

Interreg “V-A ITALIA MALTA” Programme

Evaluation Plan 2014 2020

(approved by the Monitoring Committee on the 29th of March 2017)

Final Version 1

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1. CONTEXT

1.1 REGULATORY CONTEXT

The Evaluation plan is laid down in accordance with the following regulatory framework:

- **Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013, laying down common provisions on 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. In particular, Article 50, which refers to the annual implementation report where evaluative contributions should also be reported; Article 50, which defines the objectives and the content of the assessment; Articles 55-57 which provide the periods of evaluation (ex ante, ongoing and ex post); Articles 110 and 114 in which, amongst others, recall the obligation to draw up an Evaluation Plan for the approval of the Monitoring Committee;
- **Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013** of the European Parliament and Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions regarding the support of the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal with particular reference to preamble 26 on the responsibility of the Managing Authority in conducting assessments, and Article 14, which describes the requirements for the realization of the implementation reports;
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 240/2014** of the Commission of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds with particular reference to Art. 16: involvement of partners in the evaluation of Programmes;
- **Implementing Decision of the European Commission of 16 June 2014**, setting up the list of cooperation programmes and indicating the global amount of the total support of the European Regional Development Fund to each programme with regards to the goal "European Territorial Cooperation" for the period 2014-2020 including the ERDF contribution allocation to the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta which amounts to € 43,952,171;
- **The final EC Decision C(2015) 7046 of 12 October 2015**, adopting the Cross-border Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A Italia-Malta" to support the European Regional Development Fund in the field of the "European Territorial Cooperation" in Italy and Malta.

The plan was also drawn up on the basis of the guidelines and recommendations of the European Commission detailed in the following documents:

- **Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans. Terms of Reference for Impact Evaluations. Guidance on Quality Management of External Evaluations**, published by the European Commission, DG Regional and Urban Policy and "Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion", in February 2015;
- **Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation. European Cohesion Fund, European Regional Development Fund. Concepts and Recommendations**, published by the European Commission, DG Regional and Urban policy, in March 2014.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME

The INTERREG V-A Italia Malta Programme, approved by final Decision C (2015) No. 7046 of 12 October 2015 and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) amounting to € 43.952.171, is firmly rooted in the Europe 2020 strategy.

Though keeping in continuity with Italy-Malta 2007-2013 Operational Programme in its commitment to enhance the cross-border dimension of sea and land and of sustainable growth of the cooperation area, the 2014-2020 programme has made some significant changes with regards to the development of innovative services and enterprises, and the creation of networks to promote the mobility of researchers and workers in the cooperation area.

The programme is also benefitting from the enlargement of eligible areas for funding, thanks to the inclusion of the territories corresponding to the Sicilian provinces of Enna and Messina.

Based on the analysis of the context and of local needs, as well as the results of the 2007-2013 Programming Period, the Programme highlights the most important challenges, as summarized below and placed at the relevant dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy:

Smart Growth

- To increase specialization in R&D in some areas of interest
- To improve R&I in the field of environmental protection, the security of the territory and the sea, cultural heritage, quality of life and health of citizens
- To strengthen and increase the interaction between clusters, networks, economic sectors, production chains across borders

Sustainable Growth

- To mitigate the consequences of climate change across borders
- To reduce the coastal and urban pressures through long-term sustainable and integrated development
- To reduce the pressures on coastal and marine areas and cultural heritage caused by economic activities

Inclusive Growth

- To improve the quality of life, the employment rate and the cross-border economy suffering from the ageing population
- To increase the rate of socio-economic inclusion of young people, especially for PhDs and graduates

With regard to the inclusion/competitiveness aspect, the focus is on two of the three priority axis, which orientate the interventions on the innovation aspect and the enterprise development. This is aimed at improving the quality of life, the fruition of cultural heritage and environmental protection across all axis and also in terms of creating new job opportunities and cross-border mobility of workers and researchers.

As for the sustainability aspect, Axis 3 of the Programme focuses on the protection and enhancement of natural resources, biodiversity and the management of natural and human risks of the sea and land.

Considering the financial budget, Axis 3, linked to the protection of the environment (biodiversity protection, risk management) assumes the most relevant role with 46,17% of the programme's resources, while Axis 1

and Axis 2, linked to the improvement of quality of life and the competitiveness of businesses, together have an allocation of 47% of the Programme's resources.

The table provided below refers to the articulation of the programme's strategy that includes 5 investment priorities, one of which is specific to the European territorial cooperation, linked to 5 thematic objectives and as many specific objectives. The table also includes the beneficiaries and the main typologies of interventions linked with the investment priorities and specific objectives.

The main task expected through the Evaluation Plan is to verify the relevance of the strategy developed for the achievement of the objectives of the Programme, also with specific reference to the enlargement of the eligible cooperation area and the introduction of new priorities.

The plan will also consider the Programme's contribution to the implementation of the EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with particular emphasis to the specific choices and working methods put in place for their successful implementation.

