

**Joint Evaluation Plan
for the
Border, Midland and Western
and the
Southern and Eastern
Regional Operational Programmes
2014-2020**

November 2015

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1. Introduction

The purpose of evaluations as stated in Article 54 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 is to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes, as well as to assess their effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The impact of programmes is to be evaluated in the light of each ESI fund, in relation to the targets under the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The utility of evaluations of the ERDF co-funded Regional Programmes rests in their ability to contribute to the improvement and strengthening of regional growth policy through the dissemination of good ideas, experience and knowledge.

Article 114 of the Common Provisions Regulation specifies that an evaluation plan shall be drawn up by the Managing Authority or Member State for one or more Operational Programmes and shall be submitted to the Monitoring Committee(s) no later than one year after the adoption of the Operational programme. The Evaluation Plan will be drawn up by the Managing Authority¹ and will specify inter alia:

- Possible data needs for on-going evaluations including evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact for the programme, and in particular for the impact evaluations that should assess the programme contribution to the objectives of each priority axis at least once during the programming period
- Main evaluations to be undertaken i.e., covering the interventions leading to the main results or responding to specific needs (for example to ascertain whether further/additional actions are needed in a specific field of activity).
- Timing of evaluations, their methods and data needs, and possible training activities if deemed necessary.
- Information relating to possible integration of data collection procedures with other ESIF Programmes (e.g., alignment of data needs where applicable for both ERDF co-funded Regional OPs).
- Methods to be applied to the planned impact evaluations and availability of the related necessary data through the monitoring system, existing administrative data or national or regional statistics
- Indicative budget

¹ For the most part terms like Managing Authority and Programme Monitoring Committee are used in the singular throughout this joint plan but should be read as referring to the Managing Authorities for both OPs unless otherwise stated.

This evaluation plan provides an overall framework for monitoring and evaluation for the BMW and the S&E Regional OPs 2014-2020. The purpose of the evaluation plan is to set out the proposed arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the success of the programme in meeting its overall and priority-level objectives which are detailed in the evaluation plan. The evaluation plan takes account of Commission Guidance Document² on Monitoring and Evaluation. It also builds on the experience of the Managing Authority in planning and steering evaluation processes over the 2000-06 and 2007-13 programme periods; and the findings of the ex-ante evaluations undertaken by RSM McClure Watters in 2013/2014³. It outlines how the Managing Authority will undertake effective monitoring and evaluation to support the successful management and delivery of the Operational Programme.

Evaluations will be carried out by experts functionally independent of the programme authorities. The results shall be published according to the applicable rules on access to documents. Evaluations will be financed from the budget for technical assistance of the respective OPs. The Irish authorities will provide the resources necessary for carrying out evaluations, organise the production and gathering of the necessary data and use the various types of information provided by the monitoring system.

The main audience for Programme monitoring and evaluation information will be the respective Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC). The Managing Authority will produce detailed Programme Monitoring Reports at each meeting of the PMC to assist the PMC in reviewing the progress of the Programme. These reports will outline progress based on data for the indicators, finance, project approval and pipeline and a qualitative account of issues in implementation. The other major audience for Programme monitoring and evaluation information will be the European Commission (EC). The main monitoring tool for the EC is the Annual Implementation Report (AIR). The EC requires Member States to submit AIRs for each Operational Programme. The first AIR is due in 2016 and will cover 2014 and 2015 (art. 111(1) CPR regulation).

This evaluation plan takes account of the proportionality principle whereby the number and scope of evaluation activities proposed during programme

² http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

³ RSM McClure Watters conducted the ex-ante evaluations on both Regional OPs.

implementation should be in proportion to the scale and resources of the OPs It also reflects the needs of the programmes.

In preparing this evaluation plan the Managing Authorities have drawn upon their extensive existing experience in commissioning and overseeing externally-conducted evaluations. The selection of evaluations for inclusion in the joint evaluation plan (see section 5) has been influenced by this experience, for example the utility of conducting a performance-based evaluation after 3 years of implementation, the utility of using a composite index to capture the impact of integrated urban investments, the added value of conducting an impact evaluation on each priority towards the end of the programme period to influence future Regional Operational Programmes.

2. Key Concepts

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are closely linked concepts. Monitoring is generally understood as the assessment of progress i.e., assessment of out-turns against expectations on an ongoing basis. Evaluation involves the analysis of information from multiple sources to identify and explain the effects of the interventions. Monitoring and evaluation have always been essential for effective programme and project management.

To monitor means to observe. Monitoring of outputs means to observe whether intended products are delivered and whether implementation is on track. This includes financial progress (such as commitment and spend) and physical progress (e.g. numbers of businesses and individuals assisted by the Programmes). Good monitoring data are also crucial for evaluation as monitoring observes changes in the result indicators (policy monitoring). Tracking the values of result indicators allows a judgement on whether or not the indicators move in the desired direction. If they do not, this can prompt reflection on the appropriateness and effectiveness of interventions and on the appropriateness of the result indicators chosen. Policy monitoring means tracking the development for all potential beneficiaries, not just for actual beneficiaries.

