



ANNEX 3a

**Description of the Monitoring and
Evaluation System
- Joint Operational Programme
Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 -**

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Description of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

- Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 -

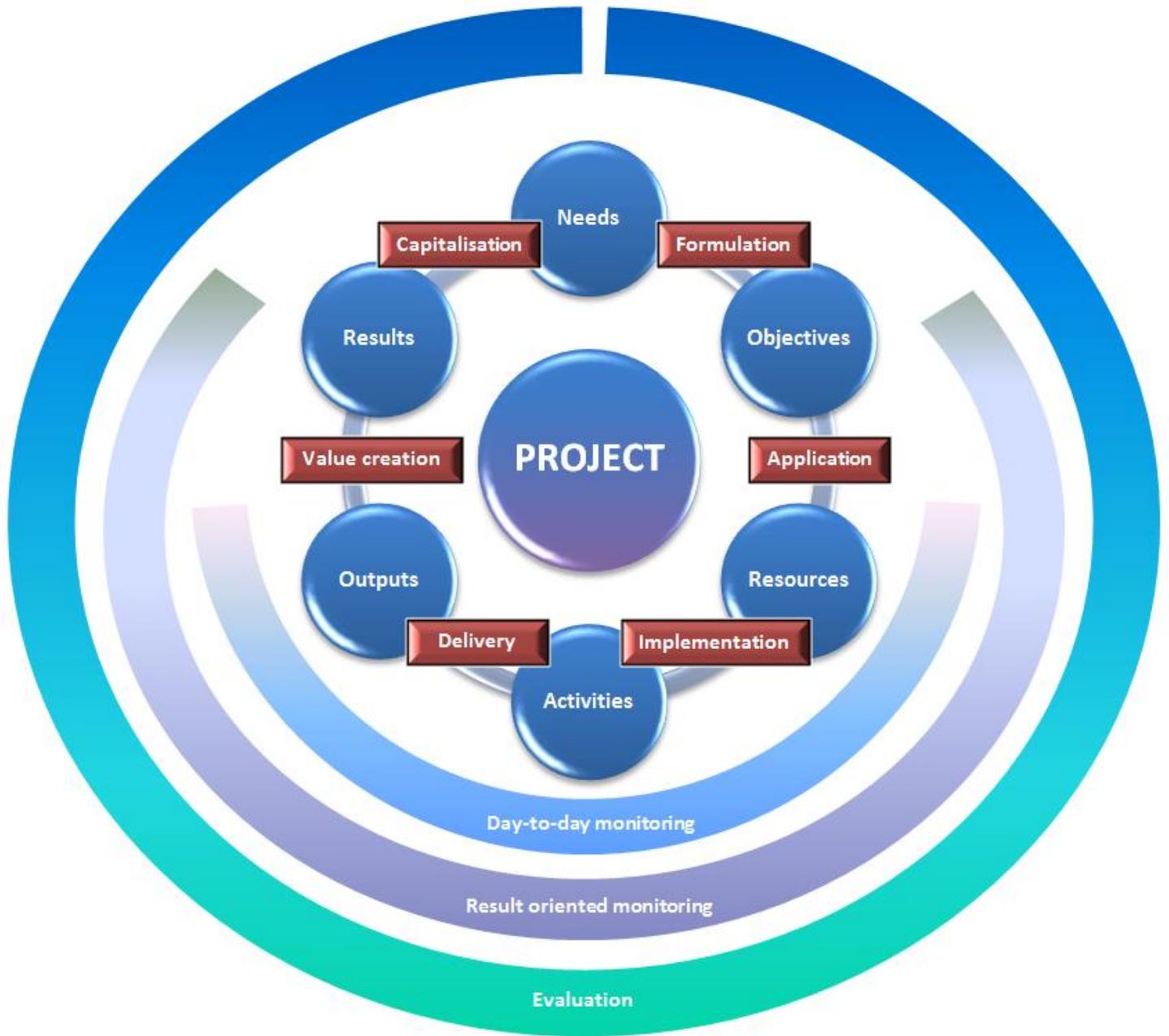
1. Background and Legal Basis

According to the ENI-CBC Implementing Regulation, the programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system shall aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation, as well as at assessing and improving its consistency, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. As such, the M&E system will support the preparation, discussion and adoption of key decisions regarding programme strategy and implementation by the JMC. It will also provide important inputs to the programme annual report (including an annual M&E plan) to be sent to the EC by 15 February each year, for the first time in 2016. The technical part of that report shall describe, among other things, the progress achieved in implementing the programme and its priorities. Furthermore, the MA will draw up the programme final report to be approved by the JMC and sent to the EC by 30 September 2024. This should also contain an overview of the achievements of the programme, which will have to be based on M&E system outputs.

2. Objectives

The monitoring and evaluation activities will play an important role in the programme implementation cycle. The objective is to put in place a proper risk management by project partners, programme bodies and the EC. In addition, the M&E system will enable learning to take place during project and programme implementation, which will lead to improved performance at both levels. Moreover, the programme and the EC will be better able to safeguard accountability as to the spending of Community and national funds.

The following graph illustrates the role and timing of M&E activities throughout the project implementation cycle: **day-to-day monitoring activities**, among others checking whether activities are on time and on budget as well as delivering like they should, have a narrower scope than **result-oriented monitoring**, which also assesses the extent to which planned results and objectives are being achieved. While the former makes use of output indicators mainly, the latter also requires data collection on the basis of result indicators (mainly at project level). Corrective action based on the findings of day-to-day monitoring most likely concentrate on activities and the way they are carried out while ROM may lead to more substantial changes, for example in terms of updating the logical framework, human resources, the budget or carrying out capacity building actions. Still more