



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 21.5.2002

**The 2000-2006 Programming Period:
Methodological working papers**

WORKING PAPER NO 8 a

**The Mid Term Evaluation of
Structural Fund Interventions – INTERREG III**

This document is a shortened and simplified version of the Commission's guide to the Mid Term Evaluation, adapted to the circumstances of the INTERREG III Community Initiative. It has been prepared in order to give more specific guidance to managing authorities on how the mid term evaluation of INTERREG should be organised and the key issues it should address. The document takes account of the later start of INTERREG programmes as compared to mainstream programmes and the consequently reduced amount of activity to evaluate. It also provides some guidance on the evaluation of the cross border, transnational or inter-regional aspects of the programmes.

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FOREWORD

This methodological document is aimed at national, regional and local authorities responsible for managing 2000-2006 INTERREG III Community Initiative Programmes (CIP), and specifically at those responsible for organising evaluation. It should also prove useful for those carrying out the evaluations. The document provides a guide to how the mid term evaluation should be organised and what it should contain. It is a shortened and simplified version of the Commission's Working Document No. 8 on the mid term evaluation of all Community structural interventions.

The mid term evaluation is not an end in itself but a means to improve the quality and relevance of programming. It provides an opportunity to identify reorientations to the programming which may be needed to ensure the achievement of the original objectives. The starting point for the mid term evaluation is the ex ante evaluation and the agreed CIP and Programme Complement. The mid term evaluation will revisit the main elements of programming examined in the ex ante evaluation to review them for continued relevance, to assess first outputs and results and to review likely impacts. Therefore, the key concerns arising for the mid term evaluation are:

1. Continuing Validity of Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses and Potential;
2. Continuing Relevance and the Consistency of the Strategy;
3. The Quantification of Objectives – Outputs, Results and Impacts;
4. Effectiveness To Date and Expected Socio-Economic Impacts; and
5. Quality of Joint Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements.

The first two elements listed above will lead to a review of the appropriateness of the programme strategy. The core of the evaluation, however, will be the assessment of how well the form of assistance is performing in reality, judged on the basis of its continued relevance and the effectiveness of its implementation (3 to 5 in the list above). Impact will be dealt with only insofar as first outputs and results are known and whether or not they or any changes in the context are likely to affect the expected impact.

Structure of the Guide

The guide is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the practical issues of how to carry out the mid term evaluation in a manner which will ensure its quality, utility and value for money. The second part focuses on the content of the mid term evaluation under each of the five headings listed above, highlighting the key issues which need to be addressed. There may be further issues which national or regional authorities wish to see explored in the mid term evaluation and these should be included. A key concern for INTERREG will be the assessment of the cross border, transnational or inter-regional nature of the programme.

The guide is intended to be used as an aid for those commissioning and those undertaking a mid term evaluation and it should be used flexibly, as long as the key components are covered. It is a simplified version of the Commission's working document on the mid term evaluation. Two key components of the evaluation have been omitted - the review of newly available evaluation results because of the short timescale since the relatively late agreement on the INTERREG CIPs and the performance reserve since this does not apply to Community Initiatives. The text of the guide has been simplified with a few additions to refer more

specifically to the INTERREG programme and what its mid term evaluation should contain. These concern the quantification of objectives and the joint management and implementation systems in particular. Further guidelines on the INTERREG III Community Initiative are available in the Commission's Working Paper No. 7 on Ex Ante Evaluation and Indicators for INTERREG III.

INTRODUCTION: AIM OF MID TERM EVALUATION OF INTERREG III IN THE CONTEXT OF STRUCTURAL POLICIES

The overall aim of the mid term evaluation of INTERREG CIPs is to assess their establishment and initial outputs and to make recommendations for any changes needed to ensure that they achieve their objectives. This aim can be broken down into a number of objectives:

- **To assess whether the overall form of assistance remains the appropriate means to address the issues confronting the co-operation area.**

The mid term evaluation will review the analysis of the ex ante evaluation in the context of evolving circumstances, to assess the continued relevance of the priorities chosen and to provide the evidence for the competent authorities to consider if changes need to be made to align the programme more closely with the external environment at the mid term review.

- **To review whether the strategic axes, priorities and objectives are coherent and still relevant, how far progress has been made towards the achievement of these objectives and the extent to which they can actually be achieved.**

The mid term evaluation should review the consistency and coherence between needs, objectives, activities and their intended results in the light of any changed circumstances since the adoption of the programme. The experience of implementation for one to two years will give first insights into the appropriateness of the strategy in relation to the development problems and the extent to which the aims and objectives of the form of assistance are likely to be achieved.