Evaluation is considered an important programming tool which can add value by enhancing the effectiveness of programme implementation and ensure a longer term impact. Impact is the change that can be credibly attributed to an intervention. The effect of an intervention or the contribution of an intervention, are also expressions for the concept of impact. Impact evaluations measure the extent of the effect of a

public intervention. On the other hand, implementation evaluations look at how a programme is being implemented and managed. Typical questions are whether or not potential beneficiaries are aware of the programme and have access to it, if the application procedure is as simple as possible, if there are clear and relevant project selection criteria, is there a documented data management system, are results of the programme effectively communicated.

In the 2014-2020 period, these functions are more important than ever due to the agreed emphasis on results-orientated programming. It is not possible to assess whether programmes have had the desired results without good monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation approaches will draw on the data captured on the European Structural and Investment Funds IT System. There will also be a need to identify key outcomes as they relate to environmental sustainability, equality of opportunity and social inclusion.

Result and Output Indicators

The intended result of policy interventions is the specific dimension of well-being and progress (positive change) that motivates policy action, i.e. what is intended to be changed, with the contribution of the interventions designed. Result indicators are variables that provide information on some specific aspects of results that lend themselves to be measured. Selecting clear result indicators facilitates understanding of the problem and the policy need and will facilitate a later judgement about whether or not objectives have been met. In this context it is useful to set targets for result indicators. The values of result indicators, both for baselines and at later points in time, in some cases can be obtained from national or regional statistics. In other cases it may be necessary to carry out surveys or to use administrative data, such as the VAT registry of enterprises or non-private car commuting levels.

As regards results indicators, there has been a shift in the definition applied to ERDF co-funded schemes. Results indicators no longer capture the effects on direct beneficiaries, as they did for the 2007-13 programmes, they now must relate to the changed situation in the co-funded sector or programme area.

The monitoring indicators are set out at Investment Priority level in the Operational Programme. These indicators are based on both common output indicators set out by the European Commission and programme-specific output indicators which were

developed by the Irish authorities in consultation with stakeholders during programme development in 2013 and 2014. The indicator system was developed to reflect the key activities and objectives of the Investment Priorities.

Outputs are the direct products of programmes - they are intended to contribute to results. The intention to change the situation in a certain region, for a sector or group of people (potential beneficiaries) is the *raison d'être* of the programme. However, public investment programmes often cannot support all persons, areas or enterprises that are concerned by a problem. In most cases only some potential beneficiaries will become actual beneficiaries. One of the tasks at the European level is to aggregate certain information across all programmes in order to be accountable to the Council, Parliament, the Court of Auditors and EU citizens in general on what Cohesion Policy resources are spent on. This is the task of common output indicators defined at EU level.

3. Data Collection

All data for the BMW and S&E Regional Operational Programmes will be collected and stored on the EU Structural Funds IT System for the 2014-2020 programming period. The specification for the system includes the requirement that all data required by the regulations will be collected.

All Intermediate Bodies and Public Beneficiaries will be required to collect data at operation level to meet the requirements of Annex 111 of Commission Delegated Regulation 480/2014 including the indicators agreed for the relevant priority of the Operational Programme (see Annex 2). Private beneficiaries will be required to assist the Intermediate Body in the compilation of relevant beneficiary data and the supported operation. These data requirements are set out in Administrative Agreements with each Intermediate Body.

To simplify this process for Intermediate Bodies and beneficiaries, the specification of the IT System referred to above will include a customisation of the interface for each co-funded scheme, identifying the relevant data required, including the specific indicators, for that scheme.

These datasets will be critical because they provide both the fundamental basis for monitoring the progress of the Operational Programme, but also provide the basic

data required for evaluations and can be used to link to other datasets to obtain further information on the outcomes of the Programmes.

The Managing Authority will work with Intermediate Bodies to ensure the reliability and consistency of the monitoring data. This will involve providing training to Intermediate Bodies and (Public) Beneficiaries on the completion of the operation fields on the IT system. Verifications undertaken by Managing Authority staff and audits undertaken by the ERDF Audit Authority will check the evidence supporting the indicators. In addition to this, when producing Annual Implementation Reports (see below), the Managing Authority will check the data for any anomalies, e.g. any decreases between reporting periods or unexplained trends.

The Administrative Agreement with each Intermediate Body includes a general requirement that Intermediate Bodies co-operate with programme evaluations, this could entail the sourcing and provision of additional data to address specific evaluation questions.

4. Ex Ante Evaluation

An independent ex ante evaluation of the BMW and the S&E Regional OPs 2014-2020 was conducted by RSM McClure Watters in accordance with Article 55 of the Common Provisions Regulation, in parallel with the drafting and finalisation of the OPs between November 2013 and July 2014. The overall aim of the evaluations was to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance and the implementation of the OPs. The role of the ex-ante evaluation was to ensure that the Operational Programme clearly articulates its intervention logic and can demonstrate its contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy.

The five key components of an ex-ante evaluation were as follows:

- Programme strategy
- Indicators, monitoring and evaluation
- Consistency of financial allocations
- Contribution to Europe 2020 strategy
- Strategic Environmental Assessment

More specific evaluation questions at ex-ante evaluation stage considered internal and external coherence and the quality of implementation systems. Internal and

external coherence relates to the structure of the strategy and its financial allocations and the linkage of the strategy to other regional, national and Community policies, with particular importance in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the ex-ante evaluation appraised the relevance and clarity of the proposed programme specific indicators; how the expected outputs will contribute to the results; and whether the quantified target values for indicators are realistic, having regard to the support from the Funds envisaged. The ex-ante evaluation also appraised the suitability of the procedures for monitoring and for collecting the necessary data to carry out evaluations and the suitability of the milestones selected for the performance framework.