elaborate in scope is evaluation, which analyses the full (project or programme) implementation cycle and assesses the degree to which results have been achieved and needs met, analysing the reasons for possible underachievement and making recommendations for the rest of the implementation period (in the case of mid-term evaluation) or for similar interventions in the future (in the case of ex-post evaluation). These principles apply at both project and the programme level.



In order to meet these objectives, the following activities will be carried out:

- Monitoring at project level
- Monitoring at programme level
- Evaluation

In addition to the day-to-day monitoring, the MA shall carry out programme and project level ROM.

3. Monitoring at Project level

Monitoring activities shall be carried out at project level, both internally (by the project partners) and externally (by the programme bodies). The aim of the project-level monitoring activities shall be to track progress in project implementation, to take remedial action where necessary as soon as possible, as well as to update action plans.

Objective

According to article 43 of the Implementing Regulation, project applications will have to include a description of monitoring and evaluation arrangements for internal purposes. Projects should describe the way in which the lead partner collects information on the progress of various activities by the other partners, aggregates this information to a regular overview of the state of play of project implementation, and assesses the risks related to possible under-performance in terms of delays, budget overruns or non-achievement of outputs. This assessment should take into account, and be logically connected to, the assumptions formulated in the project logical framework.

Day-to-day monitoring activities by the MA and JTS will consist of a review of progress reports, regular contact with the lead partner by e-mail and telephone, and where possible attending key project events, always keeping the other project partners informed as much as possible. Also, specific on-the-spot visits may be carried out to the lead partner premises by MA or JTS staff. National authorities may support monitoring visits (both day-to-day and ROM) at the request of the MA. The lead partner is expected to be continuously informed about the developments in project activities carried out by project partners. All monitoring information collected will be stored systematically in the Management Information System (MIS) of the programme.

In addition, there is a need for collecting data to measure programme-level output indicators based on project reports. It will be compulsory for project applications to include the measurement of at least one of the programme output indicators, alongside project-specific output indicators.

