generated document (checklist) can be a good option as well in the on-line system</p> <p>Mailing and notifications to applicants with personalised attachments automatically generated and sent from the MONITORING SYSTEM</p> <p>Mixed solution: part of the assessment done in the system and part outside of</p>	<p>Correct allocation of access rights - it is better to have more strict rules for who is allowed to see the assessment results.</p> <p>Harmonisation of terminology used when you have different assessors posting different comments to the same project. JTS can provide guidance for the assessors to improve the terminology and understanding of ETC issues.</p>	<p>Conflict of interest and problems that may be caused by the wrong use of data security, like access to information by organisms that should not or, on the contrary, too much access denied</p>



	the system.		
Contracting project data	JTS is uploading all versions of the AFs that are part of the subsidy contracts. It's better to avoid overwriting of different versions, but it is important to keep track of all of them.		
Monitoring project outcomes and indicators	Keep track of results indicated in the AF	To reach the common understanding of indicators by all users.	“Control freaks” Non-quantifiable indicators
Programme annual report (PAR)	It is difficult to generate the whole PAR from the monitoring system, because some descriptive parts cannot come from the system directly. It is better to use the MONITORING SYSTEM as a support for the manual generation of the report.	Allocate every project a code so that every expense is linked with a code (simplification).	
Project changes	Tools for approving changes and informing relevant programme bodies are needed (decided by JTS and MC) JTS cannot make changes in the MONITORING SYSTEM if the decision is not supported by necessary documents (e.g. new contract)	Harmonisation and coordination between LP and PPs, harmonisation and timing between project and programme	



	<p>A summary of changes can be generated from the MONITORING SYSTEM before every MC meeting.</p>	<p>Active involvement of MC members</p>	
<p>Project monitoring, on-the-spot checks</p>	<p>Included in the workflow if it influences the procedure, otherwise it is only attached as an annex</p>	<p>Risk based visit or risk evaluation, when there is a risk calculation</p> <p>Registration of monitoring events in the MONITORING SYSTEM, simple registration without consequences</p> <p>The challenge should be to provide a difference between the checks that are conducted on a regular basis and those that instead arise from the evaluation of a risk . in this second case the material to be uploaded on the monitoring system should include documents and evidence of the check result and the actual risk</p>	



Monitoring of programme activities	TA budget included in the system, reporting TA expenditure on database, calculating N+2/3	Connecting monitoring system to Programme officers e-mail system Monitoring of revenues? How to deal with this? How to reflect it in the MONITORING SYSTEM?	Special cases like when a partner/project would like to report not according to the rules, maybe outside of the reporting periods.
Project reporting, interim and final	All institutions involved in report verification and payment should have access to the Monitoring System. Personalised mail with attachments sent to project beneficiaries directly from the MONITORING SYSTEM, to update them about the advancement of the programme. Follow up system for deadline, e.g. flag system- a flag system works in a way that you set an alarm, or flag, for a deadline. For example for an annual report. When the deadline approaches the flagsystem		



	<p>informs you and so you are reminded.</p> <p>Task reminder in outlook - Outlook provides a flag system and some programmes use this so they don't need to ask their IT provider to add an extra function to the Monitoring System</p>		
General comments		Harmonise the needs of all bodies and be user friendly	Overloaded database with unnecessary functions and data

FINANCIAL GROUP

WHAT?	HOW IT IS DONE? GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED	CHALLENGES	WHAT TO AVOID?
<p>Project financial application data - how it is included into the MONITORING SYSTEM? Who does what and</p>	<p>Two approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online AF - excel AF, which is imported to the monitoring system automatically - keeping track/documentation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How detailed should be the budget - per budget line, per work package, per budget or down to the cost items? How to reflect and monitor it in the MONITORING SYSTEM? - rounding-up function - e.g. while 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allowing more than 2 decimals (digits after comma) as it can create problems - expensive, not functional software



when?	procedures	calculating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to include shared/joint costs in the MONITORING SYSTEM - dealing with bilingual applications - excel settings per country differ, macros are problem for some institutions - testing correct format - takes time - uploading many applications - dealing with damaged files - communicating rules to applicants 	
Approved allocation and contracting data - is the application data changed in the MONITORING SYSTEM in case of conditional approval? What kind of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment done in the MONITORING SYSTEM (checklists filled in the system) - conditions fulfilment monitored in the system - revised AF uploaded to the MONITORING SYSTEM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comparing different versions of AF; version management; - follow up on conditions when numerous - external experts assessment online (in the MONITORING SYSTEM) - allocation of user rights, training, etc. - ensuring the proper user rights for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - late start (when MONITORING SYSTEM is operational only after several calls are finalised and you have to include the data retrospectively); - access to assessment results before the MC meeting for other actors than the JTS (e.g. regional bodies) - inconsistency in different



