

France (Channel) England Evaluation Plan

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A. Introduction

Evaluations in the France (Channel) England Programme

During the current programming period, the France (Channel) England Programme is scheduled to undertake two evaluations – one evaluation of the implementation of the Programme, and another evaluation of the Programme’s impact.

Evaluations provide a context and means for gathering data, reflecting and drawing conclusions regarding the current state and future of the Programme. As such the Programme will employ evaluations for the following reasons:

- The Programme is committed to a results orientated INTERREG: we intend that our projects make demonstrable change in the programme area
- Similarly, we intend that the Programme is fully accountable for the money invested: this means having a clear sense of what the ERDF has been spent on in terms of change to people lives.
- We intend to follow an evidence-based approach when implementing changes to the programme and planning for the future

The Evaluation Plan

The Evaluation Plan of the Interreg France (Channel) England Programme (FCE Programme) has been prepared in compliance with the following regulatory framework:

- Common Provision Regulation – CPR (Regulation (EC) No 1303/2013), in particular Article 54 describing the general provisions on evaluation, Article 56 on evaluation during the programming period, Article 110 defining the functions of the monitoring committee and Article 114 focussing on evaluation.
- European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1299/2013, in particular Preamble 26 on the responsibility of the managing authority on carrying out evaluations on the basis of the Evaluation Plan and Article 14 describing the requirements for submission of implementation reports.

In addition, the Evaluation Plan builds on the following relevant European Commission (EC) guidance documents:

- The programming Period 2014-2020. Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation. European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, Concepts and Recommendations. March 2014.
- 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 2015.
- Questions and Answers on impact evaluation(s) for Interreg programmes 2014-2020. Interact. August 2015.

The Evaluation Plan of the FCE programme has been drafted by the Joint Secretariat (JS) and has been submitted for approval to the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) via written procedure within one year of the adoption of Cooperation Programme¹. Following its adoption, following the incorporation of any feedback provided by the PMC, it has been sent to the European Commission (EC) for information through the SFC portal. The Evaluation Plan as well as the outcomes of the evaluations are published on the programme website.

The regulatory framework for the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) emphasises result-orientation and evaluation of programme effectiveness and impact. Annual reporting on outputs and results is required, including findings of evaluations, where available; so too are evaluations of the contribution of funds to achieving programme objectives. In order to strengthen the contribution of evaluations to the effectiveness of programmes, the CPR makes it compulsory to design Evaluation Plans at the beginning of the programming period.

The Evaluation Plan of the FCE Programme is therefore a strategic document for the use of the Programme bodies setting out how evaluations will be organised during the 2014-2020 period, and how they will support the programme implementation and its result-orientation. In particular, it defines the strategy chosen for evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme. In accordance with the EC Guidance Document on Evaluation Plans the main objectives of the Evaluation Plan are to:

- improve the quality of evaluations undertaken by the Programme through proper planning, including identification and collection of necessary data (Article 54(2) CPR)
- enable informed programme management and policy decisions on the basis of evaluation findings;
- provide a framework to plan impact evaluations (Article 56(3)CPR)
- ensure that evaluations provide inputs for annual implementation and progress reports;
- facilitate the synthesis of findings from different Member States by the EC and the exchange of available evidence
- ensure that resources for funding and managing the evaluations are appropriate (Article 54(2) CPR).

Progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Plan as well as the outcomes of the evaluation activities (when available) will be reported in the annual implementation report (AIR) for the years 2017, 2019 and the final AIR. By 31 December 2022, the MA will submit to the EC a report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programme period.

The present paper sets out the evaluations planned for the entire programming period though evaluations described may be subject to change. New evaluation needs might occur during programme lifetime. The Evaluation Plan will regularly be reviewed by the Performance and Audit Sub-Committee (PASC) and it might be adapted according to the programme needs.

¹ The France (Channel) England Cooperation Programme was adopted on the October 28th 2015.

