



Evaluation plan for IPARD II 2014-2020 REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

January 2016

1. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

For the purpose of ensuring sufficient and appropriate evaluation activities and to provide for appropriate resources able to support these activities, pursuant to Articles 57 of the FWA, Article 54 and 56 of the SA an Evaluation Plan (EP) has been drawn up for evaluation of the IPARD II programme in Serbia for the period 2014-2020.

According to article 56 (2) of the SA, the objectives of the EP are to:

- examine the progress of the IPARD II programme in relation to its goals by means of result and, where appropriate, impact indicators;
- improve the quality of the IPARD II programme and its implementation;
- examine proposals for substantial changes to the IPARD II programme;
- prepare for interim and ex-post evaluation.

In line with the article 54 of the SA the following **principles for the evaluation** of the IPARD II programme will be strictly implemented:

(1) Article 55 of the FWA sets out general principles of evaluation of IPA II Assistance. For the purposes of Article 55 of the FWA, evaluations shall aim to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from Union funds and the strategy and implementation of the IPARD II programme;

(2) The IPARD II programme shall be subject to ex-ante and ex-post and, where considered as appropriate by the Commission, interim evaluations carried out by independent evaluators under the responsibility of Serbia;

(3) The evaluations shall assess the implementation of the IPARD II programme towards the achievement of objectives set out in Article 16(5) of the FWA;

(4) The evaluations shall examine the degree of utilisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming, its socio-economic impact and its impact on the defined objectives and priorities. They shall cover the goals of the IPARD II programme and aim to draw lessons concerning rural development policy. They shall identify the factors which contributed to the success or failure of the implementation of the IPARD II programme, including the sustainability of actions and identifications of best practices.

(5) Evaluation reports shall explain the methodology applied, and include an assessment of the quality of the data and the findings;

(6) The quality and implications of evaluations shall be assessed by the Managing Authority, the IPARD II monitoring committee and the Commission;

(7) The results of the ex-ante and the interim evaluations shall be taken into account in the programming and implementation cycle.

In order to successfully fulfil these objectives and principles, the evaluation activities of the IPARD II programme will be implemented by:

- targeted, diverse and tailored approach: the monitoring and evaluation activity will be targeted on capturing whether the programme is delivering on the identified policy priorities. For this purpose different evaluation techniques shall be used for monitoring and evaluating different aspects of the IPARD II programme. This will also allow sufficient flexibility in annual planning to address evaluation needs as they emerge,
- timely provision: ensure the monitoring and evaluation activity is undertaken at the right time in order to inform all those involved in programme management, policy-makers and stakeholders of the impact and effectiveness of the programme,
- dialogue and transparency: early dialogue between relevant stakeholders for relevant and timely feedback and fostering evaluation transparency to have the greatest benefits from evaluation report.

2. GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

This section describes the main bodies involved and their responsibilities in the monitoring and the evaluation of IPARD II programme. It also explains how evaluation activities are linked with IPARD implementation in terms of content and timing.

The actors involved in the monitoring and evaluation system are: the Managing Authority (MA), the IPARD II Monitoring Committee (MC), the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC), the IPARD Agency and independent evaluators.

The role and responsibilities of involved bodies in the monitoring and evaluation system are given:

Managing Authority (MA):

The Managing Authority is responsible for the process of organization and management of monitoring and evaluation system. In line with the article 54, 56 and 59 of the SA the MA is responsible for and the implementation of the EP and has to ensure as a minimum the following legal requirements:

- that ex-ante and ex-post and where considered by the Commission, interim evaluations are timely and in accordance with the monitoring and evaluation system;
- that European Commission is informed on each evaluation via AIRs;
- that each year a report on the results achieved under the evaluation plan is presented to the IPARD II MC;
- that the results of evaluation are published.

The Managing Authority is also responsible for managing all evaluation tenders, facilitating cooperation and access to data amongst the monitoring and evaluation stakeholders (through establishing a consultative working group (ESC)), ensuring their evaluation capacity building,

checking the quality of evaluations, communicating the evaluation results to internal and external stakeholders, as well as to the wider public, following recommendations on evaluation reports and undertake activities in view of complying with them, and coordinating evaluation with programme implementation.