The ex-ante evaluation (section 9) found that the Programme Developers have taken steps to ensure that the mechanisms are in place to ensure that all aspects of programme implementation (including monitoring and evaluation) are managed effectively and efficiently. It also found that all of the Intermediate Bodies have experience in delivering these types of schemes and they have robust systems already in place for the monitoring and capturing of data and where there is need for further training on these areas resources have been put in place to ensure that training can be provided.

5. Evaluation during the programme period

It is proposed to undertake 3 categories of evaluation during programme implementation, as described hereunder:

1. Performance/Implementation evaluation
2. Impact Evaluations
3. Thematic Evaluations

Performance/Implementation Evaluation

It is considered appropriate in accordance with the proportionality principle, that a single evaluation across all priorities to assess implementation and the performance of the programme will be useful in the early stages of implementation approaching the mid-term of the OP. This will include an assessment of how support from the European Regional Development Fund is contributing to the objectives of each

priority. It is proposed by the Managing Authority that this would largely be effected through the commissioning of a comprehensive performance-related evaluation of the BMW Regional OP and the S&E Regional OP in 2017. The key objective of this evaluation will be to provide an independent analysis of progress under the programme and developments in the programme environment up to that date and to make appropriate recommendations for programme adjustments on the basis of this analysis.

An indicative list of the key analytical tasks required to complete the performance-related evaluation are set out in the table overleaf under six broad evaluation headings. It should be noted that the overall focus, timing and scope of the evaluation and the detailed terms of reference to be used will be developed and adopted by a steering committee for the evaluation.

The evaluation plan for the BMW OP will also draw upon the outcomes of an evaluation of the impact of the RTDI measures in the BMW Region undertaken at the end of the 2007-13 programming period.

It will be the responsibility of the respective Managing Authorities to ensure that that the performance/implementation evaluation is carried out and followed-up as required by the Common Provisions Regulation i.e., ensuring examination by the Monitoring Committee and submission to the Commission.

Impact Evaluations

An assessment of the impacts of the co-funded priorities will be undertaken towards the end of programme delivery, in 2022. This evaluation will identify the broader effects of the interventions under each priority (with the exception of Priority 5 which will be subject to a separate evaluation, see below).

During the 2007-13 programme period the ERDF Managing Authorities in Ireland jointly devised an innovative means of evaluating the impact of various investment programmes on the development of Ireland's designated urban centres. The Gateways and Hubs Development Index (previously the Gateway Development Index) examines the socio-economic performance and economic reach of Ireland's primary urban centres between 2009 and 2012. Key trends across a range of indicators, which includes population, enterprise and employment, knowledge and innovation, natural and physical environment, transport and connectivity, health and wellness, crime and affluence and deprivation are highlighted. The index draws

upon a wide array of data sources including census data, central statistics office (CSO) data and administrative data. It is proposed to update the index in 2017 and 2022 to coincide with the availability of national census data.

Thematic Evaluations

Thematic evaluations will be undertaken during programme implementation if specific programme issues requiring independent analysis are highlighted by the OP Monitoring Committees. These could relate to implementation issues, performance issues, cross-cutting issues.

Indicative List of Evaluations during programme implementation 2014-2020⁴

Evaluation Title	Rationale	Indicative Evaluation Questions (provisional)	Evaluation Methods	Data Requirements and availability	Schedule
Implementation/ Performance Evaluation	<p>To review external developments and the continued relevance of programme and priority objectives and the priority-level intervention logic.</p> <p>To assess programme management and the efficiency, effectiveness and performance to date</p> <p>To review all programme indicators</p> <p>To draw conclusions and make recommendations from the analysis</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To assess the continued relevance of the intervention logic of each priority towards achieving the priority result How has the OP performed in the period 2014-2016 and what conclusions should be drawn from such performance? What are the implications for future performance? What key changes if any 	<p>Quantitative and qualitative analysis of programme-derived and administrative data to include a review of the operating environment: (policy and socio-economic context); analysis of the Monitoring Data;</p> <p>Interviews/Questionnaires with Implementing Bodies & key stakeholders; literature review of relevant studies, evaluations</p>	<p>Source: Intervention Logic Annex to the OP</p> <p>Source: Intermediate Body progress reports on IT system and interview/survey derived data</p> <p>Source: NRP reports</p> <p>To assess contribution of the OP towards the attainment of the relevant CSR of the NRP</p>	Completed before end of 2017

⁴ As specified in section 3.5.2 of the Commission Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation

		<p>9. Is the OP on track to deliver on the national targets of high speed broadband in the unserved settlements?</p> <p>10. How or did the OP contribute to Ireland's target under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan?</p>			
Impact Evaluation	This evaluation will assess the broad impacts (both intended and unintended) of the OP , in particular the economic impacts of Priorities 1,2,3 and 4 of the BMW and the S&E Regional OPs on the respective region	<p>To identify the impacts of the co-funded initiatives on the broad regional economy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extent of Company spin-outs - Levels of postgraduate research activity - Patents filed and in use and invention disclosures 	Quantitative and qualitative analysis of programme-derived and sectoral and socio-economic data and review of relevant studies, evaluations	<p>Source: SFI studies and evaluations and surveys of funded research centres</p> <p>Source: Enterprise Ireland</p>	Completed before the end of 2022



