



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
MINISTRY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EU FUNDS

EVALUATION STRATEGY
FOR EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL INSTRUMENTS

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARDS	-	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization
CF	-	Cohesion Fund
CODEF	-	Central Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds
CPiE	-	Country Programme Interim Evaluation
CSF	-	Common Strategic Framework (2014-2020)
DMS	-	Decentralized Management System
EC	-	European Commission
ERDF	-	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	-	European Social Fund
EU	-	European Union
EWG	-	Evaluation Working Group
IPA	-	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
MRDEUF	-	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
NIPAC	-	National IPA Coordinator ¹
NSRF	-	National Strategic Reference Framework
OP	-	Operational Programme
PC	-	Partnership Contract (2014-2020)
Phare	-	Programme of Community Aid to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe
SF	-	Structural Funds
SCF	-	Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund
ToR	-	Terms of Reference

¹ Based on Article 31 Paragraph 2 of the Act on the Government of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, No 150/2011) and Article 6 of the Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Commission of the European Communities on the Rules for Co-operation concerning EC-financial Assistance to the Republic of Croatia in the Framework of the Implementation of the Assistance under the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) (Official Gazette – International contracts, No 10/2007), on a session held on 26 January 2012 the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted a Decision on the Appointment of the National Coordinator for Programmes of Assistance and Cooperation with the European Union. Mr. Matija Derk, Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, was appointed National Coordinator for Programmes of Assistance and Cooperation with the European Union and he shall be responsible for the overall coordination of pre-accession assistance and IPA programme assistance as well as for ensuring that there is a connection between the general accession process and utilization of pre-accession assistance. Regarding the fact that the official abbreviation of the new function has not been established, the currently used abbreviation NIPAC is used in this Evaluation Strategy for European Structural Funds for better understanding.

Introduction

This Evaluation Strategy has been designed primarily for Croatia's transition from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA – Components III and IV) to the Structural Instruments in the second half of the year 2013 and beyond for the programming period 2014-2020.

IPA Components III and IV are currently under implementation in Croatia and cover Regional Development and Human Resource Development respectively. The much larger Structural Instruments will become available to Croatia after EU accession and comprise the Structural Funds (SF) – European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), as well as the Cohesion Fund (CF). These instruments will support large-scale investments in a wide range of socio-economic development fields, such as environment, transport, regional competitiveness, human resource development and administrative capacity development.

The Evaluation Strategy has been prepared in order to set a coherent framework for SCF evaluation activities and to ensure consistency of evaluations within the SCF administration.

Evaluation experience in Croatia

Evaluation is not an entirely new concept to the Croatian public administration managing EU funds, as evaluation has been a regulatory requirement under EU pre-accession funds.

Under CARDS and Phare programme, however, the European Commission was responsible for commissioning evaluations. Under IPA Component I commissioning and management of interim evaluation was decentralised to the NIPAC office in January 2010. There is also recent experience with ex-ante evaluation of IPA Component III and IV Operational Programmes (OPs).

Nevertheless, the strategy recognises that evaluation capacity in Croatia is at a relatively early stage of development. A key objective of the strategy is to build *evaluation capacity* – to both enhance capabilities in the relevant public institutions for managing evaluation processes and to ensure future supply of qualified Croatian evaluators.

Evaluation in the SCF regulations

The influence of European Community regulations on the development of evaluation practice and evaluation culture is significant in most of the EU Member States. For each programming period (e.g. 1994-1999, 2000-2006, 2007-2013) the European Commission establishes regulations² (adopted formally by the Council and the Parliament), which *inter alia* set regulatory requirements for evaluation.

According to the *MEANS Collection*³ the legal requirement to evaluate the SCF has led to development and increase in the evaluation culture. In many countries evaluation practice has also developed within the framework of domestically funded national or regional programmes as a result.

Although the Structural Instruments regulations for 2014-2020 have not yet been adopted, it is not questioned that ex-ante evaluation of the new OPs for this period will be required. Once the

² For current programming period 2007-2013, Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

³ Evaluating socio-economic programmes. Evaluation design and management. Volume 1. EC, DG Regional Policy (1999).

detailed regulatory provisions for evaluation of the 2014-2020 OPs are known, this Strategy will be updated accordingly.

Croatia's transition to Structural Instruments

As regards the transition to SCF, the main focus of the national authorities in the years up to 2014 will be on:

- ex-ante evaluation of the first generation of SCF OPs planned to run from July 2013 (which will also include an interim examination by the evaluators of the IPA Component III and IV OPs);
- ex-ante evaluation of the second generation of SCF OPs for 2014-2020.

Interim/final evaluation of the first generation of SCF OPs (if required) is likely to occur at a slightly later stage. Interim/on-going evaluations of the second generation of SCF OPs can be expected to begin from 2016-2017. There is flexibility regarding scope, design and timing of these evaluations. Compared to the evaluation of pre-accession assistance, the evaluation of SCF is likely to be broader in scope in line with the increased range of investment fields and higher resource allocations.

The national authorities will be responsible for planning, as well as commissioning and managing ex-ante and interim evaluations. Under current Regulations, the European Commission is responsible for ex-post evaluation in close cooperation with each Member State.

'Evaluation culture'

The *MEANS Collection* distinguishes three phases in the development of *evaluation culture*:

- 1st phase: Evaluation is seen as an answer to regulatory obligations. It is therefore a constraint and an additional workload weighing on managers who consider it, above all, as a demand by European Commission.
- 2nd phase: Evaluation becomes a system to aid the design and management of interventions. A dialogue is established with the evaluators and the quality of the information gathered improves. In this highly operational phase, the evaluation approach is refined and progress is made rapidly.
- 3rd phase: Evaluation becomes a political act, the results of which are publicly debated. The aim is to inform public opinion on the effectiveness of the use of public funds, and on the demonstration of their efficiency in terms of obtaining the expected impacts (value for money). In a sense, evaluation becomes a tool of democracy by informing citizens.

This Evaluation Strategy marks an important step in moving towards a mature *evaluation culture* in Croatia.

Chapter 1: What is evaluation?

1.1 Defining evaluation

There is no single, universally accepted or preferred definition what constitutes evaluation.

In the context of EU funded programmes, the following definitions of evaluation have been presented.

The *MEANS Collection, Volume 6*⁴ defines evaluation as follows:

➤ **Evaluation** – judgement of the value of a public intervention with reference to criteria and explicit standards (e.g. its relevance, its efficiency). The judgement primarily concerns the needs which have to be met by the intervention, and the effects produced by it. The evaluation is based on information which is specifically collected and interpreted to produce the judgement.

*The Evalsed Guide: the resource for the evaluation of socio-economic development*⁵ defines evaluation as follows:

➤ **Evaluation** – judgement on the value of a (usually) public intervention with reference to criteria and explicit standards (e.g. its relevance, efficiency, sustainability, equity etc.). The judgement usually concerns the needs which have to be met by the intervention, and the effects produced by it. The evaluation is based on information which is specially collected and interpreted to support the judgement. For example: evaluation of the effectiveness of a programme, cost-benefit evaluation of a project, evaluation of the validity of a policy, and evaluation of the quality of a service delivered to the public.

In the document *Evaluating EU activities. A Practical Guide for the Commission Services*⁶ evaluation has been defined as follows:

➤ **Evaluation** – judgement of interventions according to their results, impacts and needs they aim to satisfy. The evaluation process culminates in a judgement (or assessment) of an intervention. The focus of evaluation is first and foremost on the needs, results and impacts of an intervention.

The most commonly recognised **purposes of evaluation are**⁷:

- **Planning/efficiency** – ensuring that there is a justification for a policy/programme and that resources are efficiently deployed;
- **Accountability** – demonstrating how far a programme has achieved its objectives, how well it has used its resources and what has been its impact;

⁴ Evaluating socio-economic programmes. Glossary of 300 concepts and technical terms. Volume 6. European Commission, DG Regional Policy (1999).