The Managing Authority shall establish ESC as consultative working group through approval by the HEAD of MA and coordination of the operations of ESC.

Deliverables of the MA:

- Annual Implementation Report (AIR)¹;
- Annual update of the Evaluation Plan: will establish procedures for the preparation of tenders to contract external experts for evaluation needs, the methods of dissemination of evaluation results, the detailed evaluation capacity-building plan, methods of engaging other institutions in data collection, proposals for EP revision, etc. Each year the MA will report to the IPARD II MC the annual evaluation activities of the EP². The report will include assessment of the EP progress, proposed revisions and any necessary reallocation of resources.

IPARD II Monitoring Committee (MC)

The role of the IPARD II MC is to monitor the efficiency and quality of the IPARD II programme implementation, as well as review the progress in the utilisation of allocated funds towards the set objectives. Among other tasks, the MC approves EP, analyses the activities and results of the EP implementation and may issue recommendations to the MA regarding programme implementation and evaluation and then monitor actions taken as a result of its recommendations. It considers and approves AIRs before they are sent to the EC.

IPARD Agency (IA):

The IPARD Agency, as data provider, defines the methods of collecting the required data in agreement with the MA. For the purpose of monitoring and evaluation the IPARD Agency has the role to:

- Collect information based on documents submitted through applications, information on supported projects and payments and information on conducted controls. Collection of data is made through the Monitoring tables given by the EU Commission and tables for other indicators required by the programming document and other requirements of MA.
- Makes provisions to ensure that beneficiaries report on time and at the required scope.

¹ Article 59(3) of the Sectoral Agreement

² Article 56(3) of the Sectoral Agreement

The IPARD Agency shall ensure the setup of a system to:

- Store the collected information. The IPARD Agency shall establish the recipients' database with unique reference number of recipients which will allow data analysis defined on the base of territorial structure of Republic of Serbia.
- Secure a timely data flow to the MA.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding between IPARD Agency and MA the data and the tables (hardcopy and electronic version) shall be provided regularly as follows:

- All tables at least once a year for the annual report;
- All or main tables after each call for proposals for the needs to plan next calls;
- All or main tables before the MC meeting (semi-annually);
- Ad-hoc (upon request of the MA).

Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC):

In order to ensure a high quality of planning and execution of evaluation activities a regular consultation of stakeholders shall be ensured, via establishment of a permanent Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). The members of the Evaluation Steering Group will be members of the IPARD II monitoring committee and/or external experts with experience in evaluation.

The ESC serves as a consultative body and is mandated to assist the MA in:

- formulating the scope of evaluation;
- support MA when drafting the Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR for engaging independent evaluators will cover the entire period of implementation of the IPARD II programme and will include all the planned evaluation activities;
- provide advice on planning of the evaluation activities, formulation of evaluation questions and design;
- annual update of the evaluation plan of the IPARD II programme through preparation of short recommendations reports to assess the EP progress, propose revisions of EP to MA and any necessary reallocation of resources;
- ensures that the evaluator is provided with full access to information;
- support and monitor the work of the evaluator;
- conducting a quality control of evaluation findings;

- monitor the process of implementation of the recommendations formulated as the result of the conducted evaluations.

ESC will meet at least twice each year.

Independent evaluators

All evaluation activities will be carried out by external experts who are functionally independent from the Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency. Evaluators will be contracted in accordance with public procurement provisions – PRAG rules and financed from “Technical assistance” measure.

National Rural Network

Contribution of the National Rural Network in implementation and achieving the goals of the IPARD II Programme from the viewpoint of evaluation, within their cooperation with a MAEP (MA) can be accomplished through data collection from the field and assistance in promotional activities of the Ministry on the local and regional level.

NRNs will also have a role in sharing and disseminating monitoring and evaluation findings, which is to be decided at a later stage.

3. EVALUATION TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES

The development of the EP has taken into account any relevant recommendations of the Ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD 2014-2020.