B. Evaluation Framework

B1. Type of Evaluations

Based on the above mentioned objectives and in line with Article 56 (3) of CPR² and on the specific programme needs, two main types of evaluations are planned for 2014-2020:

- Evaluations on the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme;
- Impact evaluations on each of the specific objectives selected by the programme.

With the aim of ensuring their quality and optimising the evaluation efforts and costs, synergy among different types of evaluations will be promoted as much as possible.

B2. Roles and Responsibilities

The main responsibilities and functions for the programme evaluation process rest with the Managing Authority (MA), Joint Secretariat (JS) and the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) (supported by the Performance and Audit Sub-Committee (PASC)). They are specified as follows:

a. Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat

In accordance with Article 114(1) CPR, the MA has the responsibility to draw up an Evaluation Plan and submit it to the PMC no later than one year after the adoption of the Cooperation Programme. The MA has to submit the Evaluation Plan, and any amendments to the Evaluation Plan approved by the PMC, to the EC for information.

In accordance with Article 56(3) CPR, during programme implementation, the MA has to ensure that programme evaluation, including evaluations on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme, are carried out on the basis of the Evaluation Plan and that appropriate follow-up measures to follow-up evaluations are taken. It will ensure that all evaluations are examined by the PMC and sent to the EC.

The MA assisted by the JS are responsible for drafting the Terms of Reference for the proposed evaluations, and for the procurement of external experts to be appointed as independent evaluators. The MA is responsible for submitting information based evaluations in the annual implementation reports. The MA will delegate to the Joint Secretariat (JS) technical tasks related to coordinating, monitoring, quality assurance and reporting.

In addition to this, in accordance with Article 114(2) CPR the MA will submit to the EC in 2022 a report summarising the findings of the evaluations carried out and the main outputs and results of the programme, providing comments on the reported information.

² The article foresees that 'During the programming period, the managing authority shall ensure that evaluations, including evaluations to assess **effectiveness, efficiency and impact**, are carried out for each programme on the basis of the plan and that each evaluation is subject to appropriate follow-up in accordance with the Fund-specific rules. At least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the ESI Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority'.

b. Programme Monitoring Committee

Articles 110(1)(b) and 110(2)(c) CPR state that the PMC has to examine and approve the Evaluation Plan (including any amendments) and the progress made in its implementation as well as the follow-up measures to the findings of evaluations which will be reported within the annual implementation reports in the years 2017 and 2019 (according to Article 111(4)(a) CPR). In the France (Channel) England Programme the PMC will be supported in the functions of reviewing implementation and follow-up actions by the PASC on an annual basis.

The PASC will also support the PMC closely accompany and steer the evaluation process and assists for example with the drafting of Terms of Reference and the selection of external experts. The PASC will review any evaluations and will be consider actions based on finding of the evaluation. The PASC will provide annual reports to the PMC regarding these activities.

B3. Synergy with other Programmes and Initiatives

The Programme will actively look for possibilities of coordination with other Interreg programmes, seeking exchanges with the managing authorities of other, geographically overlapping programmes on the planning and implementation of evaluations as well as on evaluation methodologies and results.

In addition to this, the MA/JS will actively contribute to the exchange and sharing of information with other transnational cooperation and cross-border programmes through its participation in the evaluation network which is facilitated by INTERACT.

Evaluations will look to incorporate findings of other national and regional studies wherever relevant.

B4. Source of Evaluation Expertise

Article 54 (3) of the CPR regulation states that evaluations are to be carried out by experts (internal or external) that are functionally independent from the authorities responsible for programme implementation.

On the one hand, the Programme intends to guarantee that human and financial resources are allocated to evaluation activities efficiently and intends to ensure ownership of evaluation activities by the Programme. However, it will not be possible for departments/units separate from the MA/JS within Norfolk County Council (and who would therefore be functionally independent) to deal with evaluation.

Therefore, a mixed approach of internal and external expertise will be used.