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/index_en.htm

⁶ Evaluating EU activities. A Practical Guide for the Commission Services, DG Budget – Evaluation Unit, (2004)

⁷ The Evalsed Guide: the resource for the evaluation of socio-economic development.

- **Implementation** – improving the performance of programmes and the effectiveness of how they are delivered and managed;
- **Institutional strengthening** – improving and developing capacity among programme participants and their networks and institutions.

It also needs to be mentioned that:

- Evaluation can be carried out at the level of a policy, programme or project,
- Evaluation is systematic, this means that evaluation should be based on accepted social science research standards,
- Evaluation involves forming a judgment or opinion on the policy, programme or project in question, this judgement is to be based on certain criteria,
- The purpose of the evaluation exercise is to improve the policy, programme or project under evaluation, the aim is to make things work better in the future. In this sense, evaluation can be understood as a learning exercise.

In the context of the current document, evaluation is discussed mostly in relation to programmes.

1.2 Differentiating evaluation from other tools

Evaluation is one of a number of tools used in the management of publicly-funded interventions (policies, programmes and projects). Other tools include **monitoring** and **audit**. The processes are complementary (particularly monitoring and evaluation) but yet quite different in some respects.

Monitoring is a continuous, systematic process carried out during the implementation of a policy, programme or project. The focus of monitoring is on checking whether outturns (outputs and results) are in line with prior expectations. The focus is on the outputs of the intervention in question rather than on processes through which the intervention operates or the outcomes to which it gives rise. Thus, the key differences between monitoring and evaluation are that:

- **Monitoring** is a continuous process whereas evaluation is generally discreet, i.e., occurring only at certain points in the life cycle of an intervention;
- **Evaluation** is inherently a more comprehensive and in-depth activity compared with monitoring, with a focus on a wider range of questions about the operation and impact of a programme.

There are important linkages between the monitoring and evaluation processes. In a programme context, monitoring generates data that may give rise to questions which can only be answered through an evaluation. So, if monitoring data reveals that a programme is behind target, programme managers may decide to commission an evaluation to explore further the reasons for under-performance.

Secondly, the information collected through the monitoring system is itself an important source of data for evaluation. Evaluators use monitoring information but generally need to supplement this with additional data.

Audit covers both traditional financial audit which concentrates on whether resources have been spent as intended. However, the scope of audit activity has been gradually extended into the area of *performance audit* which overlaps somewhat with evaluation. The focus of performance audit

is on what is termed the “3 e’s” of economy, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme or organisation in question.

Evaluation is concerned with a broader range of issues including the process through which the results of the intervention came about and its longer-term impacts or outcomes.

It can be said that **evaluation** is concerned with the examination of factors outside the influence of the programme managers, whereas both **monitoring** and **audit** focus on dimensions of performance which are essentially within their control.

Evaluation should be distinguished from **research**. Evaluation involves the application of the range of social science research techniques and methods (including surveys), however, where evaluation differs from research is in terms of intent. Evaluation is intended for use whereas research is mainly concerned with knowledge production and understanding. The other key difference is that, as noted above, evaluation involves an element of judgement against specified criteria, whereas research typically does not.

The *MEANS Collection*⁸ explains the difference between **monitoring**, **evaluation** and **audit** through the judgement criteria and through the point of view from which the public action is judged.

Concerning the **point of view from which the public action is judged**, **audit** verifies the legality and the regularity of the implementation of resources. **Monitoring** verifies the sound management of the interventions and produces a regular analysis of the progress of the outputs. **Evaluation** judges programme implementation on the basis of the outputs, results and impacts it has produced in the society.

A second distinction between those functions concerns **judgement criteria**. **Audit** judges in terms of criteria that are known and clarified in advance (budgets, regulations, professional standards). **Monitoring** judges in terms of operational objectives to be achieved. By contrast, **evaluation** often has to start by choosing its judgement criteria. These are formulated on the basis of the objectives of the evaluated public action.

The three exercises have intrinsic differences, but they all make use of one another, owing to their complementarities.

1.3 Determining the impact of interventions

Most evaluations are ultimately concerned with determining the socio-economic **impacts** of the interventions financed. However, distinguishing such effects from wider trends likely to occur in any case has proved problematic in the majority of Member States.

For the 2014-2020 phase of SCF a shift is planned in the way the notion of **impact** is approached. Early Commission guidance in this area for the new phase⁹ proposes viewing **impact** more in terms of ‘**net results**’ – i.e. *as the effect of the contribution of the outputs supported by the policy to the change value of a given result indicator*. The aim is to achieve a more result-oriented

⁸ Evaluating socio-economic programmes. Evaluation design and management. Volume 1. European Commission (1999).

⁹ Concepts and Ideas – Monitoring and Evaluation in the practice of European Cohesion Policy 2014+ - European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund - http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/doc/14042011/2a_ks_section1.doc

approach with programmes designed to deliver benefits more clearly identifiable with the well-being and progress of people, which can also be evaluated.

1.4 Evaluation criteria and questions

In this section, the main criteria or questions used in the evaluation of programmes are presented. When launching an evaluation, these criteria should be developed into more detailed, specific questions in the Terms of Reference for individual evaluation project. The focus below is on evaluation of publicly-funded programmes although the criteria presented can, in principle, feature in policy and project-level evaluation.

The main **evaluation criteria** which feature in evaluations of programmes funded by the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund or with other publicly funded programmes with socio-economic development focus are as follows:

- The **relevance** of or need for the programme;
- Criteria related to the question of **utility** of the programme;
- Programme **effectiveness**;
- The **efficiency** with which the programme is implemented;
- Issues around the **sustainability** of the programme.

Each of these **evaluation criteria** is defined and considered in more detail below.¹⁰

➤ **Relevance**

To what extent is an intervention relevant in respect to the needs, problems and issues identified in target groups? Sometime after the initial implementation, the rationale that initially gave rise to the public intervention has to be verified to assess if the strategy remains **relevant** given the possible evolution of the situation (i.e. evolving needs, problems and issues).

➤ **Effectiveness**

To what extent do the effects induced by an intervention correspond with its objectives as they are outlined in the intervention strategy? A major element in judging the success of an intervention is to assess its **effectiveness** in terms of the progress made towards the attainment of pre-determined objectives.

➤ **Efficiency**

How economically have the resources used been converted into effects? In addition to ascertaining if an intervention has attained its objectives, it must also be assessed on the basis of how much it cost to attain them. Hence an assessment of the **efficiency** of intervention is required.

➤ **Utility**

How do the effects of an intervention compare with the wider needs of the target population? Over and above those effects that correspond with the stated objectives of an intervention, other effects may occur that may be either negative or positive (i.e. unplanned or unexpected effects). An assessment of these provides the basis of a broader assessment of performance on the basis of an intervention's **utility**.

¹⁰ Based on *Evaluating EU activities. A Practical Guide for the Commission services* (2004).

