EX ANTE EVALUATION OF THE TRANS-NATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME FOR THE ATLANTIC AREA 2007-2013

Final Report

Madrid, 28 February 2007

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FIGURES:

1.0   Introduction and background

1.1   Introduction

ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd. was commissioned by the Management Authority of the Objective 3 Programme Atlantic Area to undertake the ex ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Operational Programme Atlantic Area 2007-2013.

The purpose of the ex ante evaluation has been to optimise the allocation of resources and to improve the quality of programming and this has been achieved by means of the setting up of an interactive process whereby the recommendations of the evaluators have been taken into account by the planners in subsequent drafts of different parts of the Programme.

This is the Final Report for the ex ante evaluation. It draws together analysis presented to the Working Groups (WG) in its different meetings held in Lisbon, Cardiff, Seville and Porto.

1.2   Objectives of the ex ante evaluation

1.2.1   Overall objectives and legal base

Article 48(2) of the General Structural Funds Regulation[I] sets out the purpose and objectives of ex ante evaluations of Structural Funds interventions:

Objectives of ex ante evaluation of Structural Funds interventions

"Ex-ante evaluation shall aim to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources under operational programmes and improve programming quality. It shall identify and appraise the disparities, gaps and potential for development, the goals to be achieved, the results expected, the quantified targets, the coherence, if necessary, of the strategy proposed for the region, the Community value-added, the extent to which the Community's priorities have been taken into account, the lessons drawn from previous programming and the quality of the procedures for implementation, monitoring, evaluation and financial management".

In the terms of reference for this evaluation, it is stated that the ex-ante evaluation is *an interactive process* between the authorities in charge of drawing the Operational Programme (OP) and the evaluator. It is important that the evaluator provides its opinions and recommendations "along the way" on different aspects of the OP being drawn up. The independence of the evaluator is crucial. At the end of the interactive process, the ex-ante evaluation makes an essential contribution to understanding the strategy and resource allocation

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[I] Council Regulation no 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund

by clearly establishing the reasons for an impact of the choices made by the authorities in charge of drawing up the OP.

As noted in the European Commission's *Draft Working Paper on Ex Ante Evaluation*[I], the focus of ex ante evaluations should be on the relevance (of the strategy to needs identified) and utility (judging the likely impacts against wider social, environmental and economic needs). More specific evaluation questions at ex ante evaluation stage relate to the internal and external coherence and the quality of implementation systems and the potential risks for the programme, both in relation to the policy choices made and the implementation system proposed.

1.2.2 *Key evaluation questions*

In light of the generic objectives of ex ante evaluation, the main questions which need to be addressed in relation to the Territorial Cooperation Objective for the Atlantic Area OP are as follows:

Key evaluation questions

1. Does the programme represent an **appropriate strategy** to meet the challenges confronting the Atlantic Area?
2. Is the strategy **well defined** with clear objectives and priorities and can those objectives be **realistically** achieved with the financial resources allocated to the different priorities?
3. Is the strategy **coherent** with policies at regional, national and Community level? How will the strategy contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon strategy for Jobs and Growth?
4. Are **appropriate indicators** identified for the objectives and can these indicators and their targets form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance?
5. Are **implementation systems** appropriate to deliver the objectives of the programme?

The analysis and recommendations of the ex ante evaluation have been underpinned by the need to maximise the Community Added Value of the programme. In the case of the Atlantic Area Territorial Cooperation Programme, particular consideration is required of the added value which stems from the exchange of experience and networking at a trans-national level.

1.3   Evaluation structure and roadmap

The ex ante evaluation was initially structured in phases. Phase 1 focused on the strategic assessment: relevance and coherence of the Operational Programme, Phase 2 on the Indicators and the quantification of impact and Phase 3 on the proposed implementation systems, as illustrated below.

[I] The New Programming Period, 2007-2013: Methodological Working Papers - Draft Working Paper on Ex Ante Evaluation

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Figure 1: Evaluation Roadmap

METHODOLOGY: SUMMARY OF PHASES/ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES	
Phases/activities	**Deliverables**
Phase 0: Kick-off and Inception Stage	• Framework memo
Phase 1: Strategic Assessment Step 1.1 Appraisal of Relevance 1.1 Desk research 1.2 Consultation of Environmental Authorities 1.3 Review of baseline economic data 1.4 Appraisal of socio-economic analysis and resulting needs analysis 1.5 Appraisal of the relevance of the proposed strategy to the needs identified	• Appraisal note on the relevance of the programme, including Issues Maps and Relevance Matrix.
Step 1.2 Appraisal of Consistency 1.6 Work developed in close collaboration with the team in charge of drafting the Operational Programme 1.7 Consultation with regional representatives	• Field information that will contribute to the drafting of the Interim ex-ante evaluation report
Step 1.3 Appraisal of Coherence 1.8 Evaluation of internal coherence 1.9 Appraisal of the external coherence to Lisbon 1.10 Appraisal of the external coherence to Gothenburg 1.11 Appraisal of the external coherence to National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs)	• Field information that will contribute to the drafting of the Interim ex-ante evaluation report
Phase 2: Indicator development and quantification of impact 2.1 Mapping and analysing the existing monitoring system and set of indicators 2.2 Defining the final set of indicators for the new programming period and formulating indicator fiches	• A good set of baseline, input, output, result and impact indicators • Indicator fiches for selected indicators • Guidelines for a quality, effective and transparent monitoring system that supports the implementation of the set of indicators
Phase 3: Implementation systems 3.1 Examine previous experience 3.2 Formulate the necessary implementation aspects for monitoring 3.3 Assist with implementation and monitoring arrangements	• Drafting the relevant section of the Interim Report Implementation, including the assessment of the implementing provisions proposed for managing, monitoring and evaluating the programme
Phase 4: Summarising and concluding 4.1 Prepare Interim Report of the Ex Ante Evaluation 4.2 Prepare final report of the Ex Ante Evaluation	• Interim Ex Ante Evaluation Report • Final version of the Ex Ante Evaluation Report