As a general rule, for the impact evaluation analyses will be carried out by external experts, as will data collection when specialist techniques are required (for instance, interviews or questionnaires) or where a wider scope is required (synergies with studies beyond the programme).

The JS will assist with data collection regarding programme context, programme decision-making, stakeholder feedback and project monitoring, including setting up systems for collecting and storing this data (with methodological input from external experts).

For the implementation evaluation both data collection and analysis will be undertaken by the JS, with the methodology and findings independently verified by external evaluators.

The MA/JS and external experts will share tasks related to defining, planning and setting up evaluations, in liaison with the PASC when appropriate.

External experts may be required increase evaluation capacity within the JS or among project partners through training or developing materials.

B5. Data Collection and Monitoring System

Data will be collected in order to measure programme results and provide answers to evaluation questions. These questions in turn will be chosen taking into account what can be answered based on the data that is feasible to collect.

Once the data required is known, the JS will review existing systems or set up data collection systems to ensure that sufficient data is collected for evaluations to be performed. Advice on data collection methods will be provided by external experts.

Additional indicators may be developed in addition to those set out in the Cooperation Programme (CP).

Data sources already available include the following:

- Existing studies carried out by expert evaluators (evaluations of previous programmes, ex ante report)
- Studies and analyses conducted by the JS (e.g. in development of result indicator targets, lessons learnt from individual calls/events)
- Decisions taken by the Programme captured in minutes
- Data related to individual calls on the Online Monitoring System
- Data related to projects as part of project reporting (reporting on deliverables and outputs) on the Online Monitoring System.
- Expert surveys as part of monitoring of Programme Result Indicators

Further potential data sources:

- Desk-based research of existing literature on the Programme area
- Data from interviews surveys or questionnaires of stakeholders or beneficiaries
- Case studies of best and worst practice (also compiled through interviews, questionnaires)
- Focus group meetings
- Project reporting on results

Regarding project reporting on results, though projects reports are designed as far as possible to support the programme evaluations, depending on the data required for evaluation, reports may be modified to request additional information regarding the quality of outputs and regarding results. In this case, external evaluators may be required to develop training for applicants or partners on how to evaluate their own projects in a way that the findings can be comparable and therefore used in evaluation at a programme level.

B6. Dissemination of Evaluation Results

Following regulatory requirements, the evaluation outcomes will be presented for approval to the PMC, and sent to the European Commission. The PMC will be supported in this task by the PASC. The programme is committed to making evaluation reports as practical as possible so that evaluation results during the programming period are used to inform implementation. Additional recommendations based on results may also be presented to the PASC so that findings can be acted upon immediately.

As well as the Evaluation Plan, evaluation reports will be published on the programme website. In addition, the dissemination of results of evaluation will be carried out as part of activities (thematic workshops, use of social media etc.) set out in the Communication Strategy. At the same time, results of evaluations will influence the implementation of the Communication Strategy as findings will be taken into account when deciding on the thematic focus of workshops and the groups they look to engage.

Evaluation results will also form an important basis for the justification that the programme's interventions realised through the projects have led to positive results and impacts, that there is added value in cooperation, and for giving accountability for invested funds.

Finally, the evaluation outcomes will contribute to planning for (possible) future programmes after 2014-2020.

B7. Quality Management

To ensure quality of programme evaluations, adequate time will be foreseen to plan evaluations and procure expertise. For the latter, specific criteria has been defined in the terms of reference for the selection of evaluation experts. The ToR will define, among others, the objectives of the evaluations, the target audience of reports, the role and responsibilities of the evaluators, the description of the evaluation assignment and work flow, management arrangements, the duration of the contract and the resources to be allocated. Particular attention has been paid to the specification of evaluation tasks (including the evaluation framework and questions to be further developed by the bidders) and to the estimation of data requirements. With regard to the foreseen impact evaluation, the ToR will be developed in line with the model provided as Annex 1 to the EC Guidance document on Evaluation Plans.