➤ **Sustainability**

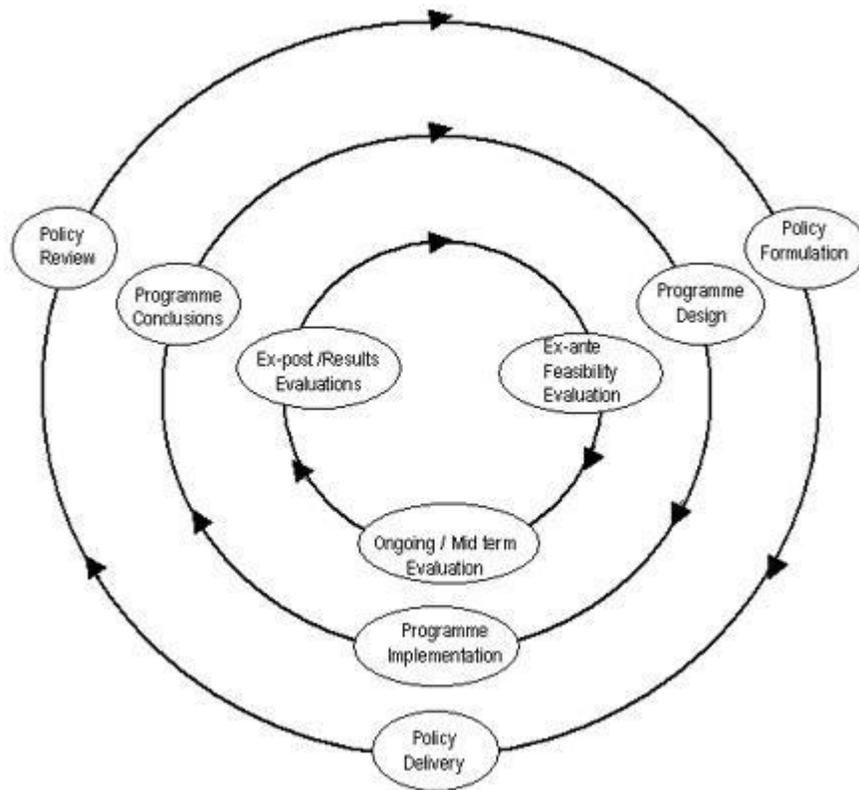
To what extent can any positive changes resulting from the intervention be expected to last after it has been terminated or when beneficiaries are no longer supported? While some interventions merely support certain activities that would otherwise not occur, others may be designed to bring about lasting changes within a target public etc. An assessment of the latter provides the basis of the **sustainability** of an intervention's effects.

Chapter 2: Evaluation cycle

2.1 Introduction to Evaluation Cycle

In this Chapter, issues related to the **evaluation cycle** are considered. The evaluation cycle is concerned with the timing and focus of the different evaluations that are typically undertaken over the life of a programme. Essentially, timing considerations are integrated or combined with the different evaluation purposes and criteria discussed in Chapter 1 above (Section 1.3.).

As the diagram below illustrates, the evaluation cycle is a function of the wider programme and policy cycles. Ideally, evaluations (of programmes) should also be undertaken at intervals that allow them to influence the wider policy-making process. Ultimately, evaluations must influence the policy process if they are to be useful.



As the diagram above shows, there are three stages over the **programme lifetime** at which evaluations are undertaken:

- **Ex-ante evaluation**, undertaken before programming is completed;
- **Ongoing or interim evaluation or mid-term evaluation**, undertaken during programme implementation; and,
- **Ex-post evaluation**, carried out at the end of the programming period.

Each of these evaluations is considered in further detail in the sub-sections below.

2.2 Ex-ante evaluation

Ex-ante evaluation is essentially an aid to planning and programming. Ex-ante evaluation is undertaken before programming is finalised.

For programmes funded by the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, the relevant regulations require that an ex-ante evaluation be carried out by Member States. In a programming context, the purpose of ex-ante evaluation “is to optimise the allocation of resources and improve the quality of programming”.¹¹

Regarding the **evaluation criteria**, the main concerns of ex-ante evaluation are **relevance** (of the strategy to needs identified), **effectiveness** (whether the objectives of the programme are likely to be achieved) and **efficiency** (the overall value for money of the programme proposed).

More specific evaluation questions at ex-ante evaluation stage are 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. Of particular importance for the 2007-2013 period in relation to external coherence are the Lisbon Agenda and the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion. For the 2014-2020 period it will be the EU’s Europe 2020 Strategy.

The quality of the proposed implementation system is important to understand how it may affect the achievement of programme objectives. Finally, ex-ante evaluation needs to examine the potential risks for the programme, both in relation to the policy choices made and the implementation system proposed.

Those responsible for drawing up programmes need to develop the detailed evaluation questions to be answered in relation to the national, regional or sectoral strategies to be evaluated.

As a broad outline, the ex-ante evaluation should provide a response to the following questions:

As regards relevance:

- Does the programme represent an appropriate strategy to meet the challenges confronting the region or sector?
- Is the strategy coherent with policies at regional, national and Community level? How will the strategy contribute to the achievement of the European Union objectives (e.g. Europe 2020)?

As regards effectiveness:

- Is the strategy well defined with clear objectives and priorities and can those objectives be realistically achieved with the financial resources allocated to the different priorities?
- Are appropriate indicators identified for the objectives and can these indicators form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance?
- Are implementation systems appropriate to deliver the objectives of the programme?

¹¹ The New Programming Period 2007-2013. Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Ex-ante evaluation. Working Document No. 1. European Commission, DG Regional Policy, August 2006.

As regards efficiency

- Are quantified target values for results and impacts commensurate with the proposed deployment of resources under the strategy?

To maximise the influence of the evaluation, the ex-ante evaluation is undertaken in parallel with the programme design process. The ex-ante evaluation represents an integral part of the formulation of the programme. An iterative, interactive arrangement, where the evaluator provides regular, timely inputs to the programming authorities, is essential.

Based on Article 48 of the Regulation No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, it can be concluded that:

- ex-ante evaluation has to be carried out separately for each Operational Programme under the Convergence Objective;
- in exceptional cases and following respective prior agreement between the European Commission and the Member State, a single ex-ante evaluation covering more than one Operational Programme may be carried out;
- it is the Member State's responsibility (authority responsible for the preparation of programming documents) to organise ex-ante evaluation of Operational Programmes.

The draft General SCF Regulation for 2014-2020¹² retains these basic provisions and requires a summary of the ex-ante evaluations carried out for each of a Member State's OP to be presented in that the Member State's 'Partnership Contract' (PC) – successor to the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) under the 2007-2013 Regulations. The draft new Regulation further proposes that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) be incorporated into the ex-ante evaluation exercises carried out on OPs to which the SEA Directive applies.

Two important Working Documents were issued in 2006 by the European Commission, DG Regional Policy on the subject of **ex-ante evaluation**:

- *Working Document No 1: The New Programming Period 2007-2013. Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Ex-ante Evaluation.*¹³
- *Working Document No 2: The New Programming Period 2007-2013. Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Indicators for monitoring and evaluation.*¹⁴

The Commission is likely to issue Revised Working Documents covering this area for the 2014-2020 period.

2.3 On-going evaluation

On-going (or interim) evaluation refers to evaluations carried out during the life time of the programme. It includes mid-term evaluation, carried out at the half-way stage of the programme.

On-going evaluation is closely related to the monitoring process. Where monitoring data reveals that programme performance is not in line with expectations, the programming authority may decide to commission an ongoing evaluation with a view to exploring in more detail the reasons

¹² See http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm#1

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd1_exante_en.pdf

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd2indic_082006_en.pdf

behind the under-performance. In this sense, the monitoring system acts as an “early warning mechanism”.

Other circumstances where on-going evaluations may be commissioned include situations where there have been major or unexpected developments in the external environment of the programme or significant changes in policy. These may call for revisions to the programme with an on-going evaluation acting as an input to the broader decision-making process.

In terms of the evaluation questions discussed above, the key focus of on-going evaluation is on the following criteria:

- The **relevance** of the programme or, more precisely, its *continuing relevance* taking account of policy developments and wider changes in the programme’s external environment;
- The **effectiveness** of the programme; i.e., is the programme on course to meet its objectives on the basis of progress made; and,
- Programme **efficiency** including the functioning of implementation systems and the relationship between programme outputs or benefits and costs incurred.

It will be apparent from the above that, to be successful, monitoring and ongoing evaluation need to be closely linked. A well-functioning monitoring system, producing good-quality, timely data is important, both in terms of helping programme managers decide when to commission evaluations and in providing essential data inputs to evaluators.