2.0   The Atlantic Area Operational Programme

2.1   The European Territorial Cooperation Atlantic Programme 2007-2013

The Objective 3 Operational Programme for the Atlantic Area for 2007-2013 has been drafted on the basis of Article 6(2) of the ERDF Regulation (No 1080/2006). This article provides for "the establishment and development of trans-national cooperation through the financing of networks and of actions conducive to integrated territorial development". The Regulation states that actions should be focused on four broad priority areas, which in practice correspond to the four priorities adopted in the Atlantic Area Operational Programme, as follows:

Figure 2: Priorities for Territorial Cooperation

ERDF Regulation (Article 6(2))	Operational Programme
Innovation	Priority 1: Promote transnational entrepreneurial and innovation networks
Environment	Priority 2: Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment sustainably
Accessibility	Priority 3: Improve accessibility and internal links
Sustainable Urban Development	Priority 4: Promote transnational synergies in sustainable urban and regional development

2.2   Programme Priorities and Objectives

The Priorities and Objectives of the Programme are set out in table 3 below. In the remainder of this document, we will refer to the objective by the short numbers in the right-hand column.

Figure 3:Programme Priorities and Objectives

Priority 1: Promote transnational entrepreneurial innovation networks	Short Number
Objective 1: Develop knowledge transfers between companies and research centres	**1.1**
Objective 2: Enhance competitiveness and innovation capacities in maritime economy niches of excellence	**1.2**
Objective 3: Stimulate restructuring and diversification by promoting the endogenous potential of regions in difficulty	**1.3**
Priority 2: Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment sustainably	
Objective 1: Improve maritime safety	**2.1**
Objective 2: Sustainable management and protection of the resources of marine spaces	**2.2**
Objective 3: Exploit the renewable energy potential of the marine and coastal environment	**2.3**
Objective 4: Protect and promote natural spaces, water resources and coastal zones	**2.4**
Priority 3: Improve accessibility and internal links	
Objective 1: Promote interoperability, continuity and interconnection between transport networks	**3.1**
Objective 2: Promote short-sea shipping and cooperation between ports	**3.2**
Priority 4: Promote transnational synergies in sustainable urban and regional development	
Objective 1: Pool resources and skills in the field of sustainable urban and rural development	**4.1**
Objective 2: Make cities and regions more influent through networking	**4.2**
Objective 3: Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest	**4.3**

2.3   Content of the Operational Programme

Article 12 of the ERDF Regulation (No 1080/2006) specifies the overall content required in Operational Programmes for the Territorial Cooperation Objective. The Trans-national Cooperation for the Atlantic Area OP contains all relevant information required, although certain elements will be further developed, specially in what concern the indicators' system.

Figure 4: Content of the Atlantic Area OP

		Content Required	Section of Atlantic Area OP
1		An **analysis of the situation of the cooperation area** in terms of strengths and weaknesses and the strategy chosen in response	SWOT – Section II.D Strategy – Section III
2		A list of the **eligible areas** within the programme area	Section II. A
3		A **justification of the priorities** chosen having regard to the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion, the national strategic reference framework where the Member State has chosen to include actions financed under the European territorial cooperation objective within it, and the results of the ex ante evaluation	Section III.D
4		Information on the **priority axes and their specific targets**. Those targets shall be quantified using a limited number of **indicators** for output and results, taking into account the principle of proportionality. The indicators shall make it possible to measure the progress in relation to the baseline situation and the achievement of the targets of the priority axis	Appendix 4 To be refine in the PIMH.
5		For information purposes only, an indicative **breakdown by category** of the programmed use of the contribution from the ERDF to the operational programme	Section V
6		A **single financing plan**, with no breakdown by Member State, comprising two tables: • a table breaking down **for each year** the amount of the total financial appropriation envisaged for the contribution from the ERDF. • a table specifying, for the whole programming period, for the operational programme and **for each priority axis**, the amount of the total financial appropriation of the Community contribution and the national counterparts, and the rate of the ERDF contribution.	Section V
7		Information on **complementarity with measures financed by the EAFRD** and those financed by the **EFF**, where relevant;	Appendix 3
8		The implementing provisions for the operational programme, including: (a) designation by the Member States of all the **authorities** referred to in Article 14;	Section VI
		(b) a description of the **monitoring and evaluation systems**;	Sections VI.C and VI. D
		(c) information about the competent body for receiving the **payments** made by the Commission and the body or bodies responsible for making payments to the beneficiaries;	Section VI.E.2
		(d) a definition of the procedures for the mobilisation and circulation of **financial flows** in order to ensure their transparency;	Section VI.E
		(e) the elements aimed at ensuring the **publicity and the information** of the operational programme as referred to in Article 69 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;	Section VI.F
		(f) a description of the procedures agreed between the Commission and Member States for the **exchange of computerised data** to meet the payment, monitoring and evaluation requirements laid down by Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;	Section VI.G
9		An **indicative list of major projects** within the meaning of Article 39 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 expected to be submitted during the programming period for Commission approval.	Section IV