- **To assess the quantification of objectives, specifically the extent to which they have facilitated monitoring and evaluation.**

The mid term evaluation should draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the quantification exercise undertaken in the programming phase. Do the core indicators actually reflect the activity being co-financed? Are the targets set still appropriate? Has timely information been made available to the monitoring committee? Was the information necessary for evaluation provided by the quantification of objectives? On foot of answers to these questions, the mid term evaluation should make recommendations for any necessary improvements or refinements to the quantification of objectives.

- **To assess the extent to which horizontal priorities – equal opportunities and the environment in particular – have been integrated into the forms of assistance.**

The regulations specify horizontal principles for all Structural Fund assistance. The mid term evaluation presents an opportunity to consider how effectively these priorities have been integrated within INTERREG. An initial assessment should be made of the

effectiveness of the implementation of the policy of “mainstreaming”, leading to recommendations, if necessary, for more effective integration of these priorities.

- **To analyse the adequacy of the joint implementation and monitoring arrangements.**

By the time the mid term evaluation is underway, the monitoring committees will have met on a number of occasions and the evaluation should comment on their effectiveness and the effectiveness of implementation procedures. A particular concern will be to analyse the quality of joint monitoring systems in terms of organisation, regularity and quality of data and other information. The adequacy of project selection criteria and procedures should also be reviewed.

PART 1: MID TERM EVALUATION – THE PROCESS

If the process for carrying out the mid term evaluation is right, it is likely that the content will be of a high quality and be geared to the needs of those who will use it - national, regional and sectoral authorities, the Commission, other organisations and the public in general. This document therefore devotes significant attention to how the evaluation should be carried out, who should be involved and the timescale of the exercise.

The Regulation¹ states that the mid term evaluation shall be carried out under the responsibility of the managing authority, in co-operation with the Commission and the Member State. It shall cover each CSF and each assistance. It shall be carried out by an independent assessor and be submitted to the Monitoring Committee and then sent to the Commission, as a general rule three years after adoption of the assistance, and no later than 31 December 2003, with a view to the review of the form of assistance being complete by 31 March 2004. As a continuation of the mid term evaluation, it shall be updated for each CSF and assistance and completed no later than 31 December 2005 in order to prepare for subsequent assistance operations.

1.1. Evaluation Timetable

The deadlines contained in the Regulation and the relatively late agreement on some of the INTERREG CIPs imply the timetable and stages in the evaluation process as outlined in the table below. This timetable is meant to be indicative and should be adapted to suit regional circumstances.

Mid Term Evaluation	
Indicative Timetable	
Timeframe	Stage of Process
June 2002 - December 2002	Planning the Evaluation Establish Steering Group Agree Terms of Reference Advertise or otherwise invite tenders
October 2002 – March 2003	Award Contract

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds. Article 42.

	Evaluation Underway
March 2003 – July 2003	Evaluation Underway First Draft sent to Steering Group Steering Group signs off on final draft
September 2003– December 2003	Meeting of Monitoring Committee to consider Mid Term Evaluation Evaluation Report forwarded to the Commission

Particular points to note are the need to devote sufficient time to planning the evaluation before it is undertaken and to responding to it after it is complete. In addition, it is important the timescale allows the Steering Group to consider the first draft and to request further work from the evaluators if this is necessary.

1.2. Planning the Evaluation

The timetable outlined above demonstrates that it is necessary to start planning for the mid term evaluation in mid 2002 at the latest. Even though the mid term evaluation is mandatory, the specificity of CIP requires that proper consideration is given to the issues of budgets, level of detail to be addressed, appropriate methodologies, availability of data, etc.. Decisions need to be taken on these issues *before* the evaluation commences.

The regulation (Article 42) states that the mid term evaluation shall be carried out under the responsibility of the managing authority, in co-operation with the Commission and the Member State. It also states that the Commission shall examine the relevance and quality of the evaluation on the basis of criteria defined beforehand by the Commission and the member State in partnership. The Commission should be consulted on the terms of reference for the mid term evaluations, the methodology and the draft report, while the Commission will consult with the managing authority on the criteria for assessing the relevance and quality of the evaluation.

