

Ex Ante Evaluations of Structural Funds Programmes

Purpose, approach and coverage

The purpose of ex ante evaluations

- 1 The Commission wishes to improve the quality of plans and programmes submitted under the Structural Funds and to reinforce the relevance of the strategies they contain. With this in mind, independent *ex ante evaluations* provide the Commission with a degree of reassurance that the plans being submitted have *already* been subject to independent external review which confirms that they:
 - are the correct means of dealing with the issues facing a region
 - are part of a clear strategy with well-defined priorities and objectives
 - have quantified objectives whose achievement is capable of being monitored
 - will involve efficient and open decision making and management
 - propose adequate implementation and monitoring arrangements.
- 2 The Commission has stated that ‘the objective of the ex ante evaluation is to improve and strengthen the final quality of the Plan or Programme under consideration’.

The approach to ex ante evaluations

- 3 An independent external evaluator is normally appointed to undertake the ex ante evaluation. The evaluation should take place *at the same time* as the plan is being prepared. It should be an *interactive* process where the external evaluator comments on elements of the plan as it is being developed in the expectation that, where appropriate, these comments will be taken on board by those responsible for developing the plan. The evaluator is expected to have transferred knowledge to the plan team and to have made a contribution to the document finally submitted.
- 4 The final ex ante evaluation should enhance and help to explain the plan and point the way forward to issues which are likely to emerge in the early years of implementation. In the eyes of the ex ante evaluator, there may still be weaknesses in the submitted plan. Where this occurs, it should be spelled out clearly by the evaluator, together with suggestions on how weaknesses might be remedied.

Coverage within the ex ante evaluations

- 5 **Analysis of previous evaluation results.** The ex ante evaluation should make clear the extent to which the plans submitted have drawn on and learned from past relevant experience either from within the Czech Republic or elsewhere.

- 6 **Analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the state, region or sector.** The ex ante evaluation should not repeat the analysis which is contained in the submitted document, but it should contain a brief explanation of the evaluator's own views on the economic characteristics of the state, region or sector. There should be a commentary on the robustness of the analysis contained in the submitted document.
- 7 **Assessment of the rationale and overall consistency of the strategy.** The evaluation should demonstrate the extent to which the proposed actions:
- follow from the analysis of the economy in the area or sector
 - are capable of achieving objectives
 - are mutually supportive and consistent
 - are consistent with Community, national and regional policies.
- 8 **Quantification of Objectives.** The achievement of the objectives of the plan should be capable of measurement using the cause and effect chain of indicators as follows:
- inputs -> outputs -> results -> impacts.*
- 9 The ex ante evaluation should comment on the indicators with which it is proposed to measure the benefits which the plan will bring to the area. The evaluators should contribute ideas on indicators and provide guidance on the extent to which indicators are capable of measurement.
- 10 **Evaluation of expected socio-economic impacts and justification of the policy and financial resources allocation.** The ex ante evaluation should make its own assessment of the likely economic impact of the submitted plan. In the SOPs or SPDs this will be a commentary on the analysis contained within the documents themselves. The evaluators will use their judgement based on readily available information. However, the ex ante evaluation of the National Development Programme will require the evaluators to develop their own econometric model for the Czech Republic. Comment should also be made on the appropriateness of the resources allocated to each priority, taking account of the strategic objectives of the plan.
- 11 **Quality of the implementation and monitoring mechanisms.** The ex-ante evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the implementation, management and administration arrangements including monitoring, project selection and financial control. There should be comment on the means through which it is proposed to undertake consultation with economic and social partners at all stages of plan formulation.
- 12 **Linkages.** The evaluation should assess the linkages between ERDF and ESF programmes and offer a view on possibilities for mutual reinforcement.
- 13 **Horizontal themes.** The evaluation should consider the means of ensuring equality between men and women as well as the proposals for taking forward the Information Society.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 14 The ex ante evaluation should include a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This is a specialist matter which will require specific skills, qualifications and experience. These items will need to be covered:

- a description of the current environmental conditions in the area
- an indication of the likely impact on the environment including effects of traffic levels, emissions, land take, resource consumption
- a commentary on how the plan proposes to minimise environmental disbenefits
- a description of the proposals for environmental improvement
- a commentary on the proposals to monitor environmental impact.

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