Regarding the expertise of the evaluators, the expertise needed for the evaluations will be linked to competences in relation to the Programme area (knowledge to the specific challenges and

opportunities as well as the geography) and competences in relation to evaluation of cross border cooperation programmes and in specific competences in relation to qualitative evaluation methodologies. The demands for specific expertise as well as other relevant quality management questions are also part of the ToR for the evaluator procurement.

Terms of reference have been drawn up by the JS and were submitted to the PASC for feedback before the procurement process begins.

Evaluators are required to produce inception, interim and final reports on the evaluations carried out. MA/JS are responsible for quality control of the outsourced evaluation activities. The inception report may also be scrutinised by the PASC.

For those cases where the MA/JS provide data, set up data collection processes, conduct analysis or other perform other evaluation activities, the external evaluators review and validate the evaluation concept (planned evaluation questions, methodology and data) and the results of the evaluations (to verify if conclusions are logic and objective).

For coordination between the MA/JS and the external evaluators, an evaluation coordinator from the JS will act as main interface with the appointed evaluation team which, in turn, are required to set up a clear responsibility structure and their coordinator. Continuous dialogue between the evaluators and the JS using an interactive and iterative approach will be ensured as this is directly linked to the quality and usefulness of evaluation outcomes. Regular meetings (physical or virtual) between the evaluators and the JS will be scheduled.

As well as being involved in the definition of the ToR for the procurement of external experts and in the design of the evaluation concept for the evaluations, the PASC will review all evaluation reports; and will accompany and monitor the implementation of follow-up measures defined as a result of evaluations.

The PASC will be regularly informed of progress on evaluation activities, their outcomes and will also receive evaluation reports.

The PASC will provide information on its support to the PMC in its annual report.

B8. Human and Financial Resources

One staff member of the JS overseen by the MA is engaged in the preparation and implementation of the plan. Additional staff members of the JS will be involved in the evaluations when required. The JS communication officer will contribute to evaluations concerning the communication strategy and will also ensure the communication of the outcomes of programme evaluations.

To ensure good knowledge of qualitative, quantitative evaluation methodologies and sound planning and managing of evaluations MA/JS staff will regularly take part in training offered, especially by INTERACT, and will exchange with other Interreg programmes. The possibility of external experts providing training to JS staff members will also be explored.

Based on the estimated evaluation needs and the overall budget available from the technical assistance budget (TA) for external expertise, a maximum amount of EUR 200,000 is reserved for evaluations in the period 2014-2020.

C. Planned Evaluation and Timings

C1. Rationale

The FCE programme foresees 2 main evaluations (1 implementation evaluation and 1 impact evaluation) each with 2 phases. Phase 1 of the Implementation Evaluation will take place in 2017 followed by Phase 2 in 2018/2019. The Impact Evaluation will begin in 2018 and will culminate with a final report in 2022. These evaluations have been designed with the following considerations in mind:

Meeting Regulatory Requirements

The regulations require that programmes evaluate both the effectiveness and efficiency and the impact of funds. Therefore the FCE programme will hold evaluations both of the implementation of the programme (whether it is on track to realise key implementation steps necessary to achieve projected results and achieve the desired change in the Programme area and to sufficient quality) and the impact (has the Programme actually contributed to challenges set out in the CP).

Programmes are also required by regulations to include results of evaluations in its reports to the Commission. In the Annual Implementation Reports of 2017 and 2019 programmes should include a synthesis of the findings of any evaluations that have become available during the previous financial year; information on progress made towards achieving the objectives of the programme; and, in 2019, a report on the programme's contribution to the EU 2020 strategy.

Therefore, the two phases of the implementation evaluations are scheduled for their results to be available in time to feed into the Annual Implementation Reports of 2017 and 2019 respectively. In the case of the Annual Implementation Report of 2017, this may be limited to preliminary findings.

