

# Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

*September 2023*

*Version 1.0*

## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	3
2. Documents and Legislative Framework .....	5
3. Evaluation Plan Objectives .....	6
3.1 Introduction – The Programme Context .....	6
3.2 Focus on Evaluations .....	12
4. Evaluation Plan Context .....	15
4.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the Existing Mechanism/Bodies for the Evaluation Process .....	15
4.2 Involvement & Roles of Partners & Stakeholders .....	16
4.3 Independence of Evaluations .....	17
4.4 Training Activities .....	17
4.5 Dissemination & Use of Evaluation Findings .....	18
4.6 Quality Management Strategy.....	18
5. Evaluations.....	20
PART A: Summary and scheduling of evaluations .....	20
5.1 Summary Table.....	20
5.2 Timetable .....	20
PART B: Evaluations’ Analysis .....	21
5.3 Evaluations’ Analysis.....	21
5.4 Evaluations’ Identity Sheets .....	28

## 1. Executive Summary

The current Evaluation Plan relates to **Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme** and it has been prepared by the Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027 (Ministerial Decision 3411/16.01.2023, FEK 183/B/18.01.2023), with the support of an External Expert, according to the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (Interreg Regulation), Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (Common Provisions Regulation-CPR) and Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 (ERDF Regulation). It has also been based on:

- the SWD (2021) 198 final/08-07-2021 Commission Staff Working Document: «Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027»
- the 41662/05-05-2023/EYSSAE and EYSEKT Working Document 4 «Guidelines for Developing the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Programmes» and on relative documents of the European Commission.

The **strategic objective** of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme is to support the convergence of the area toward the growth and sustainability standards of the National and European Area, by responding to the complex challenges of the geographical regionalization and highlighting through cooperation, understanding, and networking its specific characteristics as comparative advantages.

In total, Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme is focusing on **3 (three) Priorities, 3 Policy Objectives** which are structured into **6 (six) Specific Objectives**. The Programme is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and national funds of the countries participating in it.

The current **Evaluation Plan** of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme will focus on the following:

- on the assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, coherence, EU added value and impact of the Programme's activities and projects
- on ensuring that the Programme is meeting its objectives and targets
- on ensuring that the Programme is making progress towards its goals
- on the compliance of the Programme with the performance framework
- on the compliance of the Programme with the regulatory framework
- on the preparation for impact assessment
- on whether or not to update the intervention logic and to allocate new or redistribute the resources in the Programme
- on improving performance in the interim implementation of the Programme
- on the specialization or the potential redesign of interventions.

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

The Evaluation Plan foresees **two (2) Evaluations in total**, one (1) in **2026** and one (1) in **2029**, of a total budget of **70,000 € plus VAT** (or **86,800 € including VAT**), that will be carried out by independent External Experts.

The Evaluation Plan and the Evaluations will be published on the Programme website <https://www.greece-bulgaria.eu>, on the internet and social media and they will also be presented at various events, in order to reach various stakeholders and the general public. The Final Evolution Reports will be transmitted through the SFC system as well.

The Evaluation Plan and its amendments, as well as the Evaluations findings will be submitted to the Programme's Monitoring Committee to be reviewed and approved.

## 2. Documents and Legislative Framework

The current Evaluation Plan takes into consideration the following documents and legislative framework:

- Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, "definition of the common provisions for the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund+, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, and fiscal rules for these Funds and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for the Financial Support of Border Management and Visa Policy".
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, "on the specific provisions governing the 'European Territorial Cooperation' (Interreg) objective, which is supported by the European Regional Development Fund and the external financing mechanisms".
- Law 4914/2022 "Management, control, and implementation of development interventions for the Programming Period 2021-2027, establishment of a Public Company "National Register of Startup Companies S.A." and other provisions" (Government Gazette 61/A/21.3.2022).
- The Cross Border Cooperation Programme (Interreg VI-A) "Greece – Bulgaria 2021-2027 ", as approved with the number C(2022)6635/13-9-2022 European Commission Implementing Decision for the approval of the support of the Cooperation Programme "Interreg VI-A Greece – Bulgaria 2021-2027" from the European Regional Development Fund within the framework of the objective of European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) in Greece and in Bulgaria.
- The SWD (2021) 198 final/08-07-2021 Commission Staff Working Document: «Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027»
- The 41662/05-05-2023/EYSSAE and EYSEKT Working Document 4 «Guidelines for Developing the Evaluation Plans of the 2021-2027 Programmes» and on relative documents of the European Commission.
- The Greek Ministerial Decision 3411/16.01.2023, FEK 183/B/18.01.2023

It also takes into account the findings and conclusions of the following Evaluations of Interreg V-A Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 Programme:

- First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020" – 5th Deliverable – Final (b) UPDATED FINAL REPORT» [May 2019]
- First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020" - 2nd Deliverable 1st Report» [April 2021]
- First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020" - 3rd Deliverable 2nd Report» [May 2021]
- First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020" - 4th Deliverable Final Report» [August 2021].

### 3. Evaluation Plan Objectives

#### 3.1 Introduction – The Programme Context

Interreg VI-A Greece – Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme is implemented at the NUTS III administrative area surrounding the 475 km border line that separates the two countries, plus the Regional Units of Thessaloniki, Kavala and Thassos. The border line stretches west to east from the tri-border point between Greece, Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia to the similar one between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey.

The region includes:

Seven (7) Greek Regional Units: Evros, Xanthi, Rodopi, Drama, Kavala of the Eastern Macedonia -Thrace Region, Serres and Thessaloniki of Central Macedonia Region

Four (4) Bulgarian Regions: Blagoevgrad of South West Region, Haskovo, Smolyan, Kardzhali of South Central Region.

	<p>EL511–<b>Evros</b> EL512–<b>Xanthi</b> EL513–<b>Rodopi</b> EL514–<b>Drama</b> EL515–<b>Kavala, Thassos</b> EL522–<b>Thessaloniki</b> EL526 – <b>Serres</b></p>		<p>BG413– <b>Blagoevgrad</b> BG422– <b>Haskovo</b> BG424- <b>Smolyan</b> BG425 – <b>Kardzhali</b></p>
--	---	--	---

Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) between Greece – Bulgaria has a significant history starting in the context of the Community Initiatives and, over time, it has evolved into a stable support mechanism in the area. Throughout the different Programming Periods, the priorities and capabilities of the Programme changed according to the respective provisions of the Regulations and the needs of each programming period (transition, accession, economic crisis). However, over the last three programming periods there has been a constant and committed targeting towards cooperation and objective achievement. This stability has gradually led to a specific definition of the options and the implementation instruments of the Programme through the adoption of practices such as Strategic and Targeted Calls. Best practices and capacity building (through experience and trust) also led Programme Authorities to proceed to innovative activities with confidence for the achievement of positive results.

