

EVALUATION PLAN

OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS IN MONTENEGRO
UNDER IPARD II 2014-2020

- written material for the adoption by the IPARD II monitoring committee on first meeting in July 2016

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ABREVIATIONS

AIR - Annual Implementation Report

AE - Agri environmental measure

AEP - Annual Evaluation Plan

EU - European Union

EP - Evaluation plan

EC - European Commission

FWA - Framework Agreement between Montenegro represented by the Government of Montenegro and the European Commission on the arrangements for implementation of union financial assistance to Montenegro under the instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA II)

MA - Managing Authority

MARD – Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

MC - Monitoring Committee

M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation

NGO - Non-governmental organization

NIPAC – National IPA Coordinator

IA - IPARD Agency

IPARD II - Instrument of Pre-Accession of Rural Development 2014-2020

TNA - Training Need Assessment

LAG - Local Action Group

LDS - Local Development Strategies

LEADER - Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale

RDP - Rural Development Programme

SA - Sectoral Agreement between The Government of Montenegro and The European Commission setting out provisions for the management and implementation of the Union financial assistance to Montenegro under the instrument for pre-accession assistance in the policy area “Agriculture and rural development” (IPARD).

1. OBJECTIVES 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 55 and 57 of the FWA, Article 54 to 58 of the SA an Evaluation Plan (hereinafter: EP) has been drawn up for evaluation of the IPARD II programme in Montenegro for the period 2014-2020.

The objectives of the EP are to:

- Ensure that satisfactory and adequate evaluation activities are undertaken to provide the necessary information for IPARD II programme steering;
- Ensure the availability of sufficient and suitable resources (human and financial);
- Ensure that appropriate data is available at the right time and in the right format for the purpose of the IPARD II programme evaluation, especially for the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), the interim and the ex-post evaluations.

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

- For the purposes of Article 55 of the FWA (sets out general principles of evaluation of IPA II Assistance), 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;
- The IPARD II programme shall be subject to ex-ante, interim and ex-post evaluations carried out by independent evaluators under the responsibility of Montenegro;
- 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;
- The evaluations shall examine the degree of utilization 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;
- Evaluation reports shall explain the methodology applied, and include an assessment of the quality of the data and the findings;
- The quality and implications of evaluations shall be assessed by the Managing Authority, the IPARD II monitoring committee and the Commission;
- 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 IPARD II 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.

This EP is drawn up by the Managing Authority, in consultation with the NIPAC, for the IPARD II programme in accordance with Article 57 of the FWA. The evaluation plan shall be submitted to the monitoring committee no later than one year after the adoption by the Commission of the IPARD II programme.

2. GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

The monitoring and evaluation system for the IPARD II programme consists of those actors, mechanisms and activities involved in the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation.

The actors involved in the monitoring and evaluation system are: the Managing Authority, the IPARD II monitoring committee, the IPARD Agency and independent evaluators.

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

Managing Authority (MA):

Managing Authority is responsible for drawn up the evaluation plan and its implementation after submitted to the IPARD II monitoring committee no later than one year after the adoption by the Commission of the IPARD II programme, and has to ensure as a minimum the following requirements:

- Planned evaluation activities are timely and in accordance with the monitoring and evaluation system;
- The European Commission is informed on each evaluation via AIRs;
- Progress of the implementation of EP is presented to the IPARD II MC each year;
- Results of evaluation are published.

The Managing Authority is also responsible for managing all evaluation tenders, facilitating cooperation amongst the monitoring and evaluation stakeholders and ensuring their capacity building as well as communicating the evaluation results to internal and external stakeholders, as well as to the wider public.

IPARD II monitoring committee (MC)

The role of the IPARD II MC is to monitor the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of the IPARD II programme implementation, as well as review the progress in the utilization of allocated funds towards the set objectives. Among other tasks, the IPARD II MC analyses the activities, results and recommendations of the EP implementation. Also, IPARD II MC may issue recommendations to the MA regarding IPARD II programme implementation (including evaluation) and may monitor actions taken as a result of its recommendations. It considers and approves AIRs¹ before they are sent to the EC.

IPARD Agency (IA)

For the purpose of monitoring and evaluation the IA collects information based on documents submitted through applications, information on supported projects and payments and information on conducted controls.

The IPARD Agency shall ensure the setup of a system to secure a timely data flow to both the MA and evaluators. At the request of the evaluators, the IA will ensure provision of all additional information and documentation as required.

The IA will work closely in coordination with the MA to ensure the timely provision of all data on operations and necessary monitoring data.

It is within their responsibility to put up and maintain a proper data management system that is able to collect, store and provide all relevant data concerning the application and relevant project and submit this data to the MA in short notice for evaluation.

¹ Each AIR will consist chapter regarding implementation of EP.

Independent evaluators

Most of the evaluation activities will be carried out by external experts who are functionally independent from the MA and the IA. Evaluators will be contracted in accordance with public procurement provisions – PRAG rules and financed from “Technical assistance” measure.