Axis	Thematic Objective	Investment Priorities	Specific Objectives	Beneficiaries	Main types of interventions	Financial Allocation
1	1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	1.b Promoting business investment in innovation and research and developing links and synergies between businesses	1.1 Enhancing research and innovation activity to improve the quality of life and the accessibility to cultural heritage	Central administrations and local authorities, research institutions, Universities, Clusters/districts, SMEs, micro enterprises, newly established enterprises (including spin-offs), enterprise incubators, Chambers of Commerce, Knowledge agencies and intermediaries.	A. Interventions aimed at financing costs related to the introduction of forms of "non-technological innovation" in order to promote the productive system; B. Intervention aimed at sustaining R&I activities to improve the quality of life and the utilization of the cultural heritage; C. Interventions aimed at financing exchanges and mobility of researchers	€ 13.185.651
2	3. Promoting competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises	3.a Promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas	2.1 Favours the creation and strengthening of companies in the sectors of intervention within the cross-border area	SMEs and micro enterprises (even in partnership), newly established enterprises, clusters/districts, Universities, public and private research centres, scientific parks, innovation poles, category associations.	A. Aids for the start of innovative start-ups and expansion of new businesses (micro, small and medium) operating in the sectors of intervention defined by the axis	€ 7.471.869
	8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility	8.e Integrating cross-border labour markets, including mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and consulting services and joint training	2.2 Favours workers' mobility in the cross-border area, through the creation of networks	Regional and national research institutions, public administrations, higher education schools (technical high schools), Enterprises (SMEs including the newly established ones) operating in the sectors of the strategy, consortia/associations of SMEs, manufacturing and technological districts	A. Financial support to the emergence of cross-border networks to promote the mobility of workers in enterprises (micro, small and medium) operating in the programme's intervention areas B. Interventions to finance cross-border mobility by providing a voucher	
3	6. Protecting the environment and fostering an efficient use of resources	6.d Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soils; promoting services for ecosystems, even though Natura 200 and green infrastructure	3.1 Contributing to stop the loss of biodiversity by keeping and restoring ecosystems and protected areas	Regional and national research centres, University and research centres, central, local and regional administrations, specialized state agencies and institutions, authorities that manage protected areas, category associations in the sectors of intervention of Axis III	A. Interventions aimed at reducing the impact of biodiversity of land and the sea of the area and in the Natura 2000 network sites B. Support the dissemination of knowledge and the utilization of the natural heritage (with particular attention to the land and marine ecosystems) through the creation of innovative services and/or systems and the utilization of advanced technologies	€ 20.294.651
	5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	5.b Promoting investments targeting specific risks, thereby ensuring resilience in case of natural disasters and emergency management systems	3.2 Promoting system and technological actions to mitigate the effects of climate change and natural and anthropic risks	Regional and national research centres, University and research centres, central, local and regional administrations, Harbour Offices, civil and military Authorities, state agencies and institutions, category associations in the sectors of interventions of Axis III	A. Interventions to mitigate the effects of the climate change B. Interventions to target the various risk scenarios	

2. OBJECTIVES, COVERAGE, COORDINATION

The Evaluation Plan of the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Cross-Border Cooperation Programme sets forth the manner in which evaluation activities will be organized and implemented during the 2014-2020 programming cycle.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

In compliance with the expectations outlined in the *Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans. Terms of Reference for Impact Evaluations. Guidance on Quality Management of External Evaluations* of the European Commission, the aim of the evaluation plan is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes, as well as their impact on the cross border area.

The plan aims to increase the understanding of what works best within the scope of the programme, so that timely decisions can be made in a manner that support the successful implementation of the programme.

The main tasks of the evaluation plan are:

- improving the quality of design and execution of the programme to assess its effectiveness, efficiency and impact.
- facilitating an informed management of the programme and decision-making based upon the findings resulting from the evaluations.
- ensuring the availability of information necessary for the preparation of annual implementation reports, with particular reference to those made in 2017 and 2019, for which it is necessary to provide an overview of progress made in the implementation of the Evaluation Plan and of the evaluation activities, as well as of the final programme implementation report.
- ensuring that the resources to finance and manage the evaluations are adequate.
- providing useful information for the possible definition of the 2021-2027 programme.

This Plan, therefore, defines the entire system of evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Programme for its entire period of performance, in a manner consistent with and proportionate to the resources allocated for it, also taking into account the achievement of objectives set out in the performance framework.

2.2 COVERAGE

This Evaluation Plan covers exclusively the area of the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF, under the European Territorial Cooperation.

The Programme area includes the following NUTS areas listed below:

- For Italy: Trapani, Palermo, Messina, Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Enna, Catania, Ragusa and Siracusa
- For Malta: Malta, Gozo and Comino

The chronological coverage of this Plan is expected until the year 2022, when, no later than 31 December, the Managing Authority will submit, pursuant to Article 114, paragraph 2 of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013, a

report summarizing the evaluation findings carried out during the programming period and the main results obtained by the operational programme, also providing comments on the reported information.

