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Interreg
Italy - Croatia

EUROPEAN UNION

FROM SHARED RESOURCES
TO JOINT SOLUTIONS

INTERREG V A ITALY CROATIA CBC PROGRAMME 2014-2020
EVALUATION SERVICE
CIG 8411073D01 CUP H79B17000030007

Rome,
January 2022

Updated Integrated Evaluation Design 2022

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Introduction

This document represents the Update of the Integrated Evaluation Design (IED) of the Evaluation Service of the INTERREG V A ITALY CROATIA CBC Programme 2014-2020.

One year in the implementation of the evaluation service, the purpose of the document is to further update the methodological and organisational framework already included in the First version of the Integrated Evaluation Design, dated January 2021.

The IED, in the light of the adopted participatory planning process , describes the overall methodological approach of the set of ongoing evaluation activities, which are further refined during the implementation of the Evaluation Service in order to adapt them to each deliverable.

The Evaluation Design is intended as a **flexible tool**, to be adapted periodically – once at year - on the basis of the developments and programming progress in order to agree for each evaluation report the aspects that will be worthy of in-depth analysis. This is because the provision of the present Evaluation Service is not interpreted as the simple drafting and delivery of the various contractual deliverables foreseen, but as a continuous activity in relation to the precise identification of the Programme bodies' needs.

In year 2021, the Evaluation Team has delivered 6 reports, as further outlined in Chapter 6 on Evaluation Deliverables, while in 2022 it will deliver the second operational evaluation and the first impact evaluation.
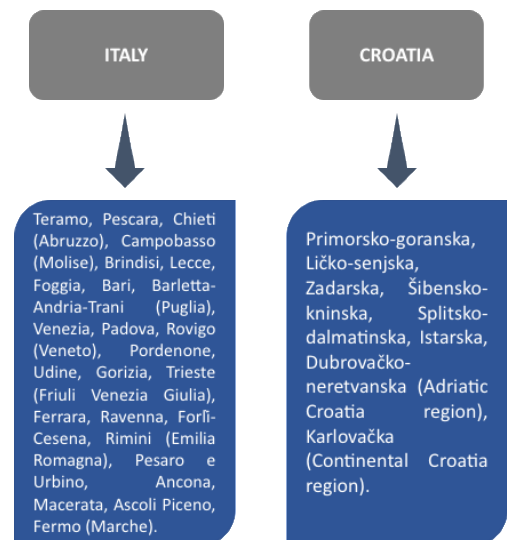
1   The INTERREG Italy-Croatia Programme

The cooperation between Italy and Croatia takes shape with the accession of the latter to the European Union and the resulting Programme of cross-border cooperation INTERREG V - A approved in January 2014, which aims at increasing prosperity, well-being and growth in the whole Adriatic Sea area.

INTERREG V A Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy – Croatia 2014-2020 has its foundations in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and in the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance IPA and is designed within the framework of the European strategy for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth and its Country and Regional Strategy Papers (Europe 2020 Strategy).

Figure 1: Italy-Croatia cooperation area 14-20

ITALY

CROATIA

Teramo, Pescara, Chieti (Abruzzo), Campobasso (Molise), Brindisi, Lecce, Foggia, Bari, Barletta-Andria-Trani (Puglia), Venezia, Padova, Rovigo (Veneto), Pordenone, Udine, Gorizia, Trieste (Friuli Venezia Giulia), Ferrara, Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena, Rimini (Emilia Romagna), Pesaro e Urbino, Ancona, Macerata, Ascoli Piceno, Fermo (Marche).

Primorsko-goranska, Ličko-senjska, Zadarska, Šibensko-kninska, Splitsko-dalmatinska, Istarska, Dubrovačko-neretvanska (Adriatic Croatia region), Karlovačka (Continental Croatia region).

The **overall aim** of the Programme is to increase the prosperity and the blue growth potential of the area by stimulating cross-border partnerships able to achieve tangible changes. The Programme cooperation area covers the administrative units at the NUTS III level, as shown in the figure 1, of the two countries, Italy and Croatia, with an area of more than 85,500 km^2 and a population of more than 12.4 million inhabitants. Therefore, the cross-border cooperation area is presently composed by 33 statistical NUTS III territories (25 provinces in Italy and 8 counties in Croatia).

In order to enable regional and local stakeholders in both countries to exchange knowledge and experience, develop and implement pilot actions, test the feasibility of new policies, products and services and support investment, the Programme has presently funded **83 projects under three calls for proposals**:

i) "Standard+" projects ► 22 projects;

ii) "Standard" projects ►50 projects;

iii) "Strategic" projects ►11 projects.

The projects are implemented by wide partnerships composed by different actors including regions and counties, municipalities and cities, universities, research centres and foundations, private institutions.

As of 31 December 2021, 46 projects have concluded their activities while the remaining 37 are still in the implementation phase.

In addition to the above mentioned funded projects, on 20th October 2021, the Programme has launched a **Restricted Cluster Call for Proposals** dedicated to the funding of IT-HR cluster projects in 5 different thematic areas in order to maximize experiences and results achieved by the Programme through the implementation of Standard+ and Standard Projects. The call has been closed on 14th December 2021 and the proposals are currently under evaluation by the Programme bodies.

1.1 The structure of the Programme and its synergies

INTERREG V A Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy – Croatia 2014-2020 has a complex structure involving several actors inside and outside the Programme's specific framework.

The figure below shows the overall objective of the Programme with its four priority axes: the focus is on the blue economy in terms of climate change, adaptation, environmental security and sustainability, and on the natural and cultural heritage as a driving force for sustainable and more balanced **territorial development** by integrating rural areas and ensuring a better spatial distribution of visitor flows.

Figure 2: Overall objective and priority axes of the Programme
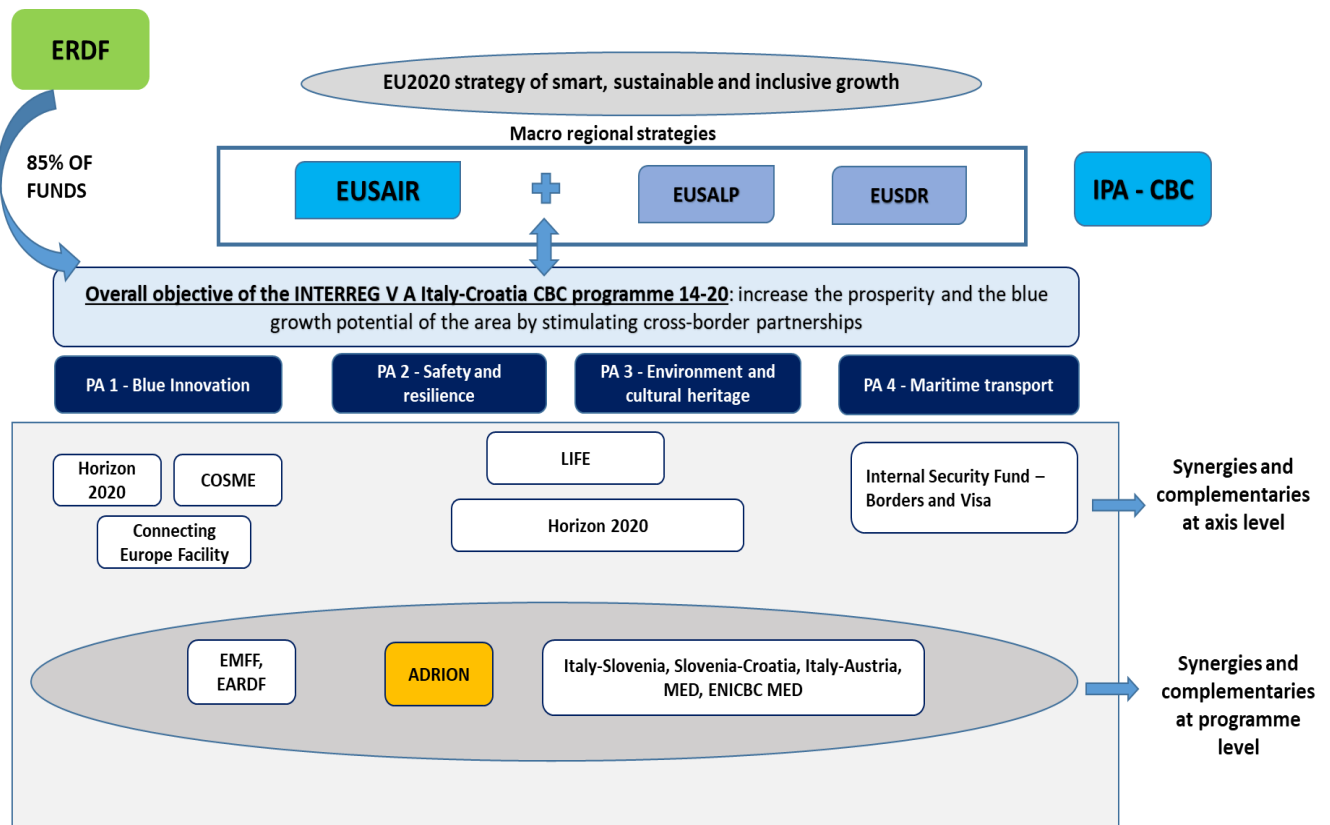
In addition, the figure above also represents the contribution of Interreg Italy- Croatia to the regional strategies (**EUSAIR** above all, and then EUSALP and EUSDR) which together constitute **a "macro-regional strategy"** to address challenges common to the geographical area and to contribute to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion in the area.

The additional **synergies and complementarities** showed by the figure, among which stands out the ones with the INTERREG ADRION programme, are also of outmost importance in order to implement the programme in a complementary and coordinated way, through the establishment of coordination mechanisms, in line with the **principles of subsidiarity and proportionality**.

2   Methodology

2.1   Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The current Evaluation Service aims at providing the Partner States of the Programme and the key stakeholders with an **independent assessment of the whole INTERREG programme 2014-2020**.

The figure below presents, at a glance, the purpose of the evaluation, its specific objectives and how they will be achieved through specific evaluation activities. In particular, the evaluation activities have been grouped with the main specific objective to which they mainly contribute, but there is a clear intercommunication among the tasks that will gather data to assesses the different aspects of the Programme converging in both operational and impact evaluations, as further detailed in the following chapters.