Evaluation activities will show the progress, impact, achievements, effectiveness, efficiency and importance of the IPARD II programme for the rural development in Serbia. Evaluation activities will ensure an adequate analysis of the Programme contribution to the objectives.

At the start of the programming period, the priority will be given to the following **activities**:

- **A review of data availability for common context indicators (or proxies) and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection.**

During this process, following the start of the IPARD II programme implementation, a review of data availability will be carried out for common context indicators (especially impact indicators) and weaknesses and gaps in data collection will be assessed.

The lack of data will be analysed in order to identify the appropriate steps to be taken to ensure the proper availability of quality data according to the results of analysis. Review/assessment of data availability for common context indicators will be done by drawing up a detailed overview of data availability, assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection; engaging other institutions in data collection. The responsible institutions will be engaged to collect data,

especially for missing environmental context indicators, in order to establish the methodology and prepare the set-up of the system by the end of 2017 for effective data collection from 2017 at the latest. During the implementation of the IPARD II programme, on-going monitoring of data quality will be carried out and any appropriate actions taken to upgrade the quality of data or take into account further indications at EU level. Adequate financial resources shall be earmarked for the above.

- **Building up evaluation capacity within the MA and IPARD Agency.**

The trainings will be done in accordance with a trainings plan which will be based on a proper training needs assessment. In order to assess the training needs a questionnaire will be delivered to the staff. The results of the questionnaire, the staff opinion on their capacity to carry out their job in the best manner, the discussion will enable to identify the training needs.

- **Establishing the Evaluation Steering Committee after the start of the implementation of IPARD II programme.**

In 2017, following few months of implementation, the focus will be on:

- **Barriers to absorption and administrative simplification;**
- **Strengthening the advisory capacity.**

In 2018, attention will be given to:

- **The assessment of the established monitoring and evaluation system in IPARD Agency/ Managing Authority and further development of the system.**

The established system of collecting and storing of data will be checked at the IPARD Agency. Examples of good practice of member states in the organisation of monitoring and evaluation system will be further analysed. This will create a solid basis for the future evaluation activities.

- **Preparation of new measures and to interim evaluation of IPARD 2014 – 2020.**

During the last two years of the Evaluation plan, the ex-ante evaluation for the next programming period and preparation for the ex-post evaluation of IPARD 2014 – 2020 will add up to the already on-going evaluation activities.

The evaluation and monitoring activities will be listed in the table under chapter 5. They will be carried out with emphasis on specific IPARD II topics:

- Observation of development trends and context analysis;
- On-going observation of changes in the context in which the programme's interventions take place against set baselines (using common context indicators);
- Monitoring of implementation of evaluation recommendations;

- Absorption capacity.

4. DATA AND INFORMATION

This section provides a brief description of the system to record, maintain, manage and report statistical information on IPARD implementation and the provision of monitoring data for evaluation.

A clear definition and understanding of each indicator, together with the data collection methodology to calculate their value is the basis for implementation of any evaluation.

In the IPARD II programme for the period 2014-2020 the following common indicators are foreseen:

1. Context indicators
2. Common Indicators – Target indicators
3. Output indicators

1. Context indicators

Values of common context indicators are collected mainly by Statistical Office of Serbia (SORS) and Eurostat. Some of the context indicators are not available as they are not collected in Serbia and not monitored. These are mostly indicators referring to the environment. In the beginning of programming period the lack of data will be analysed in detail and adequate steps will be taken to ensure the proper availability of quality data according to the results of analysis.

2. Common Indicators - Target Indicators

The source of data for the quantifying of target indicator values will be databases (operations database) managed by the IPARD Agency, and for the base year, statistical databases. The expected values of envisaged target indicators are given in the chapter 6.4. of the IPARD II programme.

3. Output indicators

Relevant output indicators are monitored in the operations database and provided by monitoring tables that will be generated by the IPARD Agency. All key data for each operation chosen for financing, as well as for completed operations, will be recorded in the electronic operations database, updated and managed by the IPARD Agency. The access to operations database will be enabled to the Managing Authority. Based on collected data from the operations database, monitoring tables will be completed on a monthly basis. Using data from the delivered report and monitoring tables, the Managing Authority will draw up regular monitoring reports and AIRs.