Summarizing main joint challenges, considering economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, the strategic orientation is considering:

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

- The Greece–Bulgaria CBC area is a European territory that faces significant and complex challenges. It is one of the poorest regions (based on the GDP), with unfavorable demographic and social characteristics such as population ageing and abandonment
- The productive structure of the Greece-Bulgaria area is mainly agricultural, consisting of low knowledge intensity and innovation micro enterprises with low competitiveness. Those dominating micro and/or family businesses have also limited access to finance
- Natural environment along with culture represent two strong points of the CBC area, capable to boost sustainable growth and jobs. The CBC area is of high importance regarding the presence of endemic species and community interest habitats. A large part of the area is a site of the NATURA 2000 Network. The control and effective adaptation & treatment of climate risks requires cross border cooperation and interconnection of communication, monitoring, early warning, management plans and inter-operability of prevention infrastructures
- Regarding resource efficiency, the region is characterized (like both countries) by extremely low performance in circular economy indicators. The main instruments for the transition to the circular economy are the National Plans and the financial instruments available to them
- Peripheral Geographical position, mountainous terrain and absence of modern infrastructure, significantly affect the level of development, competitiveness and living conditions in the CBC area. In such case, the transition to “sustainable mobility” presupposes an investment in both terms
- The GR-BG CBC area, particularly in the countryside and the mountainous area, is characterised by (comparatively) low rates of population with higher education, participation in lifelong learning activities and digital skills. The liaison between education, training, competitiveness and entrepreneurship is a common challenge for the area
- The GR-BG cross-border area has a rich and diverse tourist product that thematically can cover all tourism activities. The ski & seaside resorts are at distance of less than three hours away among them, while the rich historical, cultural and natural reserve of the area offers the possibility of developing almost all tourist forms (cultural, historical, nature, M.I.C.E., gastronomic, city brake, etc.). Some of the disadvantages are the low competitiveness of mainly small tourism enterprises, the lack of organization of tourist areas and networks, the poor accessibility and territorial integration, the unsustainable management of destinations, the lack of inclusiveness and the weak international visibility.

The strategic objective of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme is to support the convergence of the area toward the growth and sustainability standards of the National and European Area, by responding to the complex challenges of the geographical regionalization and highlighting through cooperation, understanding, and networking its specific characteristics as comparative advantages.

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

More specifically, Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme will focus on:

- Capitalization and spatial expansion / qualitative upgrade of systems and practices for adaptation and confrontation of climate risks and the protection of citizens, with emphasis on joint action, direct and effective coordination / cooperation, and infrastructure inter-operability (**S.O.2.iv**)
- Strengthen cooperation for the preservation of biodiversity and to enhance the identity of the settlements of the cross-border area through the upgrade of green and blue infrastructures in urban areas and settlements with the aim of jointly improving living conditions (**S.O.2.vii**)
- Focus on needs in sectors of common interest (in which there are capabilities such as Tourism and Culture or emerging needs such as Circular Economy), with a special focus on the integration of microenterprises that have limited access to mainstream national – regional financial instruments (**S.O.2.vi, S.O.4.vii**).
- Reduce isolation and improve interconnection through a modern, greener, and safer transport system (**S.O.3.ii**), in a way that will bring benefits to the economic and social development of the whole region.
- Employment, entrepreneurship and upgrade of the capacities of enterprises (especially digital competencies) through the provision of support for education, coaching, training, and microfinance support through Small Project Funds (**S.O.4.ii**).

In total, Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme is focusing on **three (3) Priorities, 3 Policy Objectives**, which are structured into **six (6) Specific Objectives**:

Priorities, Policy Objectives & Specific Objectives of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme



Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

Priority	Policy Objective	Specific Objective
<p><b>PRIORITY 1:</b>  <b>A more resilient and greener Greece – Bulgaria Cross Border Territory</b></p>	<p><b>2.</b> A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility</p>	<p><b>RSO2.4.</b> Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account ecosystem-based approaches</p>
		<p><b>RSO2.6.</b> Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p>
		<p><b>RSO2.7.</b> Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 2:</b>  <b>A more Accessible Greece-Bulgaria Cross Border Territory</b></p>	<p><b>3.</b> A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility</p>	<p><b>RSO3.2.</b> Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 3:</b>  <b>A more inclusive Greece-Bulgaria Cross Border Territory</b></p>	<p><b>4.</b> A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights</p>	<p><b>RSO4.2.</b> Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training</p>

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

		<b>RSO4.6.</b> Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation
--	--	--

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

In the framework of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme, Cooperation Programme, cooperation actions at cross-border level are expected to result in more strengthened capacities and skills in terms of the following:

- Strategic and Targeted Calls should continue, as they are highly efficient and effective, and seem to produce higher added value in terms of effects for beneficiaries, quality of services provided, and population size affected.
- The exploitation of the current project development (calls and proposals preparation and submission practices) will use the technical skills and capacity that has already been built. This will enhance established partnership (fostering continuation, sustainability, and capitalization) and will also allow the Programme to start without delays.
- Capitalisation Plan drafted with the support provided by the Interact Programme (2014-2020) should be integrated to improve quality of results.
- The improvement of the beneficiaries' awareness has led to an increase in the competition for proposals. The submission of numerous proposals increases the managerial effort (delays on the selection and the approval of projects). It also places a significant administrative and financial burden on the potential beneficiaries for the preparation of the proposals' dossiers, most of which will be rejected due to budget constraints. One of the proposed practices in the selection process is to include a pre-selection stage at which concept notes will be evaluated. Thus, a more rational number of proposals will have to be evaluated in full and the less prominent proposals will be rejected without excessive effort from authorities or beneficiaries.
- There is limited experience in the use of simplified cost options during the 2014-2020 period. Based on the opportunities in the new legal framework, the use of simplified cost options will be further enhanced in the 2021-2027 period, focusing on the results of specific type of actions and aiming to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries and control bodies.
- Efforts should be made for a better sustainability of projects and the enhancement of their networking, thus providing results with permanent (long term) impact and greater integration. More effort is necessary for fostering the results of previous projects. Capitalisation activities should be considered. The Programme will rely upon the current management capacity to set up a system ensuring that all exchanges between beneficiaries and the programme authorities are carried out by means of electronic data exchange.

