

Post-27: Common indicators and the provisions effecting evaluation

Interreg Knowledge Fair session report | 5 March 2024, 10.30-12.30

Overview

Around 65 Interreg specialists analysed the use of performance indicators with a focus on tracking common and programme specific indicators during the period 2021-2027. In addition, future perspectives and potential enhancements to the common indicators and evaluation provisions post-2027 were explored.

Usage of Common Indicators: Common indicators play a crucial role in Interreg programmes, constituting 95% of the total indicators, while programme-specific indicators make up the remaining 5%. Recognizing their significance, an informal working group on indicators will be established end of March to discuss on which indicators should be retained, modified, deleted, or added for post-2027.

Evaluation Provision Findings: Key findings from the ex-post evaluation (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) and the evaluation provisions for 2021-2027 were presented. The latter has received positive feedback from Interreg programmes, with no expressed desires for changes.

Key Discussion Points

Indicators:

- Are the Interreg common indicator definitions consistently used by the programmes / by policy objective / by specific objective?
- How consistent is the target setting?
- Are there indicators that are more challenging to collect?
- Are the low use indicators useful? Should they be kept/dropped?

Evaluation provision

- Which aspects works well with existing evaluation provisions?
- Is there any need for modifications?
- Aspirations for the future?

1. Indicators

- **Assessment of Interreg common indicators:** Discussions centered on identifying challenging indicators, those deemed acceptable, and pinpointing missing or requiring adaptation.
- **Balancing specificity and generality:** Establishing a universally applicable indicator system poses challenges, necessitating a balance between specific/detailed

indicators and more general ones that can be utilised by diverse Interreg programmes.

- **Contextual development:** Emphasising that indicator definitions should align with intervention types, intervention logic, and policy objectives.
- **Reflecting programme objectives:** Indicators are considered proxies mirroring the goals the programme aims to achieve.

Challenges Discussed:

- Target setting is often challenging: It needs to be based on assumptions and such assumptions might be wrongly taken – in the end leading to over and underperformance; still, it is important to contain outliers that are based on misinterpretation of indicators (as has been the case with indicators on support for SMEs)
- Indicators cannot satisfy all purposes: common indicators have a distinct function for 'upstream' reporting, i.e. to European policy makers; indicators making investments more visible might be important to agree on targets at programme level but when aggregating it at EU level, Interreg will not manage to have impressive quantitative achievements or to show critical mass based on a disperse set of indicators for all different investment types used in cooperation programmes
- Difficulty in effectively communicating indicators to applicants; the so-called indicators fiches have been a valuable source of information; still, in some cases descriptions could be clearer and more applicant-friendly.

2. Evaluation provisions

- **Ex Post Evaluation:** An overview of the ex-post evaluation was presented including the design, highlighting the impact of ETC (2007-2013) and lessons learned during that period. Subsequently, the evaluation process for 2014-2020 was summarized, providing insight into the current stage of the evaluation. The emerging findings and lessons learned will be summarised in a "cookbook" – a toolkit for ETC policy practitioners, encompassing do's and don'ts, obstacles. In addition, a final report will be released in summer 2024, followed by a synthesis by the end of 2024, and a Staff Working Document in 2025.
- **Evaluation Provision 2021-2027:** The key elements of the evaluation provision for the period 2021-2027, including its scope, timing, process, and evaluation responsibilities, were introduced.
- **Discussion on Existing Evaluation Provisions:** Key questions included identifying aspects that work well, assessing the need for modifications, and expressing aspirations for the future. Notably, no wishes for changes were voiced by the participants during the event.

Regulations and articles of particular significance

Common Provisions Regulation: Article 45: "Evaluation by the Commission"

Interreg Regulation: Article 34 "Indicators for Interreg programmes", Article 35 "Evaluation during the programming period".

Conclusions, plans for followed up

During the meeting the uptake of the common indicators was presented and the current challenges of working with these indicators was discussed.

Current status quo of satisfaction with common indicators for 2021-2027:

- Indicators deemed acceptable: RCO87, RCO83, RCR 81
- Indicators requiring little revision: RCO116, RCO86, RCO84, RCO81, RCR 79,
- Indicators requiring substantial revision: RCO120, RCO117, RCO115, RCO90, RCO85, RCO82, RCR83, RCR85, RCR82, RCR84, RCR104
- Missing indicators: indicator on infrastructure and indicator on capacity building

Next Steps: An informal working group dedicated to develop common indicators for post-2027 (around 20 Interreg programmes) will be established by Interact. Interested Interreg programmes are invited to express their intent to join this informal working group (per e-mail: evaluation@interact.eu) by the end of March.

Between April and October, the informal working group members together with the representatives of Evaluation Unit of DG REGIO will in a series of 2-3 online meetings discuss the current common indicators and come up with common indicators for the period beyond 2027. This process includes the review of relevant documents and the exchange of data and findings during the online meetings.

During the summer, a comprehensive survey will be sent to all Interreg programmes through online platforms. This survey aims to gather feedback from all Interreg programmes regarding the proposed set of common indicators for post-2027+, developed collaboratively by the informal working group.

The conclusive step in this process is the presentation of the final set of common indicators for 2027+ during the meeting scheduled for November 19-20 in Brussels.

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