Figure 3: Rationale of the Evaluation Service
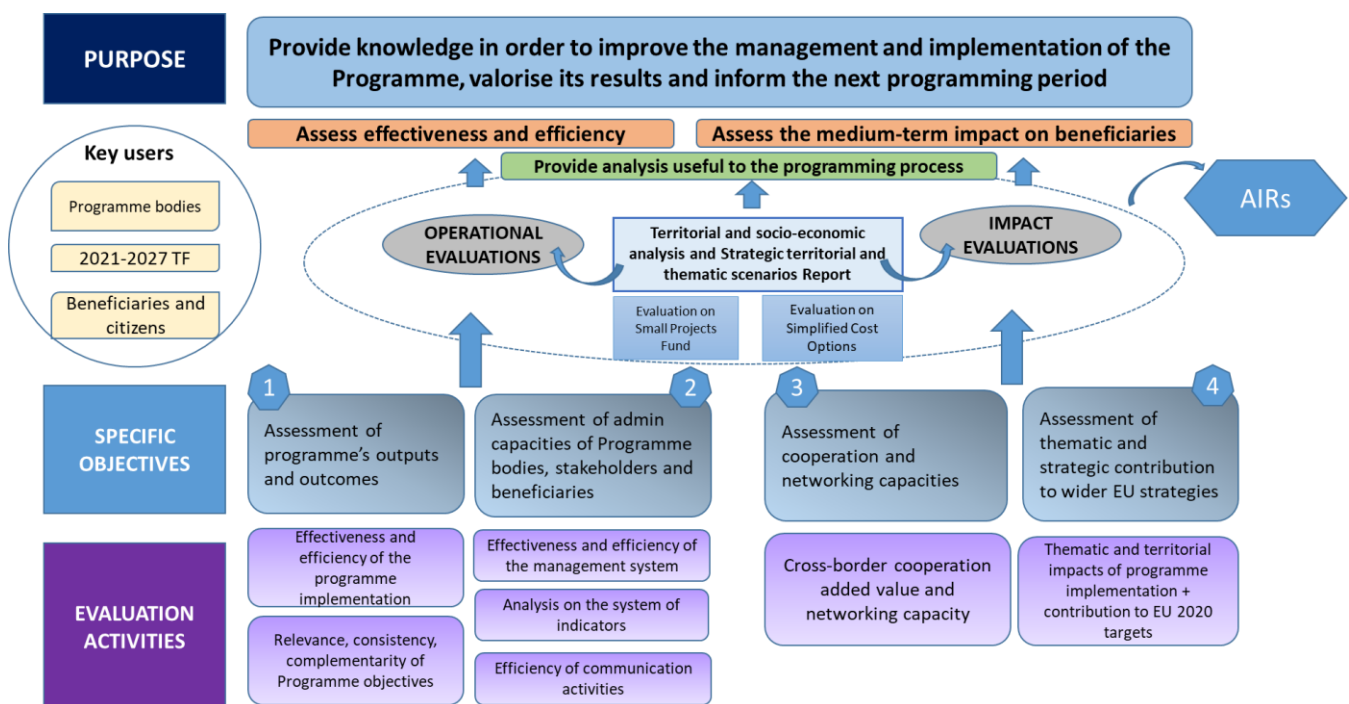
Therefore, to achieve the overall objective, the exercise consists of two types of ongoing evaluations concerning the different aspects of the programme: i) **operational evaluations** and ii) **impact evaluations**.

Moreover, with the main objective of **supporting the MA in the development of the next Programme** for the period 2021-2027, the evaluators are engaged in the drafting of **a territorial and socio-economic analysis** of the Programme's area, which will lead to the presentation of a **Strategic territorial and thematic scenarios** in order to enhance the programming process with valuable information on the concerned territories, updated also in the light of the COVID-19 context, but also to enrich the ongoing evaluations with valuable data. The support related to the drafting of the next programme, to be addressed in particular to the **Task Force 21-27**, is also provided though two additional evaluation reports on specific subjects identified in consultation with the MA as key to inform the programming process: Projects of limited financial volume and Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), as detailed in Chapter 6.4 and showed by the figure above.

The criteria which guide the evaluation activities are the following:

- **Efficiency**: which is evaluated by analysing outputs and results in relation to the implementation process, tools and resources mobilized.
- **Effectiveness**: which is evaluated by focusing the analysis on the quality and quantitative consistency of outputs, results, impacts and the degree of alignment with the planned objectives. Constant monitoring of the effects of the Programme allows the timely identification of potential critical areas, which could affect the impact of the interventions.
- **Relevance**: which aims at assessing the validity of the strategy over time with respect to the changes in the social, economic and environmental context (considering also its contribution to the macro-regional strategies).
- **Coherence** (internal and external): the level of *internal coherence* refers to the causal links underlying the theory of a programme, which connect and characterize its components. The analysis of *external coherence* focuses both on the relationships between the Programme and the other programming tools which are consistent in terms of policy areas and territorial context, as well as on the contribution provided by the Programme to the integrated strategic framework at the regional, national (on both sides of the Adriatic basin) and EU level.
- **Impacts:** intended as the positive and negative, intended or unintended changes deriving from the implementation of the Programme.

The objective is in fact to strengthen the value of the information gathered throughout the evaluation process and to ensure, for the entire duration of the Service, a **continuous monitoring** of the implementation in terms of outputs, results, and impacts, with respect to the intervention logic. Therefore, a **participatory and iterative approach** is adopted, which allows for a systematic follow-up of the evaluation results and support and inform the decisions of the Programme bodies.

In particular, the operational evaluations of the implementation of the Programme enable - through the collection and analysis of quantitative data (outputs and results of the interventions) and qualitative information (on the governance and management mechanisms, criticalities and strengths, the profiles of the beneficiaries, etc.) - to organize the **knowledge base** on which the impact assessment will be designed and put in place. Although the two functions (impact and operational) require different designs and methodology, it is nevertheless evident that they are closely interconnected and complementary in the perspective of supporting the *organizational learning*, through the identification of **lessons learnt** and the formulation of **conclusions and recommendations.**

The attention to the results and to the impacts – since the regulatory framework requires to evaluate the objectives of each priority of a Programme - has significant consequences on the planning of this service:

- First, the adoption of an integrated methodological perspective allows to monitor the chain of events underlying the logic of the Programme - focusing the attention on the clarity of the objectives, on the quality of implementation processes and mechanisms and on the links that connect their effects to the specific contexts and to the different actors involved.
- Second, the principle of concentration of the resources and of the operations, which informed the whole phase of preparation of the 2014-2020 programming period, requires to align the Evaluation Service on a few clearly defined priorities.

With reference to these aspects, the approach adopted ensures **integration, multidimensionality and wide participation** in the evaluation process. This also in consideration of the particular need of this

Programme to **enhance the role of the partnership** and of the stakeholders in supporting governance and increase the use and dissemination of the results of the evaluation service.

Thanks to the AIRs and to the other dissemination activities, the evaluation findings can reach the beneficiaries of the Programme and the **final users**, including local, regional and national public authorities, regional and local development agencies, chambers of commerce and other business support organisations, SMEs, universities, technology transfer institutions, research institutions, centres of R&D excellence, NGOs, associations, innovation agencies, business incubators, cluster management bodies and networks, education and training organisations as well as social partners and labour-market institutions and citizens.

To sum up, taking into account the analysis of the evaluation plan[1] and of the ToR, and the specific needs related to the peculiar characteristics of the programming context, in the light of the discussions held with the MA, the Evaluation Service is provided according to the following objectives:

- *Supporting the Programme bodies* by providing precise answers to the evaluation questions and valuable information.
- *Support the decision-making process* by providing comprehensive and relevant knowledge on the different dimensions being assessed: processes, indicators, outputs, results, impacts, strategy and the contexts of the interventions.
- *Promote learning processes* on the results of the evaluation in order to improve the Program management.
- *Promote the ownership of the evaluation process* in order to maximize its usefulness and impact on the programming process.

As mentioned, in pursuing these objectives, specific attention is paid to **the 2021-2027 programming process**. In this case the objective is to capitalize the knowledge produced by the evaluation activities in order to identify the strengths and the criticalities - both of the implementation and of the strategic level - to be taken into account in the development of the new strategy of the intervention.

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[1] "Evaluation plan of the Italy-Croatia Crossborder Cooperation Programme 2014-2020" (CCI 2014TC16RFCB042) Version N. 2 of 14/02/2020

2.2 Evaluation Process

Considering the specificities of the evaluation needs, we are applying a ***hybrid approach***, combining techniques for quantitative, qualitative, participatory and visual (tables and graphics) analysis based on direct (primary) and secondary data. This approach is able to offer a rich explanatory potential and a high degree of reliability in providing evaluative responses to complex issues, as:

• the need to support decision-making processes which are implemented in the context of the territorial cooperation (which involves a plurality of actors, institutional levels, different territories and network of cities) both for the ongoing and the next programming period;

• the peculiar nature of the actions to be evaluated (integrated and multidimensional policies).

More specifically, we refer below to the main approaches to choose from for each evaluation to be undertaken and combined according to the specific characteristics of the evaluation questions and of the nature of the interventions:

►**Theory-based models**: they guide the interpretation of causal mechanisms by referring to the theories of change underlying the Programme, on the basis of paradigms borrowed from the specialized literature and research in the relevant thematic areas. They are used in conjunction with quantitative techniques and, where applicable, techniques aimed at identifying the net-effect. Theory based models – and in particular the *realistic evaluation* - enhance the interpretative capacity of evaluative analyses, as they allow to focus on both contextual aspects and on the implementation process, answering questions about *what works better; where, for whom, under what circumstances and why*. They are also a valid alternative to counterfactual investigations in cases in which the cause-effect relationships are multiple and the relationships between the different mechanisms are not linear.

►**Participatory models**: they are particularly useful for the analysis either of the process of implementation or the impact of a Programme. In the contexts of multilevel governance, as the CBC Programmes, the use of participatory approaches has a particular relevance for the evaluation, since they allow to enhance the different perspectives of the actors and the territories involved. They allow to interpret the cause-effect dynamics and the complex relationships which has been implemented in the framework of the Programme; at the same time, they trigger learning processes and develop visions and shared practices which may involve stakeholders and beneficiaries. The questions on which approaches of this type are focused are the following: *What exactly does an intervention mean? What are the relevant dimensions and how can they be observed / measured? Is the change determined by the financed interventions? What are the critical issues? How to modify and improve the intervention?*

►**Performance oriented models**: they constitute a sub-group of participatory models, of particular relevance for the evaluation of the management system and the performance resulting from the actions taken (outputs and results). This approach focuses on the participation of the actors of the Programme management in the monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme management system and in the quantification of the related indicators.

►**Counterfactual models**: they respond to the need to analyse the quantitative consistency of the net effects produced by the Programme. In many Interreg programmes the overall number of projects is too low to allow for statistically significant results. However, even when there are sufficient case numbers, the thematic and territorial differentiation might not allow for identifying enough cases which are actually

comparable[2]. Therefore, the Evaluator will carefully consider the possibility of using of some of the counterfactual techniques which anyway need to be cautiously designed according to the specific programming context, otherwise they risk to be merely a theoretical exercise.

Finally, it is useful to consider that the most important contribution of a CBC Programme to the territorial development cannot be easily defined in terms of "net impact", but rather in its capacity to generate **positive externalities** which improve, for example, the localizing factors for the companies in the area of cooperation through the provision of real services and specific/technical knowledge. This is precisely why "space matters"[3] and shapes the potential for the development of a territory. The clear description of the positive externalities[4] produced or incremented with the Programme intervention can be supported by the implementation of the first three approaches. The fourth group of models (counterfactual) could eventually provide evidence of the net effect of the implementation of the positive externalities (or "framework conditions" as stated in the SO 1.1) in some of the areas of interventions.

For each evaluation deliverable, the evaluation process is organized in **five main phases**: 1) structuring; 2) observation; 3) analysis; 4) judgment; 5) dissemination.

► **Structuring Phase .** The structuring is the phase that leads to: the definition of the Evaluation Questions to be answered, the operational development of the methodological choices described in the present Integrated Evaluation Design; the outline of the tools and of the techniques to be used in the data collection (questionnaires, focus group and case studies guidelines, sampling design guidelines etc.), the internal organization of the evaluation team and its interaction with the bodies responsible for the evaluation activities. The Integrated Evaluation Design outlines a comprehensive vision of the structuring phase.

► **Observation Phase .** The observation phase includes all the preparatory activities for the collection of the secondary data (monitoring data, technical documentation, statistical sources related to the context of the Programme, studies and researches, other evaluations, etc.) and primary data (the collection of data and information conducted directly by the Evaluator). Moreover, during this phase the set of the planned specific evaluation activities are implemented in order to provide the necessary knowledge base for the following phases.

► **Analysis Phase .** During this phase, the Evaluator processes the data and information collected during the previous phases in order to reconstruct the information base (programme, outcome and output indicators and new indicators proposed by the Evaluator). The analysis on the set of data and information is carried out with different levels of detail, processing methods and techniques according to the context and to the specific sets of evaluation questions. If applicable and relevant to the evaluation purpose, primary and secondary data may be processed to conduct:

- **longitudinal studies** based on the application of techniques (mostly regression) that try to establish causal relationships between "before and after" the intervention;
- **cross sectional analysis** based on the application of techniques (mostly multivariate analysis, spatial analysis, probit and logit models, etc.) which allow the creation of profiles of beneficiaries and of

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[2] On these issues see: ESPON EGTC, "Net impact of Interreg. An inquiry into causal inference, counterfactual and qualitative methods and their applicability for estimating the net impact of Interreg programmemes", Luxemburg, 2020.