1.3. Managing the Evaluation

Each mid term evaluation should be guided by a Steering Group representative of the monitoring committee for the CIP. The Steering Group's role is largely technical. It will develop the terms of reference for the evaluation, select the evaluators, guide the evaluation, give feedback on the first draft and approve it for quality on completion. The involvement of one or more outside experts in evaluation on the Steering Group should be considered. Organisations directly responsible for the delivery of programmes being evaluated should not be represented on the Steering Group.

It is good practice for the full Monitoring Committee to approve the terms of reference for the mid term evaluation. In line with the requirements of the regulation, it must also consider the evaluation before it is forwarded to the Commission.

1.4. Independence of the Evaluation Process

The General Regulation requires that the mid term evaluation is undertaken by an independent assessor. By this is meant that the evaluator is independent of those responsible for the management or implementation of the programme. The evaluator should be selected by means of a competitive tendering process, with the decision on whether an open or closed

tender should be organised depending on the size of the form of assistance and the scale of evaluation required.

1.5. Organising a Cost-Effective Evaluation

In planning the evaluation, the managing authorities, in conjunction with the Commission, should consider how to organise the evaluation process so as not to duplicate work across different levels of programming. The evaluation should be organised to ensure that full use is made of the monitoring information which has been gathered and that the evaluators do not engage in unnecessary work in this regard. Given that a key element of the evaluation is an examination of the monitoring system, it is essential that evaluators use this information as part of the evaluation process.

1.6. Respecting the principle of proportionality

The principle of proportionality quite simply draws attention to the need for evaluation work to be in proportion to the scale of the intervention. So, while large Objective 1 CSFs will require macro economic modelling, this would be inappropriate for the majority of Objective 2, 3 or small Objective 1 Plans and all INTERREG CIPs.

1.7. Financing

The cost of the mid term evaluation will be met out of the Technical Assistance allocation in the form of assistance. Competent authorities should consider that the mid term evaluation can be costly. The cost is not always proportional to the expenditure foreseen by the form of assistance and, for this reason, any disproportionate expenditure should be avoided. Member States can find some guidance on this matter in the MEANS collection, Volume 1² and the SEM 2000 Communication on Evaluation³. For the mid term evaluation of the 1994-1999 period, the average cost was less than 0.1% of the total annual cost of the programmes. In order to obtain quality evaluations, the cost should be higher than this in general, except in the case of very large programmes. Indicative budgets for the mid term evaluation should be agreed at the planning stage.

1.8. Structure of the Evaluation

At the European Commission's Fourth Conference on Evaluation⁴, the view was expressed by a number of speakers that Structural Fund evaluations tend not to feed into public or political debate. The reasons for this may include the over use of technical language, overly long evaluations and the lack of clear conclusions and recommendations for action. In an attempt to encourage debate, the Commission proposes the inclusion in the mid term evaluations of short summaries of conclusions and recommendations. These summaries should be non-technical, free-standing documents, focusing on conclusions on the effectiveness and relevance of the programme as well as recommendations for change where necessary. They should facilitate debate on the appropriateness of the conclusions and how the recommendations can be implemented.

² European Commission, (1999). *Evaluating Socio-Economic Programmes. Volumes 1-6*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

³ European Commission (1996). *SEM 2000 Communication on Evaluation, 8 May 1996, "Concrete Steps Towards Best Practice across the Commission SEC 96/659*

⁴ Evaluation for Quality, Edinburgh, 18/19 September 2000

In the interests of encouraging debate, but also in the interests of quality, the mid term evaluation should aim for conciseness and avoid the use of long descriptive material. The emphasis should be analytical, not descriptive. While the mid term evaluations undertaken between 1996 and 1998 demonstrated a “spectacular development” on previous evaluation practice in relation to the Structural Funds (MEANS, Volume 1, 1999), “most reports [could be] criticised for not being analytical enough and for providing conclusions that [were] too descriptive to be truly useful in decision making”. Of course, there were exceptions to this general judgement, but the important point is to emphasise the need for analysis rather than description in the mid term evaluations to be carried out in 2002/2003. Evaluators should aim to produce clear documents which avoid unnecessary technical language.

While not wishing to be overly prescriptive as regards the content of the mid term evaluations, given their diversity, evaluations should reflect the broad structure outlined below.