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

**Financing Plan**

Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and by National Funds of the countries participating in the Programme, that is Greece and Bulgaria.

The total financial appropriations per Priority, by Fund and by National Contribution, are shown in the following Table:

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Fund</i>	<i>EU Contribution (€)</i>	<i>National Contribution (€)</i>	<i>Total (€)</i>
1	ERDF	28.297.767,00	7.074.442,00	35.372.209,00
2	ERDF	24.865.178,00	6.216.295,00	31.081.473,00
3	ERDF	14.000.000,00	3.500.000,00	17.500.000,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>All funds</b>	<b>67.162.945,00</b>	<b>16.790.737,00</b>	<b>83.953.682,00</b>

3.2 Focus on Evaluations

Taking into consideration the available material on hand it appears that the current Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece- Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme should focus:

- on the assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, coherence, EU added value and impact of the Programme’s activities and projects
- on ensuring that the Programme is meeting its objectives and targets
- on ensuring that the Programme is making progress towards its goals
- on the compliance of the Programme with the performance framework
- on the compliance of the Programme with the regulatory framework
- on the preparation for impact assessment
- on whether or not to update the intervention logic and to allocate new or redistribute the resources in the Programme
- on improving performance in the interim implementation of the Programme
- on the specialization or the potential redesign of interventions.

More specifically, the **First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme “INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020” – 5<sup>th</sup> Deliverable – Final (b) UPDATED FINAL REPORT»** [May 2019] has identified the following:

- The implementation progress of the Programme Communication Strategy is considered very satisfactory both in terms of activities’ content as well as targets’ achieved

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

- There is a satisfying awareness' level with regards to the EU-funded cross-border cooperation in the Programme
- The results of the online questionnaire promoted by the JS, demonstrated an overall positive evaluation of the information provided within the Programme
- There is balanced geographical allocation of the communication activities in both sides of the borders and in all the eligible area
- The first phase of the communication strategy was successfully completed, while the second one has already achieved a satisfying implementation level
- It should be paid some further attention in the promotion of the Programme through the social media. Posting more often (at least twice per week) in combination with some advertising could help to the increase of the followers.

The **First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme “INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020” - 2<sup>nd</sup> Deliverable 1<sup>st</sup> Report**» [April 2021] and the **First Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme “INTERREG V-A GREECE-BULGARIA (EL-BG) 2014-2020” - 3<sup>rd</sup> Deliverable 2nd Report**» [May 2021] have identified the following:

- There was a significant change in the definition of the data collected in the case of “R0210 Social enterprise employees in the CB area”. Continuity of data are of crucial importance in order to establish the impact of the programme
- The continuity of data, as well as the periods that are updated was also a concern in other indicators, namely “R0205 % of Natura areas reporting excellent or good degree of conservation” and “R0206 % of characterized surface water bodies in GES”
- The programme updating the status prior to the implementation of the programme interventions created a data gap that would not be covered before the end of the programming period.
- There was a case of discrepancy in the baseline data (R0202 Total Value of Annual CB Area Exports) and in several indicators data were not made available.
- In most cases, where data were available and the impact could be evaluated despite the aforementioned difficulties, the case can be made that the targets set were not ambitious.
- The selection of the indicators would have allowed for continuity and transparency if the data sources were more reliable. Additionally, with minor improvements in the methodological note, would further support the data manipulation techniques and would allow independent evaluators to assess indicators longitudinally.

Further suggestions for improvements that lie within the JS focus of control are:

- The shift of focus from expected outcome to expected result evaluation of the projects through a clear logical and meaningful intervention logic or theory of change
- The Ex-ante development of a Monitoring and Evaluation system that would allow granular counterfactual analysis of the projects and programmes impact.
- The establishment of strong ties with the indicator providers, as well as the assignment of a liaison officer between the data providers and the JS in order to:

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

Safeguard that data are available on the necessary time series and level for a meaningful impact assessment

- Timely address changes in the indicators methodologies in order to achieve continuity.

## 4. Evaluation Plan Context

### 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the Existing Mechanism/Bodies for the Evaluation Process

According to the provisions of:

- the Greek Ministerial Decision 3411/16.01.2023, FEK 183/B/18.01.2023
- Law 4914/2022 (FEK A 61/21.3.2022) “Management, control and implementation of development interventions for the Programming Period 2021-2027, and other provisions”
- Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (Interreg Regulation),

the evaluation process and the management process of the evaluation cycle throughout the life of the Programme are the responsibility of the following bodies/mechanisms:

Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027 (MA) & Joint Secretariat (JS) of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

The Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027 (MA) is responsible for the overall management & implementation of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme.

In particular, MA carries all Evaluations of the Programme, according to the provisions of Article 35 of Interreg Regulation, based on the Evaluation Plan, which has to be drawn up and submitted to the Programme’s Monitoring Committee, so as to be reviewed and approved no later than one year after the approval of the Programme.

MA is also responsible for the preparation and submission to the Programme’s Monitoring Committee of possible subsequent Amendments and Revisions of the Plan, while it ensures the implementation of the Evaluations according to what’s foreseen in the Evaluation Plan.

MA provides to the European Commission all information necessary to review the Programme’s performance, according to Article 31 of Interreg Regulation, on the basis of the most recent data available regarding the Programme’s implementation. In this framework, the MA follows-up issues raised by the European Commission and informs the European Commission, within three months of the date of the review, of the measures taken.

The MA is responsible for the coordination and quality management in all phases of the evaluation cycle.

Finally, the MA is responsible for the publication of all Evaluations on the Programme website <https://www.greece-bulgaria.eu>, on the internet and social media. The final evaluation reports will be transmitted through the SFC system as well.

#### Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

In all of the above, the MA is supported by the Joint Secretariat (JS) of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme. In general, the JS assists the work of the MA and of the Committees related to the Programme's implementation.

The JS also provides with information to the potential partners/beneficiaries of the Programme regarding funding opportunities and assists the Partners in successfully implementing their projects.

Both the Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027 (MA) and the Joint Secretariat (JS) of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme are based in Thessaloniki (Greece), 65, Leoforos Georgikis Scholis, 570 01.

#### Monitoring Committee (MC) of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

The Monitoring Committee (MC) of the Programme, representing the Member States, has a steering and deciding role regarding the development & implementation of the Evaluation Plan. The MC examines, approves and reviews the Evaluation Plan and possible subsequent Amendments and Revisions of the Plan. The MC also examines the progress made in the implementation of the Evaluation Plan and the follow up given to the findings of the evaluations.

#### European Commission

In compliance with the Rules of Procedure of the Programme, the European Commission (EC) will have an observer role and can therefore be consulted at all stages of the evaluation process throughout the entire programming period 2021-2027.

#### 4.2 Involvement & Roles of Partners & Stakeholders

In compliance to the principle of partnership, the Programme promotes the engagement of its stakeholders in the design and implementation of the evaluation of the Programme. In the frame of the evaluation, the Programme seeks the contribution of its stakeholders. The Programme will also explore other forms of consultation and exchange. Finally, stakeholders will be the target of the Programme's dissemination and communication activities with regard to the evaluation results. Specifically, relevant partners as Regional and Local Authorities, the Certifying and Verifying Authority, etc., shall be involved in the evaluation of Programme within the framework of the Monitoring Committee meetings. Therefore, the involved partners shall examine the progress made in the implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations. Within the same framework, the partners shall also be consulted on the Final Performance Report of CP 2021 – 2027, to be submitted by 15/02/2031 (Article 33, paragraph 1 of Interreg Regulation).



#### 4.3 Independence of Evaluations

According to Article 35 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 (Interreg Regulation), Evaluations shall be entrusted to internal or external experts who are functionally independent from the authorities responsible for Programme evaluation, in order to avoid any potential conflict of interests.

The Managing Authority (MA) is responsible for the tendering and selection of independent external Evaluators, through public procurement(s). The MA drafts the Terms of References (ToR) and the award criteria of each procurement procedure for the contracting of external evaluators. Emphasis should be put on the quality of methodological approaches and mix of knowledge in the thematic fields of the Programme, skills and experience. The MA coordinates the internal activities related to the evaluation. The JS is in charge of monitoring and collecting data on project and Programme level and supports the whole evaluating procedure by providing to the External Evaluators all necessary information, in order to perform their evaluation activities. The External Evaluators will carry out –independently- the evaluation and will involve all relevant Stakeholders in the process, via Desk Research & Literature Reviews, Data Analysis, Case Studies, Focus Groups, Surveys and Interviews.

#### 4.4 Training Activities

The option of organizing training activities in support of the evaluation process (for the MA, the JS and the MC representatives as well as for Partners/Beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders representatives) may be considered, if deemed necessary.

Such training activities may refer to the following indicative fields/subjects:

- Planning & Managing the Evaluation Process [Training Programme A1]
- Quality Control of the Evaluation Reports [Training Programme A2]
- Qualitative & Quantitative Evaluation Methods [Training Programme A3]
- Methods for Impact Assessment [Training Programme A4]
- Training of Final Beneficiaries/Partners representatives for Effective Participation to Various Evaluation Processes [Training Programme B].

The costs of participation to the respective Training Programmes can be covered by the Programme's Technical Assistance Resources. The above mentioned Training Programmes are estimated to have the following indicative budget:

- **5,000 € plus VAT for Training Programme A** (addressed to the MA, the JS and the MC representatives).
- **7,000 € plus VAT for Training Programme B** (addressed to the Final Beneficiaries/Partners representatives).

#### 4.5 Dissemination & Use of Evaluation Findings

The whole Evaluation process is pointless if the findings and the results of the evaluation are not properly used and disseminated. The Evaluations findings are essential for the following two reasons:

- To Improve the Programme Implementation: the evaluations findings will serve as a tool to improve the Programme's implementation mechanisms by focusing on their effectiveness and efficiency.
- To show-case remarkable achievements and to disseminate the results: according to EU regulations, all evaluations results, findings & recommendations will be communicated to the Programme's Stakeholders and will be published on the Programme website <https://www.greece-bulgaria.eu>, on the internet and social media. The final evaluation reports will be transmitted through the SFC system as well.

#### 4.6 Quality Management Strategy

The Quality Management Strategy is a key element in the process of each evaluation and throughout its life cycle since it ensures the preparation of high quality evaluations, the best use of assessment conclusions and the maximum dissemination of the results to all stakeholders and users.

The Quality Management Strategy, as part of the evaluations that will be elaborated in the 2021-2027 Programming period, will ensure the following principles:

Objectivity/Independence: As already described in Chapter 3.3: Independence of Evaluators, the evaluations will be carried out by Independent External Evaluators, based on reliable data and without any political interferences and influences.

Transparency: Transparency enhances confidence in the bodies/authorities participating in the evaluation process and establishes the appropriate conditions in order to get them involved and to take into account and make use of the evaluations conclusions, findings & recommendations. It is therefore necessary for all evaluations to be made public and to be accessible to the general public, as already stated in Chapter 3.5: Dissemination & Use of Evaluation Findings.

Ethics: Throughout the life cycle of an evaluation, all ethical issues that may arise, should be taken into account and resolved. Evaluations and evaluators should respect the rights and dignity of all stakeholders, while all the participants in the evaluation process should not be subject to external pressures and evaluations should not reflect personal or other interests.

Quality: The quality of each evaluation can be ensured at two separate phases: at the phase of specification of the Terms of References (ToRs), and at the phase of the approval of each

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

evaluation deliverables (with the setting up of minimum requirements for quality assurance of the deliverables), as already described in Chapter 3.3: Independence of Evaluators.

Utility: All evaluations should focus on specific user groups providing them with adequate & understandable information, in order to respond to issues of interest to them and to be relevant to the questions asked for decision making. The principle of Utility will be enhanced through the identification and specification of the user groups within each evaluation and through the dissemination of the evaluations conclusions/recommendations to all user groups.