<p>contracting data is included, when and by whom?</p>		<p>different users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - version management, properly structured data 	<p>versions of AFs</p>
<p>Data on project monitoring, e.g. on-the-spot visits, FLC, sample audits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on-the-spot checks stored in the MONITORING SYSTEM (information uploaded by the JTS or directly by the institution performing the check?), and can be commented by other users (e.g. FLC) - access of FLC to MONITORING SYSTEM - including data on the control and reports submitted directly by the FLC - there were mixed opinions on the purposefulness of such solution - not much experience with sample audits so far 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consolidation of collected data (e.g. on-the-spot checks) - how to manage comments/corrections by FLC on hard copy documents, e.g. reports? - separation of functions, allocation of different user rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - situation when everyone is allowed to see everything, as it might cause problems and is not in line with data protection policy
<p>Budget reallocations - how budget reallocations are reflected in the MONITORING SYSTEM? When and who is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reallocations within flexibility rule reflected in the MONITORING SYSTEM only as an information - revision of the AF is not needed - restrictions for the changes, e.g. no reverse changes allowed, only 1 big reallocation at the project lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reallocation between territories (main programme area, adjacent area and out of programme territory) - how detailed should be the information? - version management and proper 	



including such information?		documentation	
Financial information to be included into the AIR and statistics which can be generated automatically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fixed statistics/reports to be generated by the system - IT specialist is programming the MONITORING SYSTEM to get different kind of statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - changes to fixed statistics/reports - to create a report that meet all stakeholder's requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not having precise specification on reports needed when designing MONITORING SYSTEM
Monitoring of TA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitoring of TA as one of the projects with different budget lines - monitoring of overall amounts of TA - no division between different programme institutions 		
Reporting and spending targets (project and programme level), monitoring of n+2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spending targets verified with progress reports, reasons identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ERDF spending to be calculated automatically by the MONITORING SYSTEM, not manually 	
Project final spending,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - retaining part of the eligible expenditure approved until approval of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consolidation of irregularities 	



irregularities-recoveries, withdrawals	final progress report - reallocation of not spent ERDF to other projects (“recycling” of unused funds)	- motivate spending	
--	---	---------------------	--

The second day all participants had a chance to discuss several issues connected with more strategic use of the Monitoring Systems as well as with possible future requirements. The outcomes of the second workshop are summarised below.

1. Regulatory requirements → What shall be kept? What shall be improved? Indicators?

a. Indicators

- Are difficult to quantify.
- A new system for the next period is needed and the programmes need to be involved in the discussion.
- There is a suggestion to either have one system (a list of indicators) for all cooperation programmes or separate systems per strand. They can be further divided per priority, geographical area etc. Indicators on sublevels could be added to show more details where appropriate (programmes choose how many levels they need).
- Typology - could be an addition to the set of indicators in the next period.
- More openness to failure when it comes to indicators.

b. There should be either less details in the regulations or more, but explained properly, not to have so many different interpretations across Europe. However we need to keep in mind that too many details cause overregulation.

c. Monitoring systems

- If the EC says which technology to use for monitoring systems it would be easier for the standardisation, but it will also mean that the existing systems will not be used anymore.
- Many programmes use a lot of resources (money, time) to develop a monitoring system and if the rules keep changing we pay for the new system in every period.



- Minimum requirements, not giving a room for different interpretation, that programmes need to respect are needed. Guidance about the basic monitoring should be given, allowing programmes to do more if needed. In this way it will be possible to plan real costs.
 - Clear requirements without constant changes during the implementation period and changes between periods would mean more stability and lower costs (no need to change monitoring systems).
 - EC could have a monitoring system available, but not necessary to use, for smaller programmes.
- d. Make available guidelines of different monitoring systems for other programmes to see and use solutions if possible (legal requirements, country/programme specifics), not to reinvent the same thing in different parts of EU.

2. Simplification → How can we make it easier for programmes and projects?

- a. Current approach of many programmes: you never know what will be required in the future, so need to read between the lines in the regulations and collect all possible data.
- b. Define starting standard packages to help programmes - what will be required, what has to come out of it.

3. Standardisation of ETC tools → Which tools and to what extent they could be standardised? (links to KEEP, Typology)

- a. We are talking about common Europe, but project partners face 5 different application forms in one area, therefore something has to be done.
- b. Harmonisation should start with the application form, reporting form etc. and then maybe programmes can also have similar monitoring systems.
- c. 100 % standardisation is not realistic or possible
- d. Terminology used in programmes is very different - glossary from EC is needed and should be translated into all EU languages.

4. Evaluation of the programmes → What data is needed to ensure enough inputs for quality evaluation?

- a. Only figures could be used from monitoring systems to feed into the evaluation.



b. Are soft indicators possible as they are not quantifiable?

The first Monitoring Systems Networking meeting was a good chance to exchange experience between MS practitioners from different Territorial Cooperation programmes. However it has shown that a more thematically focused approach is needed, as there is no time to have detailed discussions on all subjects.

INTERACT is planning to continue such Networking meetings in 2011, and will ask the participants to propose the subjects which are of great importance for them to be discussed during next meeting.