At the request of the Managing Authority and/or contracted evaluator, all contracted recipients of the IPARD II programme shall co-operate in view of delivering data or enabling insight in project and business documentation for the purpose of evaluation implementation. Recipients will be obliged to provide information for monitoring and evaluation. This includes submission of information not only via the applications and claims process, but may also envisage sample surveys.

External data sources

Given the diverse nature of the programme, there are a number of potential external sources of information which may be drawn on to help inform the performance and assess its impact, such as:

- internal statistical data within the MAEP (e.g. Land Registry, farm structure survey and farm accounts (FADN)). As these statistics are collected in-house, informal procedures will be established for their use;
- databases and information from other sources (e.g. Statistical Office of Republic of Serbia);
- additional and bespoke surveys of recipients to capture broader impacts;
- evidence from the Research Institutes and NGOs;
- independent reviews of the programme through public procurement.

The additional sources will be further defined within the ESC.

5. TIMELINE

It is essential to ensure that all activities relating to monitoring and evaluation are carried out in appropriate time, respecting the implementation workflow in relation to time when certain information is necessary. Timely planning will enable planning and foreseeing of assignments for each body involved in the monitoring and evaluation system. Activities of monitoring and evaluation will provide necessary information at a suitable moment, particularly information for the purpose of drawing up of AIRs and the final report on the IPARD II programme implementation.

The indicative timeline of implementation of the planned activities of the EP is given in the table below and in accordance with the informal multiannual retro planning tool.

Table 1: Timeline of evaluation activities and reporting

Activities	Number of units	Type of the evaluation	Indicative allocation of funds (EUR)	Reporting
2016				
Budget for evaluation			111.000	
Setting up and running ESC	At least two meetings each year	Internal	0	IPARD II MC AIR
Provision of special study for detailed overview of data availability of common context indicators and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection	After the start of the implementation of IPARD II programme (2016) – on-going	Internal with the help of external evaluator	100.000	IPARD II MC AIR
Building-up of evaluation capacities of the MA and IPARD Agency and one initial training for the members of the ESC	Minimum one training per year for MA and IPARD Agency and one initial training for the members of the ESC (2016)	Internal with the help of external evaluator	11.000	IPARD II MC
2017				
Budget for evaluation			115.000	
Provision of special studies for the measures planned to start on a later stage such as Agri-environment climate and organic farming and Implementation of Local development	2017	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR

strategies - LEADER approach				
Preparation for the interim evaluation of the IPARD II programme	Start of the preparation in 2017.	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Assessment of the monitoring system established in IPARD Agency/MA and further development of the system	Second year (2017) of the implementation of the IPARD II programme	External		IPARD II MC AIR
Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2017)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Assessment of the use of resources from "Technical assistance"	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2017)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Provision of review of data availability for common context indicators and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection	During the implementation of IPARD II programme (2017) – on-going	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Check the established system of collecting and storing data at IPARD Agency	2017	External		IPARD II MC AIR

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Assessment of the financial allocation per measures, absorption capacity and barriers to access to finance	2017	External		IPARD II MC AIR
Assessment of relevance of first measures	2017	External		IPARD II MC AIR
2018				
Budget for evaluation			180.000	
Preparation and implementation of the interim evaluation of the IPARD II programme	Completed interim evaluation at the end of the third year of the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2018)	External		Interim Evaluation report will be discussed and approved by the IPARD II MC and the Commission. Follow up recommendations will be reported to the MC
Provision of special studies for Agri-Environment-Climate measures/updating of the existing studies	In the 1 st and 2 nd quarter of 2018	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2018)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Assessment of the use of resources	During the implementation	Internal with the help of		IPARD II MC AIR

from "Technical assistance"	of the IPARD II programme (2018)	external evaluator		
Provision of review of data availability for common context indicators and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection	During the implementation of IPARD II programme (2018) – on-going	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Observation of development trends and context analysis: - on-going observation of changes in set baselines of common context indicators through updating the programme table	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2018)	External		IPARD II MC AIR
Monitoring system for agri-environment, climate and organic farming	2018	External		IPARD II MC AIR
Monitoring system for LAGs and Local development strategies – LEADER approach	2018	External		IPARD II MC AIR
Dissemination of evaluation results	Publish evaluation reports on the IPARD II programme web sites in English	Internal		IPARD II MC