## 5. Evaluations

### PART A: Summary and scheduling of evaluations

#### 5.1 Summary Table

The following Summary Table lists all Programme’s planned evaluations **until 2030**. Each evaluation is indicated with title, indicative completion date and estimated budget.

It is noted that in the event that additional needs arise for the assessment of the implementation progress of the Program and/or its impact, the MA Interreg 2021-2027 retains the flexibility to initiate the modification of the Evaluation Plan by adding additional assessments. Any modifications are submitted and approved by the Monitoring Committee.

Table 1: Summary Table of Programme’s evaluations

$\alpha/\alpha$	Evaluation title	Indicative completion date	Estimated budget (€)
1.	Evaluation during the Implementation of CP 2021-2027 including communication activities	10/2026	30,000 € plus VAT (or 37,200 € including VAT)
2.	Impact Evaluation of CP 2021 – 2027	6/2029	40,000 € plus VAT (or 49,600 € including VAT)

The total budget of the Evaluations that are included in the Evaluation Plan amounts to **70,000 € plus VAT (or 86,800 € including VAT)**.

It must be noted that according to Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, a **Final Performance Report** is required to be submitted until **15 February 2031**. In the context of the contents of this report (as these will be specified in the template referred in paragraph 1 of the above Article) the necessity of an updated implementation evaluation may arise. In this case, a modification of the current Evaluation Plan will be required, in order to describe and specify its contents in detail.

#### 5.2 Timetable

The next figure depicts the timetable of evaluations helping in the decision-making process during the various stages of implementation of the Programme:

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
<b>REPORTING OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION</b>									
Final Performance Report									15/2
<b>PROPOSED EVALUATIONS</b>									
Evaluation during the Implementation of CP 2021-2027 including Communication Activities				31/10					
Impact Evaluation of CP 2021 – 2027							30/6		

## PART B: Evaluations' Analysis

### 5.3 Evaluations' Analysis

#### 5.3.1 Evaluation during the implementation of CP 2021-2027 including communication activities

It will include two (2) Reports:

- a. Evaluation of the implementation
- b. Evaluation of the communication activities.

The evaluation will be prepared by an external evaluator, with a budget of **30,000 € plus VAT** and estimated date of completion in **10/2026**.

Evaluation methods that may be used:

According to the evaluation subject, different methods may apply. The indicative methods and tools to be applied for evaluations are listed below. They will be further specified in the Terms of References (ToR) of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.

- Desk research and literature reviews (e.g. Programme documents such as Cross Border Cooperation Programme, internal procedures, Programme and Project Manual, etc.);
- Data analysis (e.g. information collected through the Programme monitoring systems such as data on applicants and project beneficiaries, Programme's result and output indicators, project progress reports, financial and Programme monitoring data, etc.);
- Case studies (e.g. on selected focus groups, types of beneficiaries, thematic achievements, policy impacts);
- Focus groups (e.g. with thematic experts)
- Surveys (e.g. among applicants, addressing project beneficiaries, other stakeholders and target groups, experts etc.);
- Interviews (e.g. with Programme bodies, project beneficiaries, other relevant target groups etc.).

For the above mentioned methods the following data requirements apply. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.

#### **Desk research and data analysis**

The information related to the Programme procedures and (monitoring) data is well documented in various Programme documents/manuals, and in the MIS. In particular, the latter contains all information and data related to funding applications - proposals, project selection, project implementation and monitoring of the progress (including indicator system and financial data). These documents and data serve as a solid base for the desk research and data analysis.

#### **Case studies**

## Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

The MA/JS are closely monitoring the implementation of the funded projects via project progress reports and when needed through on-the-spot visits. The MIS provides information on the deliverables and outputs from the project monitoring, including progress reports which constitute a very comprehensive information source for the conduction of case studies by the evaluators.

### Surveys and interviews

The Programme bodies and in particular the JS dispose of a comprehensive contact data of project beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders which is constantly updated and which can be used for the purposes of the evaluation. The contact data could be sorted according to various criteria allowing targeted communication and selection of addressees for surveys and interviews.

Sources of data are implemented by JS with the approval of the MA and are as noted in Co-operation Programme.

#### a. Evaluation of the implementation

Its content will be an assessment/evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the CP 2021-2027 with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of the Programme.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the objectives set are met at the level of output and result indicators, whether this achievement is satisfactory for the timely attainment of the target values set at the level of the CP and to examine the factors responsible for the good or bad progress in the achievement of objectives set at the level of output and result indicators. At the same time, the purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether all of the implemented interventions are implementing effectively in relation to costs. The evaluation will include the assessment of the capacity of planning bodies, management and implementation of the actions of the CP and resource management capacity and procedures of programme resources.

The objective is the implementation evaluation in order to improve performance in the interim implementation of the Programme and the specialization or the potential redesign of interventions and/or even review of CP. Emphasis will be given to the intervention areas and indicators.

The assessment relates to all of the specific objectives per Priority of the Programme. It covers horizontally all the Specific Objectives and all the intervention areas of the Programme including cross cutting themes, due to strong interactions recorded.

Evaluation criteria will be:

- Effectiveness and
- Efficiency

The key evaluation queries may be the following per SO (non-exhaustive list):

As to effectiveness:

- To what extent were the targets set achieved?

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

- What are the reasons for achieving and not achieving the objective?
- What can be done so that interventions can be more effective? Is revision needed in order to achieve better results?
- Which factors influenced the observed results?

As to efficiency:

- To what extent the interventions acted effectively in relation to the cost?
- Have the desired outputs been achieved with less cost?
- To what extent was the available budget appropriate for their implementation?
- Could other interventions resolve the identified problems with less cost?
- To what extent did the procedures and organizational structure for planning, selecting actions, implementing and managing them contribute to achieving better results?

b. Evaluation of the communication activities

Its object will be the Information and Communication measures and its content will be the effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the Communication activities.

Evaluation criteria will be:

- Effectiveness and
- Efficiency.

The key evaluation queries may be the following (non-exhaustive list):

- Do the communication activities carried out by the Programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives set out in the Communication Strategy? If not which changes are needed?
- Which communication tools were the most effective in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme?