3.0   Relevance

3.1   Key Question

> Does the programme represent an appropriate strategy to meet the challenges confronting the Atlantic Area?

3.2   Socio-economic and needs analysis

3.2.1 General assessment

The socio-economic analysis and resulting needs analysis for the Trans-national Cooperation Programme for the Atlantic should portrait the Atlantic Area and illustrate the main needs that can be tackled within the competences of the Programme.

Section II on the diagnostic and challenges starts with a brief presentation of the chapter, explaining the convenience of undertaking a prior analysis of the relevant cooperation area, its basic structure and the main sources used. The ex ante evaluator recommended, nevertheless, that a brief overview of the current situation of the Atlantic Area is included in the introduction or in section II.B. In other words, describe in a brief and simple manner "what's going on in Atlantic Space today?"

The evaluator appreciated an effort to concentrate the analysis only on those issues that are within the competence of the Programme and on which transnational cooperation is appropriate.

The evaluator also appreciated that the selection of these issues is based on a through revision of the ERDF Regulation 1080/2006, the previous versions of the Programme, including its fact-finding studies, and the mid-term evaluations carried out in 2003 and 2005. However, a general overview on the complete socio-economic situation of the area is essential. The evaluator suggested counting with this simple and straightforward analysis providing with general indicators about the general performance of the trans-national cooperation area at stake, and this has been taken into account.

Sections II.B.1, II.B.2, II.B.3 and II.B.4 contain a selection of sophisticated and in-depth analysis on the specific issues of economic development, environment and maritime heritage, accessibility and transport and territorial structure.

The text follows an *essay pattern* where the point of view of the Atlantic Transnational Network (ATN), the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON), and the Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective (ASDP) appears explicitly many times along the text . The evaluator has suggested using a more neutral style based in facts rather than in opinions to increase the objectiveness of the text. It must be noted that the content of the text should be user-friendly and

tailored to all the relevant stakeholders, thus it has to contain information on facts evidenced by social and economic indicators.

In addition, the text, according to the evaluator, should be expressed in simple words, sufficient for a non-expert reader to understand it without having to consult external sources. As an example, some project applicants may not be familiar with studies such as the ATN, the ASDP or indexes such as the RDI (Relative Development Index). References to these very valuable Studies and Projects are too frequent, following the evaluator's point of view. We have to take into consideration that the Programme is actually addressed to the end-user, who is a potential applicant or bidder of the Programme.

To illustrate this, and taking section II.B.1 as an example, the evaluator would propose to introduce the theme on "big disparities among regions" by saying:

The Atlantic Area is characterised by unequal development and territorial divides. Broadly speaking, the North parts are more developed than the Southern ones, and metropolitan areas are more developed than areas with a low degree of urban concentration. In addition, prosperous regions present diversified economies meanwhile the poorer regions are generally over-specialised in sectors with low added value.

The evaluator's suggestions and contributions for this particular section have gone in line with the following:

- The *Economic development* section should primarily reflect the economic importance of the Atlantic Area. The suggestion was to express it using conventional indicators such as share of GDP of the total EU 25, growth rate, population, employment or/and unemployment rate. The economic importance of the Atlantic Area could be further underlined by addressing the economic structure (the increasing importance of services). Secondly, it would be useful for the purposes of this analysis to have a description of the developments in growth, unemployment, education, research and development, and innovation and their spatial concentration. This exercise was done in the current programming period, and the evaluator is of the opinion that providing with a general overview of the relevant cooperation area will help to set up the right context for the implementation of the Programme.

- The section on *Environment and maritime heritage* should reflect the value of the Atlantic Area natural spaces and maritime heritage, and that those form a precious asset for the attractiveness of the area. The attention to *Natural and technological hazards,* in particular to maritime pollution, is certainly justified in the light of the efforts of the previous programme and its clear trans-national scale.

- *The accessibility and transport* section should reflect the peripheral situation of the Atlantic Area and its relative isolation. Spatial aspects and urbanization patterns should be covered. This section should finally dig into the room for improvement in the air, land and maritime transport and in the access to Information and communication technologies (ICT) for all.

- *Territorial structure.* The evaluator does not have any relevant suggestions on this section.

- Finally, *a* short conclusion summarizing the main needs and challenges of the Atlantic Area would be useful.