[3] Barca, McCann, Rodríguez Pose, The Case for Regional Development Intervention: Place Based versus Place Neutral Approaches, Journal of Regional Science, vol. 52, 2012.

[4] The specific objectives of the Programme clearly reflect this approach, e.g., 1.1 "Enhance the *framework conditions* for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area".

groups of beneficiaries, to analyse the correlations between variables or to represent the effects of the policies according to specific topics, e.g., spatial distribution, impact of the selection criteria of the policies, age and gender distribution, diverse economic activities, etc.);

- data could also be processed in order to provide a **spatial representation** of the dimensions which will be covered by the evaluation. If used, the georeferenced data of the territorial areas of the Programme will be used by integrating the data of the "evaluation monitoring system" with other relevant sources.

At the end of the analysis phase, a draft version of the concerned output is produced . This draft does not include the judgements and recommendations that will be made explicit in the subsequent evaluation phase.

► **Judgment Phase .** The judgments of the evaluation team are based on the criteria and objectives that inform the proposed model. This phase aims at making judgments and recommendations to provide a knowledge base which is coherent with the EQs and to guide and qualify the implementation of the Programme. Operationally, this phase provides answers to all the EQs identified in the structuring phase, drawing up conclusions and recommendations for the following steps, both for the final part of the current programming period and for improving the design of next one. At the end of this phase, the final versions of the deliverables are prepared and delivered.

► **Dissemination Phase .** The dissemination phase is aimed at communicating the results to the target groups of the evaluation, making them intelligible, smoothing out the elements of complexity and technicality. As mentioned, a non-comprehensive list of possible target groups involved in the dissemination phase includes the following actors:

- The Programme bodies with particular reference to the MA, JS and MC.
- The relevant stakeholders, especially those which are not represented in the MC (the advisory list of the MC already includes several representatives of the social and economic associations and institutions, science and research bodies, etc.).
- The beneficiaries and the other actors which have been involved in the evaluation activities.
- The widest audience of operators, scholars and stakeholders interested in regional development and CBC policies.

The following figure provides a summary representation of the organisation of the evaluation process.

Figure 4: Evaluation Process
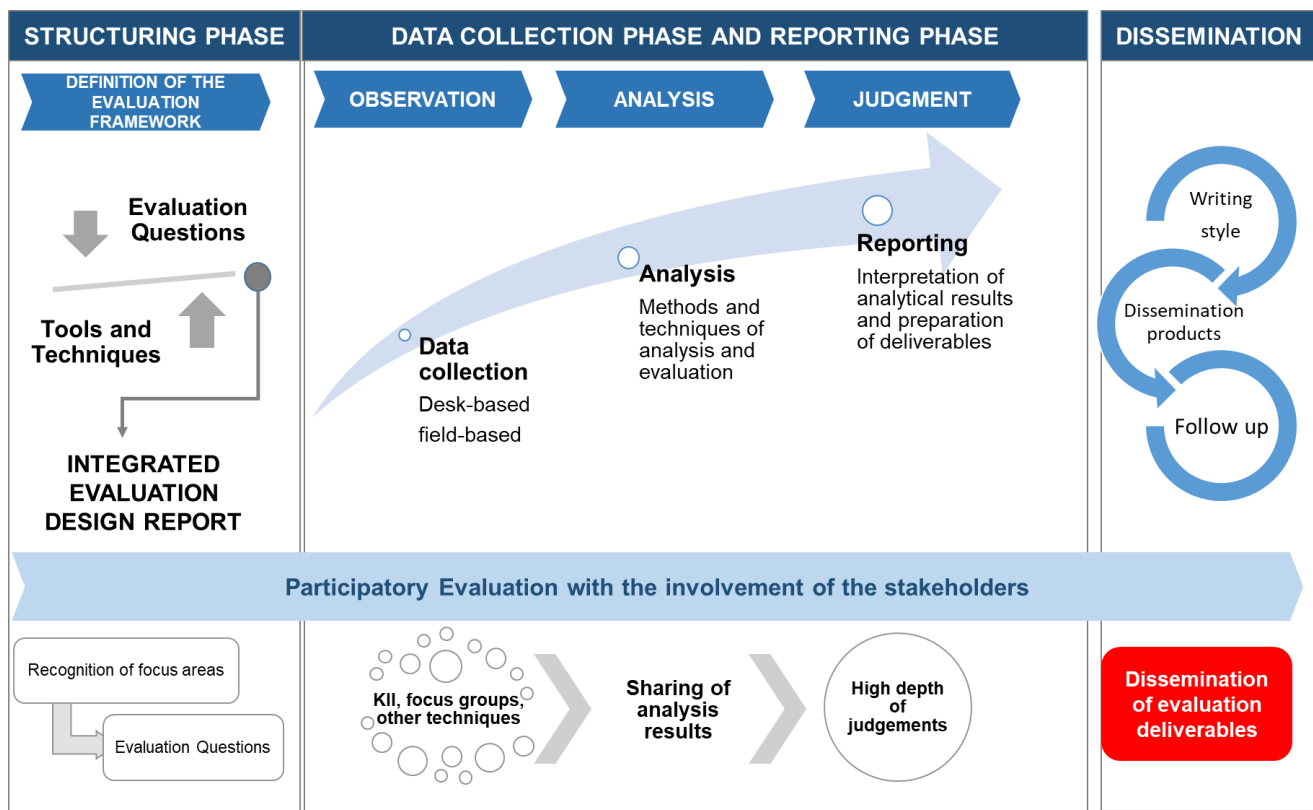
It is clear that the present assignment is conducted in unprecedent times characterized by the spread of the **COVID-19 pandemic** that severely limits the face-to-face meetings, both in terms of consultations with the Administration and, mainly, in terms of primary data collection through Key Informant Interviews (KII), focus groups, surveys and other kind of participatory exercises. Nevertheless, the companies of the consortium have acquired substantial expertise in implementing remote evaluation activities related to our ongoing evaluation contracts, without any delay with respect to the planned timescales, through a **widespread and full use of the most advanced remote collaboration technologies**, (e.g. Cisco Webex, GoToMeeting, MS Teams, Terminal Server, Remote Desktop, Skype, Skype for Business, Hangouts, etc.), which allow conducting online interviews and applying remote participatory techniques (e.g. Focus Group, NGT - Nominal Group Technique , Evaluative brainstorming, etc.) and IT social collaboration platforms such as MS Teams and PODIO.

Therefore, the evaluation deliverables already delivered in year 2021, as further outlined in chapter 6, have been partially affected by the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 since the data collection has been efficiently conducted remotely.

3 Tools, Techniques and sources

3.1 Evaluation Questions

In consideration of the number of evaluation questions (EQs) contained in the ToR (67 EQs) in the technical offer the EQs have been classified in relation to the theme and the order in which they are listed in the annex B1 of the ToR. To each of the themes has been assigned a letter (from A to G) and to each of the EQs related to the theme we have assigned a progressive number that corresponds to the sequence in which they are listed in the annex, theme after theme. The classification – which is applied in the table 1 - allows to avoid to write the entire text of the EQs but to clearly expose how our methodological approach meet the requirements of the ToR and, thus, the programme bodies expectations.

Table 1: Classification of the EQs

A.	Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system (15 EQ)
B.	Focus on the indicators system (6 EQ)
C.	Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation (16 EQ)
D.	Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives (4 EQ)
E.	Cross-border cooperation added value and networking (5 EQ)
F.	Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy (10 EQ)
G.	Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets (11 EQ)

In this way, it is possible to clearly represent the methodological articulation of the various approaches proposed to respond to the EQs, indicating for each of them: the type of evaluation (operational, strategic, impact), possible methodological approaches (Theory of change – which informs the whole methodological approach - Participatory, Performance oriented, Counterfactual), the range of activities and techniques that could be utilised (with initial reference to target groups and sources).

The methodological approach involves a mix of different data gathering and analytical methods, including documentary review, analysis of monitoring data and project websites, interviews to programme bodies, surveys to project partners and observers, as well as a on line consultation of key players.

It has to be underlined that the Evaluation Questions are a flexible tool that has to be useful not only for the Evaluation Service as a whole but also for the Programme managers to verify the programme's performance and to re-programme as well as to implement the forthcoming new programming period. As a consequence, the techniques proposed are "possible methods" that are applied or not, depending on different reasons such as the changing context or new needs that may emerge.

Responses to EQs are given in the framework of the planned evaluations. During the structuring phase of each evaluation report the final list of EQs is presented to be validated by the EWG.

The following chart shows the selection process of the evaluation questions that is carried out during the entire Evaluation Service.

Figure 5: Selection process of evaluation questions
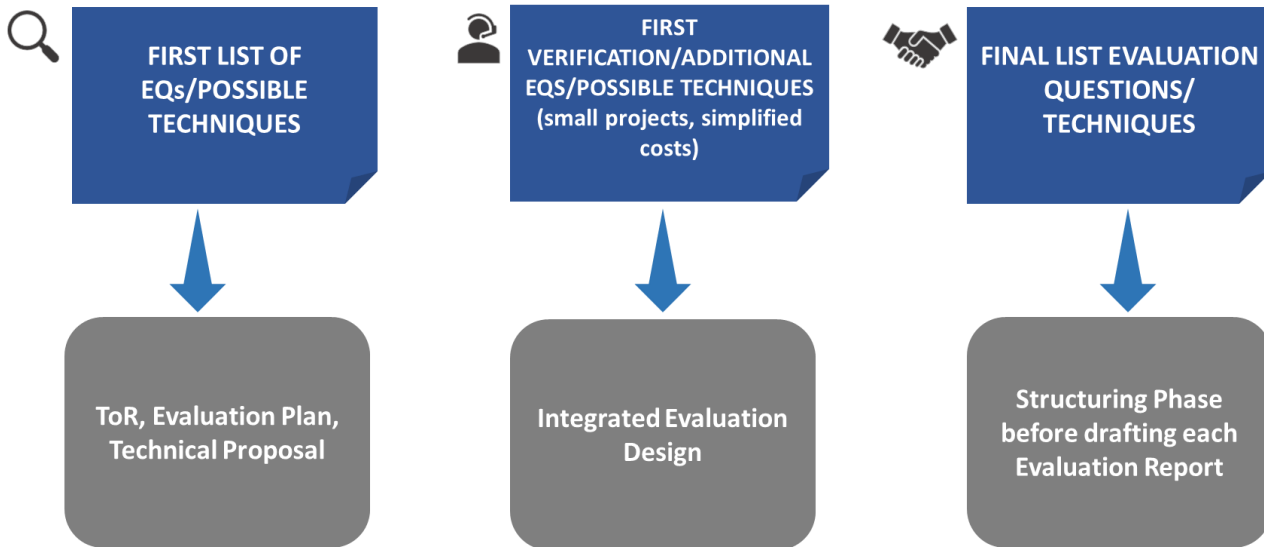
To offer a full picture, the following tables present all the evaluation questions presented in the Terms of References. In particular, some questions are grouped (according to the classification of the EQ) according to their semantic proximity, which allows to adopt the same methodological approach. In some cases, the activities and techniques implemented in the evaluation of a group of EQs provide information to the evaluation of another group, specifically within the same theme of EQs. This is an effect of applying an Integrated Evaluation design which allows us to avoid duplication in the utilization of the evaluation techniques.