Article 48 of the Regulation No 1083/2006 establishes the following concerning on-going evaluation:

Article 48 - Responsibility of Member States

[1] The Member States shall 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.

They may also draw up, where appropriate, under the Convergence objective, in accordance with the principle of proportionality set out in Article 13, an evaluation plan presenting the indicative evaluation activities which the Member State intends to carry out in the different phases of the implementation.

[3] During the programming period, Member States shall carry out evaluations linked to the monitoring of operational programmes in particular where that monitoring reveals a significant departure from the goals initially set or where proposals are made for the revision of operational programmes, as referred to in Article 33. The results shall be sent to the monitoring committee for the operational programme and to the Commission.

The proposed draft General SCF Regulation for 2014-2020¹⁵ strengthens these provisions – making the submission to the Commission of an evaluation plan for each OP obligatory. The draft new Regulation specifies that evaluation during the programming period must ‘*assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact for each programme*’. It also proposes the requirement that ‘*at least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority*’.

¹⁵ See http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm#1

Regarding the on-going evaluation during the programming period, European Commission, DG Regional Policy issued *Working Document No. 5: The New Programming Period 2007-2013. Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation during the Programming Period (April 2007)*.¹⁶ Further specific guidance in this area from the Commission is expected for 2014-2020.

2.4 Ex-post evaluation

Ex-post evaluations cover the entire programming period and are conducted after the programme has ended. For EU programmes, ex-post evaluation is the responsibility of the European Commission. Ex-post evaluation largely serves the *accountability* purpose, providing information on what has been achieved and at what cost. However, depending on when the results are available, they can also provide input to the planning of follow-on programmes.

Ex-post evaluation tends to be summative in character with the evaluator called upon to express a final judgement on the programme.

Ex-post evaluations generally concentrate on an assessment of programme *impacts* as it is often only at this point that the outcomes of the programme can be observed or measured. Questions of programme **effectiveness** (e.g. how far have its objectives been achieved?) and **efficiency** (e.g. could stronger impacts have been achieved for the same cost?) will therefore be of interest in ex-post evaluation. Questions of **utility** (e.g. what have been the overall effects of this programme on specific marginalised groups?) may also be of high relevance.

Article 49 of Regulation No 1083/2006 the European Commission stipulated the rules for ex-post evaluation of programmes.

Article 49 – Responsibility of the Commission

[3] The Commission shall carry out an ex post evaluation for each objective in close cooperation with the Member State and managing authorities.

Ex post evaluation shall cover all the operational programmes under each objective and examine the extent to which resources were used, the effectiveness and efficiency of Fund programming and the socio-economic impact.

It shall be carried out for each of the objectives and shall aim to draw conclusions for the policy on economic and social cohesion.

It shall identify the factors contributing to the success or failure of the implementation of operational programmes and identify good practice.

Ex post evaluation shall be completed by 31 December 2015.

In the proposed draft General SCF Regulation for 2014-2020¹⁷ ex-post evaluation is to ‘*examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the CSF Funds and their contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in accordance with requirements established in the Fund-specific rules*’. The draft does not specify that an ex-post evaluation is required for each OP, however draft Commission guidelines emphasise the utility of Member States carrying out a summary evaluation of each OP in 2020 which would clearly contribute to the ex-post evaluation exercise.

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd5_ongoing_en.pdf

¹⁷ See http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/proposals_2014_2020_en.cfm#1

2.5 Types of evaluation

The emphasis in the preceding has been on the evaluation cycle, with programme evaluations classified as ex-ante, ongoing or ex-post. Evaluation of the impact of public intervention generally aims to answer two distinct questions:

- did the public intervention have an effect at all and if yes, how big – positive or negative – was this effect?
- why did the intervention produce the observed (intended and unintended) effects.

Sometimes, evaluations can provide quantified evidence that an intervention works (i.e. a number), but more often they provide judgements on whether the intervention worked or not (i.e. a narrative). Besides programme-level **impact evaluation**, other types are possible:

A **thematic evaluation** is one which horizontally analyses a particular issue or theme in the context of several interventions within a single programme or of several programmes implemented (e.g. across all OPs). The examples of themes to be evaluated in a thematic evaluation may be for example: innovation, the information society, SME development etc.

Horizontal policy evaluations (e.g. expected impact on environment, effects on equal opportunities etc.) can form part of thematic evaluations.

Theory based impact evaluation starts from the premise that a great deal of other information, besides quantifiable causal effect, is useful to policy makers to make decisions and of interest to citizens. Theory-based evaluations can provide insights into why interventions succeed or fail. This approach does not produce a number, it produces a narrative.

Counterfactual impact evaluation attempts to answer the key question of whether the difference observed in the outcome after the implementation of the intervention was caused by the intervention itself, or by something else. Evaluations of this type are based on models of cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change.

In addition, there is **implementation evaluation** which looks 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 project selection criteria, is there a documented data management system, are results of the programme communicated, etc. The methods of implementation evaluation are similar to theory-based evaluations. Evaluations of this type typically take place early in the programming period.

Draft Commission guidelines for 2014-2020¹⁸ highlight the fact that each type of evaluation has its own strengths and weaknesses and should be adapted to the specific question to be answered, the subject of the programme and its context. Whenever possible, evaluation questions should be

¹⁸ Concepts and Ideas – Monitoring and Evaluation in the practice of European Cohesion Policy 2014+ - European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund - http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/doc/14042011/2a_ks_section1.doc

looked at from different viewpoints and by different methods. This is known as the principle of triangulation.

In this regard, **meta-evaluation** is the evaluation of another evaluation or of a series of evaluations. Such syntheses or systematic reviews are based on the notion that lessons are best learned cumulatively over more than one evaluation if one wants to have confidence in results and findings.

Chapter 3: Current status of evaluation in Croatia

Evaluation is a relatively new concept to Croatia. Evaluations have been carried out in the context of the EU financed pre-accession programmes, as evaluation is a regulatory requirement of those EU-funded programmes.

3.1 CARDS

Until mid-2007 there were only sporadic *ad hoc* evaluations of EU programmes carried out on behalf of the European Commission. This includes the *ad hoc* evaluation scheme for decentralised CARDS 2003 and 2004 projects.

The Ad-hoc Evaluation Report of Decentralised CARDS programme in Croatia was prepared in December 2007 by ECOTEC Research and Consulting. 16 CARDS projects (projects of 2003 and 2004 CARDS national programme) were selected as a sample for evaluation. The project selection included projects from the following sectors: Social; Internal Market, Competition, Agriculture; Justice and Home Affairs; and a project from Public Administration Reform, Environment and Energy sectors.

3.2 Phare Interim Evaluation

At the end of 2007, annual interim evaluation of Phare programme was introduced in Croatia by the DG Enlargement through so called Interim Evaluation Scheme. The aim of the Interim Evaluation Scheme was to provide authorities that manage Phare programme with the assessment of the programme progress and likelihood of a programme's success in achieving the set objectives in the particular sector. The Interim Evaluation Scheme covered Phare 2005 and 2006 annual programmes.

The IE unit, established by a private sector consortium (MWH Consortium) under direct contract with the Commission Services in Brussels, started its work in October 2007. The interim evaluations that were performed from 2007 until December 2008 were the interim evaluations of the 6 six project clusters or sectors (Public Administration Reform, Public Finance and Statistics; Justice and Home Affairs; Internal Market, Competition and Agriculture; Economic and Social Cohesion; Environment and Energy; Social Sector). Four sectors were evaluated once and two were evaluated twice.