3. EVALUATION TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES

Evaluation activities will show the progress, impact, achievements, effectiveness, efficiency and importance of the IPARD II programme for the rural development in Montenegro. Evaluation activities will ensure an adequate analysis of the IPARD II programme contribution to the objectives. All evaluation activities will be coordinated by means of the MA staff involved in evaluation issues.

The development of the EP has also taken into account all relevant recommendations of the Ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD II programme.

Since good quality evaluation cannot be performed without a well-established monitoring system, the most important activities at the beginning of the implementation process will be assessment of the established M&E system in MA/IA and further development of the system.

The established system of collecting and storing of data will be checked at the IA level. Also, a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) will be carried out and appropriate capacity-building activities implemented, including training for the MA staff.

Special studies will be provided for the measures planned to start on a later stage (dormant measures). The methodology for the M&E system for these measures shall be established. Specific guidance concerning the requirements for LAGs, as a good basis to report their performance will be developed. In addition, the following M&E activities will be carried out with emphasis on specific IPARD II topics:

- Building-up of evaluation capacities;
- On-going assessment of the monitoring system;
- On-going observation of changes in the context in which the programme interventions take place against set baselines (using common context indicators);
- Interim evaluation of IPARD II programme in accordance with the Article 57 of the SA;
- Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs;
- Assessment of absorption obstacles, including evaluation of appropriateness of the eligibility and selection criteria for the measures (especially for the measure 1 “Investments in physical assets on agricultural holdings and measure 3 “Investments in physical assets concerning processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products”);
- Establishing monitoring system for measure 4 “Agri-environment, climate and organic farming”;
- Assessment of the use of resources from measure 9 “Technical assistance”;
- Assessment/encourage M&E system for LAGs (as part of the preparation for measure 5 “Implementation of local development strategies –LEADER approach”);
- Assessment of efficiency of promotional campaign activities on absorption of EU funds;
- Analysis of the development trends and context analysis of the IPARD II programme; Contribution of the National Rural Network in implementation and achieving the goals of the IPARD II programme;
- Assessment of coordination between national rural development measures and IPARD II programme.
- Dissemination of evaluation results;
- Ex-ante evaluation of future programming period (2021-2027);
- Ex-post evaluation of the IPARD II programme in accordance with the Article 58 of the SA.

In addition to previously mentioned evaluation activities, specific “ad-hoc” evaluation activities will be carried out during the IPARD II programme implementation based on the needs and results of external evaluations, appropriate recommendations of the MA, the IPARD II MC and other evaluation stakeholders.

Each AEP shall include as horizontal theme dissemination and capacity-building actions to be carried out through Programme implementation, as well as 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 etc.

Each year through AIR, the MA will report to the IPARD II MC performed evaluation activities of the EP.

4. DATA AND INFORMATION

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 of Montenegro the following indicators are foreseen:

- Context, including impact indicators
- Target indicators and
- Output indicators

Context, including impact indicators

Values of common context indicators are collected mainly by Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT) and they are presented in Annex IV of the IPARD II programme. Some of the context indicators are not available as they are not collected in Montenegro and not monitored yet. These are mostly indicators referring to the environment. During the programming period the lack of data will be analyzed in detail and adequate steps will be taken to ensure the proper availability of quality data according to the results of analysis. Special emphasis will be given to the impact indicators.

Target indicators

The source of data for the quantifying of target indicator values will be databases² managed by the IA, and for the certain year, statistical databases.

Target indicators are presented in the IPARD II programme through each of the measure description.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, at least, 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.

² Those data are mainly predefined in MANUAL OF PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING; 3.1.7. Appendix 7: Table of database of recipients.

³ Review of indicators is presented in table 20 of IPARD II programme: A summary table of the intervention logic showing the measures selected and quantified target.

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

- Internal statistical data within the MARD;
- Databases and information from other sources (e.g. Statistical Office of Montenegro-MONSTAT);
- Evidence from the Research Institutes and NGOs;
- Additional and bespoke surveys of recipients to capture broader impacts.

5. TRAINING ON EVALUATION

Up to now the experiences of M&E of rural development policy in Montenegro have been very limited and not organized on a systematic way. This is taken into account in developing the EP.

In addition, ex-ante evaluators have been strongly recommended to strengthen the MA at MARD and the capacity of staff in line with M&E rules (in terms of both numbers and competences). Examples of good practice of member states in the organization of M&E systems will be further analyzed - internally and externally.

A Training Needs Assessment will be carried out and appropriate capacity-building activities for MA and IA staff implemented.

Also, in later stage, as part of preparation for measure 5 “Implementation of local development strategies – LEADER”, special studies will be provided through EP, with purpose to encourage LAGs in fulfilment M&E requirement regarding programming and implementation of LDSs in line with LEADER approach. Specific guidance concerning the requirements for preparation of LDSs and reporting their performance will be developed.