Table 2: Theme A. Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
A.1 A.2 A.3 A.4 A.5	• Operational • Strategic implications (EQA4) -Management system; including all the Programme bodies. -Organization of the management, clearly focusing on the relation between the Programme bodies and the functions activated in order to establish and implement the multilevel governance. -Strengths, Weaknesses of the Management system. -Training needs of the Programme staff. -Implications for the post 2020 policy frame.	The "Performance oriented models" - part of the Participatory approach - are useful for the evaluation of the management system, its organization, and the performances resulting from its implementation. This approach focuses on the participation of the actors of the Programme management and in the analysis of the related performances. This approach – which feeds the overall "Theory of change model" of evaluation – when applied during the implementation of the Programme provides indications to the MA in order to adjust or re-orient the Programme.	d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework. f) Analysis of financial implementation. g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress. h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes.	• Document Analysis: Management system, internal documents, MC deliverables. • Data Analysis (Programme monitoring system): to support the activities f) and g) and provide evidence to the other techniques implemented (with regards also to the following section). • Semi-structured interviews. • Focus Group and Workshop (in particular for the EQA4). • SWOT analysis.
A.6 A.7 A.8 A.9 A.10 A.11 A.12 A.13 A.14 A.15	• Operational • Strategic implications (EQA9) -Project development process (generation, selection). -Project management (Contracting, SIU application and tools, etc.). -Project implementation rules and tools. -Program monitoring system (A10) -Technical assistance contribution to the management of the implementation process (A15).	The "Theory based models", which focus on both contextual aspects and on the process of implementation, allow to analyse the relation between the Management system, the implementation process and the strategies of the implemented projects. The "Participatory models" support the inclusion of the beneficiaries in the application of some techniques (Semi-structured interviews, Focus Group and Workshop).	e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy. g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress. h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes.	• Document Analysis (Calls for proposals; SIU user's manual and application package; projects documents, etc.). • Logical framework (relations between the Program management system, implementation process and projects strategies). • Semi-structured interviews. • Focus Group and Workshop (in particular for the EQA9, A14).

Table 3: Theme B. Focus on the indicators system

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
B.1 B.2 B.3 B.4 B.5 B.6	• Operational • Strategic implications (EQB6) -Review of the entire system of indicators of the Programme (baseline, milestones, targets). -Operative definitions of indicators (feasibility, cost efficiency, consistency, relevance).	The assessment and evaluation of the indicators and the monitoring system is guided by the "Theory of change models" and will also inform the Impact analysis. The activities foreseen imply the participation of the management system, particularly the Programme bodies involved in the monitoring system, including the beneficiaries. The evaluation of the capacity of the monitoring system of providing a reliable description of the progress and of the process of implementation is conducted, implying also a review of the logical framework of the Programme. – It included also a review of the current indicators, of their definitions, and proposal of new indicators.	c) Analysis of the socio-economic context. g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress. i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators.	• Document Analysis (guidelines, operative definitions of the indicators). • Data Analysis: primary sources (monitoring system - to support the activities g) and i) and provide evidence to the other techniques implemented); secondary sources (to test the result indicators and possible alternative indicators). • Semi-structured interviews. • Focus Group and Workshop (in particular for the EQB5-6). • Logical framework (relations between the objectives, indicators and their implementation).

Table 4: Theme C. Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
C.1 C.2 C.6 C.7 C.8 C.9 C.10 C.11 C.12	• Impact • Strategic -Evaluation of the progress of the Programme towards the achievement of the specific objectives (the analysis will also take in consideration the effects of the pandemic). -Evaluation of the extent to which the Programme achieved its general and specific objectives.	The analysis is conducted with an approach based on the "Theory of change". Starting from the quantification of the result indicators, the evolution of the socio-economic context and the logical framework of the Programme, the impact will be analysed on the following macro-areas related to each of the specific objectives (if feasible also with the use of counterfactual techniques): 1.1 innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy; 2.1: climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures; 2.2: safety from natural and man-made disaster; 3.1: natural and cultural heritage for territorial development; 3.2: protect and restore biodiversity; 3.3: environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area; 4.1: quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services. From the estimation of the specific impacts, the next step will be to focus on the impact of the general objective. This analysis will be implemented through interviews, focus groups and Delphi analysis and will allow us to establish if, to what extent and with which mechanisms the Programme has achieved its overall objective - in relation to the means and resources mobilized. Particular attention will be paid to bringing out if there are any internal or external factor hindering the achievement of the Programme.	c) Analysis of the socio-economic context. e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy. f) Analysis of financial implementation. g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress. i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators j) Impact assessment.	• Logical framework • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews (surveys) • Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources). • Counterfactual techniques (if feasible it will be tested on some of the macro-areas). • Network Analysis (analysing the networks for each macro-areas). • Delphi Analysis • Focus Group.

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
C.3 C.4 C.5 C.13 C.14 C.15 C.16	• Operational • Strategic implications (EQ C14, C15, C16) -Programme management capacity to achieve the expected outputs and results and to avoid the risks related to the	The "Performance oriented models" - part of the Participatory approach - are useful for the evaluation of the management system, its organization, and the performances resulting from its implementation. This approach provides indications to the MA in order to identify risks, bottlenecks, areas of underperforming and consequently to adjust or re-orient the Programme. This approach includes participative techniques .	d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework. f) Analysis of financial implementation. g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress.	• Document Analysis: Management system internal documents, guidelines, MC deliverables, etc. • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews (surveys)

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
	financial implementation. -Inclusivity of the Programme management (target groups, geography, horizontal principles).	Particular attention will be paid to bringing out if there are any internal or external factors hindering the achievement of the Programme.	h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes.	• Data Analysis (primary sources). • Spatial analysis (maps and territorial focus) • Focus Group • Workshop.

Table 5: Theme D. Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
D.1 D.2 D.3 D.4	• Operational • Strategic -Assessment of the Programme strategy towards the end of its implementation and in the perspective of the post 2020 (the analysis will also take in consideration the changing CBC scenario after the pandemic).	This theme requires a classic "Theory of change model" of evaluation to test the Programme implementation with two criteria of the evaluation (relevance and consistency) and explores the strategic complementarity of this programming period with the planning of the post 2020. This approach will include participative techniques as well as interviews and desk analysis.	c) Analysis of the socio-economic context d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy.	• Document Analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Delphi Analysis • SWOT Analysis • Logical framework • Foresight • Workshop.

Table 6: Theme E. Cross border cooperation added value and networking

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Possible Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Possible Techniques (sources and target groups)
E.1 E.2 E.3 E.4 E.5	• Operational • Strategic (E.1 and E.2) • Impact (E.5) -Relations between CBC strategy and the implemented partnerships and projects (the analysis will also take in consideration the changing CBC scenario after the pandemic). -Evaluation of the effects of the Programme in promoting institutional building, effectiveness and efficiency in achieving the planned results.	"Theory of change model" applied to test the Programme implementation with the criteria of the evaluation and analyse the strategy through the analysis of the projects and partnership implemented. This approach include participative techniques as well as interviews and desk analysis. Impact and "Performance oriented" evaluation regard the programme and the projects management in relation to the capacity of enforcing the CBC strategy. Network analysis will improve with territorial insights and with key information on the kind of relations which have been developed during the implementation of the projects. Network analysis will be implemented according to the availability of the data and the sufficient number of cases.	c) Analysis of the socio-economic context d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes. e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress.	• Document Analysis (application package; projects documents, etc.). • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews (survey): on the improvements of the administrative skills in the CBC projects frame. • Network Analysis: to identify groups of beneficiaries (tracking the partnerships established) operating as broker - linking actors which otherwise will operate separately. • Logical framework • Spatial analysis (maps and territorial focus) • Workshop.

Table 7: Theme F. Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Techniques (sources and target groups)
F.1 F.2 F.3 F.6 F.7 F.8 F.9	• Operational - Analysis of the implementation of communication activities with respect to the general and specific objectives set out in the communication strategy	The evaluation is based on an analysis of the implementation of the communication activities and their effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the communication strategy. This activity will be based on qualitative analysis, aimed at verifying the adequacy and consistency of the activities implemented, and will focus on: a) the processes and tools promoted; b) their actual utilization by the beneficiaries; c) the adequacy of the timing and coherence of the initiatives implemented (from the promotion of the opportunities offered by the program to the dissemination of the results).	e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy f) Analysis of financial implementation g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators k) Analysis of the good practices.	• Document Analysis (i.e., Communication Strategy, Rules on the use of logos, specific provisions for the beneficiaries). • Semi-structured interviews (target groups of the communication strategy). • Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources). • Case studies (Program bodies and the administration involved). • Focus Group (Program bodies, experts and informants).
F.4 F.5 F.10	• Impact -Programme capacity to raise awareness on its activities and results -Contribution of the Programme to improve the knowledge on EU funds and CBC Programme objectives.	Following the implementation of the evaluation activities foreseen for the previous set of EQs (operational assessment) a survey which will involve the target groups of the Communication strategy will be carried out on the effectiveness of the information and tools promoted - with the aim of quantifying the result indicators ("Increasing awareness about EU funded cross-border cooperation activities in the area") and the impact of the Communication strategy.	i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators j) Impact assessment k) Analysis of the good practices.	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews (surveys on the target groups; sampling techniques will regard the general public). • Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources). • Focus Group and Workshop (selected group of informants and experts).

Table 8: Theme G. Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro regional strategies and EU 2020 targets

Evaluation Questions	Type and Topic of evaluation	Evaluation methodological approach	Activities of the Service of Evaluation	Techniques (sources and target groups)
G.1 G.2 G.3 G.4 G.5 G.6	• Impact • Strategic -Programme achievements, effectiveness and impact at a territorial level and in relation with different target groups: economic sectors, clusters, broker which promote the integration of policies through the territories (the analysis will also take in consideration the changing CBC scenario after the pandemic).	The evaluation is based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches and will be based on the evaluation findings of the activities carried out to answer the questions related to the impact with respect to the general and specific objectives of the program (EQs C.2,6,7,8,9,10,11). The mechanisms that promoted the impact, and the presence of unintended effects, will be reconstructed through a "Theory-based approach" by means of interviews and focus groups. By means of an analysis that crosses the results and impacts with the target groups it will be possible to establish *for whom* and *how* the Program worked and if the expected impacts on different target groups were achieved. A Foresight analysis will explore the durability of the effects and their possible developments.	c) Analysis of the socio-economic context e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy j) Impact assessment.	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews (surveys, including on line consultation of EUSAIR stakeholders) • Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) • Counterfactual techniques • Network Analysis: to identify groups of beneficiaries (also tracking the partnerships established) operating as broker - linking actors which otherwise will operate separately. • Spatial analysis (maps and territorial focus) • Benchmarking: analysis of the impacts in the CBC area and other EU CBC regions.
G.7 G.8 G.9 G.10 G.11	• Impact • Strategic -The contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets (the analysis will also take in consideration the effect of the pandemic).	The contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets will be estimated starting from the observation of the evolution of the socio-economic context with reference to the relevant dimensions and according to the degree of intensity and direction (direct or indirect) of the contribution. The direct and quantifiable contributions will be estimated through econometric models with a counterfactual approach. The evaluation will be based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques, contributing to a model aimed at estimating the impact of the Program on the socio-economic and territorial area; a "Theory based" perspectives will support the interpretation of the results and the underlying logic and causal links.	c) Analysis of the socio-economic context e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy j) Impact assessment.	• Structured interviews • Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) • Counterfactual techniques • Document Analysis • Logical framework • Focus Group.

3.2   Data collection methods and tools and data needs

As mentioned above, for data collection and analysis, the evaluation deliverables imply the use of a **mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques**, based both on secondary and primary data sources, to be implemented through structured questionnaires, interviews, network analysis, case studies, focus groups, nominal group technique, evaluative brainstorming and other techniques. **Quantitative analysis techniques**, necessary for processing large amounts of data with standardized tools, are integrated with **qualitative techniques** aimed at investigating specific aspects or dimensions that are difficult to investigate in statistical terms.