2.3 COORDINATION

The Regional Planning Department of the Sicilian Region, in its capacity as Managing Authority of the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Programme, also functions as the Coordination Authority of the Managing Authority of the Sicilian ERDF OP 2014-2020.

This authority will ensure, throughout the implementation and evaluation phase of the 2014-2020 programming, strong regional coordination and synergy among Operation Programmes of the various ESI funds and other Programmes, with particular reference to Territorial Cooperation Objective programmes, as well as the connection with the main regional policies pertaining to the areas of intervention of the cohesion policy.

As for Malta, the Funds and Programmes Division manages the EU funds allocated to Malta under the European Territorial Cooperation as well as carried out the following functions:

- National Focal Point for the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms;
- National Co-ordinator of the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme;
- National Contact Point for the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (ETC) 2014-2020;
- National Contact Point for the INTERREG V-A Italia Malta Cross Border Programme 2014-2020;
- National Co-ordinator of Pre-Accession Funds, TAIEX and Transition Facility;
- National Contact Point for the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) and the European Solidarity Fund;
- National Authority for the ERASMUS+ Programme;
- Responsible Authority for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020 and Internal Security Fund 2014-2020 (ISF);
- Managing Authority for the Rural Development and Agriculture Fund (EAFRD);
- Managing Authority for the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF);
- Coordination and guidance of focal points of the various EU and other Funds and Programmes.

This will ensure, both during implementation and evaluation, coordination of actions with other territorial cooperation programmes in which both Sicily and Malta participate as explained in further detail in the Description of management and control systems for the INTERREG V-A Italy-Malta programme Chapter 2.2.1.

In the organizational design of the Plan, the **Monitoring Committee** (MC) of the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Programme performs an essential role.

National and regional authorities of the Member States of the Programme, as well as representatives of stakeholders related to socio-economic and institutional fields, form part of the MC and perform both decision-making and advisory functions. Within this framework, information about the progression of the Programme and monitoring of the results achieved, in terms of completion of outputs and results, are defined and set during the programming phase.

Therefore, the MC plays an essential function in stimulating the evaluation and, in its internal procedures assessing the results achieved throughout the programme, in such a way as to promote an informed debate based upon objective evidence of the programme performance.

In this context, the MC intervenes both in promoting feedback during the drafting of the Plan, and also in proposing a review of the “objects to be evaluated”, on the basis of the observation of the Programme’s implementation.

A role complementary to the role played by the MC is that of the **2014-2020 Programme Coordination and Integration Roundtable of the Region of Sicily**, established by Regional Council Resolution no. 208 of 10 July 2014, in order to promote integration in the process of the implementation of the programmes co-financed by ESI Funds.

Among the various functions assigned to the Coordination Roundtable, there is also the promotion of cooperation between the Managing Authorities in the field of monitoring and evaluation, as well as the integration of ESI funds with actions related to European Territorial Cooperation.

Furthermore, with reference to the EUSAIR strategy, coordination and integration activities will also be ensured in connection with the Department of Extra-Regional Affairs of the Region of Sicily.

As regards Malta, the MNCA will ensure the necessary coordination with mainstream ERDF OP 2014-2020 through its participation in the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee.

In addition, the Programme’s Managing Authority, with the support of the Joint Secretariat and the Maltese National Coordination Authority, will actively contribute to the exchange and sharing of information with other European Territorial Cooperation programmes through the participation in activities organized by the INTERACT programme.

3. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

3.1 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The main responsibility for the evaluation process, starting from the preparation of this Plan, is assigned to the Managing Authority.

Pursuant to art. 110, para. 1, letter b) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013, a key role is granted to the Programme Monitoring Committee (MC), whose task, in addition to reviewing and approving the Plan, (par. 2, letter c of the aforementioned Art. 110), is to provide an opinion concerning implementation progress and evaluation results.

The responsibilities of and skills required from all individuals involved in the aforementioned activities are detailed below.

Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat

Based on the provisions of art. 114 of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013, the Managing Authority is responsible for drawing up the evaluation plan, submitting it to the MC for approval, and transmitting it to the European Commission for its information.

Consistent with art. 56(3) of the aforementioned Regulation, during the programming period, the Managing Authority shall ensure that evaluations are carried out on effectiveness, efficiency and impact, on the basis of the evaluation plan, and that any such assessment is subject to appropriate follow-up.

The Managing Authority ensures that all evaluation results are reviewed by the MC and sent to the EC within the stipulated timeframes. In compliance with art. 114(2) of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013, by 31 December 2022, the Managing Authority will prepare a report summarizing the evaluation findings carried out during

the programming period and the main results obtained by the operational programme, providing comments on the reported information.