Proposed Structure for Mid Term Evaluation

1. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations (in English, French or German – maximum 5 pages)
2. Methodology - outlining the approach of the evaluators and to include a description of the original research undertaken as well as the sources of data and information. The methodology should include a statement of the evaluator’s assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation report.
3. Chapters 1 – XX
4. Conclusions
5. Recommendations

The main body of the report (parts 3 to 5 according to the proposed Structure above) will present the results of the evaluation, structured in a manner which is appropriate to the INTERREG CIP being evaluated. The conclusions chapter should focus on each of the issues listed in Section 2.8 below, as well as any other issues which arise from the specificity of the programme. The basis for each conclusion should be clearly rooted in the findings of the evaluation. The final chapter should contain recommendations for action which respond to conclusions on weaknesses in the programme strategy or implementation.

1.9. Quality

An important task for the Steering Group is to assure the quality of the mid term evaluation. The Steering Group should report to the Monitoring Committee indicating if the evaluation meets quality criteria which have been predefined and approved at an earlier stage. In establishing the quality criteria at the start of the process, the MEANS quality criteria may be of use (MEANS, Vol. 1, p. 179) if national quality standards are not available. The eight quality criteria are listed below.

MEANS Quality Criteria

- **Meeting needs:** Does the evaluation adequately address the requests for information

formulated by the commissioners and does it correspond to the Terms of Reference?

- **Relevant scope:** Have the rationale of the programme, its outputs, results, impacts, interactions with other policies and unexpected effects been carefully studied?
- **Defensible design:** Is the design of the evaluation appropriate and adequate for obtaining the results ?
- **Reliable Data:** Are the primary and secondary data collected or selected suitable? Are they sufficiently reliable compared to the expected use?
- **Sound Analysis:** Are quantitative and qualitative data analysed in accordance with established rules, and are they complete and appropriate for answering the evaluative questions correctly?
- **Credible Results:** Are the results logical and justified by the analysis of data and by interpretations based on carefully presented explanatory hypotheses?
- **Impartial Conclusions:** Are the conclusions just and non-biased by personal or partisan considerations, and are they detailed enough to be implemented concretely?
- **Clarity:** Does the report describe the context and goal, as well as the organisation and results of the evaluated programme in such a way that the information provided is easily understood?

1.10. Consultation with Partners and Stakeholders

Consultation should take place at two levels during the process of the mid term evaluation. In the first place, consultation with a wide range of stakeholders should form a part of the methodology adopted by the evaluators. Stakeholders in the programme have valuable insights which the evaluators should harness in assessing the performance of programmes. Evaluators should include members of the Monitoring Committee in this consultation.

Secondly, the partners involved in the Monitoring Committee will consider the evaluation report when it is complete and the views of the Monitoring Committee will be forwarded to the Commission along with the mid term evaluation itself.

1.11. Publication

The summary of the mid term evaluation should be made available to the public once the evaluation is forwarded to the Commission. Where possible, summaries should be placed on the internet either on Structural Funds related websites or the websites of the authorities managing the CIP. The Commission regards it as good practice to make public the entire evaluation report.

1.12. Consideration of Evaluation Findings

The mid term review may deal with a range of issues thrown up by the mid term evaluation and will involve a detailed consideration by the member State(s) and the Commission of its conclusions and recommendations. In line with Article 42 of the General Regulation, the Commission shall examine the relevance and quality of the evaluation in this context, on the basis of the criteria defined beforehand by the Commission and the Member State(s) in partnership. The mid term evaluation will have been forwarded to the monitoring committee and the Commission regards it as good practice that the monitoring committee should be

consulted for its views to contribute to the debate. The Member State(s) and the Commission will agree appropriate changes to be made to the forms of assistance to respond to the mid term evaluation findings. Specifically in relation to the Community Initiatives, the General Regulation (Article 21) states that they shall be re-examined following the mid term evaluation and amended as required.

PART 2: THE MID TERM EVALUATION – KEY COMPONENTS

The first part of this document outlined the processes involved when organising the mid term evaluation. In this second part, its content is considered. Given the diversity in scale and content of the various forms of assistance and the varying durations of implementation involved, it must be emphasised that the guidance given should be adapted as appropriate. This document outlines a simplified version of the guidance developed specifically for the INTERREG context. At the end of each section key issues are identified. These are pulled together at the end of the document, highlighting the need for the mid term evaluation to draw conclusions on each of the key issues. The list of key issues can act as a checklist for those who will plan evaluations as well as those who undertake them.

