



Mid-term evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

Interreg III is a Community initiative, which aims to stimulate transnational cooperation in the EU between 2000-06. It is financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The overall objective for Interreg is to prevent national borders from constituting barriers to the balanced development and integration of the European territory.

Interreg IIIB concerns co-operation within larger transnational areas. The transnational co-operation between national, regional and local authorities aims to promote a higher degree of territorial integration across large groupings of European regions, with a view to achieving sustainable, harmonious and balanced development in the Community and better territorial integration with candidate and other neighbouring countries.

The Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme is one of the 13 Interreg IIIB programmes set up and operating. The contents of the programme will be described in section 2.

The European Commission, in Articles 40 and 42 of *Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds*, requires Member States to monitor and assess regional assistance from Structural Funds.

In accordance with Article 42 of the General Regulation No. 1260/1999, a mid-term evaluation will be carried out under the responsibility of the managing authority, in co-operation with the Commission and the Member State concerned. It will be carried out by an independent assessor and be submitted to the Monitoring Committee and then sent to the Commission by 31.12.2003. The mid-term evaluation will be updated by 31.12.2005.

For the Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme, the County Administration of Västerbotten, as Managing Authority for the programme will manage and oversee that the mid-term evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the Swedish Public Procurement rules. A Steering Group has been appointed (see Annex 1) by the Programme Monitoring Committee. The steering group will advise the commissioning of the contract, oversee the work undertaken and act as a reference group to the independent evaluators. The steering group will report to the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC), which will provide an opinion on the report and recommendation on how to action the results. The evaluation report will be submitted to the Commission no later than 31st December 2003.

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The mid-term evaluation will build upon the previous ex-ante evaluation performed by Barlindhaug Consultants AS in 2000, when setting up the Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme.

2. BACKGROUND

INTERREG III B Northern Periphery Programme

The Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme proposal was submitted to the Commission on 21st November 2000. The Commission approved the programme on 14th December 2001.

The programme consists of the northern parts of Finland, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, the whole of Iceland, Greenland and Faroe Islands. The programme operates in the programming period 2000-2006.

The overall objectives of the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme are:

- ◆ Prosperous and sustainable development of the communities
- ◆ Wise management of distinctive cultural and natural resources
- ◆ Improved functionality and maximized potential of the NPP area
- ◆ Compensate for permanent disadvantages of harsh climate, long distance, complicated topography and sparse population.

There are a number of strategic themes shared by all regions as a result of their common geography. These are:

- ◆ The need to improve the competitiveness of regions to offset the disadvantage of peripherality and population sparsity
- ◆ To fully recognise and use the human and natural resources available; those which are unique to the area such the cultural and natural heritage and cold climate expertise and knowledge
- ◆ To sustain and develop communities, many of which are experiencing difficulty in retaining population and services.

Based on the principles of the INTERREG III guidelines four priorities have been established:

- ◆ Priority 1: Communications
- ◆ Priority 2: Strengthen sustainable economic development
- ◆ Priority 3: Community development
- ◆ Priority 4: Technical assistance

The total financing for 2000-2006 is 53,2 MEUR. This is made up of 39,3 MEUR from the Member States, of which 21,3 MEUR is contributed by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and 13,96 MEUR from the Non-member states: Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway.

The Managing and Paying authority for the Programme is County Administration of Västerbotten in Umeå, Sweden.

The Joint Programme Secretariat for the Programme is located in Copenhagen, Denmark.

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There have been 3 calls for main project proposals since the programme was approved resulting in 26 received applications. Of these, 13 have been approved. There have also been 11 preparatory projects and 1 micro project approved by 13 December 2003. In total the programme has committed 6,6 MEUR, 25% of the programme funds.

For further information, see the website: <http://www.northernperiphery.net/>

3. REQUIREMENTS

As stated, the European Commission requires Member States to monitor and assess regional assistance from Structural Funds (as laid down in Articles 40 and 42 of Council Regulation (EC) No1260/1999).

According to the Commission guidelines (Working Paper 8 a), the evaluation is required to:

- ◆ Re-assess the relevance and consistency of the strategy
- ◆ Quantify the objectives –outputs, results and impacts
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness and expected socio economic impacts and, on this basis, evaluate the financial resources allocation
- ◆ Assess the quality of joint implementation and monitoring arrangements
- ◆ Provide conclusions and recommendations.

Because of the short timescale since the relatively late agreement on the Interreg programmes in general, the mid-term evaluation should focus on the quality of the implementation, especially the selection process and the organisation for implementation of the programmes. This is especially relevant for the Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme, which has a unique administrative structure with Regional Advisory Groups taking part in the selection process and a management organisation split across several countries with the Managing and Paying Authority in Sweden, the Joint Programme Secretariat in Denmark and the Regional Contact Points throughout the programme area. Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme covers the largest geographical area within the Interreg III B programmes. Involvement of non-member states: Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Greenland provide a unique extension to the transnational cooperation. The Programme encourages cross-sectoral cooperation within funded projects.

Key issues

Re-assessment of the relevance and the consistency of the strategy

A core element of the planning process was the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT-analysis) facing the co-operation area concerned. The ex ante evaluation verified this analysis, including the priority to be assigned to the various economic needs and the appropriateness of the opportunities and challenges identified. The mid term evaluation should briefly review the continuing validity of the SWOT analysis. Once the question of the main needs and socio-economic problems has been reviewed, the mid term evaluation should assess again the appropriateness of the balance between the combination of policies and activities

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being co-financed. This should be done by checking how each priority area will contribute to the overall objectives.