Furthermore, there were several thematic and ad hoc interim evaluations performed that included Review of Phare Assistance to Preparation for Structural Funds in Croatia (Ad Hoc IE), Thematic IE of the European Union Pre-Accession Assistance - Review of Twinning in Croatia, Thematic Evaluation – Supporting Public Administration Reform in Croatia, Ad Hoc Report on Donor Coordination in Albania, Croatia and FYROM, as well as Country Summary Brief - Sectoral IE of the European Union Pre-Accession Assistance.

3.3 Phare and IPA Component I – Country Programme Interim Evaluation

The Country Programme Interim Evaluation (CPiE) was introduced by the European Commission in June 2009 as a successor of the former Phare Interim Evaluation Scheme with the basic aim to provide the assistance and to analyze the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of initiatives funded under the Phare 2005, 2006 and IPA 2007, 2008 programmes.

The CPiE represented a departure from the previous Interim Evaluation model used to assess the performance of Phare assistance programmes in the past. While previous evaluations principally adopted a sectoral or thematic approach, in the CPiE the emphasis was placed on the programme level. Furthermore, 2009 CPiE was conceived as a transition exercise in order to help Croatia in developing evaluation capacities with the view to take full responsibility of interim evaluations under IPA Component I from 2010.

The CPiE aimed at providing inputs for decision-making process to key stakeholders. To this end, the CPiE reviewed a series of horizontal issues concerning the programming, management, monitoring and evaluation of assistance under Phare and IPA TAIB. Also, the CPiE is particularly aimed at providing recommendations of an operational nature, supporting them with concrete proposals.

3.4 Decentralised Interim Evaluation for Phare and IPA Component I

In July 2010 CODEF¹⁹, as NIPAC office launched commissioning of Interim Evaluations for the following programmes: 2007, 2008, 2009 National Programme under IPA Component I and Phare 2005 and 2006 national programmes, which were still under implementation in 2009. The 2011 Interim Evaluation evaluates assistance deployed under the following programmes: 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 National programmes under IPA Component I as well as Phare 2005 and 2006 National Programmes, which were still under implementation in 2010. The evaluation exercise also provides analysis of the follow up of recommendations from the previously performed evaluations, including CARDS 2003 and 2004 programmes.

In these decentralised evaluations, the NIPAC's office, that is the Directorate for Strategic Planning in the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds²⁰, is responsible for the following tasks:

- Planning, commissioning and procurement of evaluation services;
- Guidance and quality control of evaluation services;
- Reporting on evaluation findings to the stakeholders and the Joint Monitoring Committee²¹ and the IPA Monitoring Committee²².

The decentralised Interim Evaluations of Phare and IPA Component I will be managed by MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning according to approved DIS procedures. In this way, MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning will gain direct practical experience of commissioning evaluations (knowledge about and insight in all phases of the evaluation exercise and envisaged activities encompassing these phases - inception phase, fact finding phase, reporting phase, as well as learning process via controlling and commenting the quality of produced document, attending the interviews, etc.) and coordinating an evaluation process (organizing kick-off meeting, ensuring all necessary data and contacts needed for the evaluation exercise, organizing monthly progress meetings, debriefing meeting, etc.).

¹⁹ According to the Act on the Structure and Scope of Activity of Ministries and other Central Public Administration Bodies (Official Gazette 150/11) CODEF ceased to operate in December 2011 and its tasks and obligations were taken over by MRDEUF.

²⁰ According to the Decision on the Appointment of the National Coordinator for Programmes of Assistance and Cooperation with the European Union of 26 January 2012 an Assistant Minister in MRDEUF was appointed National Coordinator for Programmes of Assistance and Cooperation with the European Union.

²¹ The Joint Monitoring Committee monitors the implementation of decentralized projects from the CARDS and Phare programmes.

²² The IPA Monitoring Committee monitors the implementation of the overall IPA programme.

3.5 Evaluation of IPA Components III and IV and transition to Structural Instruments 2007-2013

Croatia had the opportunity to become acquainted with the practice of ex-ante evaluation at the stage of programming IPA OPs in the course of 2006 and 2007. Four OPs were designed under IPA:

1. Transport Operational Programme
2. Environment Operational Programme
3. Regional Competitiveness Operational Programme
4. Human Resources Development Operational Programme

In line with the requirements from the IPA Regulation No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), and Regulation (EU) No 540/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 June 2010 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), ex-ante evaluation of individual programmes was organised, in cooperation with technical assistance under the CARDS 2003 project “Support to National Development Planning”.

The findings were incorporated into the final versions of the OPs which were approved by the Commission in December 2007.

According to the EU Common Position for Chapter 22 negotiations, IPA OPs *‘adopted before the date of accession may be revised in the sole view of a better alignment with the SCF Regulations’*.

3.6 Capacity building activity undertaken

The major capacity building actions for evaluation, targeted at the public administration of Croatia, and already undertaken are listed below:

- From 2010 onwards, Seminar “Monitoring and Evaluation” as part of the programme “FMC EU Funds”, Ministry of Finance/Central Finance and Contracting Agency
- 2010, “Capacity Building Evaluation Workshop”, as a part of 2009 Country Programme Interim Evaluation (CPiE) of EU Pre-accession Assistance to Croatia, Economisti Associati,
- From May 2009 onwards, Seminar “EU Programmes Monitoring and Evaluation”, Central Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds,
- 2008, Workshop “Practice and Management of Interim Evaluation - Building capacity for Evaluation”, under Interim evaluation of EU pre-accession programmes in Croatia, MWH Consortium,
- 2008, Training “Monitoring and Evaluation” as part of the project Phare 2005 Capacity Building and Project Preparation Facility,
- 2007, IPA Evaluation Seminar - Supporting Programming and Implementation through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation, in organization of DG Enlargement, EC and CODEF.

Taken together, the Croatian authorities' involvement in these capacity building activities, as well as live experience of evaluation of pre-accession instruments provides a sound basis for the development of this Evaluation Strategy for European Structural Instruments.

Chapter 4: Evaluation Strategy

Although informed by early evaluation activity carried out in relation to EU pre-accession assistance, the main focus of the Evaluation Strategy is on the post-accession Structural Instruments.

4.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the Evaluation Strategy is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of EU financial assistance to Croatia under the post-accession Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund.

The **specific objectives** of the Strategy are:

- To enhance the Croatian authorities' capacity for commissioning, managing and utilising evaluations of SCF interventions;
- To ensure that evaluation is systematically and consistently applied across SCF implementation in Croatia;
- To incorporate evaluation results into decision-making processes for SCF implementation in Croatia.

4.2. Principles of the Strategy

The underlying principles of the Strategy are:

➤ Ownership

The Strategy can be implemented and the objectives achieved if there is a clear ownership and commitment to the Strategy. This will involve close cooperation between the NSRF/PC Coordinating Authority (MRDEUF) and the other bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs within public administration of Croatia and for evaluation of SCF assistance.

➤ Independence

In order to ensure credibility of evaluation results, evaluations shall be carried out by bodies (internal or external) that are functionally independent. It is important for evaluators to retain their independence throughout the evaluation process. The responsible authorities commissioning evaluations should respect the fact that the evaluator's role is constructive criticism, with a view to improving the quality of assistance.

➤ Partnership

Partnership is essential for planning, designing and carrying out evaluations. It relies on consultation and participation of stakeholders and provides a basis for learning and transparency during the whole process. Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders representing, for example, civil society and regional and local authorities, should form part of evaluation methodology. Partnership should also be maintained between the national authorities responsible for evaluation and the European Commission.

➤ Transparency

It is a requirement from the Regulation²³, as well as good practice to publish evaluation results in the interest of transparency, and in order to stimulate public debate on evaluation findings. The easiest way to do this is to place the evaluation reports or executive summaries of evaluation reports on the website of MRDEUF.

➤ Proportionality

The principle of proportionality relates to the number and scope of evaluations proposed and conducted during programme implementation. The evaluations initiated should be in proportion to the scale and resources of the programme or the potential risk areas associated with programme implementation.