2.1. Analysis of the Continuing Validity of the Ex Ante Evaluation’s Analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses and Potential of the Co-Operation Area Concerned

A core element of the planning process was the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the co-operation area concerned, since it formed the basis for the strategy of the programming document. The ex ante evaluation verified this analysis, including the priority to be assigned to the various economic needs and the appropriateness of the opportunities and challenges identified. The mid term evaluation should review the continuing validity of the analysis.

Recent developments in the economy or the availability of new information, including the availability of any new evaluations⁵, may need to be incorporated into the analysis. The mid term evaluation should examine the extent to which socio-economic needs and development problems are evolving and seek the reasons why. The objective is to ensure that the priorities of the CIP comprise the most appropriate response.

The evaluator should, where appropriate, take account of changes to the programme environment in the context of enlargement. The annex provides some guidance in this regard.

Key Issues

At the end of this step, mirroring this stage in the ex ante evaluation, there should be:

- A review of any new evaluations which have become available since the agreement of the CIP and an identification of any implications their findings have for the SWOT analysis.
- An assessment of the continuing validity of the ranking of the main disparities to be addressed and recommendations for any changes which should be adopted.

⁵ The examination of previous evaluation results is the first key component of mid term evaluation as set out in Working Document No. 8. Given the relatively short time since the INTERREG CIPs were agreed, this element has been omitted from this simplified guide. However, if new evaluations are available since the CIP was agreed, the implications should be considered under this element of the evaluation.

2.2. Re-Assessment of the Relevance and the Consistency of the Strategy

Once the question of the main needs and socio-economic problems has been reviewed, the mid term evaluation should assess again the appropriateness of the balance between the combination of policies and activities being co-financed. As with the ex ante evaluation, this should be done by checking how each priority area or axis will contribute to the overall objectives. The continuing relevance and consistency of the priority areas or axes should be assessed. This should include for Strand B in particular an assessment of compatibility with the European Spatial Development Perspective (SDEC). At the end of this stage of the evaluation, the mid term evaluation will have reconstituted the programme logic. This means that if the initial logic was obscure or poorly justified (i.e., if the ex ante evaluation was not performed properly or if its conclusions were not taken into account), there is an opportunity to restore logic to the programme.

Key Issues

- The mid term evaluation should present planners and decision-makers with a clear justification for the share and weight of each priority and strategic axis.
- The mid term evaluation should evaluate the consistency of programming from the level of the objectives of the Programme Complement through to the objectives of the CIP.
- The mid term evaluation should provide an appraisal as to the continuing consistency between the strategic, specific and operational objectives.

2.3. Quantification of Objectives - Outputs, Results and Impacts

Quantification of objectives in a cross border, transnational or inter-regional programme presents particular challenges and although some progress has been made in the level and quality of quantification, the mid term evaluation provides an opportunity for further necessary improvements to be made. The quantification of objectives at the two levels – CIPs and Programme Complements – is fundamental to both the planning and implementation of the INTERREG CIPs. At planning stage, the ex ante evaluation addressed the quantification of objectives at the global and specific levels and judged the appropriateness of the quantification from the viewpoint of capturing the content of the form of assistance. The quantification of operational objectives at measure level in the Programme Complement needs to be reviewed in the mid term evaluations since performance against these objectives forms building blocks towards the specific and global objectives.

The mid term evaluation should appraise the effectiveness of the process of quantification of objectives. This includes an analysis of how the quantification of objectives links logically together from Programme Complement (operational objectives) to CIP (specific objectives). The quantification of objectives to measure the impact of actions supported on equal opportunities between men and women and the environment should also be appraised.

The mid term evaluators should also appraise the data gathering systems to ensure that appropriate information is supplied for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Past Experience and Practical Issues

The quantification of objectives was one of the main difficulties in planning structural interventions in the past and major emphasis was put on this issue in planning for the current round of Structural Funds. Experience of evaluation in earlier periods has shown the importance of the availability of good quality monitoring data as an essential input into the

evaluation process. In the past, some evaluations were weakened by the lack of monitoring data. This should be less of a problem now that monitoring systems have improved in recent years.

The mid term evaluation provides an opportunity to review progress made and to suggest where further improvements can be made. Any badly defined indicators and speculative targets should be highlighted. To the greatest extent possible, indicators should reflect a relatively clear causal relationship and any which are strongly influenced by outside factors should be identified and alternatives suggested. As regards the horizontal issues of equal opportunities and the environment, in many cases the ex ante evaluations were not in a position to comment definitively on the quantification of objectives as further development work was promised in the Programme Complements. The mid term evaluation should now evaluate the adequacy of the quantification of objectives in relation to equal opportunities between men and women and the environment.