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in research revenues to research institutions <p>To assess the level of Company engagement/collaboration (SME, HPSU FDI etc.) with funded research centres and the outcomes of the collaboration in terms of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New products/processes developed - Number of new ventures established - Licenses issued for commercial development - Qualified researchers placed/employed in Companies - Commercialisation arrangements 		<p>analyses and surveys of funded institutions and Companies</p> <p>Source: LEOs Company Survey and Comreg analyses</p>	
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		<p>established</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilisation of applied research facilities by Companies - Increased co-investment by industry in research <p>To assess the impact of high-speed broadband availability on SME growth and development</p> <p>To assess the impact of the OP entrepreneurial growth and expansion</p> <p>To assess the impact of the energy retrofitting schemes on Ireland's energy efficiency targets for domestic dwellings</p> <p>To assess the OPs contribution to the attainment of Ireland's Smarter Travel Policy target of 20 percentage point increase in non-private car commuting</p>		<p>Source: LEO client surveys and CSO data</p> <p>Source: SEAI data on energy efficiency in Irish households</p> <p>Source: Central Statistics Office non-private car commuting levels census data</p>	
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Gateways and Hubs Development Index	To update of existing Gateways and Hubs Development Index, incorporating demographic, economic, social and sustainable development indicators for the designated gateways and hubs	To assess the index score for each designated growth centre in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population - Enterprise Development - Employment - Knowledge and Innovation - Natural and Physical Environment - Transport and Connectivity, - Health and Wellbeing - Crime levels - Affluence and Deprivation 	The index combines a quantitative analysis drawing upon a wide range of official and administrative statistics, with the results of a perception survey.	Source: Index data sources	2017 and 2022
Thematic Evaluations	The themes of other specific evaluations will be defined by the OP Monitoring Committee and specific terms of reference will be drawn up by the respective Managing Authority to	To be determined	To be determined after the scope of the thematic evaluation is agreed by the Monitoring Committee	To be determined after the scope of the thematic evaluation is agreed by the Monitoring Committee	Not yet determined 2020

	<p>meet the identified needs. Examples of Thematic Evaluations will be of the integration of the Horizontal Principles (HP) into the OP. (section 10 refers) or evaluation of the complementarities achieved with other EU funded programmes.</p>				
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6. *Ex Post Evaluation*

The purpose of the ex post evaluation shall be to obtain a view of the programming period as a whole. It will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the Funds and their impact on economic, social and territorial cohesion and their contribution to the Union priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It will identify the factors that contributed to the success or failure of the implementation of the OP and identify good practice.

The ex post evaluation shall be a responsibility of the Commission in close cooperation with Member States and managing authorities to be finished by 31 December 2024. The ex post evaluation will be facilitated by evaluations of Member States and Commission during the programming period, especially by the Member States' summary of evaluations and main outputs and results during the period submitted to the Commission by 31 December 2022.

7. *Annual Implementation Report*

In accordance with Articles 50 and 111 of the Common Provisions Regulation, from 2016 the Managing Authority will submit an Annual Implementation Report (AIR) to the Commission on the implementation of the programme in the previous financial year by 31st May. These reports are one of the key elements of the monitoring of an operational programme. All implementation reports are required to set out certain information, starting with the report for 2016.

Annual implementation reports shall set out key information on the implementation of the programme and its priorities (including major projects) by reference to the financial data, common and programme-specific indicators and quantified target values, including changes in the value of result indicators where appropriate, and, beginning from the annual implementation report to be submitted in 2017, progress on achieving the milestones defined in the performance framework. The data transmitted shall relate to values for indicators for fully implemented operations and also, where possible, having regard to the stage of implementation, for selected operations. They shall also set out a synthesis of the findings of all evaluations of the programme that have become available during the previous financial year, any issues which affect the performance of the programme, and the measures taken; and,

the results of information and communication measures carried out under the approved communications strategy. The 2016 annual implementation report shall set out, where relevant, actions taken to fulfil ex ante conditionalities not fulfilled at the time of adoption of the programme.

It shall also assess the implementation of actions to take into account the horizontal principles, the role of the partners in the implementation of the programme and report on support used for climate change objectives.

The annual implementation report to be submitted in 2019 and the final implementation report for the Funds shall, in addition to the information and assessment referred to above, include information on, and assess progress towards, achieving the objectives of the programme and its contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The AIRs must be examined and approved by the Monitoring Committee before they are sent to the Commission. Approved Annual Implementation reports including aggregated data will be available publicly on the Managing Authority website

8. Ensuring Use and Communication of Evaluations

Evaluations and their follow-up shall be examined by the Monitoring Committee. The Monitoring Committee may make observations to the managing authority regarding evaluation of the programme. It shall monitor actions taken as a result of its observations (Art. 49.4, CPR). Steering groups nominated by the Monitoring committee can be a valuable part of the process of steering evaluations. All evaluations shall be sent to the Commission, preferably in electronic format (Art. 56.3, CPR).

The Managing Authority will consult with the relevant Intermediate Bodies covered by the evaluation recommendations relevant to the OP and agree as to how they propose to address (accept/amend/reject) the recommendations arising from evaluations.