3.2.2 Recommendations and Tracking

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
1. To add an introduction including a summary table with the main relevant data concerning the socio-economic analysis.	To provide the reader with a quick overview of the Atlantic Space. This approach is the one used for the current 2000-2006 OP	Adopted II.A.2. and Appendix 6		Lack of general overview
2. The initial analysis should be preceded by basic data and indicators such as Growth rate, Demographical dynamics and trends, Employment rate, etc.	To provide the reader with a quick overview of the basic socio-economic data of the Atlantic Space. This approach is also used for the current 2000-2006 OP	Adopted II.A.2. and Appendix 6		Pertinence
3. Try to use more universal statistical sources: Eurostat, IMF, etc.	Currently the sources mentioned text are the work carried out by the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON), the "Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective" and the "Atlantic Transnational Network"	Adopted		Pertinence
4. Avoid so many references and invitations to consult other studies and documentation ("Atlantic Transnational Network" or "Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective"). This should be kept to the minimum, and appear as footnotes.	Potential applicants may not be familiar with these sources. The Atlantic Area OP 2007-2013 should be a self-standing document.	Partially adopted	The text still makes a lot references to outside documents	Completeness
5. Comments on regions that are not longer part of part of the Atlantic Area for 2007-2013 should be deleted. For instance: II.B.1.a. (current paragraph 28): Castile	The analysis has to be kept to the eligible area	Adopted		Pertinence
6. Maps should be complete and made more easily understandable	In some cases is not possible to read the data of the colour scale or/and the basic data is not provided.	Adopted		Usefulness of maps
7. Indicators used should be sufficiently defined: -The formula to get to the RDI should be stated. -The formula to get to the indicator used to asses the degree of integration into the knowledge economy should be disclosed	Some of the indicators used are not universal or widely accepted and used. Thus they should be further defined. Pg. 8 RDI (Relative Development Index) is not defined, though it mentions that is the aggregate of 8 socio-economic variables without mentioning which. Pg. 11 The degree of the integration into the knowledge economy (or Lisbon strategy), although in this case the 5 variables are mentioned: Productivity, employment rate, R&D expenditure, personnel working in the R&D sector, and proportion of the schooled population having completed higher education studies, the weighting of each variable is not mentioned, and innovation is not part of this indicator.	Adopted		Improving reliability, clarity and accuracy If the indicator is not well defined, we do not really know what is exactly measuring and quantifying. In this way, there could be a different Relative development Index, leading to different conclusions.
8. The section determining the list of the eligible areas within the Programme is not placed in accordance to the ERDF Regulation. The suggestion comes up when thinking about the convenience of keeping the same order that the Regulation follows.	Most of the 2007-2013 OPs will probably follow the structure set up by the Regulation.	Adopted		Coherence

3.3 Relevance of the Programme Strategy

3.3.1 General Assessment – The Relevance Matrix

Figure 5 overleaf presents a "relevance matrix", based on the Operational Programme. This matrix compares the weaknesses and opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis with the issues addressed by the 12 core objectives identified in the Programme strategy.

Overall, the matrix demonstrates that a strong correlation between the SWOT and the programme objectives exists. However, a number of points warrant highlighting:

- There are too many entries in the SWOT;
- Not all of the entries of the SWOT come from the preceding analysis;
- The distinction between objectives is not absolutely clear in two particular cases:

  - Between objectives 2.2 and 2.4 (sustainable management of resources of marine spaces/ protection of natural spaces and coastal zones) Protection of coastal zones and quality of water are present in both specific objectives.

  - Between Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 (Pool resources and skills for sustainable urban and rural development/make cities and regions more influent through networking) both objectives converge in cities putting resources together to have joint expertise. The evaluator recommended rethinking about possible ways forward to guarantee no overlapping in the Operational Programme.

Figure 5: Relevance Matrix – The link between the strategy and the SWOT

SWOT ISSUE	"Innovation networks"			"Sustainable marine and coastal environment "				"Connectivity"		"Sustainable Communities"		
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	4.3
ECONOMY												
W: Uneven development, segmentation, big disparities between the regions								X		X	X	
W: Several regions without a major international opening and with a deficient structure of offers: absence of higher-level services, over-specialisation in technological activities and low added value	X	X	X			X		X		X		
W: Low integration of these regions in the knowledge economy, with low percentage of R&D jobs and insufficient international opening	X	X				X		X		X		
W: Reluctance of the business sector to engage in technology transfer and other forms of cooperation with academic and research centres	X	X										X
O: Intensification of exchanges stimulated by globalisation, particularly in the former colonial empires								X	X			X
O: Endogenous competitive potential in certain sectors		X	X			X			X		X	X
O: Political desire to "reject the announced decline" of the Atlantic Area	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
O: Dynamics inspired by the re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy	X	X	X								X	X
ENVIRONMENT, MARITIME HERITAGE												
W: Decline in shipbuilding		X							X			
W: Industrial and urban derelict areas										X		
W: Urban development and tourist-based pressure in coastal areas					X		X			X		
W: Insufficient level of protection / conservation / sustainable management of natural resources and cultural heritage				X	X		X			X		
W: Deficient treatment of road traffic, waste, wastewater				X	X		X	X		X		
W: Damaged environment of estuaries and industrial regions					X		X			X		
W: Over fishing, marine pollution				X	X		X					
O: Growing awareness of the need for sustainable development				X	X	X	X			X		X
O: Increase in the cost of oil, and Kyoto Protocol: more attractive renewable energies in sectors of interest to the Atlantic Area					X							