For each evaluation deliverable, the methodological choices depend, case by case, on a wide array of factors (the characteristics of the EQs, the phenomenon investigated, the secondary data available or to be gathered through surveys). The fine tuning of evaluation techniques and tools is defined during the Structuring phase of each deliverable.
A general overview of the techniques that can be used is provided below.

The **activities** of the evaluation are implemented during the phases which characterize the Service according to the following model:

► Structuring Phase
a) *Review and refinement of the list of the evaluation questions*
b) *Evaluability assessment*
c) ► **Observation, analysis and judgment phases** *Analysis of the socio-economic context*
d) *Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework*
e) *Analysis of the validity of the strategy*
f) *Analysis of financial implementation*
g) *Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress*
h) *Analysis of governance and implementation processes*
i) *Analysis of the progress of the result indicators*
j) *Impact assessment*
k) *Analysis of the good practices*

► Dissemination phase
l) *Reporting and dissemination*

a) Review of the list of the evaluation questions

The definition of the evaluation questions to be answered in each evaluation is done during the structuring phase in a collaborative manner with the EWG and MA.

The definition of the EQS is supported by in-depth analysis of the relevant documentation related to the planning and implementation as well as all the other tools and techniques presented in the above-mentioned tables

b) Evaluability assessment

For each question and product of the Evaluation Service the team proceeds to activate a specific line of analysis aimed at ascertaining - beyond the availability, consistency and reliability of statistical and

information sources - the ability of the monitoring system to produce data and indicators that meet the evaluation needs: the physical and financial indicators, the monitoring system of the result indicators.

A specific focus will regard the assessment of the knowledge base required in order to implement the impact evaluation. This activity will consider all the archives and information available on "components" (people, companies, agencies, public administrations or other organizations), "attributes" (the characteristics of the components) and eventually the kind of relations which connect them (partnerships, sectors of economic activity, territory, etc.).

In order to integrate the information coming from diverse sources it will be necessary to check the "interoperability" of the archives.

This activity allows the identification of data that the Evaluator has to acquire directly through specific surveys.

c) Analysis of the socio-economic context

This activity, implemented in particular in the framework of the socio-economic territorial analysis, constituted the basis for the evaluation of the relevance of the Programme with respect to the needs of the target territories and their socio-economic and environmental characteristics. The objective was to understand if, during the implementation of the Programme, substantial changes have occurred in the context with respect to the situation ex ante and if the strategy of the Programme is still valid or require to be at least partially redefined. This analysis is also of fundamental importance for the evaluation of effectiveness and it is also a central element of the knowledge base needed for impact assessments. The evolution of the socio-economic context has been analysed through: a) the analysis of data from statistical and documentary sources; b) Direct interviews with key informants and with the actors of the management system, in order to identify any critical issues due to external factors. c) 2 Webinars organized in Croatia and Italy with the local stakeholders.

As specified further below in relation to the socio-economic territorial analysis, the results have been included in a SWOT matrix to highlight the most relevant elements for programming, in terms of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities arising from the context. This activity has provided useful insights for the post 2020 programming process.

d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework

The updating of the strategic and regulatory framework is fundamental in order to avoid possible criticalities connected to delays or weaknesses in the alignment of the strategy of the Programme to changes and innovations in the strategic guidelines (defined at the national or European levels) which may determine an insufficient degree of integration or even conflicts with respect to coherent regulations or programming tools. For this purpose, desk analyses have been carried out, supplemented by interviews with key informants, focused on the following aspects:

- Documents published at European level in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and the Cohesion policy (Guidelines, Communications and initiatives of the Commission, Council Recommendations, Reports produced in the context of the European Semester, etc.) with a specific focus on the CBC; documents and guidelines related to the post 2020 programming period.
- The set of sectoral policies and reforms outlined by the National Reform Programme and by the framework of the national and regional operational programming of the ESI Funds.

The analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework is very significant both for the purposes of the strategic and operational assessment. In fact, this activity constitutes the basis for evaluating the validity

of the strategy in relation to the dimension of external coherence, a dimension that will be assessed taking into account the elements of integration (horizontal and vertical) highlighted by the objectives of the Programme, the outputs and results achieved, with particular attention to the choices made in terms of target recipients and types of actions. From a more operational point of view, it allows to monitor the adequacy and degree of compliance of the governance and management processes with respect to the changes caused by the introduction of new regulations, reform or other significant events.

e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy

The results of the analysis of the socio-economic context and of the strategic and institutional framework are the starting point concerning the validity of the logical framework of the Programme. In order to support the assessment of the Programme, the analysis includes the following components: a) system of the objectives and the hierarchy of the priorities as resulting from the analysis of the implementation and the governance activity; b) types of operations, profiles of beneficiaries, beneficiaries, outputs and results; c) system of indicators. The knowledge framework has been integrated through interviews with key informants and desk analysis aimed at evaluating:

- *relevance* – the objectives, actions, outputs and results analysed in the perspective of the needs that emerge from the CBC context analysis;
- *internal coherence* - which is established by analysing: the links of instrumentality between actions and objectives; the consistency of the choices made during implementation; the relationships between interventions which refer to different axes, to identify overlaps or to enhance the possible synergies that can be activated to maximize the impact; the validity of the system of indicators also in relation of any changes in the Programme priorities;
- *external coherence* - which is analysed using correlation matrix to describe the relationships with other policy tools or the degree of alignment with the evolution of the EU or national strategic guidelines.

f) Analysis of financial implementation

The assessment of financial implementation is based on the monitoring data to reconstruct, at the agreed deadlines: (a) the legally binding commitments; (b) the expenditures actually incurred by the beneficiaries; (c) the amount of expenses certified to the EC; (d) the difference between the beneficiaries' expenditure and the amount of certified expenses. The processing and analysis of these data is aimed at reconstructing the levels of financial efficiency of the Programme, which is evaluated using at least the following indicators: i) commitment's capacity: the percentage between committed resources and programmed resources; ii) expense ratio: the percentage between expenses and commitments; iii) implementation efficiency: the percentage between expenditure and programmed resources.

The efficiency levels of financial implementation are assessed at the level of the Programme, Axis, actions and projects.

The analysis of the values allows for a more precise identification of any bottleneck in the implementation process addressed with targeted analyses aimed at identifying the causes and the possible solutions.

Furthermore, in order to support the commitment of the MA towards the full use of the resources and the achievement of the targets set within the Performance Framework, the following indicators are used:

- the amount of certified expenditure with respect to the regulatory "decommitment threshold";

- the amount of certified expenditure with respect to "virtual" annual decommitment thresholds taking into account the impact of the allocation of all the administrative unit involved in the management of the Programme.

g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress

This analysis is divided into two distinct levels, one general concerning the Programme as a whole, the other specific related to each Axis and the corresponding Actions related to the various investment priorities. The activity is based on the analyses of the data provided by the monitoring system of the Programme and concerning the actions activated, the projects selected, financed and concluded, also using simple progress indicators, such as: i) *efficiency of* the Implementation: the relationship between projects launched and approved and by the calculation of the average time elapsed between the deadline of the call for projects and their final approval; ii) *Implementation result*: the relationship between completed projects and started projects; iii) *Implementation effectiveness:* the relationship between the final outputs and the expected outputs.

The "quantitative" analyses are aimed at providing information on the performance of the Programme and at accounting for its capacity to achieve the outputs and results which has been established ex ante. The levels of physical and procedural implementation are central to the evaluation of the efficiency of the Programme and also constitutes the basis for beginning the evaluation of effectiveness, as well as for the evaluation activity specifically dedicated to verifying the final achievements set for 2023. Following a logic of complementarity, the desk analysis is accompanied by qualitative data collection, involving the beneficiaries, the regional officials engaged for the specific policy areas, the MA and the intermediate bodies, with the aim of reconstructing a clear picture of the actual implementation of the policies in the various territories. The "qualitative" plan of the analysis aims to deepen, on the basis of monitoring data, the specific characteristics of the projects promoted: types of intervention and services implemented, profiles of beneficiaries, companies and implementing bodies.

h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes

The objective of the analysis is to provide knowledge on the adequacy of governance and management system, on the relationships that are established between the various actors involved in the implementation process, focusing on the interactions between implementation mechanisms, context, rationality of the actors. The analyses aimed, on one hand, at providing the MA with indications and suggestions for overcoming any critical issues encountered and, on the other hand, at supporting the understanding of the effects of the Programme, providing interpretative keys and additional information to facilitate the learning process. The analysis of the governance system focuses on:
- models adopted for the analysis of the local needs and the subsequent design of services and support measures;
- system of relations and cooperation networks established within the CBC area;
- measures adopted to promote the participation of stakeholders and beneficiaries;
- models adopted for the integration of the different administrative systems in order to provide an enabling framework for strengthening the cooperation within the CBC area.

The analysis of the management system concerns:
- the organization of the management and control systems;
- the tools and mechanisms for selecting and implementing the operations, timing of procedures;

- the adequacy of the information provided by the monitoring systems and the ability to produce data and indicators that meet the needs of the monitoring and evaluation, identifying any shortcomings and suggestions for their overcoming;
- organizational settings, material and financial resources used; human capital, adequacy of skills, planned training activities;
- communication and information actions

i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators

The analysis of the indicators, in addition to providing the MA with the information necessary for the preparation of the AIR, intends to support the MA in the constant monitoring of the progress of the Programme towards the achievement of the target set of outputs and expected results, as well as for the achievement of the performance reserve. The analysis of the indicators aims at:

- supporting the MA in the continuous self-assessment of consistency and robustness of the set of indicators of the Programme also in relation to the mechanism for the allocation of the performance reserve;
- accompanying the MA in the functional activities for the analytical interpretation of the values achieved by the indicators during the implementation of the Programme and in view of the 2023 targets;
- identifying any critical issues (e.g. low participation of potential beneficiaries, time needed to carry out the audit activities, legal conflicts over tenders and other issues).

This activity is carried out through several steps:

- update the Programme's theory of change, analysing, at the action level, the relationships between the inputs (financial resources) that the Programme has assigned to achieve the outputs which concur to reach the expected results;
- analysis of the indicators through S.M.A.R.T. criteria[5]
- ongoing analysis of the Programme monitoring data;
- forecast analysis of the progress of the Programme based on the desk examination of the calls, as well as through interviews with the MA and the structures involved in the management;
- proposal to revise the targets defined in the planning phase (in relation to the change of the timing, legal and implementation condition).

It was initially planned that the steps listed above, in particular the forecast analyses on the performance of the indicators, would have allowed to feed a control and monitoring dashboard of the indicators of outputs and results. Nevertheless, considering the achievement rate of the targets of the indicators, which is very high at the programme level, this option is replaced by an analysis of targets of the indicators.

j) Analysis of impact

In the context of this Programme we can define the impact starting by the analysis of the *theory of change*, and in particular its contribution to the growth and development of the CBC area. In this perspective, it is clear that the analysis of the result indicators can give a measure of the change occurred in the specific contexts, but they cannot estimate the amount to which the Programme has contributed to that change (i.e.

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[5] Indicators have been analyzed using S.M.A.R.T. criteria: Measurable both in quantitative and qualitative terms; Available at reasonable costs; Relevant with regard to the in formative needs expressed by Programme's joint management structures and significant stakeholders; Time-bound.

the impact). The guidance document on monitoring and evaluation of the EC define impact as: *the change that can credibly be attributed to a Programme's intervention.* The guidelines usually suggest to adopt a counterfactual approach. In the case of the CBC Programmes this approach is not always applicable. The design of a *theory-based impact evaluation*, while analysing quantitative aspects of the implementation process (changes in indicators in the target territories) and qualitative analysis of the causal relation between activities and the observed changes, will make it possible to clarify the operating mechanisms which have characterized the implementation process: *how the objectives were achieved*, *what are the elements that allowed the intervention to be finalized* or, conversely, *the obstacles that prevented the Programme to be successful*.