The programme will also carry out an internal ROM plan, in the framework of which it will review the performance of projects funded with a focus on the likelihood that results will be achieved and the need for remedial action. The MA may externalise these ROM activities. The following criteria will be used:

- Relevance and design
- Efficiency of implementation
- Effectiveness
- (prospects for) Impact
- (prospects for) Sustainability

ROM reports will also make recommendations to lead partners and partners in order to improve project implementation.

Data collection method

Project applications should, as part of their monitoring arrangements, describe the methodology used for measuring (project level) expected results.

Data collection activities in the framework of ROM may include a review of all relevant project documentation (including project outputs), semi-structured interviews by telephone/e-mail and, where relevant and feasible, face-to-face interviews and/or visits to key project events. There will be at least one ROM-visit per project and more if needed depending on a risk analysis carried out e.g. on the basis of project amounts or in case previous monitoring visit detected implementation problems. The scale of the visit (only LP or more/all partners) will also be decided upon based on risk analysis, notably the amount allocated to partners.

Data collection frequency

For purposes of project-level monitoring and risk management, the lead partner should check the latest situation in terms of progress in implementation (and assess the corresponding risks) at least once a month. In case of substantial risks, the lead partner should inform the MA immediately. In all other cases, it will report to the MA every four months in the form of progress reports.

Day-to-day monitoring activities by the MA and/or JTS will be carried out on a continuous basis. ROM reports shall be produced once during the project lifetime, nevertheless they may be produced more than once, if the case, on the basis of a risk assessment of the projects e.g. according to project size and length, type of activities, timeliness of implementation to date.

Responsible stakeholders

- Lead partner
- Project partners
- JTS
- MA

Project beneficiaries (lead partners) will be responsible for project-level monitoring, including the collection of the relevant information from project partners, the identification and communication of potential bottlenecks (both to other partners and the MA) and the coordination of solving them. They will also be in charge of submitting project progress reports as well as final reports.

When needed, the national authorities may have an important role in day-to-day monitoring, informing the MA of any actual or threatened bottlenecks in the implementation of project activities in their country. The MA and JTS will be responsible for day-to-day monitoring and ROM activities at project level.

Output

- Project implementation reports (every four months)
- Records of day-to-day monitoring activities into programme MIS
- ROM reports

4. Monitoring at Programme level

The availability of statistics at programme level, which are comparable across Member States and CBC Partner Countries, is very limited. Even in cases where there are such data, the latest year for which entries exist for all countries is often not recent enough to convey any meaningful information for monitoring or evaluation purposes. This has important implications for the result indicators for this programme, the measurement of which will rely heavily on sources internal to the programme and the projects (such as project reports and surveys). Therefore the MA will organise surveys among the main target groups of each priority at least twice during the programming period.

Objective

Day-to-day monitoring activities at programme level will focus primarily on progress in implementation of the programme in terms of financial and output indicators, as well as its risks and assumptions.

Programme-level ROM will focus on programme performance as well as the likelihood of achievement of target values of the result indicators and will take appropriate actions for improvement. The prospects for programme impact and sustainability will also be addressed.

Data collection method

The basis for data collection will be mainly project reports which represent the main source for measuring the output indicators at programme level, but also for early warnings by lead partners on potential problems in implementation. Nevertheless, national authorities may give early warnings if they anticipate overall difficulties in implementation e.g a change of legislation that may create difficulties but normally not on specific projects. Aggregation will be carried out in the framework of the MIS, where data on progress in terms of launching calls, applications received, the assessment of their quality, contracts signed and project-level on-the-spot visits and audits is also available.

In addition to the data obtained through project reports/MIS, there will be a need for data collection at programme level via surveys. For programme level result indicators this would include surveys among reference groups, consisting of a sample of organisations from among the target groups for each priority in the programme strategy.

Furthermore, data will be obtained from (summaries of) the evaluation and selection process of applications, contracting, payments (to be extracted from the MIS), as well as project-level on-the-spot visits, project level ROM reports and audits.

Programme-level ROM data collection will be based on the aggregation of project level ROM reports.