### *5.3.2 Impact Evaluation of CP 2021 – 2027*

The evaluation will be prepared by an external evaluator, with a budget of **40,000 € plus VAT** and estimated date of completion in **6/2029**.

Its content will be an assessment/evaluation of relevance, coherence, Union added value and impact of the CP 2021-2027.

The object of the evaluation is the more specific and in depth evaluation of impacts in order to properly reflect the results of interventions and to assess accurately the benefits of the co-operation area from actions of the Programme. The Programme and all interventions are assessed with evaluative questions of relevance, coherence, Union added value and impact.

## Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

The content of the evaluation will be:

- The evaluation of relevance, coherence, Union added value and impact in the implementation of relevant actions and
- The evaluation of the contribution of the CP in the implementation of the development strategy of the Programme area.

The assessment relates to all of the specific objectives per Priority of the Programme. It covers horizontally all the Specific Objectives and all the intervention areas of the Programme including cross cutting themes, due to strong interactions recorded.

Evaluation methods that may be used:

According to the evaluation subject, different methods may apply. The indicative methods and tools to be applied for evaluations are listed below. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.

- Desk research and literature reviews (e.g. Programme documents such as Cross Border Cooperation Programme, internal procedures, Programme and Project Manual, etc.);
- Data analysis (e.g. information collected through the Programme monitoring systems such as data on applicants and project beneficiaries, Programme's result and output indicators, project progress reports, financial and Programme monitoring data, etc.);
- Case studies (e.g. on selected focus groups, types of beneficiaries, thematic achievements, policy impacts);
- Focus groups (e.g. with thematic experts)
- Surveys (e.g. among applicants, addressing project beneficiaries, other stakeholders and target groups, experts etc.);
- Interviews (e.g. with Programme bodies, project beneficiaries, other relevant target groups etc.).

For the above mentioned methods the following data requirements apply. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.

### **Desk research and data analysis**

The information related to the Programme procedures and (monitoring) data is well documented in various Programme documents/manuals, and in the MIS. In particular, the latter contains all information and data related to funding applications - proposals, project selection, project implementation and monitoring of the progress (including indicator system and financial data). These documents and data serve as a solid base for the desk research and data analysis.

### **Data collection:**

Data collection is implemented by JS with the approval of the MA.



## Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

The monitoring of the progress of the result indicators at different stages of Programme implementation and the comparison with the baseline situation (2021-2022) will provide an important input for the impact evaluation, since it will give evidence of changes, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This will allow getting a clear and impartial perception on progress made and on results achieved by the Programme compared to the initial situation as described in the baseline. The information gathered for the needs of result indicators monitoring will also contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the changes achieved and will serve as a valuable basis for the impact evaluation.

Other relevant data for the impact evaluation are available from the monitoring of the funded projects which are uploaded in the MIS. The system also includes all deliverables and outputs from the project implementation as well as reported indicators which constitute a very comprehensive information source for analysing the thematic project achievements.

### Case studies

The MA/JS are closely monitoring the implementation of the funded projects via project progress reports and when needed through on-the-spot visits. The MIS provides information on the deliverables and outputs from the project monitoring, including progress reports which constitute a very comprehensive information source for the conduction of case studies by the evaluators.

### Surveys and interviews

The Programme bodies and in particular the JS dispose of a comprehensive contact data of project beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders which is constantly updated and which can be used for the purposes of the evaluation. The contact data could be sorted according to various criteria allowing targeted communication and selection of addressees for surveys and interviews.

Sources of data as noted in Co-operation Programme.

Evaluation criteria will be:

- Relevance
- Coherence
- Union added value and
- Impact

The key evaluation queries in all SOs may be the following (non-exhaustive list):

As to relevance:

- to what extent does the initial design of the Programme remain current? Is the more specific targeting of the Programme current?
- is the Programme's intervention logic relevant to the needs that have arisen per Priority?
- to what extent was the planning of the Programme's actions the most appropriate?

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

- which needs did the actions respond to?
- to what extent has the partnership mechanism been integrated into the actions to identify and meet the needs?

As to coherence:

- to what extent was the targeting of the Programme coherent and did it support the overall achievement of the Programme's objectives?
- to what extent was the planning of the actions coherent and did it support the overall achievement of the Programme's objectives?
- where are there significant deviations in the implementation in relation to the initial objectives? What are the root causes? What were the necessary corrective actions?
- is the Programme's intervention logic coherent?

As to European Union added value:

- what is the added value from the implementation of the actions of the Programme? what are the identifiable/measurable results of the actions?
- in what way are the experience gained from planning and implementation used in the planning of new actions?
- are any good practices recognized?

As to Impact:

- what are the measurable results of the actions? Are they sustainable over time? Are short-term outcomes different from long-term outcomes?
- what substantial changes can be observed in relation to the objectives after the implementation of the actions? are these changes measurable? by what factors are they affected?
- what is the cause-and-effect relationship for the observed change after the actions are completed?
- What are the mechanisms that created the impact? What are the main characteristics of these mechanisms?

### *5.3.3 Final Performance Report of CP 2021 – 2027*

According to Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, a **Final Performance Report** is required to be submitted to the Commission until **15 February 2031**.

The Final Performance Report shall assess the achievement of Programme objectives based on the below elements (which will be submitted for review to the Monitoring Committee):

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

---

1. the progress in Programme implementation and in achieving the milestones and targets of the CP 2021-2027
2. any issues that affect the performance of the CP 2021-2027 and the measures taken to address these issues
3. the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and any follow-up given to findings
4. the implementation of communication and visibility actions
5. the progress in implementing Interreg operations of strategic importance and, where applicable, of large infrastructure projects
6. the progress in administrative capacity building for public institutions and beneficiaries, where relevant
7. the methodology and criteria used for the selection of operations, including any changes thereto, after notifying the Commission, where requested, pursuant to Article 22(2) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, without prejudice to points (b), (c) and (d) of Article 33(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060
8. the Evaluation Plan and any amendment thereto
9. any proposal by the managing authority for the amendment of the Interreg programme including for a transfer in accordance with Article 19(5) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

In the context of the contents of this Final Performance Report (as these will be specified in the template referred in paragraph 1 of Article 33 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059) the necessity of an updated implementation evaluation may arise.

In this case, a modification of the current Evaluation Plan will be required, in order to describe and specify its contents in detail.