The Managing Authority will then submit a response paper to the Monitoring Committee for approval, addressing all the recommendations. The Monitoring Committee will exercise its discretion whether to implement the response as proposed or to vary it.

A key part of the evaluation plan is to ensure that findings are disseminated as widely as possible, in the interests of transparency and to promote the emergent learning. One of the main purposes of carrying out an evaluation is to improve the way things are done. It is necessary to make sure that all stakeholders, decision makers and all organisations working on ERDF co-financed activities are aware of the evaluation work and make use of relevant findings. All research carried out as part of the evaluation will be published and placed on the website of the Managing Authorities for the BMW and S&E Regional Operational Programmes (www.nwra.ie and www.southernassembly.ie).

9. Evaluation of Communications Strategy

An Information and Communication Strategy for the BMW and the S&E Regional Operational Programmes were approved by the respective OP Monitoring Committees. It outlines how the Managing Authority and other bodies responsible for administering and delivering the programme will provide information on the Operational Programmes and publicise their outcomes and achievements.

The Communication Strategy includes indicators to monitor the implementation of the Information and Communication measures by the OP Monitoring Committee. These indicators will be used as a benchmark of the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation and to inform the annual communications action plan.. The strategy will be implemented through a series of activities outlined in the annual communication plan. The Managing Authority will inform the OP Monitoring Committee of the progress achieved; outlining how the action plan is contributing to the successful implementation of the strategy. The Managing Authorities will be responsible for commissioning a public awareness survey, which will be a key element of the evaluation process, in the latter half of 2016.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation of Horizontal Principles

In accordance with Articles 7 of the Common Provisions Regulation, there is a requirement that Member States ensure equality between men and women and the integration of a gender perspective, including in the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. In addition, Article 7 specifies that the programme authorities must take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination on any of the specified grounds. Article 8 of the Common provisions Regulation requires that the objectives

of the funds shall be pursued in line with the principle of sustainable development. In addition, the BMW and the S&E OPs incorporate mechanisms to promote social inclusion during implementation.

The general guidelines developed by each of the Managing Authorities for the integration of the horizontal principles into programme preparation, implementation, project selection, monitoring and evaluation are contained in the approved Operational Programmes and include:

- The capture of horizontal impacts via performance indicators;
- Measures to ensure data disaggregated by gender is captured and reported where relevant;
- Commitment to undertake impact assessments to ensure that the needs of different groups (e.g. men/women) will be met;
- The inclusion of the principles in evaluations and reviews;

Each of the horizontal principle units provided specific text which was incorporated into the guidance issued in respect of the Implementation Plans for each relevant scheme. In addition, the Managing Authority prepared a horizontal principles screening document with the assistance of the specialist units which was issued to all Intermediary Bodies.

A condition is included in the administrative agreements requiring Intermediate Bodies to report annually on the horizontal principles in an agreed format. As a general rule and where the nature of the intervention permits, data should be broken down by gender and by size of enterprise undertakings.

The annual progress reports to be provided by the Intermediate Bodies will be assessed by the respective Managing Authority in conjunction with the relevant units (above). Copies of the horizontal principle reports and the outcomes of this assessment will be provided annually to the Monitoring Committee.

It is the intention of the Managing Authority to incorporate a review of the implementation of the horizontal principle commitments into the terms of reference for the performance/implementation evaluation of the BMW and the S&E Regional OPs 2014-2020, as detailed in section 5 (above). There is also scope to undertake a thematic evaluation on the integration of the horizontal principles.

11. Monitoring Data for measuring environmental impacts (SEA)

Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires the respective Managing Authorities to monitor significant environmental effects of implementing the Regional OPs.. This must be done in such a way as to also identify unforeseen adverse effects and to take appropriate remedial action; though for this purpose, existing monitoring arrangements may be used, if appropriate, with a view to avoiding duplication.

The final environmental reports on the draft BMW and S&E Regional OPs (section 7.2) recommended that monitoring should commence as soon as the programme is adopted, with annual reporting carried out for the life of the programme. It also recommends that that any monitoring proposed should aim to specifically monitor the impact of the BMW and the S&E ROPs respectively rather than monitoring trends in the baseline environment that would have occurred regardless of the OPs. In accordance with the Irish SEA Regulations, it recommends that monitoring should also focus on aspects of the BMW and the S&E OP where environmental impacts are predicted to be significant.

The SEA process which accompanied the preparation and finalisation of the BMW and the S&E Regional OPs did not predict any significant adverse effects of the OP being implemented. As revealed in Section 6.4 of the individual environmental reports, residual environmental effects of the OPs (i.e. after mitigation measures have been adopted) are unlikely to be of greater than negligible to minor significance. Monitoring is therefore only a requisite to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects arising from the Programmes.

Suggested actions that the Managing Authority, Intermediate bodies or local authorities (as appropriate) could consider to monitor the environmental impact and achievement of the BMW and the S&E ROPs are provided in the environmental reports including detail on potential indicators and the linkage between the SEA objectives, recommended mitigation and enhancement and monitoring. A brief summary of monitoring measures recommended is as follows:

- Monitoring the level of reduced energy demand in retrofitted housing;
- Monitoring the number of urban development projects and their environmental outcomes;
- Monitoring the number of SMEs supported in the environmental services sector;

- Monitoring the number of research projects funded with an environmental sustainability focus; and
- Monitoring the length of fibre cable passing through SPAs, SACs and NHAs and the number of these sites affected (only if new infrastructure is required).