In addition, the MA is also responsible for the identification of internal or external experts who are functionally independent from the responsible authorities in charge of programme implementation. Such experts are instructed by the MA to carry out the evaluation activities described in this Plan. Furthermore, the MA supported by the JS assures the functions of coordination, monitoring and quality assurance of the assessment activities specified in the Plan..

The Managing Authority is ultimately responsible for rendering the evaluations public.

Maltese National Coordination Authority

As a Member State and programme partner, the MNCA is responsible for the proper implementation of the programme in the territory of the Maltese islands, and, therefore, where necessary, cooperates with evaluators in providing all relevant information and data for the proper completion of the implementation and impact evaluations.

The MNCA also plays an important role in the selection of operations through its representation on the executive committee.

Monitoring Committee

The MC is in charge of examining and approving the Evaluation Plan and to monitor the progress of related activities, as well as to follow up on evaluation findings reported in the Annual Reports to be submitted in 2017 and 2019, in accordance with art. 14 (4a) of Reg. (EU) No. 1299/2013. Also in line with Article 49 (4) of 1303/2013 the monitoring committee may make observations to the managing authority regarding implementation and evaluation of the programme including actions related to the reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries. The monitoring committee shall monitor actions taken as a result of its observations.

The MC verifies the implementation of the Evaluation Plan and, more specifically, the implementation of evaluation activities on an annual basis, as set forth in the Implementation Regulation 207/2015 which, in Annex X, contains the sample form for the aforementioned Annual Reports, including a specific section dedicated to a summary of evaluations made available during the previous financial year.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The Plan contemplates both operational assessments - regarding the Programme's implementation processes and structures involved, the ability of the Programme to achieve specific objectives through the correct logical connection between actions and expected results, as well as the manner and level of use of available resources - and strategic evaluations, which concerns the contribution of the Programme towards the achievement of Europe 2020 objectives.

Conventionally, and in line with the methodological guidelines set by the European Commission, the feedback regarding the execution of the Programme processes, methods and levels of use of the available resources and the requirements to verify the achievement of the expected results converge in the implementation evaluation reports, while those focused on the contribution of the Programme to the achievement of the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of Europe 2020 concern the impact evaluation reports.

The **implementation evaluation** is based on the evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency. Operationally, these types of evaluation (efficiency and effectiveness) shall be developed jointly, focusing, also in relation to the implementation level of the Programme, with the intention of examining the activities in light of the expected results, as well as to express an opinion concerning the effective possibility of achieving the target values, with particular reference to those measured by indicators included in the performance framework, the choices made in terms of resource allocation, and processes and procedures which allow concrete implementation of the Programme.

The evaluations shall then verify the manner in which the functions are carried out by the different Programme Authorities and Organisms (evaluation of the process), as well as the methods and levels of use of available resources (efficiency evaluation), and the ERDF contribution to the achievement of these defined Objectives - and, therefore, the achievement of the set results - for each investment Priority (efficacy evaluation).

Evidence of implementation assessments, especially in their component relating to effectiveness, together with other elements that will be appropriately defined during the process, allow the acquisition of a knowledge base needed to evaluate the contribution of the Programme towards the achievement of the objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and, hence figuring out the impact on the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy. These aspects will constitute the **impact evaluation** of a strategic nature.

3.3 INVOLVEMENT OF PARTNERS

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the concept of partnership has been given greater importance than in the past.

Regulation (EU) n. 1303/2013 and the Code of Conduct provide that each Member State organize a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities, with city authorities and other competent public authorities, with financial and social partners and relevant bodies representing the civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organizations, organizations promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

In line with these provisions, even on a specific theme such as evaluation, stakeholder engagement, as required by the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, assumes major relevance.

Participation of the partnership in the evaluation process will be ensured directly by the presence of representatives of socio-economic and institutional partnerships, as well as representatives from environmental authorities and others promoting gender equality and non-discrimination of the Member States, within the MC.

Participation of the partnership in the evaluation process will also be ensured by the evaluation methodology which, focusing on a highly participatory approach, will provide for the maximum involvement of beneficiaries and stakeholders in the evaluation activities through interviews and/or questionnaires that will provide useful information for the evaluation of implementation and impact.

3.4 EXPERTISE

The evaluation of Programme implementation (process, efficiency and effectiveness) will be implemented by the Evaluation and Verification of Public Investments (NVVIP) Nucleus of the Region of Sicily, a technical support structure for "programming, evaluation, implementation and evaluation of plans, intervention programmes and policies promoted and implemented by each administration" (Founding law n. 144/1999), under the remit of the Planning Department.

The impact assessment will be conducted by an external evaluator selected on the basis of a tender procedure, in which priority will be given to proven experience in the field of programme evaluation.

As per Art 54(3) of the CPR, the functional independence of the evaluators will be ensured, with respect to the authorities responsible for implementing the Programme.