The Impact Evaluation will be concluded in 2022 so that the fullest picture of the impacts of the programme can be included in the mandatory report to the Commission summarising findings of evaluations in 2022.

Provide support to the implementation of the programme

It is very important that, as much as possible, the findings of evaluations lead to practical and applicable recommendations that support the implementation of the programme.

C2. The Evaluations: the Implementation Evaluation

The objective of the implementation evaluation is to assess programme performance, identifying barriers to effective performance, and making recommendations for actions and activities to address them.

The Implementation Evaluation will assess the performance of the Programme in relation to targets and indicators of progress. These include those set out in the Performance Framework in the Cooperation Programme, but also internal targets and indicators (for instance related to programme commitment). If necessary new targets and indicators will be set for evaluation purposes.

Following the evaluation of the Programme's progress, these targets and indicators will be revised if necessary. Changes to implementation considered necessary will be made. External Experts may assist in communicating results of evaluation or in fostering acceptance of changes to processes based on findings.

Evaluation questions for the Implementation Evaluation will respond to key issues in programme implementation as defined by the PASC/PMC. They will also take into the wide range of areas that are covered by "programme implementation".

The areas that can be covered by the **Implementation Evaluation** include the following:

- Programme management structures
- Decision making processes
- Programme communication
- Project application and selection processes
- Project monitoring processes
- Progress in relation to performance framework milestones and targets
- Respect of horizontal principles
- Partner involvement (linked also to programme communication)
- Contribution to EU2020 strategy and macro-regional strategies

Resources will be channelled into investigating areas of implementation considered particularly crucial for successful operation of the Programme. The PASC will provide guidance as to which areas are priorities for the implementation evaluation.

External experts will ensure that the implementation evaluation data and findings will feed into the impact evaluation.

The Impact Evaluation

The FCE Programme Impact Evaluation will follow a theory-based evaluation approach. Theory based impact evaluations are based on establishing the theory behind an intervention (the theory of change) and assessing whether the implementation has been carried out according to that theory in order to judge the contribution of the intervention to observed effects. The theory based impact evaluation deals with 'why it works', 'did things work as expected to produce the desired change'.

As part of the impact evaluation, the theory of change already set out in the Cooperation Programme will be further defined so that it represents a series of hypotheses linking the various stages of the Programme's intervention logic.

The overall objective of the impact evaluation is to assess the extent to which the observed changes can be attributed to the cooperation programme (hereafter CP) and whether this represents the programme's full potential.