➤ Long-term vision and development

Moving away from evaluation as mere reporting requirement towards a method for continuous improvement can be a lengthy process. Experience in other countries suggests that understanding and using evaluation as management tool may take considerable time. Therefore the Evaluation Strategy should be seen as a phase in the development of the *evaluation culture* in Croatia.

4.3. Priorities for Action

The Strategy embodies three key Priorities for Action. Each Priority corresponds to a specific objective of the Strategy as follows:

Priority 1 – Building evaluation capacity

Priority 2 – Evaluation of SCF interventions

Priority 3 – Incorporating evaluation in decision making processes

Each of these Priorities is described in the following pages, together with indicative actions foreseen. Further details on planned activities their respective funding sources, as well as outputs foreseen and associated deadlines are set out in the tables in [Annex 1](#). These tables will be updated on a regular basis.

²³ Council Regulation No 1083/2006, Article 47.3: The (evaluation) results shall be published according to the applicable rules on access to documents.

Priority 1 – Building evaluation capacity

Rationale

Planning evaluations, launching evaluations, managing evaluations and using evaluation results in line with this strategy will require significant evaluation capacity.

The *Evalsed Guide*²⁴ defines **Evaluation Capacity** as follows:

The institutional, human, resource, skill and procedural base for conducting evaluations in public policy and public management systems. This structural definition is embodied in expert evaluation units within governments or other public agencies and in commitment and practice that conducts evaluation and integrates this into decision-making and policy making. It is also sometimes understood in cultural terms: as a reflex to question, be open to criticism, to learn from practice and to be committed to using evaluation outputs.

Evaluation Capacity is part of institutional and administrative capacity. Capacity cannot be created overnight nor is it without costs. However, the potential benefits of evaluation are large enough to justify the initial investment and the recurrent costs needed to continuously innovate both in evaluation processes and products. It takes time to develop capacity and the necessary systems cannot be put in place at a single moment in time. They need longer-term action to deliver sustainable benefits.

Evaluation capacity is multi-faceted and needs to be located at many different levels that reinforce each other.

For example there is an:

- Individual level consisting of necessary skills and competencies;
- Organizational level of management arrangements and structures, in other words institutionalising evaluation;
- Inter-organisational level that bridges public and private bodies through networks, procedures and partnerships, and,
- Societal level that embeds evaluative thinking in civil society including professional organisations – as well as in the public sector.

Cutting across all these levels are institutional factors, regulations, laws, resources, norms etc. that necessarily underpin organizational arrangements and mechanisms.

In addition to the demand-side of evaluation (institutions commissioning evaluations) the supply-side of evaluation must also be considered, in order to ensure that:

- there is a supply of domestic evaluators,
- there is a professional organisation of evaluators.

²⁴http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/glossary/glossary_e_en.htm#Evaluation_capacity

Therefore, in order to have domestic evaluation market (as SCF evaluations will be prepared based on the documentation in the local language and also evaluation reports will mostly be prepared in local language) the SCF administration has a clear interest in the capacity development of the supply side.

Strategic approach

In some countries evaluation capacity evolves organically over a long period of time. In most countries, however, there is a need for a plan to build up capacity within a defined time-scale. This has been the case in most new Member States of the European Union.

There are many key decisions to be made when starting to develop evaluation capacity in a strategic way.

Among the most important decisions are:

- Evaluation ‘architecture’: locating and structuring evaluation functions and their coordination;
- Strengthening evaluation demand: ensuring that there is an effective and well managed demand for evaluation;
- Strengthening evaluation supply: ensuring that the skills and competencies are in place on the supply side with appropriate organisational support;
- Institutionalizing evaluations: building in evaluation into policy making systems.

Building up evaluation capacity will take the usual capacity building tools like training, production of methodological tools and guidance on evaluation, setting quality standards, manuals on evaluation, analysis of best practice etc. Evaluation capacity should be designed as a system.

Capacity development on the supply side should aim to ensure that there is sufficient supply of evaluation expertise on the domestic market, the evaluations are bid for and evaluations are delivered to a high standard. The *Evalsed Guide* recommends three approaches for improving domestic evaluation supply:

- To build up relationships with educational institutions, in particular, universities;
- To develop and strengthen an independent community of consultants;
- To support the development of a professional evaluation community.

The universities and other educational institutions are important for the supply side of evaluation, as they already have much of the underpinning knowledge of social and economic research, data gathering, analysis and report writing that are needed by evaluators. Those research methods, however, need to be supplemented with other methods, theories and practices, as well as with practical programme management knowledge, in order to become useful in evaluation.

Universities and other educational institutions can pool skills that can be tapped into to increase the supply of evaluators in the relatively short-term.

Indicative Actions – ‘demand-side’

The following important steps for evaluation Capacity Building will be undertaken in 2012:

- ❖ Assessment of capacity for evaluation within the SCF administration,

- ❖ Preparation of Roadmap for evaluation capacity building in relevant institutions,
- ❖ Design of training modules on different aspects of evaluation, based on the assessment of evaluation capacity,
- ❖ Delivery of trainings (including train the trainers) for staff of the NSRF/PC Coordinating Authority, bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs, and other relevant institutions.

It is planned that the Technical Assistance contract “Ex-ante evaluation of programming documents and strengthening evaluation capacity for EU funds post-accession”, expected to start by the end of 2011 under an IPA I 2008 project “Support to Management, Monitoring and Evaluation of Structural Instruments in Croatia”, will implement important activities for evaluation capacity building. The activities planned under the Capacity Building Component of this contract will include:

- ✓ Assessment of the capacity and knowledge about the evaluation process in the future NSRF/PC Coordinating Authority, bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs, from the point of view of fulfilling the EC requirements with regard to evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes;
- ✓ Review of Evaluation Strategy for SCF and improvement of the document;
- ✓ Preparation of a Roadmap for building the evaluation capacity in relevant institutions in line with the Evaluation Strategy,
- ✓ Support with the development of individual evaluation plans and methodology/procedures for Cohesion Policy programmes;
- ✓ Establishment of guidelines for the preparation of tender documents for evaluation activities;
- ✓ Support to the NSRF/PC Coordinating Authority in the establishment and work of an evaluation working group (EWG) whose aim is to ensure that evaluation is actively used as a tool for enhancing the management of EU Cohesion Policy funding in Croatia;
- ✓ Design of training modules on different aspects of evaluation, based on the assessment of evaluation capacity and in line with the Evaluation Strategy;
- ✓ Delivery of trainings (including train the trainers) for staff of the NSRF/PC Coordinating Authority, bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs, and other relevant institutions;
- ✓ On the job assistance to MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning in implementation of the Evaluation Strategy, management of the EWG and quality control of evaluation reports and content of tendering documentation for evaluation contracts.

Indicative Actions – ‘supply-side’

The approach the *Evalsed Guide* is outlining for encouraging the emergence of national consultancies as evaluation suppliers is the following:

- ❖ Commissioners of evaluation insisting on consortia or partnership bids that always include some local consultants,

- ❖ Scaling evaluation contracts in ways that relatively small low-risk evaluations can be undertaken by national new entrants to the evaluation market,
- ❖ Ensuring that procurement and financial requirements associated with bidding for evaluations are not too restrictive (responses required within short time-periods, short periods also for bank guarantees and years of audited accounts),
- ❖ Emphasising in ToR technical and know-how criteria rather than complex administrative procedures with which less experienced consultants may not be familiar,
- ❖ Holding briefing meetings with potential consultants to answer questions and encourage bids in a competitive environment,
- ❖ Support for networking among relatively isolated evaluation consultants, so as to encourage team-building, consortia formation and other professional networks and associations,
- ❖ Acknowledgement by evaluation commissioners that they may need to take a more hands-on management of new contractors to speed up their acquisition of the tacit knowledge that experienced evaluation consultants already have.