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

5.4 Evaluations' Identity Sheets

Table 2: Evaluations' identity Sheets

s/n	1
<b>Evaluation title</b>	"Evaluation during the implementation of CP 2021-2027 including communication activities"
<b>Evaluation object</b>	<p>The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether the objectives set are met at the level of output and result indicators, whether this achievement is satisfactory for the timely attainment of the target values set at the level of the CP and to examine the factors responsible for the good or bad progress in the achievement of objectives set at the level of output and result indicators. At the same time, the purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether all of the implemented interventions are implementing effectively in relation to costs. The evaluation will include the assessment of the capacity of planning bodies, management and implementation of the actions of the CP and resource management capacity and procedures of programme resources.</p> <p>Finally, the evaluation's object will be the Information and Communication measures and its content will be the effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the Communication activities.</p> <p>The objective is the implementation evaluation in order to improve performance in the interim implementation of the Programme and the specialization or the potential redesign of interventions and/or even review of CP.</p>
<b>Content</b>	<p>It will include two reports:</p> <p>a. <u>Evaluation of the implementation</u>          Its content will be an assessment/evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the CP 2021-2027 with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of the Programme.</p> <p>b. <u>Evaluation of the communication activities</u>          Its content will be the effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the Communication activities.</p> <p>Emphasis will be given to the intervention areas and indicators. The assessment relates to all of the specific objectives per Priority of the Programme. It covers horizontally all the Specific Objectives and all the intervention areas of the Programme including cross cutting themes, due to strong interactions recorded.</p>
<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectiveness and</li> <li>- Efficiency</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation queries</b>	<p>The key evaluation queries in all SOs may be the following (non-exhaustive list):</p> <p>a. <u>Evaluation of the implementation</u>  <u>As to effectiveness:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent were the targets set achieved?</li> <li>▪ What are the reasons for achieving and not achieving the objective?</li> </ul>

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What can be done so that interventions can be more effective? Is revision needed in order to achieve better results?</li> <li>▪ Which factors influenced the observed results?</li> </ul> <p><u>As to efficiency:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent the interventions acted effectively in relation to the cost?</li> <li>▪ Have the desired outputs been achieved with less cost?</li> <li>▪ To what extent was the available budget appropriate for their implementation?</li> <li>▪ Could other interventions resolve the identified problems with less cost?</li> <li>▪ To what extent did the procedures and organizational structure for planning, selecting actions, implementing and managing them contribute to achieving better results?</li> </ul> <p><u>b. Evaluation of the communication activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do the communication activities carried out by the Programme authorities lead to the achievement of the general and specific objectives set out in the Communication Strategy? If not which changes are needed?</li> <li>▪ Which communication tools were the most effective in terms of increasing awareness of the Programme?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Methodology</b></p>	<p>Evaluation methods that may be used:</p> <p>According to the evaluation subject, different methods may apply. The indicative methods and tools to be applied for evaluations are listed below. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk research and literature reviews (e.g. Programme documents such as Cross Border Cooperation Programme, internal procedures, Programme and Project Manual, etc.);</li> <li>- Data analysis (e.g. information collected through the Programme monitoring systems such as data on applicants and project beneficiaries, Programme's result and output indicators, project progress reports, financial and Programme monitoring data, etc.);</li> <li>- Case studies (e.g. on selected focus groups, types of beneficiaries, thematic achievements, policy impacts);</li> <li>- Focus groups (e.g. with thematic experts)</li> <li>- Surveys (e.g. among applicants, addressing project beneficiaries, other stakeholders and target groups, experts etc.);</li> <li>- Interviews (e.g. with Programme bodies, project beneficiaries, other relevant target groups etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data</b></p>	<p>For the above mentioned methods the following data requirements apply. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.</p> <p><u>Desk research and data analysis</u></p> <p>The information related to the Programme procedures and (monitoring) data is well documented in various Programme documents/manuals, and in the MIS. In particular, the latter contains all information and data related to funding applications - proposals, project selection, project implementation and monitoring of the progress (including indicator system and financial</p>

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

	<p>data). These documents and data serve as a solid base for the desk research and data analysis.</p> <p><u>Case studies</u></p> <p>The MA/JS are closely monitoring the implementation of the funded projects via project progress reports and when needed through on-the-spot visits. The MIS provides information on the deliverables and outputs from the project monitoring, including progress reports which constitute a very comprehensive information source for the conduction of case studies by the evaluators.</p> <p><u>Surveys and interviews</u></p> <p>The Programme bodies and in particular the JS dispose of a comprehensive contact data of project beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders which is constantly updated and which can be used for the purposes of the evaluation. The contact data could be sorted according to various criteria allowing targeted communication and selection of addressees for surveys and interviews.</p> <p><u>Sources of data</u> are implemented by JS with the approval of the MA and are as noted in the Programme.</p>
<b>Evaluation Conduct</b>	Direct assignment to an external evaluator.
<b>Duration</b>	<p><b>7 months</b> (net processing time)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Estimated time of launching the tender for assigning the evaluation: <b>12/2025</b></li> <li>- Estimated time of evaluation contracting: <b>4/2026</b></li> <li>- Estimated date of evaluation completion: <b>10/2026</b></li> </ul>
<b>Estimated budget</b>	<b>30,000 € plus VAT</b> (or 37,200 € including VAT)
<b>Key evaluation conclusions</b>	-