12. Role and internal capacity of the ERDF Managing Authorities in the administration of Evaluations

Evaluation is primarily the responsibility of the Managing Authority, which has built up considerable expertise in these fields in commissioning and managing and overseeing c. 20 evaluations during the previous programming periods. These responsibilities include:

- deciding, with the approval of the Monitoring Committee, on the final structure and content of the evaluation plan and ensure the existence of an administrative framework for its implementation;
- ensuring, that the monitoring data on financial and physical indicators, required for monitoring and evaluation is collected and available;
- deciding, taking account of the opinion of the monitoring committee, to initiate evaluations and providing resources for that purpose from the Technical Assistance budget;
- ensuring, as far as possible, that evaluation aims are respected and quality standards observed;
- submitting evaluation results to the Monitoring Committee and the Commission
- effecting any modifications to the programme that emerge from the evaluation process and disseminating learning to all key actors.

The Managing Authorities for the ERDF co-financed programmes in Ireland have expertise in the definition of evaluation terms of reference and fields of interest, in selecting and procuring external evaluation consultants, in assessing inception reports, in monitoring the progress of evaluations, in liaising with external evaluators, in facilitating co-operation with evaluations by Implementing Bodies, in reviewing draft evaluation reports, in undertaking quality checks on the completed reports and in preparing responses to evaluation findings. It is expected that the managing Authority staff directly engaged in managing evaluations will benefit from participation in the Evaluation Network hosted by the Commission services. Technical support is also available from the Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit

within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which has a remit to promote best practice in the evaluation and implementation of programme and project expenditure across all Government Departments and Public Sector Agencies

As it is intended that the evaluations will be completed by external, functionally independent entities, there is a vast amount of skills available externally to undertake the evaluation plan.

13. Resources and Budgets Allocated

Sufficient financial resources have been provided within the Technical Assistance Priority to facilitate a programme of evaluations for both Regional operational programmes. The Managing Authority will ensure that the resources necessary for carrying out evaluations, organising the production and gathering of the necessary data and use of the various types of information available from the IT system, will be provided. Technical support is also available from the Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which has a remit to promote best practice in the evaluation and implementation of programme and project expenditure across all Government Departments and Public Sector Agencies. An indicative budget for the implementation of the evaluation plan is €600,000 (€300,000 each) in respect of the Regional Operational Programmes 2014-2020.

14. Evaluation Standards and Assuring Quality in Evaluations

The evaluation activities included in this joint evaluation plan will be carried out in accordance with best practice and will take account of the standards provided in Annex 3 of the Commission's Guidance Document⁵ on Monitoring and Evaluation. Among the key standards to be observed are the following:

- Responsibility for the co-ordination of evaluation activities will be assigned to the Assistant Directors of the Assemblies.
- All relevant stakeholders will be meaningfully involved in evaluation activities
- Evaluations will be planned and conducted in a transparent manner

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

- Evaluations will be carried out in a timely manner to enable the findings and recommendations to feed into decisions on the design and modification of activities
- To enable analysis and comparison at EU level, each evaluation report shall include the Terms of Reference for the evaluation and an outline of the objectives of the evaluation and its expected results.
- A steering group will be set up for each evaluation to advise on the terms of reference and to assess the quality of the completed work (see below)
- The principle of avoidance of conflicts of interest will be respected
- Independence of evaluators procured to undertake evaluations

Evaluators will be expected to draw appropriate conclusions in relation to each of the analytical tasks set out in the terms of reference. The quality⁶ of the evaluation reports will be judged on the basis of:

- Openness of the evaluation process;
- Adequacy of the evaluation design;
- Reliability of the data used;
- Results supported by evidence and rigorous analysis
- Appropriateness of the analysis and credibility of the findings;
- Clarity of presentation of conclusions; and
- Utility of the recommendations.

⁶ This draws on the Quality Standards provided in the Commission Working document No. 5: Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods (EU Commission, 2006)

Annex 1: Specific Objectives and Expected Results

BMW Regional OP 2014-2020

Priority 1: Strengthening RTDI in the BMW Region	Specific Objectives	To increase the level of research taking place in the BMW region, with Company engagement, by supplying applied research To increase the number of companies undertaking Industry R&D in the BMW region
	Expected Results	Increased number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the BMW region Increased number of SME clients of Enterprise Ireland spending >€100k per annum on R&D in the BMW Region
Priority 2: ICT Infrastructure	Specific Objectives	To increase the provision of fibre optic links to all un-served towns and villages in the BMW Region
	Expected Results	Extension of high-speed next generation broadband to un-served settlements in the BMW Region
Priority 3: SME Support, promotion and Capability Development	Specific Objectives	The specific objective of priority 3(a) is to foster and grow a cohort of entrepreneurs in the BMW region with the skills and resources to accelerate the start-up and expansion of their enterprises in order to increase employment in supported micro-enterprises. The specific objective of investment priority 3(d) is to increase the number of established SMEs within the BMW region accessing the supports and finance required for sustainability, internationalisation and growth-oriented actions.
	Expected Results	Increased employment in the micro-enterprise sector in the BMW Region Increased employment in SME clients of Enterprise Ireland
Priority 4: Low	Specific Objectives	To improve energy efficiency in the housing stock