This approach will create a solid basis for the evaluation activities, as well as for MA, also on local government level and will contribute to building up evaluation culture in rural areas in Montenegro.

6. TIMELINE

It is essential to ensure that all activities relating to the 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 M&E system. Activities of M&E will provide necessary information at a suitable moment, particularly information for the purpose of drawing up of AIRs and the Final implementation report on the IPARD II programme. The indicative timeline of implementation of the planned activities of the EP is given in the table below.

Activities	Year of implementation and duration	Reporting
Building-up of evaluation capacities of the MA and IA	After the start of the implementation of the IPARD II programme – on-going based on a proper TNA and following training plan.	Information will be provided to the IPARD II MC with the annual review of the implementation of the EP in the each AIR and in the Interim Evaluation report, as well as Ex-post report.
Assessment of the monitoring system established in MA/IA (evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the collection of data) and further development of the system.	Following the adoption of the IPARD II programme, not later than the end of first year of implementation. Some activities may be on-going.	Information will be provided to the IPARD II MC with the annual review of the implementation of the EP and in the each AIR.
Review/assessment of data availability for common context indicators and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data	During the implementation of the	Information will be provided in the each AIR and in the Ex-post report.

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<p>collection including analysis of development trends and context of rural policy implementation.</p>	<p>IPARD II programme.</p>	
<p>Interim evaluation of the IPARD II programme in accordance with Article 57 of the SA.</p>	<p>Start of the preparation by the end of the second year of implementation. Completed interim evaluation at the end of the third year of the implementation of the IPARD II programme (not before 2019).</p>	<p>Interim Evaluation report will be discussed by MA and will be submitted to the IPARD II MC, and to the Commission. Follow up recommendations will be reported to the each AIR.</p>
<p>Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs; Assessment sector/measure specific issues when absorption develops different than expected; Assessment of absorption obstacles, including evaluation of appropriateness of the eligibility and selection criteria for the measures (especially for the measure 1 “Investments in physical assets on agricultural holdings and measure 3 “Investments in physical assets concerning processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products”); Establishing monitoring system for measure 4 “Agri-environment, climate and organic farming”; Assessment of the use of resources from measure 9 “Technical assistance”; Encourage M&E system for LAGs (as part of the preparation for measure 5 “Implementation of local development strategies – LEADER approach”); Assessment of efficiency of promotional campaign activities on absorption of EU funds; Analysis of the development trends and context analysis of the IPARD II programme; Contribution of the National Rural Network in implementation and achieving the goals of the IPARD II programme; Assessment of coordination between national rural development measures and IPARD II programme.</p>	<p>During the implementation of the IPARD II programme by internal and external support.</p>	<p>Information will be provided to the IPARD II MC, in the each AIR and in the Interim evaluation report, as well as Ex-post evaluation report.</p>

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Specific ad-hoc evaluation activities	They will be implemented during the period of the implementation of the IPARD II programme, based on identified needs of the evaluation reports and recommendations from the MA.	Information will be provided to the IPARD II MC with the annual review of the implementation of the EP in the each AIR.
Dissemination of evaluation results	This will be implemented during the period of IPARD II programme implementation.	Information will be given in each AIR.
Ex-ante evaluation of the future programming period (2021-2027)	The ex-ante evaluation shall start not later than 2021.	Information will be given in each AIR and final implementation report, and evaluation report will be the constitute part of the future RDP for Montenegro.
Ex-post evaluation of the IPARD II programme in accordance with Article 58 of the SA	Start of the preparation by the end of the 2023. Completed ex-post evaluation by the end of 2024.	Will be submitted to the Commission not later than 31 of December 2024.

7. 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 AEP drawn up based on the EP. Activities will be developed in close co-operation with the department responsible for programme promotion in the MA 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 IPARD II programme. If appropriate, externally contracted experts for evaluation implementation will, in addition to the elaboration of the evaluation report, have the obligation to present evaluation results through workshops to the MA and IA 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 – targeting 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, if appropriate. 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 MA will disseminate information on evaluation by means of AIR. If there is a need, other appropriate tools will be used, such as publications, communications to the public etc.

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

8. RESOURCES

In accordance with the Rulebook on systematization and organisation of the MARD an adequate level of human resources for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is predicted within the MA and the IA. Curently MA has 2 employees responsible for M&E issues and in the future 3 more employees are perceived (5 in total). Curently IA has 1 employee and additional 1 is foreseen in the future (2 in total). The

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“in-house” resources shall be supported by specific capacity-building actions financed through TA, following the TNA.

Since evaluation activities will be outsourced and carried out by independent experts selected via public procurement tenders, appropriate and sufficient financial resources, for all activities, are provided through “Technical Assistance”. If needed, MA could use additional financial resources for timely provision of EP implementation.

The Ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD II programme is completed and performed by Agrotec S.p.A., and the financial resources have been insured from MIDAS project (No: MNE-MIDAS-TF093405- CS-CQ-14-2.1.a.8.2).