Evaluators will be provided with relevant elements, programme documentation and any other information necessary or useful for carrying out the evaluation activities. Among them, a fundamental function is attributed to the monitoring data, whose actual availability constitutes an explicit legal obligation of the Managing Authority (Art. 54 (2) of EU Reg. 1303/2013).

In this context, the Managing Authority, with the support of the Joint Secretariat, will provide all collected data through the information system, including data needed to evaluate financial, result and performance indicators.

3.5 STRATEGY FOR THE USE AND DISSEMINATION OF EVALUATION RESULTS

There are multiple users of the evaluation results and the modalities of use will differ depending on the recipients and the necessary levels of study.

Evaluation results and findings are, first and foremost, indispensable tools for the Programme bodies in order to guide the implementation of the Programme, as well as for future planning.

The evaluation reports will be presented as scheduled to the MC and discussed in that forum, involving economic and social partners and representatives of the Partnership of the Programme. In particular, the Managing Authority will present to the MC possible recommendations to re-orient the Programme and any related follow-up measures.

After the MC review, all the evaluation reports shall be sent to the European Commission through the 2014 SFC system, consisting of an executive summary in English containing the main findings and conclusions for each evaluation question, as well as a brief description of the data and the methodologies used.

The Annual Programme Implementation Reports will contain the summaries of the evaluation activities carried out during the reference fiscal year, as well as the methods by which results have been taken into account during the Programme's implementation process.

Furthermore, the disclosure of evaluation results to the public and Programme stakeholders will be ensured through the publication of reports on the Programme's website disseminated through the Annual Implementation Reports and the Final Implementation Report.

3.6 TIMING AND BUDGET

The Table presented below illustrates the planning of the evaluation methodology and the way in which evaluation activities shall be integrated with the requirements for implementation of activity related to the Programme's official reporting to the EC, on the basis of the provisions of art. 50 of the General Regulation and art 14 of the ERDF Regulation related to the European Territorial Cooperation Goal.

Implementation reports must contain a summary of the key evaluative evidence that were made available in previous years, as well as a description of each evaluation element that affects the achievement of the Programme's objectives and the measures taken accordingly.

In particular, reports to be submitted in 2017 and 2019 must include, in addition to information on the progress towards the achievement of the Programme objectives, elements that take into account the progress on the Evaluation Plan and any follow-up on the results of evaluations completed.

Furthermore, the Implementation Report to be submitted in 2019 must also contain the contribution of the Programme towards the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In reference to the provisions of art. 114, para. 2 of the General Regulation, the MA must also submit to the EC by 31 December 2022, a report summarizing all the main assessment evidence gathered in the course of the evaluation, as well as the main achievements and results of the Programme.

The resources allocated for the implementation of the Evaluation Plan are detailed as follows:

- External resources payed with the TA funds of the programme: the amount of 80,000 Euros, including VAT, of the Programme's Technical Assistance funds will be allocated to contracting

external evaluators for the implementation of activities related to the impact assessment provided for in the Evaluation Plan.

- Internal resources not paid with the TA funds of the programme: these resources, referring to the Evaluation and Verification of Public Investments (NVVIP) Nucleus of the Region of Sicily, will be available for activities related to the implementation evaluation.

The MA will be clearly established requirements and the evaluation criteria for selecting the external expertise by ensuring adequate professional skills, including language skills in both official languages of the Programme, in the field of assessment and verification of investments and public policy development. In addition, the MA will ensure a transparent selection process, with the full application of the rules of public procedures as required at European, national and regional levels.

Tab. 1 - Summary Report of the Evaluation and Timetable for the Interreg V-A Italy Malta Programme

N.	Type of assessment	Subject	Date of release of results	Methodology	Persons appointed
1	Implementation (Part I)	Operation of the Programme's management structures and its degree of implementation	30/04/2017	Document analysis Data analysis Individual and group interviews with stakeholders	NVVIP Sicilia
		Effectiveness of the management of the new cooperation area, with particular reference to the degree of involvement of the stakeholders			
2	Implementation (Part II)	Operation of the Programme's management structures and its degree of implementation	31/03/2019	Document analysis Data analysis Individual and group interviews with stakeholders	NVVIP Sicilia
		Effectiveness/efficiency of the processes of presentation and selection of applications, also in reference to the correspondence of the approved projects to the horizontal principles (art. 7 and 8 of Reg. 1303/2013)			
		Effectiveness, in terms of the Programme's ability to achieve the expected results with particular reference to the targets of the Performance Framework and efficiency (financial dimensions of the Programme)			
		Degree of integration of the Programme with other EU instruments			
		Effectiveness of the management of the new cooperation area			
Effectiveness of the communication Strategy: a. communication and dissemination to the public b. communication and information to stakeholders					

N.	Type of assessment	Subject	Date of release of results	Methodology	Persons appointed
3	Impact	Programme's contribution to the EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, with reference to: a) quality of life and health of citizens (Axes 1 and 2) b) cultural heritage (Axis 1) c) protection of the environment (Axis 2 and 3) d) risk prevention (Axis 3)	31/03/2021	Document analysis Data analysis Individual and group interviews with stakeholders, survey	External parties functionally independent from authorities responsible for implementing the Programme
4	Summary Report	Summary of the evaluations and the main results of the Programme	31/12/2022	Document analysis Data analysis	MA/JS

3.7 STRATEGY OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The MA is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the evaluation process and ensures proper management, from the planning to the communication stage, as well as follow-up on findings of, and recommendations by, the evaluators.