The *theory-based impact evaluation* can be defined as a sequence of hypotheses showing how the Programme inputs (personnel, resources, activities, etc.) are transformed through a series of intermediate steps into the programmed outcomes (desired changes for targeted population, companies, territories, etc.). This approach will be pursued through the following methodological steps:

- **Step 1**: *Define the cause-and-effect relationships underlying the interventions*
  This step corresponds to an activity of systematic literature reviews which consolidates the evaluative approach by connecting it with the theoretical debate. The subsequent analysis of the Programme documentation (guidelines, rules, etc.) will enable to define the rationale of the operative implementation of the targets and objectives; this activity will be integrated by interviews with the MA and the officials responsible of the implementation of the single lines of interventions.

- **Step 2**: *Mapping and selecting the theory of change of the Programme*
  Once the theory of the Programme has been elicited, the next step is to map it through the *logical framework technique* which will allow to represent this process through diagrams or matrix. The mapping will highlight the linkages between the socio-economic and spatial needs, objectives, financial inputs, interventions, expected results, indicators, target groups and the beneficiaries.

- **Step 3**: *Formalising the theory of change of the Programme*
  This step will allow to formalize the theory of the Programme in a propositional form, as hypothesis suitable for evaluation research. The operational definition of the hypothesis will allow to support the methodological transition from the objectives/indicators of the Programme to the variables/data to be collected during the impact evaluation. In this phase a Delphi Panel analysis (a technique for the iterative consultation of experts) will support the estimate of the potential impacts of the intervention and later will be applied to analyse the evaluation findings.

- **Step 4:** *Data collection and analysis*
  This step involves the primary data gathering through surveys, focus groups, case studies, key informant interviews and reviewing and analysing administrative and monitoring data. This step will allow to collect evidence on the results, on the validity of the hypothesis of the theory of change and on significant external factors which had an effect on the results. In this phase it will be maybe possible to adopt a counterfactual technique to quantify the net impact.

k) Analysis of the good practices

The objective in this context is to provide direct evidence of the processes that have characterized the implementation of particular intervention models which reflect good levels of effectiveness, innovation, capacity of tackling the problems and providing a solution. The description of the good practice will give emphasis to the operational context, the strategic choices that have been pursued and the gaps filled thanks to the model adopted. The selection of the cases will be coordinated with the MA and will select the projects according to the type of policy, action or cross-cutting theme, taking into account the territorial distribution

of the projects. The cases will be selected starting from potential good practices that will emerge from the phases of "observation" and "analysis" and will have the following characteristics: i) *Strategic adequacy*: Ability to achieve the goal of the intervention; ii) *Procedural adequacy*: Ability to adopt effective techniques, organizational methods and use resources; iii) *Innovativeness*: Ability to creatively address a problem, with an original approach and providing a new solution compared to those found previously; iv) *Sustainability*: Ability to achieve results, the effects of which extend beyond the project; v) *Reproducibility*: Ability to provide a clear operational articulation of its components, so as to facilitate the reproduction of the applied solutions; vi) T*ransferability*: Ability of becoming a model applicable to different territorial and sectoral contexts.

l) Reporting and dissemination

The last activity is dedicated to the production of documents (evaluation reports, presentation, dissemination material) and their diffusion. The products are drawn up and delivered according to the technical specifications and in accordance with the Programme bodies. For each product envisaged, the team adopts reporting techniques that are functional to an easy understanding and transparency of the contents. Methodological notes are included in the reports describing the techniques used, the operational obstacles encountered and the solutions adopted. Moreover, the reports are accompanied by an executive summary, structured to be easily used to support the discussion and dissemination of results.

The following table introduces an initial breakdown of the possible techniques that have been adopted and could be adopted in the continuation of the evaluation service in relation to operational and impact evaluations.

Table 9: Adopted and Possible techniques proposed in relation to activities and products of the Evaluation service

Activities / Products	Integrated Evaluation design	Operational evaluation reports	Impact evaluation report	Territorial and socio-economic analysis for the 2021-2027[6]	Example of Data sources
a) Review of the list of the evaluation questions	-Document Analysis -Initial meetings with EWG	Document Analysis - Meetings with MA and relevant stakeholders -Data Analysis (secondary and primary sources)	Document Analysis - Meetings with MA and relevant stakeholders -Data Analysis (secondary and primary sources)	Document Analysis - Meetings with MA and relevant stakeholders -Data Analysis (secondary and primary sources)	Monitoring data (SIU system) Evaluator's database
b) Evaluability assessment		-Audit of the information and monitoring systems			Monitoring data (SIU system)
c) Analysis of the socio-economic context (if relevant)		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (secondary) -Semi- structured interviews -Benchmarking	-Data Analysis (secondary) -Semi- structured interviews -Focus Group	-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (secondary) -Spatial analysis -Semi- structured interviews -SWOT Analysis	Monitoring data (SIU system) Different statistical data
d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (secondary sources) -Semi- structured interviews		-Document Analysis -Semi- structured interviews -SWOT Analysis	Monitoring data (SIU system)
e) Analysis of the validity of the strategy		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) -Logical framework -Semi- structured interviews -Delphi Analysis	-Document Analysis -Logical framework -Semi- structured interviews -Focus Group -Delphi Analysis	-Semi- structured interviews -Data Analysis (secondary) -Focus Group -Workshop	
f) Analysis of financial implementation		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (secondary) -Semi- structured interviews -Case studies -Benchmarking			Monitoring data (SIU system) Projects' reports Evaluator's database

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[6] Already submitted.

Activities / Products	Integrated Evaluation design	Operational evaluation reports	Impact evaluation report	Territorial and socio-economic analysis for the 2021-2027[6]	Example of Data sources
g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (secondary) -Spatial analysis -Semi- structured interviews -Case studies -Network Analysis	-Document Analysis -Semi- structured interviews -Focus Group -Network Analysis		Monitoring data (SIU system) Projects' reports JTS's gap analysis Programme's documents on projects' progress Network analysis's database and charts
h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) -Semi- structured interviews -Workshop			Monitoring data (SIU system) Annual Implementation Reports Evaluators' database
i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators		- Structured interviews (surveys) -Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources)			Monitoring data (SIU system) Annual Implementation Reports Evaluators' database
j) Impact assessment			-Semi- structured interviews -Structured interviews (surveys) -Case studies -Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) -Spatial analysis -Counterfactual techniques		Monitoring data (SIU system) Annual Implementation Reports Results of implementation evaluation
k) Analysis of the good practices		-Document Analysis -Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) -Semi- structured interviews -Case studies -Workshop	-Data Analysis (primary and secondary sources) -Case studies -Focus Group		Good practices' database

4 Key actors to be involved in the evaluation process

The **Managing Authority** of the Programme, responsible for the preparation of the Evaluation Plan and for the coordination of the evaluation activities, as assisted by the **Joint Secretariat (JS),** together with the **Monitoring Committee**, are the primary interlocutors for the proper conduct of the evaluation activities. In this regard, an **Evaluation Working Group (EWG)** has been formed with Italian and Croatian representatives which is involved during the whole evaluation process, as a consultative body, for the definition of evaluation themes and reports contents.

The Evaluator ensures a close synergy with the Programme bodies through a **constant contact** and **technical meetings,** to be conducted face-to-face or virtually. It is intended to ensure a continuous connection aimed at sharing the evaluation process, the working methods and the priority knowledge needs, the definition of the type of data available and, finally, the methods of dissemination of the results produced by the evaluation itself, also to the general public. This dialogue is developed throughout the entire duration of the Service. In particular, in order to guarantee a high-quality level of performance and adequate relevance of the Service provided, we have **periodic discussions linked to the needs and to the sensitive junctures of the evaluation process** that: i) ensures a full correspondence between the methodological aspects that are to be implemented and the indications gathered since the beginning of the Service; ii) guarantees a perfect adherence to the evaluation needs, through the prompt and timely identification of evaluation priorities and the indication of the most appropriate actions to be taken; iii) strengthen the tools of governance and coordination of the Service, ensuring a targeted specialist support to deal promptly with problems, through the activation of a stable communication channel that collects the critical issues related to the implementation of the Programme.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the discussions, it is proposed the frequent use of the **specific meetings**, which has proved to be suitable in similar situations – with limited number of participants - where it is necessary to receive feedback to confirm working hypotheses or identify corrections and improvements to a process.

To ensure a coherent and synergic evaluation activity, the Evaluator intends to coordinate its evaluation effort, through a direct exchange, **coordinated by the team leader**, on the following operational steps: i) choice of appropriate indicators to capture relevant phenomena and trends, in order to facilitate the precise quantification of targets and expected results also in function of the estimate of the impact of the programme; ii) development of an integrated system for the transmission of data, information and evaluation results aimed at improving the accessibility and availability of data; iii) revision and refinement of the evaluation questions and any thematic in-depth analysis.

More generally, in addition to the participation to the meetings of the MC, the interaction with the Programme bodies, is carried out, from an operational point of view, through moments of confrontation that have different nature: **periodic general coordination meetings** aimed at discussing the opinions and the different perspectives of the various key actors of the programming process in order to reach clear knowledge of their cognitive needs; if required, **participation in technical and/or national and European coordination tables**, or other institutional entities related to the evaluation activities. In this context, the evaluators provide their skills and tools to the MA in order to support with solutions and operational indications.

Taking into account the fundamental role played by the **partnership** and the integrated approaches of the ESI Funds, the team supports the participation of key actors (policy makers at different levels, beneficiaries, etc.), involving them both as qualified informants, both as stakeholders of the evaluation, in the discussion and dissemination of the results.

5   Possible risks, limitations and mitigation strategies

During the evaluation process, the consultants are likely to face a number of external risks and limitations, which the team tries to mitigate. These are presented in the below table along with our approach to mitigate them.

Table 10 – Risk Analysis

| Risks	Mitigation strategy
Large amount of reports to be delivered in a short timeframe in order to accommodate the MA's needs.	This is a situation faced in year 2021, where the Evaluation team delivered six deliverables. The Evaluator thus conceived a detailed methodological approach in order to design and deliver the due reports as agreed with the MA. Moreover, the team has been strengthened with the presence of additional experts to support the core team in order to guarantee the highest level of quality of reports to be submitted on time. In any case, the support of the MA remains of paramount importance in order to answer to the Evaluators' needs and provide timely instructions and information on the processes.
Limited availability of quantitative data and issues with quality of data	The ability of the monitoring system to produce data and indicators that meet the evaluation needs is duly explored by the evaluators in the framework of the preparation of the operational evaluations. In addition, the Evaluators are engaged to flag the data gaps and data needs in order to identify collaboratively possible alternatives and solutions to find the data necessary for the analysis.
Criticisms of the validity / robustness of the analysis	The experience of our team contributes to ensure a rigorous design of the evaluation framework and activities for each deliverable, in close collaboration with the MA. Regular exchanges are organised between the TL and the Client to ensure timely actions on key methodological questions.
The restrictions on travels and gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic may affect the data collection	As mentioned above, a mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques, based both on secondary and primary data sources, is proposed, which requires a structured interaction among evaluators and stakeholders. The evaluator, thanks to the experience gained, made and will make a full use of the most advanced remote collaboration technologies, which allow for conducting online interviews and applying remote participatory techniques. Moreover, Croatian consultants have been involved and will be involved in the data collection, if it will be necessary to conduct data collection in Croatian language. In any case, the use of the English, as language of the evaluation, is preferred when possible.
Availability / engagement of respondents and poor cooperation among stakeholders concerned due to busy schedules or lack of appreciation of the evaluation	The programme bodies facilitate the activities of the evaluation team by providing the necessary support, such support is crucial in identifying key informants early during the process, validate the instruments and introduce the evaluation team to the main stakeholders.