SWOT ISSUE	"Innovation networks"			"Sustainable marine and coastal environment "				"Connectivity"		"Sustainable Communities"		
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	4.3
O: Tourism potential in transnational cultural features				X			X	X		X	X	X
O: Niche excellence in high added value industries of the maritime economy		X					X		X			
ACCESIBILITY												
W: Mediocre accessibility for many regions, especially internationally	X	X	X					X	X			
W: Insufficient interconnection of networks								X				
W: Poor access to regional airports								X				
W: Problems of continuity and interoperability of the networks, notably the Franco-Spanish break								X				
W: Poor performance of rail freight								X	X			
W: High port costs, port services market distant and diffuse								X	X			
W: Digital divide	X	X	X							X	X	
O: World-wide growth in maritime shipping		X		X	X			X	X			
O: Great potential of SSS, enhanced by the rise in energy costs		X			X				X			
O: "Motorway of the sea of Western Europe" project				X	X				X			
TERRITORIAL STRUCTURE												
W: Low influence of many regional cities and medium-sized towns.											X	
W: Fragile zones in decline, with low integration potential			X					X			X	
O: Potential synergy between "powerhouse sub-areas" and other "sub-areas"	X	X	X					X	X		X	
O: Potential for strengthened cooperation and exploitation of synergies within existing or new transnational project partnerships	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X

W: Weakness
O: Opportunity

3.3.2 Recommendations and Tracking

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
9. To bring the analytical text, the SWOT analysis, the challenges and the Priorities description more in line with each other. Try to draw a clearer link between the analysis and the Priorities and objectives.	The draft OP relates the priorities with the Challenges and the SWOT analysis. However, the SWOT should only be fed by the preceding text. And the challenges should cover all the contents of the SWOT analysis	Adopted		Consistency
10. To strengthen the link between the SWOT analysis and the Priorities and specific objectives	The relevancy matrix demonstrates that the individual objectives chosen can not yet in all cases be backed up by the SWOT analysis	Adopted		Consistency
11. Prioritisation and ranking of the SWOT elements	Number of individual bullet points is very large, which makes interpretation difficult	Adopted		Clarity
13. Increase attention to Information and Communication Technologies		Partially adopted	Thematic Concentration	
14. The specific objectives should appear in the Index	This will provide a better overview of the program	Adopted		To improve clarity
15. When describing Priority 3, it is recommended to explain clearly that accessibility has to refer to both transport within the Atlantic Space and outside this particular area.		Adopted		Clarity
16. Consider deleting the weakness referred to "Under exploitation, fallow land in the less successful farming areas" under the Environment and Maritime Heritage Priority.	The SWOT analysis has to be tailored to the four big thematic Priorities. Otherwise, we would take a risk of not covering any single area of the Atlantic Space.	Adopted		Coherence

3.4 Conclusions and answer to the chapter's key question

The Operational Programme for the Atlantic Area 2007-2013 represents an appropriate strategy to meet the challenges confronting this specific geographic space in the European Union.

The socio-economic analysis included in the OP and the resulting needs analysis for the Trans-national Cooperation Programme for the Atlantic portraits the Atlantic Area in a satisfactory manner and illustrate the main needs that can be tackled within the competences of Programme.

The evaluator has appreciated an effort to concentrate the analysis only on those issues that are within the competence of the Programme and on which a transnational cooperation approach is appropriate.

The evaluator has also appreciated that the selection of these issues is based on a through revision of the ERDF Regulation 1080/2006, the previous versions of the Programme, including its fact-finding studies, and the mid-term evaluations carried out in 2003 and 2005.

Sections II.B.1, II.B.2, II.B.3 and II.B.4 contain a selection of sophisticated and in-depth analysis on the specific issues of economic development, environment and maritime heritage, accessibility and transport and territorial structure.

Overall, a strong correlation between the SWOT (needs and challenges for the Atlantic Area) and the programme objectives exists and only some few points have been pointed out as possible aspects to be improved such as the need to increase attention to Information and Communication Technologies.

4.0   Internal Coherence

4.1   Key Question

> Is the strategy well defined with clear objectives and priorities and can those objectives be realistically achieved with the financial resources allocated to the different priorities?

4.2   Coherence of Objectives

4.2.1 General Assessment – Objective Tree

The objective tree overleaf presents the inter-relationship between the overall aim, approach, priorities and objectives of the Objective 3 Programme for the Atlantic Area. Two issues need to be regarded here: are various components of the programme consistent with each other (at least not contradictory) and are they proportional to the overall aims of the programme?

Using the inter-relationships highlighted in the objective tree as a basis, the following issues arise on the relation between the specific objectives and the overall one.

The overall objective of the Programme is as follows: ***"To achieve significant and tangible progress in transnational cooperation geared towards cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development of the Atlantic Area and its maritime heritage"***

There is a strong relation between the overall aim of the Programme and the specific objectives. If we de-compose the overall objective in parts, we can make a direct and evident link between each part and some or all specific objectives.

- *Tangible transnational cooperation*

This has been the leading feature at the time of programming this particular OP for the Atlantic Area. All the specific objectives will strengthen transnational cooperation. The specific objectives are geared in areas where the transnational cooperation approach is the optimum, over particular local and regional initiatives.