Data on result indicators will be generated by means of a survey among pre-selected Reference Groups, which will be a sample of organisations from the target groups for each of the programme priorities. These Reference Groups should include the applicants and partners from the first and second calls of the 2007-2013 programme where relevant, supplemented by other relevant organisations according to a list provided by the National Authoritiesⁱ. In order to guarantee a sufficient level of statistical reliability, the Reference Groups should include at least 10 relevant organisations from each country participating in the programme, where possible reflecting differences in population among countries. This list should be kept as stable as possible throughout the programme period, replacing organisations only in case they cease to exist or have not provided any input the previous time this was requested. The Reference Groups will be asked for their assessment of the situation in relation to the objective of the corresponding priority by means of either an estimate of a quantity relevant for the priority objective or a subjective score on a 5-point scale indicating to what extent they agree to a limited number of statements, the average (across statements and across all Reference Group members participating in the survey) of which will constitute the value of the result indicator.

Data collection frequency

Data on programme output indicators will be collected continuously on the basis of project progress reports received, while the priority level result indicators are subject to specific surveys to be coordinated by the MA.

The result indicators shall be measured once, when the implementation period for most of the projects is finalized, or possibly twice, so to serve as a basis for future programming, in addition to the baseline measurement carried out in 2015.

Responsible stakeholders

- MA
- JTS
- (Project lead partners)

ⁱ Members of Reference Groups should be selected on the basis of their thorough and objective view on the national and international (i.e. at BSB level) situation in terms of the result indicator they are supposed to comment on. Examples include universities, (other) research institutes, and associations of companies, NGOs or municipalities, regional or national authorities.

The overall responsibility for M&E activities shall rest with the MA and JTS, which will also coordinate the preparation, discussion, JMC approval and submission of the annual report to the EC by 15 February each year. The JTS/MA will also be responsible for uploading data into the KEEP databaseⁱⁱ, based on the information available in the MIS.

The JMC will assess the quality of M&E outputs and discuss their contents, taking these into account when making decisions regarding programme strategy and implementation.

Output

The MA shall submit an annual report approved by the JMC to the EC by 15 February each year. That annual report shall include one technical and one financial part covering the preceding accounting year.

In addition to the annual reports, the programme will provide input to the KEEP database, to which all ENI-CBC programmes will upload information on, amongst others, common output indicators, award procedures, status of beneficiaries and budget allocations per (type of) partnerⁱⁱⁱ. In addition, KEEP will contain information on the extent to which programmes and projects are achieving their planned results. This will provide the EC with up to date information on the programmes and the possibility to aggregate data across programmes. It will also provide the programmes with the opportunity to use peer programmes as a benchmark for implementation.

The ROM report at programme level will be complemented by ROM reports to be commissioned by the EC at ENI-CBC instrument level. The findings of these reports will be presented to the JMC and they will be discussed as to the need to take corrective action and the related lessons learned.

5. Evaluation

By the end of 2017, the EC will commission a mid-term evaluation at instrument-level, which will generate conclusions and recommendations which are relevant for the programme as well. The MA will inform the JMC about the mid-term evaluation findings to the extent they are relevant for the programme.

In addition, the programme may commission a programme-specific evaluation (which is likely to take place in 2020), building on the EU-level mid-term evaluation and serving as a basis for future programming. However, the evaluation may also be used as a basis for reallocation of funds and/or revision of indicators of the current programme.

Furthermore, according to article 43 of the Implementing Regulation, project applications will have to include a description of monitoring and evaluation arrangements for internal purposes, which may include evaluation activities during or towards the end of their implementation period.

Responsible stakeholders

EC (instrument level)

MA and JMC (programme level)

Lead Partner (project level)

ⁱⁱ The programme will operate a manual transfer of data from the MIS to KEEP in the first years of implementation. In 2017, the possibilities for a shift to automatic transfer in xml format to KEEP will be investigated.

ⁱⁱⁱ The KEEP database is also used by the EC for the collection and representation of basic information on programmes such as the numbers of projects and partners per programme and countries.