6 Evaluation Deliverables

As foreseen in the Terms of Reference, the following products have been and will be produced during the Service:

- The Integrated Evaluation Design, updated annually
- A Territorial and socio-economic analysis and a report on the 2021-2027 strategic territorial and thematic scenarios
- 3 Operational Evaluations
- 2 Impact Evaluations
- 2 Thematic Evaluation Reports.

In particular, during year 2021, the Evaluator has delivered 6 reports, as showed in the following picture.

Figure 6: Evaluation Reports delivered in year 2021
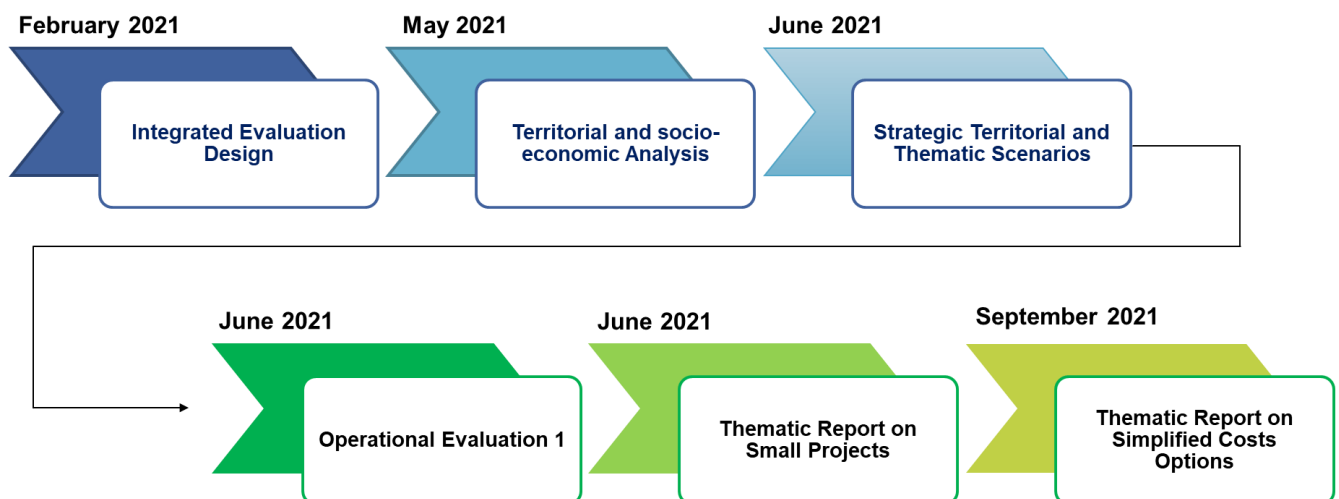
In 2022, the second Operational Evaluation and the first Impact Evaluation will be produced.

The evaluation deliverables are further described below.

6.1 Territorial and socio-economic analysis and the report on the 2021-2027 strategic territorial and thematic scenarios

In line with the ToRs and our Technical Offer, our consortium has conducted a comprehensive territorial and socio-economic analysis of the Programme area, able to define the strategic territorial and thematic scenarios for the elaboration of the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia CBC Programme, taking into account the thematic concentration requirements imposed by Art. 15 of the draft ETC Regulation.

Two separate deliverables have been prepared within this activity: a territorial and socio-economic analysis report and a report on the 2021-2027 strategic territorial and thematic scenarios.

Territorial and socio-economic analysis

This report contained a comprehensive and up-to-date identification of the main challenges, needs and potentials of the foreseen Italy-Croatia Programme area, intended as the area covered by the Programme 2014-2020.

Methodology

The core methodological tools for the analysis have been represented by the **SWOT analysis** of the area. The SWOT has been the inspiring element and the end point of deployment of a set of research tools (**documental and statistic desk research, external coherence analysis, interviews with MA, Joint Secretariat (JS), key local stakeholders, workshops**) the findings of which entered the SWOT respectively as points of strength, weaknesses, opportunities or threat.

The SWOT has been refined and validated thanks to a participative approach during the meetings of the Task Force for the preparation of the Italy Croatia Interreg CBC 2021-2027 Programme.

Content

It is presented below the Table of Contents of the Territorial And Socioeconomical Analysis Report finalised in April 2021.

1. Introduction
2. The Strategic Framework
3. Geographical, Economic and Political Features of The Programme Territory
4. Territorial Analysis on Domains
5. Swot Analysis
6. Challenges in The Programme Area
Annexes

Report on the 2021-2027 strategic territorial and thematic scenarios

This report aimed at identifying, based on the challenges and potentials mapped in the territorial analysis, the main elements that should characterize the future Programme, taking into account the thematic concentration requested by the 2021-2027 legal framework.

Methodology

The evaluation team made use of methodological tools in order to filter and prioritize the needs, challenges and potentials identified in the territorial analysis and to get to a limited number of territorial and thematic scenarios.

The key methodological reference for the present work is represented by the techniques of **multicriteria analysis**, which allowed an assessment based on all the exogenous conditioning factors which may influence the strategic choices for the CBC 2021-2027 Programme: budget constraints, thematic concentration, complementarity with other interventions, CBC added value, need continuity with the current period, etc.

Content

It is presented below the Table of Contents of the Thematic Scenarios Report finalised in June 2021.

1. Introduction: Scope of the document and methodology

2. Scoring the challenges

2.1 Analysis of the development potentials of the area

2.2 Detailed analysis of the development challenges

2.3 Scoring criteria and methodology

2.4 Scoring matrix of the 32 development challenges

3. Prioritization of the challenges and elaboration of the scenarios

4. Conclusions and recommendation

6.2   Operational Evaluation Reports

The contract, in line with the ToR and our Technical Offer, foresees three Operational Evaluation Reports in order to assess the Programme's outputs and outcomes and the administrative capacities of its Programme bodies. Therefore, also considering the breadth of the subject to be assessed, each operational evaluation report will focus on specific elements.

The Evaluation team has delivered in 2021 the First Operational Evaluation, while the final version of the second operational evaluation will be delivered in March 2022 and the last operational evaluation will be delivered in March 2023.

The first Operational Evaluation 2021 provided a first snapshot of the implementation of the Programme by analysing some key elements including the management system, the result indicators system and the partnerships created.

The table of contents of the Operational Evaluation 2021 is presents below:

1. Analysis of the implementation status of the Programme
2. Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system
3. The indicators system
4. Considerations on the effectiveness of the Programme, with regards to the relevance of the objectives and the cross-border dimension
5. Final considerations and recommendations
6. Annexes

As proposed in the Operational Evaluation 2021, the second Operational Evaluation will focus on additional dimensions of the Programme, in particular the Evaluator will answer to the evaluation questions related to the **cross-border cooperation added value and networking**, conducting additional analysis on the type of partners and on the implementing unit locations. Moreover, the report will present an additional analysis of the output indicators and its targets.

Content

The structure of the Operational Evaluation 2022 will present the following structure:
   ➢ Update of the implementation status of the Programme

➢ Response to the evaluation questions of the section on Cross-border cooperation added value and networking
➢ Focus on output indicators
➢ Final considerations and recommendations

Methodology

As far as the answer to the evaluation questions is concerned, the methodology foresees the launching of online surveys for beneficiaries of the programme (lead partners and partners) and in-depth interviews both with the Programme bodies and with a selection of lead partners of concluded projects.

The following table presents the Evaluation Questions that will be answered in the framework and, for each of them, the related methodological tools.

	Evaluation Questions	**Techniques**	**Sources and target groups**
1	Are created **partnerships** relevant and coherent with the Programme **crossborder nature**?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
2	Are all relevant **stakeholders** at cross-border level **duly represented**?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
3	Are created **partnerships** relevant according to Programme/projects **objectives**?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
4	Are the **partnerships**, of the financed projects, **balanced** in terms of **number of partners, represented areas, roles and budget**?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
5	Are promoted **partnerships based on previous experiences** and how do they ensure their **sustainability** in time?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs

6.3   Impact Evaluation Reports

The implementation of the methodological approach described in the chapters 2 and 3 will lead to the realization of the activities foreseen in order to prepare and deliver the products of the Impact Evaluation. The contract, in line with the ToR and our Technical Offer, foresees two Impact Evaluation Reports (in the years 2022 and 2023).

We present below a proposal for content to be discussed with EWG and MA in the structuring phase of each impact evaluation.

Content

The Impact Evaluation Reports have the purpose of presenting an overview of the impact evaluation activities performed and the related preliminary evaluation findings to be shared with the Programme bodies.

It is proposed that the first Impact Report will present a preliminary analysis of the standard and standard+ projects results, while the second impact report will include the strategic projects and overall Programme results with specific reference to thematic and territorial impacts along with its contribution to the EU 2020 targets.

The Impact Evaluation Reports will include a comprehensive and conclusive set of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations for all the EQs included in the impact evaluation and they will be revised on the basis of the feedbacks received. A particular focus will be set on the qualitative results of the Programme reached through Projects.

In any case, as mentioned above, the focus foreseen for each of the Impact Evaluation Report will be discussed with the EWG in order to confirm, revise and expand its content. This would allow the evaluation team to plan its work consistently and the MA to follow/monitor effectively the evaluation activities.

The following table presents all the Evaluation Questions to be answered in the framework of the First and Second Impact Evaluation and, for each of them, the related proposed methodological tools.

The selection of the actual EQs for each Report will be done during the structuring phase.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation

Evaluation Questions	Possible Techniques	Sources and target groups
What is the progress towards the overall Programme goal, specific objectives and expected results?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
How is the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilized?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme achieved its general and specific objectives?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Were there any internal or external factors hindering the achievement of the Italy Croatia CBC Programme goals?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs

To what extent has the Programme contributed to enhancing the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the *blue economy* within the cooperation area?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Have performances in the field of *blue innovation* improved?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improving the climate change monitoring and planning of *adaptation measures* tackling specific effects in the cooperation area?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme contributed to increase the safety of the cooperation area from *natural and man-made disaster*?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme contributed to make *natural and cultural heritage* a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development in the cooperation area?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme contributed to protecting and restoring the *biodiversity* in the cooperation area?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Has the Programme succeeded in strengthening the shared management and protection of *cross- border ecosystems* also for developing economic and employment opportunities?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improving the environmental *quality conditions of the sea and coastal area* by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme succeeded in improving the *quality of the sea and bathing waters*?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of *marine and coastal transport services* and nodes by promoting multimodality in the cooperation area?	• Desk analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Monitoring system • Programme bodies • LP, PPs

Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives

Evaluation Questions	Techniques	Sources and target groups
Are there any stringent uncovered needs that could be tackled under this or future cross-border Programme?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Which are the main lessons learned relating the elaboration of Programme strategy during this programming period?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
What can be improved to better address development needs in the next future?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs

Cross-border cooperation added value and networking (Operational Ev.)