Quantification of objectives- outputs, results and impacts

The quantification of objectives from the overall programme level, by priority and further on measure level, is fundamental to both the planning and implementation of the Programme. At planning stage, the ex ante evaluation addressed the quantification of objectives at the global and specific levels and judged the appropriateness of the quantification from the viewpoint of capturing the content of the form of assistance. The quantification of operational objectives at measure level (indicators) in the Programme Complement needs to be reviewed in the mid term evaluation. The mid term evaluation should appraise the effectiveness of the process of quantification of objectives. This includes an analysis of how the quantification of objectives links logically together from Programme Document (specific objectives) to Programme Complement (operational objectives). The quantification of objectives to measure the impact of actions supported on equal opportunities between men and women and the environment should also be appraised. The mid term evaluators should also appraise the data gathering systems to ensure that appropriate information is supplied for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

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

Having assessed the continuing relevance of the strategy, the mid term evaluation should review effectiveness on the basis of outputs achieved and expenditure to date. It should focus on the projects selected: micro, preparatory and main projects to examine their effectiveness, in terms of the outputs, results and impacts which they are expected to achieve and the effectiveness and impact of the type of co-operation being pursued. Analysis of effectiveness at project level should build up to an analysis of the progress being made towards the achievement of measure level objectives (operational objectives) and then specific objectives. The current distribution of projects in priorities and measures should be reviewed. A key concern will be the assessment of the transnational nature of projects and the procedures for establishing transnational cooperation. Special attention should be paid to non-member states involvement in the funded projects. The contents, scale and the quality of partnerships should also be reviewed.

Quality of Joint Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

The mid term evaluation should review the adequacy and quality of the management and delivery mechanisms of the Programme. It should:

- ◆ Review the clarity of management and implementation responsibilities
- ◆ Review control mechanisms
- ◆ Consider if transparent, competitive and common procedures and criteria for project selection are in operation.
- ◆ Examine the common project selection criteria and their use in selection procedures

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- ◆ Appraise the contribution of the partnership to the quality of monitoring and implementation
- ◆ Examine the operation of joint implementation and management processes in projects, which have been approved
- ◆ Examine the information and publicity efforts made so far (activities of the JPS and Regional Contact Points, transnational Partenariats, the effects on partnership building etc).

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions should be drawn in relation to each of the key issues and if these conclusions point to weaknesses in the planning or implementation of programme, recommendations for improvements should be made.

Methodology & Documentation

It is envisaged that the evaluation will consist of a mix of desk-based research and fieldwork. It should include, but not be limited to:

- ◆ Familiarisation with key documents:
 - The Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme Document
 - The Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme Complement
 - Ex ante evaluation for the Interreg III B Northern Periphery Programme
 - Programme Monitoring Committee minutes
 - Interreg Guidelines
 - European Commission Working Paper 8 a
 - And other relevant European Commission policy documents / working papers.

The documents can be downloaded from the Northern Periphery Programme website: <http://www.northernperiphery.net/> and acquired from the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat.

- ◆ A top-down analysis of data on key social, economic and environmental indicators.
- ◆ A bottom-up analysis of available monitoring data and qualitative data collected from a sample of projects

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Timescale, milestones and outputs

The core specification provides details of the outputs requirements, which are summarized here:

- ◆ Initial stage reporting;
- ◆ Interim report;
- ◆ Draft final report; and
- ◆ Agreed final report

It is essential that the final report is succinct and focuses on analysis rather than lengthy descriptions. It should provide clear, justified conclusions and recommendation and be written in a clear and understandable manner.

The following timetable of events will ensure that the evaluation is completed on schedule. Any variations to these milestones must be agreed, in advance, with the Client and confirmed in writing.

Milestone	Completion Date Required
Award of contract	10 March 2003
Initiation meeting	17 March 2003
Initial stage reporting	PMC meeting 12 June 2003
Delivery of interim report	29 August 2003
Draft final report	31 October 2003
Agreed final report	27 November 2003

4. CONTENT AND SUBMISSION OF TENDERS

The proposal for the mid term evaluation should contain:

- ◆ A detailed proposal with a work plan detailing the understanding of the task and a specified budget. The work plan should specify the research/evaluation methods to be used; the sources of data to be tapped into; any additional data collection exercises to be undertaken and the methods used to sample projects and partnerships.
- ◆ Description of the organization and the staff performing the evaluation
- ◆ The amount of work planned
- ◆ Previous experience of evaluating issues involved in the Structural Funds and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- ◆ Previous experience of the geographical programme area

It is estimated that the workload for carrying out the mid-term evaluation is 400-500 man-hours.

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The proposal should be sent in an envelope clearly marked "MID-TERM EVALUATION PROPOSAL" to the Joint Programme Secretariat in following address:
Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat
Hovedvagtsgade 8, 2 sal
DK-1103 Copenhagen K

by 30 January 2003.

The proposals will be assessed according to the following assessment criteria:

- Experience of similar tasks
- Technical preparedness of consultant
- Value for money

The successful contractor will be required to agree with the Client the precise objectives of the evaluation and the methods to be used.

Questions should be forwarded to the Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat by phone +45 33 32 00 66, +45 33 32 74 39 or by e-mail northernperiphery@npp2.net.

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Annex 1

Steering Group for the Mid-term evaluation

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