- *Cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development*

Again, all the specific objectives are meant to contribute to territorial cohesion. The means and the achievements will possibly increase the territorial cohesion of the Atlantic Area. The process of pulling resources and partners of the Atlantic Area together will itself have long term beneficial externalities and side effects on a sustainable and balanced territorial development.

The three specific objectives that can be outlined under Priority 1 for their high contribution in their expected results towards this part of the Programme's overall objective are the following:

Objective 1.1 Develop knowledge transfers between companies and research centres
Objective 1.2 Enhance competitiveness and innovation capacities in maritime economy niches of excellence
Objective 1.3 Stimulate economic conversion and diversification by promoting regional endogenous potential

The two specific objectives on Priority 3 accessibility and internal links can also be outlined for their high contribution in their expected results towards this end.

Objective 3.1 Promote interoperability and continuity of existing transport network, and sea/road/rail/air intermodality
Objective 3.2 Promote short sea shipping and cooperation between ports

This also applies to one specific objective under Priority 4, which is understood to be crucial for this part of the overall objective:

Objective 4.2 Make cities and regions more influential and attractive through networking

- *Development of the maritime heritage*

Four specific objectives have been spotted as major contributors to this field:

Objective 2.1 Improve maritime safety
Objective 2.2 Sustainable management and protection of the resources of marine spaces
Objective 2.4 Protect and promote natural spaces and coastal zones
Objective 4.3 Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest

In parallel to the above analysis, and using the inter-relationships highlighted in the objective tree as a basis, the following issues arise on the relation between priorities and specific objectives:

- The scope of objective 1.3 "stimulate economic conversion and diversification by promoting regional endogenous potential" goes well beyond innovation, as it includes a wide array of other areas for transnational cooperation. The evaluator could suggest to analyse the convenience of including the objective into Priority 4.

- On the Objective 2.3 "Exploit the renewable energy potential" and its inclusion under Priority 2 "Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment", the evaluator observes that if the specific objective remains with an scope related specifically to marine renewable energy (as the evaluator indeed recommended), this

particular objective on different energy renewable sources could suit better under Priority 3, on accessibility and internal links.

- The evaluator invited to consider whether Objective 4.3 on "Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest" could suit better under Priority 2, unless Priority 4 is reinforced in its urban planning role.

Finally, the evaluator welcomed the very pertinent further thematic concentration reflected in the final draft of the Operational Programme dated 21 January 2007, in particular, on the maritime dimension of the Atlantic Area.

Figure 6: Objective Tree for the Atlantic Area Objective 3 Programme 2007-2013

4.2.2 Recommendations and Tracking

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
17. To delete "Contrary to what a widespread attitude might suggest, the main reason is not the availability of ERDF funding allocated to territorial cooperation"	It is unnecessary and not very appropriate in the context of an Operational Programme	Not adopted III.A.		Coherence
18. Avoid overlap Between objectives 2.2 and 2.4 (sustainable management of resources of marine spaces/ protection of natural spaces and coastal zones) Protection of coastal zones and quality of water are present in both specific objectives.	The distinction does not appear clear in the general context of the Programme	Adopted	Objective 2.4 is drafted including protection of water resources	Clarity
19. Avoid overlap between Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 (optimisation of existing transport infrastructure and multi-modal strategies / interoperability). Multi-modal strategies and interoperability can be viewed as tools for optimising existing transport infrastructure.		Adopted	Fomer objective 3.1 has been eliminated	Duplicity
20. Avoid overlap between Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 (Pool resources and skills for sustainable urban and rural development/make cities and regions more influent through networking) both objectives converge in cities putting resources together to have joint expertise. The evaluator recommends rethinking about possible ways forward to guarantee no overlapping in the Operational Programme.		Partially adopted		
21. The scope of objective 1.3 "stimulate economic conversion and diversification by promoting regional endogenous potential" goes well beyond innovation, as it includes a wide array of other areas for transnational cooperation. The evaluator could suggest to analyse the convenience of including the objective into Priority 4		Not adopted		
22. On the Objective 2.3 "Exploit the renewable energy potential" and its inclusion under Priority 2 "Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment", the evaluator observes that if the specific objective remains with an scope related specifically to marine renewable energy (as the evaluator indeed recommended), this particular objective on different energy renewable sources could suit better under Priority 3, on accessibility and internal links.		Not adopted		
23. The evaluator invited to consider whether Objective 4.3 on " Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest" could suit better under Priority 2, unless Priority 4 is reinforced in its urban planning role.		Not adopted		

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4.3 Conclusions and answer to the chapter's key question

The various components of the Programme are structured in 4 Priorities and 12 specific objectives and they have proved to be consistent with each other. These specific objectives have been drawn with a strong component of thematic concentration, in particular, on the maritime dimension of the Atlantic Area.

Using the inter-relationships highlighted in the objective tree as a basis, the evaluator has appreciated a strong relation between the overall aim of the Programme which is to achieve significant and tangible progress in transnational cooperation geared towards cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development of the Atlantic Area and its maritime heritage and the specific objectives set up by the Programme.