The mid term evaluation will have available to it the Annual Implementation Report for 2001 and where information for the 2002 report is gathered before the mid term evaluation is complete it should also be made available to the evaluators. These reports will provide the essential information for this stage in the mid term evaluation. The Commission's documentation on quantification can also be consulted. For Strands A and B the evaluators should examine if the indicative core indicators proposed by the Commission are used and if data is collected and reported to the monitoring committee in relation to these indicators.

The evaluators should assess the extent to which existing indicators are capable of reflecting the process and quality of co-operation and make suggestions for improvements if appropriate. In this regard, these qualitative indicators could be used to obtain a longer term view of the process of co-operation in the area concerned.

Key Issues

The mid term evaluation should:

- Review the relevance of the indicators identified which aim to quantify objectives and key disparities;
- Verify the relevance of the indicators for global, specific and operational objectives;
- Assess the appropriateness of indicators to monitor equal opportunities between men and women, environmental sustainability and any other horizontal themes;
- Assess the reliability and timeliness of procedures of data collection; and
- Appraise the usefulness of the indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, in the context of giving an accurate and timely picture of the implementation of the CIP and thereby feeding through to effective monitoring and evaluation.

2.4. Evaluation of Effectiveness and Expected Socio Economic Impacts and, on this basis, Evaluation of the Financial Resources Allocation

Having assessed the continuing relevance of the strategy, the mid term evaluation should review effectiveness on the basis of outputs achieved and expenditure to date. In the light of these outputs it should form a view as to the likelihood of the expected results and impacts being achieved. The key unit of analysis should be the measure. Analysis of effectiveness at measure level (operational objectives) should build up to an analysis of the progress being made towards the achievement of specific and global objectives.

Key Issues

The mid term evaluation should draw conclusions on the continuing sound footing of the strategy and of the financial resources allocation on the basis of its response to the needs stated as well as its expected impact:

- The outputs and results achieved to date should be reviewed to assess progress towards the achievement of objectives.

Conclusions on any inappropriate weighting of priorities should give rise to recommendations for changes to the structure and balance of the form of assistance. These conclusions may stem from changes in the external environment or internal inconsistencies which arise from the experience of implementation of the programme.

2.5. Quality of Joint Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

The impact of the policy also depends on management capacity and the performance of implementation bodies. The mid term evaluation should review the adequacy and quality of the management and delivery mechanisms, since any weaknesses could materially affect the impact of the form of assistance. For INTERREG a particular concern is the joint operation of implementation and monitoring arrangements.

The mid term evaluation should address the quality of implementation, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, as they operate on the ground. It should:

- Review the clarity of management and implementation responsibilities on the one hand and consultation procedures on the other.
- Review control mechanisms on the basis of audit reports, reported irregularities or fraud and meeting the requirement for audit of 5% of the programme.
- Consider if transparent, competitive and common procedures and criteria for project selection are in operation so as to achieve the CIP objectives in a cost-effective way.
- Examine common project selection criteria to ensure their quality and application and that they reflect the objectives of the CIP and also incorporate equal opportunities and environmental considerations.
- Appraise the contribution of the partnership to the quality of monitoring and implementation, in the context of the new provisions on partnership in the Regulation and the INTERREG Guidelines.
- Establish the extent to which the legislation necessary to underpin the programme is in place and in conformity with community rules and the administrative system is adequate for ensuring compatibility with community policies.

The mid term evaluation should also review the participation of equal opportunities and environmental bodies in the monitoring process and their influence on implementation systems.

Key Issues

Key issues to be addressed are:

- Sound and efficient joint management and monitoring.
- Competitive and common procedures for project selection.
- The contribution of the partnership to the quality of implementation and monitoring.
- Genuine accountability in line with the demands of national and community regulations.

2.6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Under each point of this part of the working document, key issues have been identified. Conclusions should be drawn in relation to each of these key issues and if these conclusions point to weaknesses in the planning or implementation of programmes, recommendations for improvements should be made. The table below summarises each step of the evaluation and the key issues under which the evaluation should draw conclusions and make recommendations, as appropriate.