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

<b>s/n</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Evaluation title</b>	“Impact Evaluation of CP 2021 – 2027”
<b>Evaluation object</b>	The object of the evaluation is the more specific and in depth evaluation of impacts in order to properly reflect the results of interventions and to assess accurately the benefits of the co-operation area from actions of the Programme. The Programme and all interventions are assessed with evaluative questions of relevance, coherence, Union added value and impact.
<b>Content</b>	<p>The content of the evaluation of the CP will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation of relevance, coherence, Union added value and impact in the implementation of relevant actions and</li> <li>• The evaluation of the contribution of the CP in the implementation of the development strategy of the Programme area.</li> </ul> <p>The assessment relates to all of the specific objectives per Priority of the Programme. It covers horizontally all the Specific Objectives and all the intervention areas of the Programme including cross cutting themes, due to strong interactions recorded.</p>
<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relevance</li> <li>- Coherence</li> <li>- Union added value and</li> <li>- Impact</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation queries</b>	<p>The key evaluation queries in all SOs may be the following (non-exhaustive list):</p> <p><u>As to relevance:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ to what extent does the initial design of the Programme remain current? Is the more specific targeting of the Programme current?</li> <li>▪ is the Programme's intervention logic relevant to the needs that have arisen per Priority?</li> <li>▪ to what extent was the planning of the Programme's actions the most appropriate?</li> <li>▪ which needs did the actions respond to?</li> <li>▪ to what extent has the partnership mechanism been integrated into the actions to identify and meet the needs?</li> </ul> <p><u>As to coherence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ to what extent was the targeting of the Programme coherent and did it support the overall achievement of the Programme's objectives?</li> <li>▪ to what extent was the planning of the actions coherent and did it support the overall achievement of the Programme's objectives?</li> <li>▪ where are there significant deviations in the implementation in relation to the initial objectives? What are the root causes? What were the necessary corrective actions?</li> <li>▪ is the Programme's intervention logic coherent?</li> </ul> <p><u>As to Union added value:</u></p>



Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ what is the added value from the implementation of the actions of the Programme? what are the identifiable/measurable results of the actions?</li> <li>▪ in what way are the experience gained from planning and implementation used in the planning of new actions?</li> <li>▪ are any good practices recognized?</li> </ul> <p><u>As to impact:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ what are the measurable results of the actions? Are they sustainable over time? Are short-term outcomes different from long-term outcomes?</li> <li>▪ what substantial changes can be observed in relation to the objectives after the implementation of the actions? are these changes measurable? by what factors are they affected?</li> <li>▪ what is the cause-and-effect relationship for the observed change after the actions are completed?</li> <li>▪ what are the mechanisms that created the impact? What are the main characteristics of these mechanisms?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Methodology</b></p>	<p>Evaluation methods that may be used:</p> <p>According to the evaluation subject, different methods may apply. The indicative methods and tools to be applied for evaluations are listed below. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk research and literature reviews (e.g. Programme documents such as Cross Border Cooperation Programme, internal procedures, Programme and Project Manual, etc.);</li> <li>- Data analysis (e.g. information collected through the Programme monitoring systems such as data on applicants and project beneficiaries, Programme's result and output indicators, project progress reports, financial and Programme monitoring data, etc.);</li> <li>- Case studies (e.g. on selected focus groups, types of beneficiaries, thematic achievements, policy impacts);</li> <li>- Focus groups (e.g. with thematic experts)</li> <li>- Surveys (e.g. among applicants, addressing project beneficiaries, other stakeholders and target groups, experts etc.);</li> <li>- Interviews (e.g. with Programme bodies, project beneficiaries, other relevant target groups etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data</b></p>	<p>For the above mentioned methods the following data requirements apply. They will be further specified in the ToR of each procurement procedure for the external evaluator and in the inception report of the external evaluator.</p> <p><u>Desk research and data analysis</u></p> <p>The information related to the Programme procedures and (monitoring) data is well documented in various Programme documents/manuals, and in the MIS. In particular, the latter contains all information and data related to funding applications - proposals, project selection, project implementation and monitoring of the progress (including indicator system and financial data). These documents and data serve as a solid base for the desk research and data analysis.</p>



Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

	<p><u>Data collection</u>          Data collection is implemented by JS with the approval of the MA. The monitoring of the progress of the result indicators at different stages of Programme implementation and the comparison with the baseline situation (2021-2022) will provide an important input for the impact evaluation, since it will give evidence of changes, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This will allow getting a clear and impartial perception on progress made and on results achieved by the Programme compared to the initial situation as described in the baseline. The information gathered for the needs of result indicators monitoring will also contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the changes achieved and will serve as a valuable basis for the impact evaluation.</p> <p>Other relevant data for the impact evaluation are available from the monitoring of the funded projects which are uploaded in the MIS. The system also includes all deliverables and outputs from the project implementation as well as reported indicators which constitute a very comprehensive information source for analysing the thematic project achievements.</p> <p><u>Case studies</u>          The MA/JS are closely monitoring the implementation of the funded projects via project progress reports and when needed through on-the-spot visits. The MIS provides information on the deliverables and outputs from the project monitoring, including progress reports which constitute a very comprehensive information source for the conduction of case studies by the evaluators.</p> <p><u>Surveys and interviews</u>          The Programme bodies and in particular the JS dispose of a comprehensive contact data of project beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders which is constantly updated and which can be used for the purposes of the evaluation. The contact data could be sorted according to various criteria allowing targeted communication and selection of addressees for surveys and interviews.</p> <p><u>Sources of data</u> as noted in the Programme.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation Conduct</b></p>	<p>Assignment to an external evaluator after a tender procedure.</p>
<p><b>Duration</b></p>	<p><b>8 months</b> (net processing time)          - Estimated time of launching the tender for assigning the evaluation: <b>7/2028</b>          - Estimated time of evaluation contracting: <b>11/2028</b>          - Estimated date of evaluation completion: <b>6/2029</b></p>
<p><b>Estimated budget</b></p>	<p><b>40,000 € plus VAT</b> (or 49,600 € including VAT)</p>
<p><b>Key evaluation conclusions</b></p>	<p>-</p>

Evaluation Plan of Interreg VI-A Greece-Bulgaria 2021-2027 CBC Programme

Table 3: Evaluations' Indicative Table

S/N	TITLE	CATEGORY	EVALUATION CRITERIA	SERVICE FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATION	INDICATIVE DATE OF COMPLETION	ESTIMATED BUDGET (€)	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE COVERED	FUND	PRIORITY
1	<b>Evaluation during the implementation of CP 2021-2027 including communication activities</b>	Implementation Evaluation	Effectiveness and Efficiency	Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027	<b>10/2026</b>	<b>30,000 € plus VAT</b> (or 37,200 € including VAT)	All	ERDF	All
2	<b>Impact Evaluation of CP 2021 – 2027</b>	Impact Evaluation	Relevance, Coherence, Union Added Value and Impact	Managing Authority INTERREG 2021-2027	<b>6/2029</b>	<b>40,000 € plus VAT</b> (or 49,600 € including VAT)	All	ERDF	All