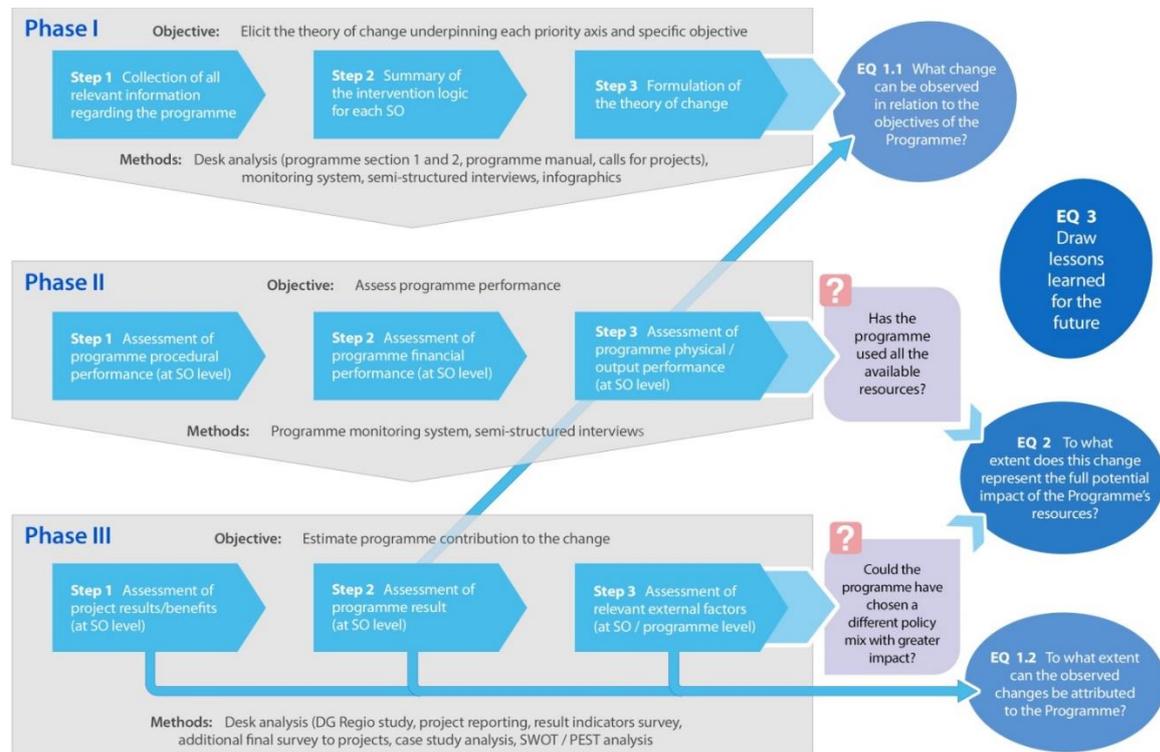
In line with this overall objective, Schedule 2 of the terms and conditions of the contract specifies a set of evaluation questions (hereafter EQ) which should be addressed by the impact evaluation:

EQ 1: *What change can be observed in relation to the objectives of the programme (EQ 1.1)? To what extent can the observed changes be attributed to the programme (EQ 1.2)?*

EQ 2: *To what extent does this change represent the full potential of the programme’s resources?*

EQ 3: *Lessons learnt for the future*

The following figure summarises the approach proposed for answering the evaluation questions.



The Impact Evaluation will cover the five Specific Objectives.

Evaluation of the Future of Cooperation

In addition to its evaluations required by regulations, the Programme intends to carry out an evaluation of the potential for cooperation in the Channel after the current programming period.

The objective of the evaluation is to provide an in-depth analysis of the underlying needs, challenges and added value of cross-border cooperation (CBC) between France and England and to explore opportunities for the future cooperation among stakeholders on both sides of the Channel after the UK’s exit from the EU.

The evaluation aims at answering the following key questions:

- What are the reasons for cooperation between French and English stakeholders in the France (Channel) England area?
- Is there an added value of cross-border activities between France and England?

- What are the key conditions which make CBC effective in the France (Channel) England programme?
- What are the existing cross-border and bilateral cooperation scenarios?

D. List and Timetable of Evaluation

No	Timing	Evaluation theme	Scheduled subject, rationale	Methods	Indicative budget
1.	Beginning 2017	Implementation evaluation part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of Key Implementation Steps for 2017 • Quality of performance regarding these steps • Thematic focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme organisation - Decision-making - Project selection - Monitoring systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research • Data analysis • Survey • Interviews with programme bodies, beneficiaries etc. • Case studies 	External expertise 26 250 EUR
2.	late 2018 - 2019	Implementation evaluation – part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of Key Implementation Steps for 2017 • Quality of performance regarding these steps • Thematic focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project implementation - Partner involvement - Horizontal principals - Contribution to EU2020 strategy and macro- regional strategies Progress of programme implementation 		
3.	2022	Impact evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic and territorial impacts of programme implementation per Specific Objective • Contribution to EU 2020 targets 	Theory based impact evaluation based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research • Data analysis • Surveys • Focus groups • Case studies • Interviews 	External expertise 75 250 EUR
4.	2018 - 2019	Evaluation of the Future of Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the added-value of cooperation in the Channel Area, to inform planning for Post-2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research • Stakeholder survey 	External expertise 50 750 EUR