Evaluation Questions	Techniques	Sources and target groups
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve partners' administrative competences/skills at Programme and project levels?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Do involved partners efficiently contribute to achieving Programme/project expected results?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs

Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy

Evaluation Questions	Techniques	Sources and target groups
Has the Programme raised awareness about its activities and achievements?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, Ps
To what extent the communication strategy has contributed to improve the knowledge on EU funds and the CBC Programme objectives and opportunities in the cooperation area?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, Ps
Were communication tools effective in increasing awareness on Programme objectives and offered opportunities?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, Ps
Which tools were most successful?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, Ps
Has the Programme contributed to increase the capacity of projects to communicate their own achievements?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, Ps

Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets

Evaluation Questions	Techniques	Sources and target groups
What change can be observed in relation to the objectives of the Programme?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs

How they are distributed at a territorial level?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent can observed changes be directly attributed to the Programme?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Are there unintended impacts?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
What mechanisms delivered the impact?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
What are key contextual features for these mechanisms?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Does the impact vary by subgroup within the main target group?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Did the Programme succeed in achieving the expected impacts on the different target groups?	• Semi-structured interviews • Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
Will short-run effects of the intervention differ from those in the long run?	• Semi-structured interviews Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs
To what extent has Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed to the EU 2020 Strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?	• Semi-structured interviews Structured interviews/survey	• Programme bodies • LP, PPs

6.4 Additional Thematic Evaluations

In line with the ToR and our Technical Offer, we considered the importance to approach the additional evaluation reports with the specific purpose of providing the MA with useful insights for the preparation of the CBC Programme for the 2021-2027 period.

In occasion of the Kick-off meeting of the Evaluation Service, the Managing Authority has accepted the Evaluator's offer to provide two thematic evaluation reports, both focusing on the preparation of the 2021-2027 programme. While for the first report the MA has chosen one of the three evaluation domains proposed in the original technical offer (Simplified Cost Options, SCOs), for the second one it has been agreed to focus on a domain (Projects of limited financial volume) which the MA considers important and urgent in order to inform the new Programme.

The two thematic evaluations have been prepared in year 2021 and submitted to the Programme bodies, the following sections present their table of contents.

6.4.1 Projects of limited financial volume

The thematic evaluation on the projects of limited financial volume presented an assessment on how effectively projects of limited financial volume have been managed in the 2014-2020 period in other Interreg programmes (direct funding vs. projects of limited financial volume) and it included conclusions and recommendations about the possible adoption of support to projects of limited financial volume in the 2021-2027 ITA-HR Interreg Programme.

The table of contents of the thematic evaluation on projects of limited financial volume is presents below:

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Legislative context
Chapter 3: Analysis of small projects funding practices in Interreg Programmes
Chapter 4: Analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches
Chapter 5: Small projects for the Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 Interreg Programme: which objectives, domains, type of interventions and recipient?
Chapter 6: The possible impact of the funding of small projects on the efficiency and effectiveness of the management system
Chapter 7: The impact of small project on the effectiveness of Programme implementation
Chapter 8: Establishing a budget allocation for small projects
Chapter 9: General conclusions and recommendations

6.4.2   Simplified Cost Options (SCOs)

The thematic evaluation on Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) provided an estimation of the possible impact of the adoption of SCOs on a wider scale, taking into account the new range of SCOs foreseen in the Regulations for the Interreg programmes of the next programming period.

The table of contents of the Thematic Evaluation report on SCOs is presents below:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Legislative context and literature review

Chapter 3: Use of SCOs during 2014-2020 period

Chapter 4: SCO in 2021-2027 programming period in Interreg programmes

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations for the next Italy-Croatia Programme
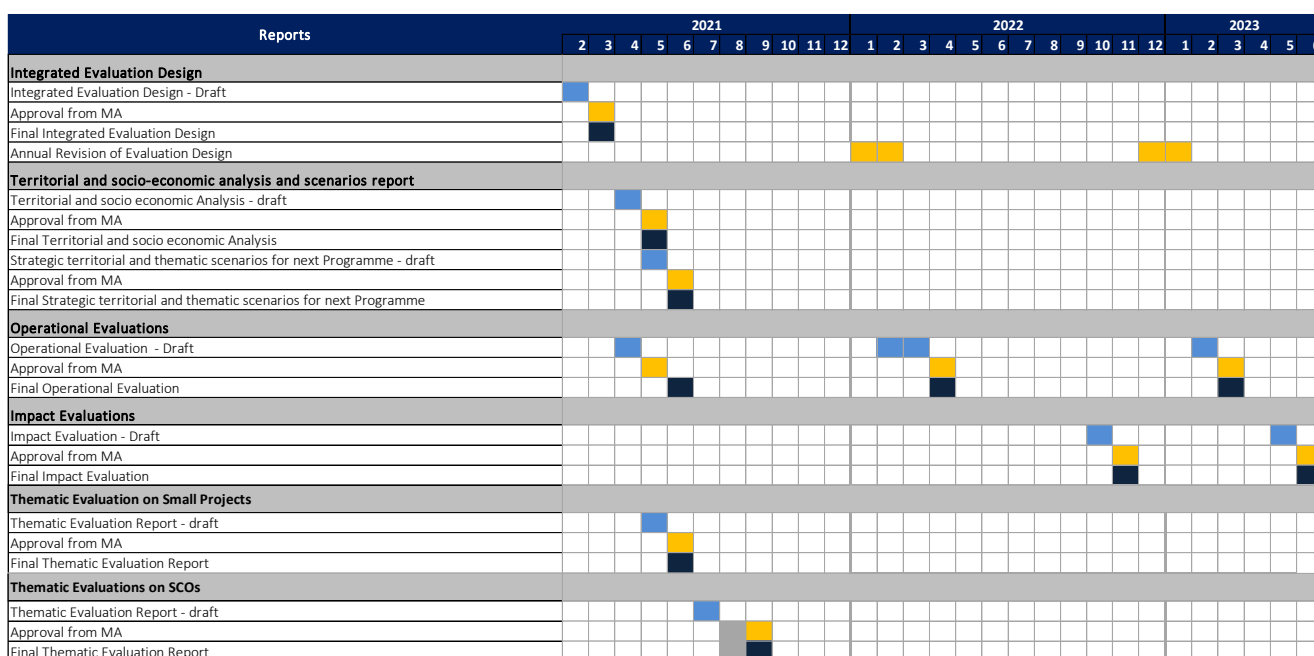
7   Timeline and resources

7.1   Timeline

The figure hereinafter shows the time schedule which defines the timing for the submission of each evaluation deliverables in the Evaluation Service, included the reports already delivered in year 2021.

As planned, the timeline is updated during the process in case of changes agreed with EWG and MA.

In particular, the changes concerns: i) we propose to proceed with the annual update of the Integrated Design in January, after the end of the year; ii) in consultation with the Client, it has been discussed the postponement of the implementation of the first impact evaluation with the draft to be delivered by June 2022 and the final report to be completed by September 2022, in order to take stock of a larger number of closed projects, which are currently concluding their activities.

Figure 7: Timeline

Reports	2021											2022												2023					
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
Integrated Evaluation Design																													
Integrated Evaluation Design - Draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Integrated Evaluation Design																													
Annual Revision of Evaluation Design																													
Territorial and socio-economic analysis and scenarios report																													
Territorial and socio economic Analysis - draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Territorial and socio economic Analysis																													
Strategic territorial and thematic scenarios for next Programme - draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Strategic territorial and thematic scenarios for next Programme																													
Operational Evaluations																													
Operational Evaluation - Draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Operational Evaluation																													
Impact Evaluations																													
Impact Evaluation - Draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Impact Evaluation																													
Thematic Evaluation on Small Projects																													
Thematic Evaluation Report - draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Thematic Evaluation Report																													
Thematic Evaluations on SCOs																													
Thematic Evaluation Report - draft																													
Approval from MA																													
Final Thematic Evaluation Report																													

7.2   Resources

The team proposed for the implementation of the activities is composed of professionals with consolidated experience in the **evaluation of public policies,** specifically in **European Territorial Cooperation**, able to ensure the effective performance of the activities (tools, techniques, methodologies, data processing, methods of stakeholder involvement and dissemination of evaluation results) and an in-depth knowledge of the territorial cooperation. The aim is, therefore, to ensure the full effectiveness of the Service through a team with the following distinctive elements:
-   full familiarity with all the wide range of methodologies, tools and techniques to which the evaluation and socio-economic analysis make use and which are expected to be used, including mixed-methods data collection and analysis;

- the deep awareness of the specificities and orientations that these methodologies and techniques assume in the framework of INTERREG programmes;
- solid knowledge related to policy contents and regulatory, technical and procedural aspects of the EU, national and regional 2014-2020 programming and discussions about the next programming period;
- wide expertise of many of the components of the team with the territorial cooperation programmes.

The team leader, Mr Virgilio Buscemi, coordinates the different teams and mobilise the different resources of the group depending on the needs of the Evaluation Service. On the basis of the topics to be addressed, for each deliverable, he designates a **Responsible Evaluator** for the drafting of the report and the related supporting team. In any case the team leader maintains the oversight of all the phases of structuring, analysis, judgment, dissemination, thus guiding the overall process and assigning relevant responsibilities to the team. The team leader remains, in each case, the main interlocutor for the Administration.

The figure below shows the responsible evaluators for the deliverables to be submitted in the year 2022[7]. The responsibilities for the evaluation activities to be undertaken in the following year will be assigned by the team leader during the Service and will be presented in the next update of the Integrated Evaluation Design.

Figure 8: Evaluation Coordination Group

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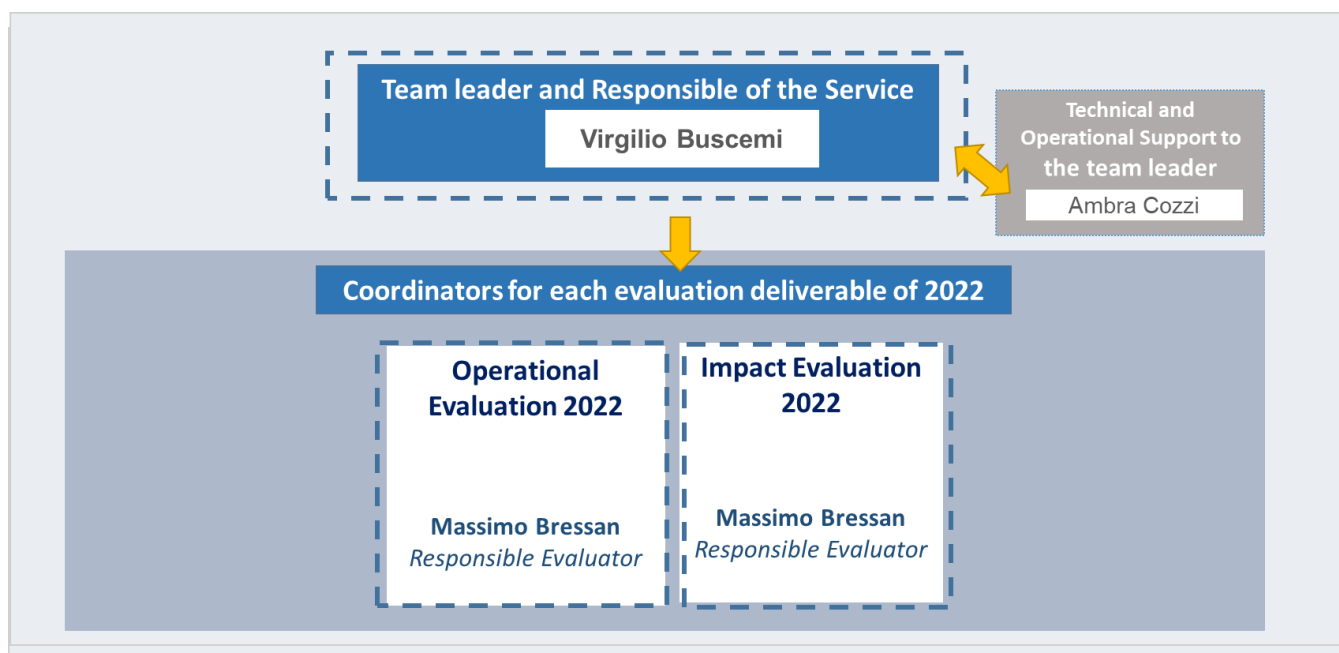
[7] The overall picture of the entire evaluation team corresponds to those included in the technical offer.