It is also responsible for the identification of evaluators.

In the case of the implementation assessment, the Evaluation and Verification of Public Investments (NVIP) Nucleus of the Region of Sicily, a technical structure supporting the Programme also in the evaluation stages of programmes, possesses the professional qualifications and independence which ensure the quality of the evaluation process.

In the case of the impact assessment, the external evaluators shall be identified on the basis of a procedure in which the MA will ensure a transparent selection process, based on the skills and experiences of evaluators, with full application of public procedures rules established at the EU, national and regional levels.

During the evaluation phase, the JS will be the main interface with evaluators, who will be provided with the Programme's monitoring data and all the information already available concerning the Programme's management/implementation. Moreover, regular meetings (in person or virtual) will be scheduled in order to verify the evaluation progress.

The MC/JS will ensure compliance between the services supplied by the evaluators and the requisites mandated to them and shall also verify the congruency of the services with the exigencies of the evaluation plan.

All evaluation reports will be made available to the MC for its review and subsequently made public through publication on the Programme corporate website www.italiamalta.eu.

4. EVALUATION PLAN

4.1 LOGIC AND CONTEXT OF ASSESSMENTS

The assessment is carried out in the context of Programme management, in that it evaluates Programme implementation and the results achieved in light of the defined objectives.

The goal of the Evaluation Plan is to verify the Programme's effectiveness, efficiency and impact, with specific reference to the following elements:

- ability to use available resources, ensuring the financial performance at project level, specific objective, investment priorities, Axis and Programme (efficiency);
- ability to achieve the expected results with a focus on the specific objectives and their outcome indicators (effectiveness);
- ability to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 objectives (extent of impact).

In the context of the Plan, this objective will be pursued through assessments attributable to the following:

1. **implementation evaluations**, of operational nature, concerning implementation processes, methods of use of resources and assessment of the achievement of expected results;
2. **impact assessment**, of strategic nature, namely functional evaluations to determine the Programme's ability to contribute to the achievement of the specific Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Together with the above assessments, the **Summary Report** will also be included, with the main purpose of drawing an overall picture of the evaluation activities carried out and the main results of the Programme. The main references, regarding the specific structure to be given to the evaluation process outlined above, shall be as follows.

4.2 DATA COVERAGE, APPROACH, METHODS AND COLLECTION

4.2.1 IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

A. Evaluation Approach and Focus

The main objective to be pursued through the proposed assessment is to verify the functionality of the Programme, with particular focus on the appropriateness of the management structures and the selection processes of the activated operations and the degree of implementation, in relation to expected results.

In this regard, during the implementation evaluation, the actions taken are examined in respect to the achievement of expected results and the actual ability to achieve the target values, with particular reference to the results measured through the indicators included in the performance framework.

In view of the above, the evaluation of these aspects has led to the identification of the following objects of analysis, taking into account the respective purposes, to which the relevant evaluation questions indicated below in Table 2, are related.

Tab. 2 - Implementation Evaluation. Subjects, purpose and evaluation questions

Evaluation Subject	Evaluation Purpose	Evaluation Questions
Operation of the Programme's management structures and its degree of implementation	The evaluations shall then verify the manner in which the functions are carried out by the different Programme Authorities and Organisms (process evaluation), as well as the methods and levels of use of available resources (efficiency evaluation), and the ERDF contribution to the achievement of these defined Objectives - and, therefore, the achievement of its results - for each investment Priority (efficacy evaluation).	<p>The Programme management structures and procedures put in place are adequate/effective as it pertains to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • human resources and MA/JS/MNCA organization? • administrative management capability? • introduction of innovations (e.g., online forms, simplified costs, etc)? • measures to reduce administrative burden on stakeholders? • control system? • support services to stakeholders? • monitoring system (guidelines for the definition and use of indicators ...)?
Effectiveness of the management of the new cooperation area, with particular reference to the degree of involvement of stakeholders	Evaluation of the involvement of stakeholders in the Programme implementation	Does the Programme's management help promote the involvement and participation of stakeholders (beneficiaries, authorities/bodies, etc.) in the Programme's implementation?
Effectiveness/efficiency of the processes of presentation and selection of applications, also in reference to the correspondence of the approved projects to horizontal principles (art. 7 and 8 of Reg. 1303/2013)	Evaluation of the processes of presentation and selection of applicants - by defining indices relating to the timetable for investigation (efficiency) and coverage per each Axis/Objective of applications (effectiveness) - with focus on the methods by which selection criteria of considered calls have defined the horizontal principles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what measure did the Programme implement efficient/effective procedures for the submission and selection of candidates in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline to evaluate projects? • Coverage per Axis/Objective of applications? • Effectiveness of implementation tools (number of projects allowed vs. projects presented)? • Coverage of applications on geographical areas involved in the Programme (number of candidates)? 2. To what extent do the procedures for submission and selection of applications take into account the principles set forth in art. 7 and 8 of Reg. 1303/2013, with specific reference to the eligibility criteria?
Effectiveness, in terms of the Programme's ability to achieve the expected results with particular reference to the targets of the Performance Framework and efficiency (financial dimensions of the Programme)	Assessment which, in the initial phase, will focus on the financial aspects of the Programme as a whole (efficiency). As far as physical indicators, it will focus on analysis related to the achievement of set target values.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the distribution of commitments per each Axis, with respect to the financial plan? And that of certified expenditures? Are spending targets achievable? 2. What is the picture that emerges from the analysis of output indicators in terms of expected results actually achieved/reachable?
Effectiveness of the communication Strategy: a. communication and dissemination to the public b. communication and information to stakeholders	Assessment of the degree of achievement of the objectives of the Strategy through surveys on communication tools, coverage, audience, and the main communication actions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the Programme activated mechanisms for information and communication that improve citizen participation? 2. Is communication with beneficiaries regular and constant?