The benefit of having a professional organisation for evaluation (national Evaluation Society) usually is that it brings together all those involved in the evaluation work and experience can be shared and practical problems discussed, as well is Evaluation Society a good forum for the development and application of quality standards for both practitioners and commissioners of evaluation.

Some of the actions what the SCF administration might consider for the capacity development of the supply-side in Croatia:

- ✓ Mapping of the domestic evaluation market (number and type of organisations active in the evaluation market and their expertise),
- ✓ Initiating consultations and support for establishing the (national) Evaluation Society,
- ✓ Publicizing evaluation plans in order to inform the evaluation community on the amount of evaluation work foreseen,
- ✓ Publicizing information on evaluation procedures and methodology on the SCF web-site to build up the capacity of the supply-side,
- ✓ Extending evaluation events and trainings to the supply-side.

Following the Roadmap for evaluation capacity building to be developed under the IPA 2008 project, further actions can be identified for the following years and subsequently financed under the SCF Technical Assistance budget.

Priority 2 – Evaluation of SCF interventions

Rationale

According to the EU Common Position for Chapter 22 Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, IPA OPs should be revised as to comply with the Structural Instruments regulations under the current Financial Perspective 2007-2013. The Regulation 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 requires that all the SCF OPs be subject to the ex-ante evaluation exercise.

In light of the above, Croatia is obliged to undertake ex-ante evaluation of the OPs for the first generation of SCF (2007-2013). The evaluation has been commissioned under the IPA 2008 technical assistance contract “Ex-ante Evaluation of Programming Documents and Strengthening Evaluation Capacity for EU Funds Post-accession” within the project under IPA Component I 2008 “Support to Management, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Structural Instruments in Croatia”. It will include an interim examination by the evaluators of IPA Component III and IV OPs in order to integrate lessons learnt into the first generation of SCF OPs.

Planning and programming for 2014-2020 is expected to start in 2012. Since the regulations for the new period are not yet adopted, an ex-ante evaluation approach which accompanies the programming process is favoured. This will provide the best chance for timely completion and submission of the new OPs.

The draft regulations for 2014-2020 are more stringent than those for 2007-2013 as regards evaluation. Careful planning of evaluations for the new programming period and strong coordination between bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs will be required.

The tasks of the Directorate for Strategic Planning in MRDEUF (the NIPAC’s office and the future NSRF/PC Coordinating Authority) currently include:

- guidance and control of the quality of outsourced evaluation services, in so far as these concern evaluation of Phare and IPA Component I (TAIB) programmes and projects,
- providing of guidance and advice on evaluation to the Operating Structures of other IPA components, the Component III & IV in particular. The Operating Structures for IPA Components II through V shall utilise EU-funded resources available under the Technical Assistance priority under the respective OPs to cover the cost of evaluation services related to those OPs.

These tasks will need to be updated in line with the new SCF requirements.

Although departments for monitoring and evaluation have been established in institutions which are currently responsible for the management and implementation of OPs for IPA Components III and IV, so far these units have not been dealing with the management of evaluation at a programme level, unlike the NIPAC’s office in MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning.

The capacity of the Monitoring and Evaluation Sections of these institutions will be reinforced in the coming period through capacity building activities described under Priority 1 among other methods.

Strategic approach

Croatia is in the unusual position of having an extremely short commitment period (6 months) for its first generation of SCF OPs, although expenditure can continue up until the end of 2016. It is understood that an ex-ante evaluation of each first generation OP is nevertheless required by the current SCF Regulations.

The overall approach will be to maximise lessons learned from the first generation ex-ante evaluations for the benefit of the ex-ante evaluation exercise for 2014-2020, which is likely to be significantly more demanding.

MRDEUF will need to play a leading role in operational terms since individual bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs for 2014-2020 might not be formally designated until a later stage. A key mechanism for this process will be the Evaluation Working Group established under Priority 1.

Indicative Actions

Actions to be carried out during the period 2012-2014 include:

- ✓ Managing the ex-ante evaluations for the first generation SCF OPs
- ✓ Tendering the ex-ante evaluation of the second generation (2014-2020) SCF OPs
- ✓ Coordinating and managing the ex-ante evaluation exercise for the second generation (2014-2020) SCF OPs – including SEA where applicable
- ✓ Developing and agreeing Evaluation Plans for the first generation SCF OPs (where relevant) and for the second generation (2014-2020) SCF OPs

Further Actions will depend on the final agreed content of the above Evaluation Plans.

Priority 3 – Incorporating evaluation in decision making processes

Rationale

According to the *Evalsed Guide*, an ideal situation for an evaluation system to be sustainable might be described in the following terms.

At an individual level:

- There are people throughout government who have experience and skills in evaluation and this is reinforced and renewed by appropriate recruitment and training and professional development,
- Training courses and diplomas are available, variously delivered by universities, private training providers and professional bodies, and open to both evaluation practitioners and commissioners.

At an organisational level:

- Evaluation is routinely undertaken at each stage of policy and programming: from planning through to implementation and follow-up,
- Evaluation findings are integrated into decision-making when deciding what policy options to choose, how best to implement and deliver and when identifying lessons about what has been effective,
- Managers look to evaluation as one important input that will help them improve performance and manage for results,
- A regular flow of evaluations are commissioned that cover the broad spectrum of policies and programmes,
- There are follow-up procedures to ensure that evaluation recommendations are taken seriously and, where feasible, acted upon,
- There are procedures to accumulate evaluation findings and lessons learned so that programme managers and policy makers have an accessible evidence base and an organisational memory.

At inter-organisational level:

- There is coordination through a network of dedicated evaluation units or functions – to ensure sufficient consistency in the way evaluations are commissioned, managed and executed across government and ultimately across the public sector,
- There are requirements that evaluations take place embodied in legislation,
- There is well-defined market with clear rules so that potential evaluation providers can organise themselves to respond to tenders, complete evaluation assignments on time, develop sectoral and technical expertise and understand the priorities of policy and programme customers,
- There is a culture of evaluation that values professional standards, independence, learning from experience and evidence based policy.

At a societal level:

- Open and systematic dialogue is maintained between policy makers and evaluation specialists so that priorities for evaluation can be identified and scrutinised,
- There is an evaluation community of practice whose members may work for universities or consultancies or be independent evaluation practitioners and consultants but still share a common ethos and standards,
- Evaluation associations exist that bring together those who commission, provide and use evaluations and reinforce a culture of evaluation, disseminate good practice and safeguard the independence of evaluation functions and practitioners,
- There is an awareness of evaluation activity and outputs and a dissemination of reports and findings such that evaluations will be routinely used by various stakeholders (in parliament, civil society etc.) to support democratic accountability and transparency.

The key aspect in this *ideal* sustainable evaluation system is that the results of evaluation are used and that it is possible to see that they are being used.

Strategic approach

The approach to be followed under this Priority is simply to feed the mechanisms and capacities set up under Priority 1, as well as the future SCF OP Monitoring Committees, with evaluation content on a regular basis. Careful attention will need to be paid to the method of presentation and timing to ensure maximum understanding and encourage its increased use of evaluation findings in decision making related to SCF.

MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning will be expected to play the leading and coordinating role to guarantee that the relevant standards are met in the context of each OP. The bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs will have the major sector-specific responsibilities for presenting evaluation findings and following up in detail on the outcome of strategic discussions in various relevant programme committees. Involving relevant stakeholders in the Steering Committees of evaluation projects also represents good practice and will be encouraged, since stakeholders often have valuable insights upon which evaluators can draw.