Carbon Economy		in the BMW Region.
	Expected Results	Increase the average thermal performance of housing units to 185 kWh per BRm2 from 210 kWh per BRm2
Priority 5: Sustainable Urban Development	Specific Objective	To increase the number of integrated growth centre strategies implemented To support low carbon sustainable, multimodal urban mobility in designated urban centres
	Expected Results	Improvement in the social, economic and physical conditions in selected urban centres, based on an urban development index Increased non-private car commuting levels in the designated urban centres
Priority 6: Technical Assistance	Specific Objective	Effective implementation of the Operational Programme Effective communication of funding opportunities and programme achievements Effective evaluation of the programme Effective capacity building for staff of the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies Establishment and operation of an effective computerised system for data exchange and e-cohesion system
	Expected Results	Results are not required to be specified under Article 96(2)(c)

S&E Regional OP 2014-2020

Priority 1:	Specific Objectives	To increase the level of research taking place in the
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Strengthening RTDI in the S&E Region		S&E region with Company engagement by supplying applied research. To increase the level of commercialisation of research by the higher education institutions in the S&E region
	Expected Results	Increased number of industry partners engaged with funded strategic research centres in the S&E region Increase in the annual number of licenses as a result of research in the S&E Region
Priority 2: ICT Infrastructure	Specific Objectives	To increase the provision of fibre optic links to all un-served towns and villages in the S&E Region
	Expected Results	Extension of high-speed next generation broadband to un-served settlements in the S&E Region
Priority 3: SME Support, promotion and Capability Development	Specific Objectives	To increase employment levels in micro-enterprises in the S&E Region by supporting business start-ups, business expansion and higher innovation levels in micro-enterprises.
	Expected Results	Increased employment in the micro-enterprise sector in the S&E Region
Priority 4: Low Carbon Economy	Specific Objectives	To improve energy efficiency in the housing stock in the S&E Region.
	Expected Results	Increase the average thermal performance of housing units to 185 kWh per BRm ² from 210 kWh per BRm ²
Priority 5: Sustainable Urban Development	Specific Objective	To revitalise, regenerate and improve the urban environment in the designated urban centres as part of integrated urban strategies; To support low carbon sustainable, multimodal

		urban mobility in designated urban centres
	Expected Results	<p>Improvement in the social, economic and physical conditions in selected urban centres, based on an urban development index</p> <p>Increased non-private car commuting levels in the designated urban centres</p>
Priority 6: Technical Assistance	Specific Objective	<p>Effective implementation of the Operational Programme</p> <p>Effective communication of funding opportunities and programme achievements</p> <p>Effective evaluation of the programme</p> <p>Effective capacity building for staff of the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies</p> <p>Establishment and operation of an effective computerised system for data exchange and e-cohesion system</p>
	Expected Results	Results are not required to be specified under Article 96(2)(c)

Annex 2: Priority-level Output Indicators

BMW Regional OP 2014-2020

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1.1	Number of new researchers in supported entities (Common Output Indicator)	Full-Time Equivalents	ERDF	More Developed	211	SFI	Annual
1.2	Number of staff who have been trained in research in Investigator Programme Awards	No. of trainees	ERDF	More Developed	88	SFI	Annual
1.3	Number of Awards under the Spokes Programme in the BMW Region	No. of awards	ERDF	More Developed	5	SFI	Annual
1.4	Number of marine research PhDs and Post-Doctoral Researchers funded	No. of researchers	ERDF	More Developed	9	MI	Annual
1.5	Number of enterprises receiving R& D supports	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	120	EI	Annual
1.6	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support (innovation partnerships)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	95	EI	Annual
1.7	Number of Commercialisation Fund Awards	No. of awards	ERDF	More Developed	95	EI	Annual

1.8	Number of enterprises receiving support (Common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	203	EI	Annual
1.9	Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects (Common Output Indicator)	€	ERDF	More Developed	22,000,000	EI	Annual
1.10	Number of enterprises co-operating with research institutions (common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	95	EI	Annual

Priority 2: ICT Infrastructure

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
2.1	Additional households with broadband access of at least 30Mbps (Common Output Indicator)	No. of households	ERDF	More Developed	144,976	DCENR	Annual

Priority 3: SME Support, promotion and Capability Development

ID	Indicator	Measurement	Fund	Category	Target	Source	Frequency of
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		ent Unit		of Region	Value	of Data	Reporting
3.1	Number of enterprises receiving supports (Common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	15,992	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.2	Number of enterprises receiving grants (Common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	791	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.3	Employment increase in supported enterprises (Common Output Indicator)	Full-Time Equivalents	ERDF	More Developed	3,661	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.4	Number of business start-ups supported (Common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	1,506	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.5	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support (Common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	11,397	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.6	Number of participants of enterprise training programmes	No. of participants	ERDF	More Developed	46,025	EI & EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.7	Private investment matching public support to enterprises (Common Output Indicator)	€	ERDF	More Developed	9,513,081	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.8	Number of enterprises receiving EI financial support	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	110	EI	Annual

3.9	Number of enterprises receiving support (Common Output Indicator)	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	110	EI	Annual
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Priority 4: Low Carbon Economy