In this way, achieving a tangible transnational cooperation among the Atlantic actors has been the leading feature at the time of Programming; this is to say, the specific objectives are geared in areas where the transnational cooperation approach is the optimum, over particular, local and regional initiatives.

Also, all specific objectives are meant to contribute to achieve a cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development; the process of pulling together resources and partners of the Atlantic Area together will itself have long term beneficial externalities and side effects on a sustainable and balanced territorial development and, in any case, the specific objectives on accessibility and internal links and the ones focusing on entrepreurship and innovations will have a high contribution in their expected results towards this part of the Programme's overall objective.

Finally, on the maritime heritage part of the overall objective, practically one full Priority is devoted to this end and also specific efforts will be concentrated on the promotion of the Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest.

Some critical points to answer this particular key question on the internal coherence came from the place to include the objective 1.3 on "stimulate economic conversion and diversification by promoting regional endogenous potential" that could be included under Priority 4 to achieve better coherence and considering whether Objective 4.3 on " Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest" could suit better under Priority 2, unless Priority 4 is reinforced in its urban planning role.

5.0 External Coherence

5.1 Key Question

> Is the strategy coherent with policies at regional, national and Community level? How will the strategy contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon strategy for Jobs and Growth?

5.2 Coherence with Strategic EU Policy

5.2.1 The link to Lisbon and Gothenburg

The Community Strategic Guidelines (CSGs) articulate the EU's conception of how EU cohesion policy contributes to the strategic objectives contained in the revised Lisbon Strategy, agreed by Europe's heads of state and government in March 2005 as well as the existing commitments set out in the Gothenburg Strategy. As such, we have taken the Strategic Guidelines as a starting point for analysis of the external coherence of the Atlantic Area Operational Programme (additionally because they are also the basis for the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and thus a common reference point for the Atlantic Area Countries).

The CSGs stress very clearly the need to ensure that resources spent through cohesion policy instruments are focused on promoting sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment as set out in the renewed Lisbon strategy. The same Guidelines argue for increased thematic and geographical concentration in the use of Structural Funds, to be ensured at the level of programmes and projects by including only those elements that can contribute to the growth and jobs agenda (CSG. p.8).

Although "Growth and Jobs" are the core priorities of the revised Lisbon Strategy, CSGs do explicitly recognised the environmental dimension of sustainable development, notably in terms of the need to reduce environmental risks and development more sustainable patterns of natural resource use.

The Community Strategic Guidelines identity three priority areas ("Guidelines"), where cohesion policy should seek to target resources in order to contribute to the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs: attractiveness, innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy and "more and better jobs". These Guidelines, each subdivided into a number of priorities, form "a single framework which Member States and regions are invited to use when developing national and regional programmes, in particular with a view to assessing their contribution to the objectives of the Union in terms of cohesion, growth and jobs".

This relationship between the priorities set out in the CSGs and the Lisbon Strategy is illustrated in Figure 7 overleaf.

Figure 7: The Contribution of Cohesion Policy to the Lisbon Strategy (Based on Community Strategic Guidelines)
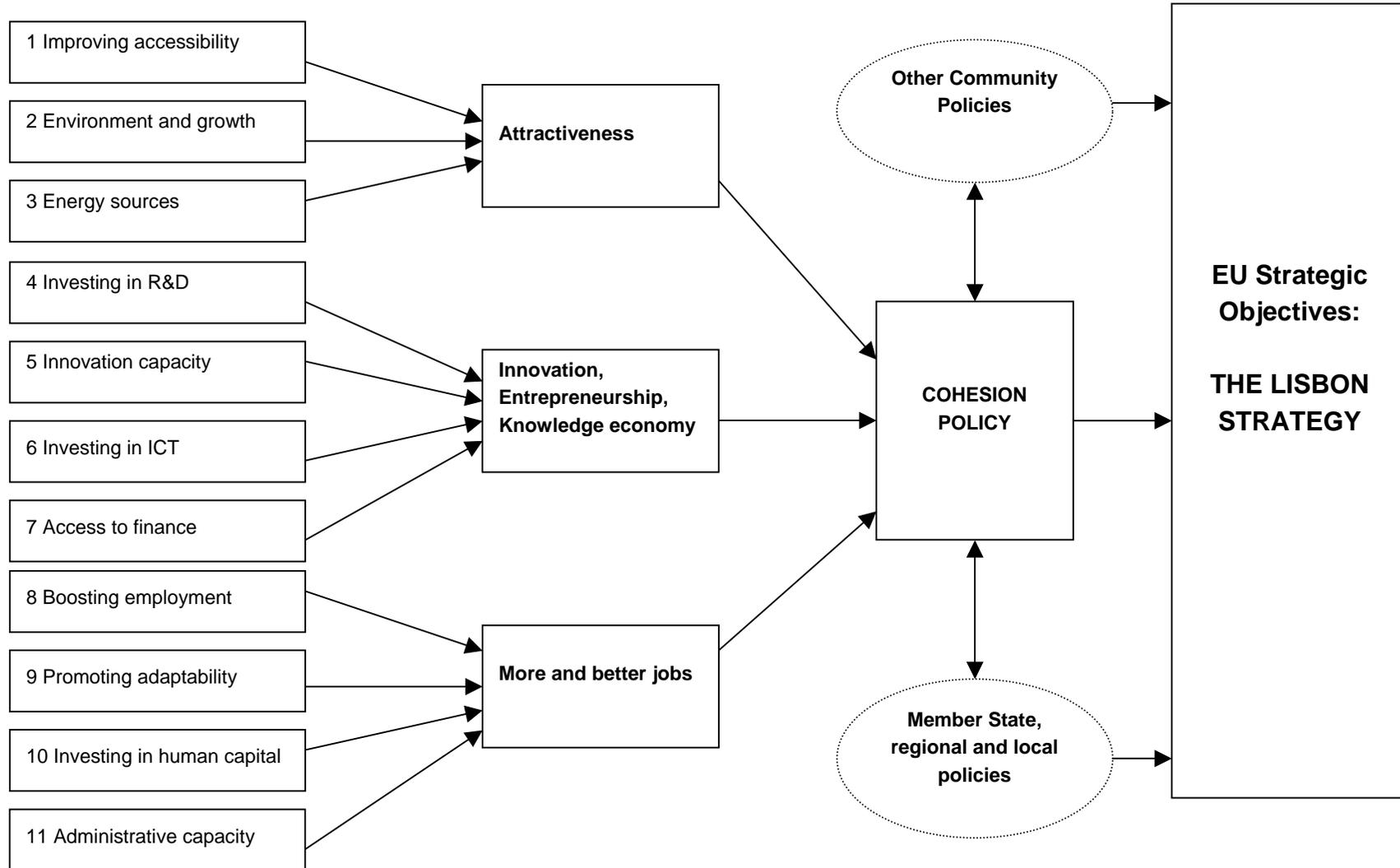
5.2.2 General Assessment - The Atlantic Area OP and Lisbon and Gothenburg