B. Data Methodology and Source

The methodology and data sources of implementation evaluation are listed in Table 3 below.

Tab. 3 - Implementation Evaluation Data Methodology and Source

Methodology	Description	Primary information sources
Document analysis	Research, reading, re-processing of programmatic, procedural, implementation and description documentation produced in the context of the Programme implementation.	Programme, description of the management and control system, as well as manuals and notices.
Data analysis	Research, analysis and processing of financial, physical and procedural progress data relating to the Programme, as well as any statistical data produced in the monitoring system	Information system Reports on physical, financial and procedural monitoring
Interviews	Administration of interviews - more or less structured - with Programme stakeholders, either individually or in groups, with the aim of deepening aspects evidenced by the analysis of documents or surveys, or to complement the application of other techniques (such as case studies).	Management Authority POCs Stakeholders Reports relating to the selection and implementation of projects

The Programme indicator system, referred to in “Annex 2 - *Methodological Document for the Definition of Target Indicators*”, is the fundamental source of information for the implementation phase. In particular, financial and output indicators, including those relating to the performance framework, will give account of the efficiency dimension of the Programme; performance indicators will help measure effectiveness.

C. Planning and Duration

Planning of the implementation assessment follows the timetable defined below.

- **Implementation Evaluation (Part I).** This report is expected by the end of April 2017, and will focus - even in light of the early stage of implementation of the Programme - on purely procedural aspects, as well as on the effectiveness of the Programme’s management, with particular reference to the degree of involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the programme. In view of the early stage of implementation, this evaluation, in addition to focusing on a limited number of issues, will draw from evidence collected from the procedure for the submission of applications, for the purpose of verifying the latter’s level of effectiveness and efficiency and implementation tools thereof.
- **Implementation Evaluation (Part II).** This evaluation report, scheduled to be released by the end of March 2019, focuses on the adequacy of the functioning of structures, on the Programme’s implementation modalities, the management of the cooperation area and use of resources, on the ability to achieve the expected results (with particular reference to the performance framework targets), on the degree of integration of the Programme with other EU tools and on the communication strategy.

D. Expected Budget

The implementation assessment (part I and II) will be carried out by the NVIP Sicily as part of its ordinary activities and, therefore, the estimated expenditure shall not have any impact on the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Programme.

4.2.2 IMPACT EVALUATION

A. Evaluation Approach and Focus

The impact assessment concerns the effects of the Programme's implementation with the aim of assessing its contribution to the Europe 2020 goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In this sense, the impact assessment examines the contribution to the EU strategy with regard to the areas of quality of life and health of citizens, cultural heritage, environmental protection, and risk prevention.

In this regard, the evaluation of these aspects has led to the identification of the following objects of analysis, taking into account the respective purposes, to which the relevant evaluation questions indicated in Table 4 below are related.

Tab. 4 - Impact Evaluation. Evaluation Subjects, purposes and evaluation questions

Evaluation Subject	Evaluation Purpose	Evaluation Questions
The Programme's contribution to the EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	Evaluation of the contribution made by the Programme in relation to the goals of Europe 2020 Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is the Programme implementation adequate to contribute to the EU strategy? Is it in line with the programming? 2) Did the Programme contribute to the purposes of the Europe 2020 Strategy? Through which measures, and how?
a) quality of life and health of citizens (Axes 1 and 2)	Evaluation of the improvement of the quality of life and the health of citizens as a result of the: a) application of developed and/or enhanced technologies, actions and innovative services; b) consolidation and creation of (micro, small and medium) businesses in the cooperation area; c) mobility of workers through joint services developed across borders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Have conditions been created such as to trigger lasting cooperation processes for improving the quality of life and health of citizens? 4) Are joint actions contemplated in the projects able to help improve the quality of life and health of citizens?
b) cultural heritage (Axis 1)	Evaluation of the improvement of the enjoyment of the cultural heritage through the application of developed and/or enhanced technologies, actions and innovative services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) Have conditions been created such as to trigger lasting cooperation processes in matter of cultural heritage? 6) Are joint actions contemplated in the projects able to help improve the enjoyment of cultural assets in the cooperation area?