	and in Serbian languages within 10 working days from the day of receiving the response from the Commission			
2019				
Budget for evaluation			180.000	
Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2019)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Assessment of the use of resources from "Technical assistance"	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2019)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Provision of review of data availability for common context indicators and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection	During the implementation of IPARD II programme (2019) – on-going	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Observation of development trends and context analysis: - ongoing observation of changes in set baselines of common context	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2019)	External		IPARD II MC AIR

indicators through updating the programme table				
Preparation and implementation of the ex-ante evaluation report for the next planning period 2021-2027	The ex-ante evaluation report shall be ready not later than 2020 as part of the RDP 2021-2027	External		Ex-ante evaluation report will be discussed and approved by the IPARD II MC and the Commission. Follow up recommendations will be reported to the MC
2020				
Budget for evaluation			115.000	
Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2020)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Assessment of the use of resources from "Technical assistance"	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2020)	Internal with the help of external evaluator		IPARD II MC AIR
Observation of development trends and context analysis: - on-going observation of changes in set baselines of common context indicators through	During the implementation of the IPARD II programme (2020)	External		IPARD II MC AIR

updating the programme table				
Preparation for the ex-post evaluation report of the IPARD programme 2014-2020	Not later than 2024	External		Ex-post evaluation report will be discussed and approved by the IPARD II MC and the Commission. Follow up recommendations will be reported to the MC
Dissemination of evaluation results	Publish evaluation reports on the IPARD II programme web sites in English and in Serbian languages within 10 working days from the day of receiving the response from the Commission	Internal		Information will be provided to the IPARD II MC

6. COMMUNICATION

Appropriate activities for disseminating the results of evaluations as well as the assessment of information needs for each target group will be foreseen in the yearly update of the Evaluation Plan drawn up based on the EP. Activities will be developed in close co-operation with the department responsible for programme promotion in the Managing Authority and in accordance with the overall communication strategy of the IPARD II programme.

The dissemination of evaluation results will indicatively be carried out in two ways:

- In house – targeting employees and decision makers in the Managing Authority and IPARD Agency, particularly in relation to implementation of evaluation recommendations and for the overall implementation of IPARD II programme. Monitoring and evaluation results will be shared internally to facilitate effective delivery of the programme. Externally contracted experts for evaluation implementation will, in

addition to the elaboration of the evaluation report, have the obligation to present draft evaluation reports to the Managing Authority and IPARD Agency and, where needed, at the meetings of the IPARD II MC and/or National Rural Network after its establishment. Furthermore, annual report of the evaluation activities undertaken will be provided to the IPARD II MC.

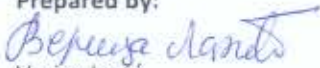
- Outside dissemination of information – targets: the general public. In accordance with the principles of transparency of IPA assistance, evaluation reports will be published on the IPARD II web pages. In addition to this report, the evaluators will also deliver a summary report with clearly shown results of evaluations, which will also be available to the public. These summary reports will be presented in a user-friendly way to enable a wide range of stakeholders to easily access information on how the programme is performing and what monitoring and evaluations are planned for the future. In addition to the above mentioned, the Managing Authority will disseminate information on evaluation by means of ESC, and by means of AIR. If there is a need, other appropriate tools will be used, such as publications, communications to the public etc.

The ESC shall monitor the follow-up of the use of evaluation results and a summary report prepared annually for submission to the IPARD II MC.

7. RESOURCES

An adequate level of human resources for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is provided within the Managing Authority within the Group for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and IPARD Agency and through the work of the ESC. The in-house resources shall be supported by specific capacity-building actions financed through TA, following the Training Needs Analysis. Since evaluation activities will be outsourced and carried out by independent experts selected via public procurement tenders, appropriate and sufficient financial resources, for all other activities, are provided through “Technical Assistance”.

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