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
4.1	Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification (Common Output Indicator)	Number of households	ERDF	More Developed	10,194	DCENR, SEAI and DECLG	Annual
4.2	GHG ⁷ Reduction (Common Output Indicator)	Tonnes of CO ₂	ERDF	More Developed	4,560	DECLG	Annual

Priority 5: Sustainable Urban Development

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
5.1	Number of integrated growth centre strategies	No. of strategies	ERDF	More Developed	7	Managing Authority	Annual
5.2	Population (no.) living in areas with integrated urban development strategies (common indicator)	No. of people	ERDF	More Developed	206,208	Managing Authority	Annual

⁷ Arising from social and vacant housing retrofit

5.3	Number of multimodal urban mobility projects implemented	No. of strategies	ERDF	More Developed	3	Managing Authority	Annual
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Priority 6: Technical Assistance

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1	Number of Monitoring Committee meetings	No. of meetings	ERDF	More Developed	10 (1 per year)	MA	Annual
2	Number of Evaluation Studies conducted	No. of studies	ERDF	More Developed	5 (1 per priority)	MA	Annual
3	Number of annual Information and Publicity Events	No. of events	ERDF	More Developed	7 (1 per annum 2014-2020)	MA	Annual
4	Number of staff employed	FTE	ERDF	More Developed	4.5	MA	Annual
5	Number of staff participating in capacity-building measures	No. of staff	ERDF	More Developed	30	MA	Annual
6	Computerised system in place for data exchange and e-cohesion	Completed system in place	ERDF	More Developed	1	MA	Annual
7	Number of representations on other programme committees for complementarity	Number of representations	ERDF	More Developed	6	MA	Annual

	purposes						
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S&E Regional OP 2014 -2020

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
CO 24	Number of new researchers in supported entities	Full-Time Equivalents	ERDF	More Developed	689	SFI	Annual
1.1	Number of Awards under the Spokes Programme in the S&E Region	No. of awards	ERDF	More Developed	25	SFI	Annual
1.2	Number of marine research PhDs and Post-Doctoral Researchers funded	No. of researchers	ERDF	More Developed	21	MI	Annual
CO 01	Number of enterprises receiving supports	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	143	EI	Annual
CO 26	Research, innovation: Number of enterprises co-operating with research institutions	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	143	EI	Annual
1.3	Number of Commercialisation Fund Awards	No. of awards	ERDF	More Developed	325	EI	Annual
CO 04	Number of	No. of	ERDF	More	143	EI	Annual

	enterprises receiving non-financial support (innovation partnerships)	enterprises		Developed			
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Priority 2: ICT Infrastructure

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
CO 10	Additional households with broadband access of at least 30Mbps (Common Output Indicator)	No. of households	ERDF	More Developed	164,344	DCENR	Annual

Priority 3: SME Support, Promotion and Capability Development

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
CO 01	Number of enterprises receiving supports	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	51,736	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
CO 02	Number of enterprises receiving grants	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	1,804	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
CO 06	Private investment matching public support to enterprises	€	ERDF	More Developed	13,649,599	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
CO 08	Employment increase in supported	FTE	ERDF	More Developed	5,760	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual

	enterprises					on Unit	
CO 05	Number of new enterprises supported	No. of enterprises	ERDF	More Developed	2,398	EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
CO 04	Number of enterprises receiving non – financial support	No. of participants	ERDF	More Developed	17,770	EI & EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual
3.1	Number of participants of enterprise training programmes	Participants	ERDF	More Developed	105,552	EI & EI LEO Co-ordination Unit	Annual

Priority 4: Low Carbon Economy

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
CO 31	Number of Households with improved energy consumption classification	Number of households	ERDF	More Developed	19,497	DCENR, SEAI and DECLG	Annual
CO 34	GHG ⁸ Reduction	Tonnes of CO ₂	ERDF	More Developed	8,945	DECLG	Annual

Priority 5: Sustainable Urban Development

⁸ Arising from social and vacant housing retrofit

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
CO 37	Urban Development: Population (no.) living in areas with integrated urban development strategies	Persons	ERDF	More Developed	1,571,356	Central Statistics Office	Annual
5.1	Number of integrated growth centre strategies implemented	No. of strategies	ERDF	More Developed	9	Managing Authority administrative records	Annual
5.2	Number of multimodal urban mobility projects	Number of projects	ERDF	More developed	4	Managing Authority administrative records	Annual

Priority 6: Technical Assistance

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Fund	Category of Region	Target Value	Source of Data	Frequency of Reporting
1	Number of Monitoring Committee meetings	No. of meetings	ERDF	More Developed	10 (1 per year)	MA	Annual
2	Number of Evaluation Studies conducted	No. of studies	ERDF	More Developed	5 (1 per priority)	MA	Annual
3	Number of annual Information and Publicity Events	No. of events	ERDF	More Developed	7 (1 per annum 2014-2020)	MA	Annual

4	Number of staff employed	FTE	ERDF	More Developed	4.5	MA	Annual
5	Number of staff participating in capacity-building measures	No. of staff	ERDF	More Developed	30	MA	Annual
6	Computerised system in place for data exchange and e-cohesion	Completed system in place	ERDF	More Developed	1	MA	Annual
7	Number of representatives on other programme committees for complementarity purposes	Number of representatives	ERDF	More Developed	6	MA	Annual