Evaluation Subject	Evaluation Purpose	Evaluation Questions
c) protection of the environment (Axis 2 and 3)	Evaluation of the contribution of actions to the improvement of protection and safeguarding of marine and terrestrial biodiversity in the cooperation area	7) Have conditions been created such as to trigger lasting cooperation processes in matter of environmental protection? 8) Are joint actions contemplated in the projects able to help protect and safeguard marine and terrestrial biodiversity in the cooperation area?
d) risk prevention (Axis 3)	Assessment of the impact of technological systems and joint actions to improve the security in the cooperation area (sea and land) from natural and anthropogenic hazards	9) Have conditions been created such as to trigger lasting cooperation processes in matter of prevention and management of risks resulting from climate change and improvement of marine safety? 10) Did the measures to adapt to climate change prove to be relevant and pertinent with respect to risks identified? 11) Did the actions contemplated in the PI 5b prove adequate to enhance risk monitoring?

B. Data Methodology and Source

The methodology and data sources of impact evaluation are listed in Table 5.

Tab. 5 - Impact Evaluation. Data Methodology and Source

Methodology	Description	Primary information sources
Document analysis	Research, reading, re-elaboration of programmatic documentation, implementation, procedural and description documentation produced in the context of the Programme implementation.	Programme, description of the management and control system, as well as manuals and notices.
Data analysis	Research, analysis and processing of financial, physical and procedural progress data relating to the Programme, as well as any statistical data produced in the monitoring system	Information system Reports on physical, financial and procedural monitoring
Survey	Administration of questionnaires to groups - identified <i>a priori</i> - of beneficiaries or stakeholders affected by particular aspects of the implementation of the Programme.	Management Authority, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries
Interviews	Administration of interviews - more or less structured - with Programme stakeholders, either individually or in groups, with the aim of deepening aspects evidenced by the analysis of documents or surveys, or to complement the application of other techniques (such as case studies).	Management Authority, Stakeholders Reports relating to the selection and implementation of projects

C. Planning and Duration

The release of the Programme's implementation is expected by 31 March 2021.

D. Expected Budget

The impact assessment will be conducted by external evaluators, who shall be functionally independent from the authorities responsible for implementing the Programme, and are recruited through public procedures. Recruitment expenses will be paid by the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Programme for an estimated total of around € 80,000.

4.2.3 SUMMARY REPORT

A. Evaluation Approach and Focus

Pursuant to the provisions of art. 114 of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013, the Managing Authority shall submit to the Commission a **Summary Report** with the aim of: 1) summarizing the evaluation findings carried out during the programming period and the main results obtained by the operational programme, and 2) provide comments on the reported information.

Table 6 below associates evaluation questions to the Summary Report.

Tab. 6 - Summary Report. Evaluation Subject and Questions

Evaluation Subject	Evaluation Questions
Summary of the evaluations and the main results of the Programme	1.1 What were the main contributions of the evaluation to the Programme management? 1.2 What were the most useful evaluative activities and why? 1.3 Was the Evaluation Plan substantially complied with?

B. Data Methodology and Source

The methodology and sources of information of the Summary Report draw from the programmatic, implementation, procedural and descriptive documentation produced in the context of the Programme implementation, as well as the evaluation and implementation reports produced over time, and whose contents will be useful to draw an overall picture of the main valuation issues raised and, through these, of the main results of the INTERREG V-A Italy Malta Programme.

The methodology and data sources of implementation evaluation are listed in the Table below. 7.

Tab. 7 - Summary Report. Data Methodology and Sources

Methodology	Description	Primary information sources
Document analysis	Research, reading, re-processing of programmatic, procedural, implementation and description documentation produced in the context of the Programme implementation.	Programme, description of the management and control system, as well as manuals and notices.
Data analysis	Research, analysis and processing of financial, physical and procedural progress data relating to the Programme, as well as any statistical data produced in the monitoring system	Information system Reports on physical, financial and procedural monitoring

C. Planning and Duration

The release of the Summary Report is expected by 31 December 2022, as defined in art. 114 of Reg. (EU) n. 1303/2013.

D. Expected Budget

The Summary Report will be prepared by the Managing Authority with the support of the Joint Secretariat. The latter will perform its activities in a manner consistent with its work plan for the completion of which the Programme draws on the resources of the technical assistance plan approved by the MC of the programme.