Community Added Value

The fundamental objective of the Structural Funds is to support economic and social cohesion across and within member States of the European Union and the mid term evaluation should draw conclusions on progress being made towards this overall objective. This is usually measured using a range of quantitative indicators which feature in all the programming documents and evaluations across all the member States (e.g., GDP, Employment, Productivity, etc.). The community added value of the Structural Funds is made evident in studies which examine the counterfactual situation, i.e., what would have happened in the absence of Structural Fund support. Even more simple is the measurement of outputs supported: how many more kilometres of road was it possible to build? How many more new business start-ups were supported? How many more people were trained? A further type of added value is the testing of new actions or approaches with community support, which would otherwise not have happened.

The Structural Funds have other impacts in the member States and the Commission wishes to start a process of identifying and tracking these features of community value added. In general, only anecdotal evidence is available on these aspects of added value, but the features usually cited are development of the planning process through the development of programming documents, development of partnership through the monitoring committee structures, broadening the range of implementation bodies through open tendering procedures, development of an evaluation culture, etc.. In the conclusions of the mid term evaluation, the Commission wishes the evaluators to identify the aspects of added value (if any) evident which stem from the existence of the Structural Funds investment in the region concerned. For INTERREG as a Community Initiative, the task will require a judgement on whether the Initiative has created the conditions for sustained co-operation in the cross border, transnational or inter-regional area concerned.

**Checklist for Contents of
Mid Term Evaluation**

Appropriateness of Programme Strategy

Component of Evaluation	Conclusions and Recommendations on:
1. Analysis of the Continuing Validity of the Ex Ante Evaluation's Analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses and Potential of the Co-Operation Area Concerned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of any new evaluations which have become available since the agreement of the CIP and an identification of any implications their findings have for the SWOT analysis. • The continuing validity of the ranking of the main disparities to be addressed and any changes which should be adopted. •
2. Re-Assessment of the Continuing Relevance and the Consistency of the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification for the continuing share and weight of each priority and strategic axis. • The consistency of programming from the objectives of the Programme Complement through to the objectives of the CIP. • An appraisal of the continuing consistency between the strategic, specific and operational objectives.

Checklist for Contents of Mid Term Evaluation

Implementation To Date

Component of Evaluation	Conclusions and Recommendations on:
3. Quantification of Objectives - Outputs, Results and Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevance of the indicators which aim to quantify objectives and key disparities. • The relevance of the indicators for global, specific and operational objectives. • The appropriateness of indicators to monitor impact on equal opportunities and environment and other horizontal themes. • The reliability and timeliness of procedures of data collection. • The usefulness of the indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, in giving an accurate and timely picture of implementation and thereby feeding through to effective monitoring and evaluation.
4. Evaluation of Effectiveness To Date and Expected Socio-Economic Impacts and, on this basis, Evaluation of the Financial Resources Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results achieved to date and progress towards the achievement of objectives.
5. Quality of Joint Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound and efficient joint management and monitoring. • Competitive and common procedures for project selection. • Genuine accountability in line with the demands of national and community regulations. • Contribution of the partnership.
6. Community Added Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspects of added value (if any) evident which stem from the existence of the Structural Funds investment in the region or sector concerned.

ANNEX 1

Involvement of Accession Countries in INTERREG III Programmes

Within the framework of enlargement, the INTERREG III Community Initiative will be introduced in the accession countries. The existing INTERREG III A programme areas at the border between the EU 15 and the accession countries will be completed by INTERREG regions in the new Member States, replacing today's PHARE Cross Border Co-operation (CBC) programme areas. In addition, the new Member States will participate in the B and C strands of INTERREG.

The respective INTERREG III programmes of all strands will need some adaptation in order to integrate the new participating areas. It can be expected that the necessary programme amendments will be prepared and proposed to the Commission in the same timeframe as the mid-term evaluation of INTERREG within the EU 15 (until end 2003).

Therefore the Commission draws the attention of the Member States to the possibility of using the mid-term evaluation as a supporting instrument in preparing the necessary amendments. This could mean a review and possibly a completion or improvement of the information in existing programming documents (Joint programming documents) and the ex ante evaluations already carried out. For example, the evaluators could assist the responsible authorities in the adaptation of the monitoring system (indicators and their quantification). Moreover, the evaluation could assess if all or only some of the priorities of the existing INTERREG III programmes should be applied in the new participating areas in the short remaining period until the end of 2006.

Separate evaluation studies should be envisaged only under specific circumstances, for instance in the case of considerable information gaps in the existing programme documents or for new programme areas.

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