Indicative Actions

Actions to be carried out include:

- ✓ Presenting ex-ante evaluation findings for the first generation SCF OPs in Evaluation Working Group, OP Monitoring Committees and other relevant programme committees
- ✓ Recording how ex-ante evaluation findings were taken into account during finalisation of the first generation SCF OPs
- ✓ Animating discussions on the ex-ante evaluations for the second generation SCF OPs (including SEA where applicable) in Evaluation Working Group and various partnership groups established for the 2014-2020 programming exercise
- ✓ Recording how ex-ante evaluation findings were taken into account during finalisation of the second generation SCF OPs (2014-2020)

- ✓ Presenting findings of interim evaluations of SCF OPs in the Evaluation Working Group, OP Monitoring Committees and other relevant programme committees and following up on related decision making
- ✓ Production of tools, such as evaluation follow-up tables, evaluation libraries/databases etc. in support of the above activities

Minutes of Monitoring Committees and meetings of other relevant partnership groups will provide a ready source of information on decisions taken subsequent to presentation of evaluation results.

Chapter 5: Managing the Evaluation Strategy

As future Coordinating Authority for European Structural Instruments, MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning will be responsible for the overall management of this Evaluation Strategy in cooperation with bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs. The bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs will be responsible for commissioning and managing evaluation projects for their own OPs and for disseminating their results in the respective OP Monitoring Committees.

5.1 Evaluation Working Group

The inter-institutional Evaluation Working Group to be established under Priority 1 will be the main forum for coordinating and discussing SCF evaluation issues.

The Evaluation Working Group will be chaired and serviced by MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning and will meet regularly to monitor the state of progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategy. The Working Group membership will be made up of persons with a designated role for evaluation from MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning and from bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs. Other persons with specific SCF evaluation interests and/or relevant experts in the field may also be invited to participate in meetings of the Working Group.

Members' responsibilities will include reporting on Working Group activities to their respective OP Monitoring Committees and/or other strategic partnership bodies established for SCF. Once agreed in the framework of the Working Group, common evaluation guidance, standards and tools will be applied by the bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs, where relevant, in their evaluation-related tasks.

The Evaluation Working Group will draw up and agree its own detailed rules of procedure.

EVALUATION STRATEGY
FOR EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL INSTRUMENTS

ANNEX 1

Tables on planned Actions

PRIORITY 1				
Building evaluation capacity				
Action	Output	Indicative deadline	Funding source for activity	Responsible institution
<i>Demand-side Actions</i>				
1.1. Establish evaluation function at the NSRF / PC Coordinating Authority and in bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs	Officials responsible for evaluation appointed	II Q 2012	National budget	MRDEUF Bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
1.2. Establish Inter-ministerial Evaluation Working Group EWG	Evaluation Working Group established	IIQ 2012	National budget	MRDEUF
1.3. Assessment of capacity for evaluation in the NSRF Coordinating Authority, in bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs and other bodies involved in OP programming but without a formal role in implementation	Capacity assessment report	IIQ 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA)	MRDEUF
1.4. Completion of roadmap for evaluation capacity building in the relevant institutions	Roadmap agreed by all relevant institutions	IIIQ 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA)	MRDEUF
1.5. Training modules on different aspects and types of evaluation, based on the assessment of evaluation capacity (incl. training of trainers)	Trainings on evaluation designed and carried out	IIIQ 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA)	MRDEUF
1.6. Support to the development of evaluation plans and methodology/procedures	Evaluation plans developed	IIIQ 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA)	MRDEUF Bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
	Methodology and procedures developed			
1.7. Developing web-site on SCF evaluation, as a link from MRDEUF website, to introduce concept of evaluation, explain process and	SCF Evaluation web-site developed	IIQ 2013	National budget, IPA I 2008 and other EU funding as available	MRDEUF

PRIORITY 1				
Building evaluation capacity				
Action	Output	Indicative deadline	Funding source for activity	Responsible institution
methodology, publicise evaluation work plans and/or Evaluation Reports				
1.8. Developing manuals for evaluation	Manuals prepared	IIIQ 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA)	MRDEUF Bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
1.9. Carrying out training on evaluation (process, methodology and quality standards)	Training delivered	Continuous from 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA) National budget	MRDEUF
<i>Supply-side Actions</i>				
1.10. Awareness-raising for supply-side (local evaluation market)	Information on MRDEUF evaluation website, briefings, seminars	Continuous from 2013	National budget and EU funding as available	MRDEUF
1.11. Mapping of the domestic evaluation market (number and type of organisations active in the evaluation market and their expertise)	Mapping report with relevant categorisation of bodies in evaluation market	Continuous from 2013	National budget and EU funding as available	MRDEUF
1.12. Consultations on establishing the National Evaluation Society	Consultation report showing support for National Evaluation Society	Continuous from 2013	National budget and EU funding as available	MRDEUF

PRIORITY 2				
Evaluation of SCF interventions				
Action	Output	Indicative deadline	Funding source for activity	Responsible institution
2.1. Managing ex-ante evaluation of the 1st generation SCF OPs (2013)	Ex-ante evaluation reports of OPs 2007-2013	III Q 2012	IPA I 2008 project (TA)	Bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs with assistance from MRDEUF
2.2. Tendering the ex-ante evaluation of the 2 nd generation (2014-2020) SCF OPs	Contract signed for ex-ante evaluation of 2 nd generation SCF OPs	IVQ 2012	EU funding	Bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OP
2.3. Coordinating and managing the ex-ante evaluation for the 2 nd generation (2014-2020) SCF OPs	Finalised ex-ante evaluation reports for OPs 2014-2020	<i>In time for formal submission of OPs</i> IVQ 2013	not required	MRDEUF in cooperation with bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
2.4. Coordinating and agreeing evaluation plans at Evaluation Working Group meetings (1 st and 2 nd generations)	Coordinated evaluation plans	Annually, from 2013	not required	EWG
2.5. Approving evaluation plans by Monitoring Committees (1 st and 2 nd generations)	Approved evaluation plans	Annually, from 2013	not required	Members of NSRF and of OP MCs

PRIORITY 3				
Incorporating evaluation in decision making processes				
Action	Output	Indicative deadline	Funding source for activity	Responsible institution
3.1. Discussing evaluations, evaluation results and implementation of evaluation recommendations in Evaluation Working Group meetings	Conclusions and minutes of EWG meetings	Continuous from IIQ 2012	not required	MRDEUF, members of EWG
3.2. Preparing follow-up tables of evaluation recommendations for each evaluation	Follow-up tables prepared	Continuous from IIQ 2012	not required	MRDEUF and evaluation managers in bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
3.3. Considering results of Ex-ante of 1 st generation SCF OPs (2007-2013) in finalising future programming documents (using current IPA Monitoring Committee structures and related partnership groups)	Record of how ex-ante evaluation results were taken into account in finalised SCF NSRF and OPs 2007-2013	II Q 2013	not required	MRDEUF Bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
3.4. Animating discussions on ex-ante evaluations for the 2 nd generation SCF OPs in various partnership groups established for the 2014-2020 programming exercise	Record of how ex-ante evaluation results were taken into account in finalised SCF PC and OPs 2014-2020	IIQ 2013	not required	MRDEUF and evaluation managers in bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs
3.5. Discussing interim evaluation results and implementation of evaluation recommendations in Monitoring Committee meetings (1 st and 2 nd generation SCF)	Conclusions and minutes of Monitoring Committee meetings	Continuous from 2013	not required	MRDEUF and evaluation managers in bodies responsible for the management and

PRIORITY 3

Incorporating evaluation in decision making processes

Action	Output	Indicative deadline	Funding source for activity	Responsible institution
				implementati on of OPs
3.6. Decision-making by Monitoring Committees, following evaluations findings and evaluation recommendations (1st and 2nd generation SCF)	Decisions by Monitoring Committees	Continuous from 2013	not required	MC members