There are five main priorities from the CSGs, where (in light of its remit and resources), the Objective 3 Operational Programme for the Atlantic Area might be expected to contribute directly to the Lisbon goals, namely:

1. Expand and improve transport infrastructures
2. To strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth
3. Address Europe's intensive use of traditional energy sources
4. Facilitate innovation and promote entrepreneurship
5. Promote the information society for all

The programme cannot directly support activities under the other priorities within "more and better jobs", as these do not fall within the issues to be addressed by the ERDF (and the Trans-national Cooperation Objective), but are financed at Community level through the ESF and other Community Programmes (for example those in the field of education and training).

As such, our assessment of external consistency will focus on the five areas listed above, with a view to addressing the key question of whether the priorities and objectives are coherent with the relevant EU strategic priorities as articulated in the revised Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs and the Community Strategic Guidelines. The "external consistency matrix" overleaf provides a qualitative assessment of these linkages for each priority and objective in the Programme.

Figure 8: External Consistency Matrix

		Expand and improve transport infrastructures	To strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth	Address Europe's intensive use of traditional energy sources	Facilitate innovation and promote entrepreneurship	Promote the information society for all
1. Promote transnational entrepreneurial and innovation networks	**Objective 1.1**: Develop Knowledge transfers between companies and research centres	No direct link	No direct link	Potential for fostering "energy innovation"	Direct link, given importance of academic-business links	Potential for fostering "ICT innovation". ICT may play a role in the networking envisaged
	Objective 1.2: Enhance competitiveness and innovation capacities in maritime economy niches of excellence	No direct link	No direct link	Optimisation of energy sources can reduce consumption	Direct and evident link	ICT may play a role in the networking envisaged
	Objective 1.3: Stimulate economic conversion and diversification by promoting regional endogenous potential	No direct link	Potential for restructuring protecting/recovering the environment. Although the link is not evident.	Optimisation can reduce energy use	Direct and evident link	ICT may play a role in the restructuring envisaged
2. Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment sustainably	**Objective 2.1**: Improve maritime safety	No direct link	Improved security will have a positive effect on conservation of the environment and in competitiveness and growth	No direct link	Possible innovative approaches to pollution management and to improve maritime safety	ICT may play a role.
	Objective 2.2: Sustainable management and protection of the resources of marine spaces	No direct link	The positive effect on conservation of the environment will have a positive impact on competitiveness and growth	No direct link	Possible innovative approaches to sustainable management of the resources of marine spaces	ICT may play a role in the management
	Objective 2.3: Exploit the renewable energy potential of the marine and coastal environment	No direct link	Reduced pollution has a positive impact on attractiveness	Direct and evident link	Possible innovative approaches to exploit renewable energy	No direct link
	Objective 2.4: Protect and promote natural spaces, water resources and coastal zones	No direct link	The positive effect on conservation of the environment will have a positive impact on competitiveness and growth and on attractiveness	No direct link	Possible innovative approaches to pollution management	ICT may play a role in the management
3. Improve accessibility and links	**Objective 3.1**: Promote interoperability and continuity of existing transport networks, and sea/road/rail/air intermodality	Direct and evident link	Multimodal approaches and optimisation can have positive environmental impacts	Multimodal approaches and optimisation can reduce energy use	No direct link	No direct link
	Objective 3.2: Promote short-sea shipping and cooperation between ports	Direct and evident link	SSS can reduce environmental impact of transport	Possible reductions in energy use	Possible innovative approaches to SSS	No direct link

		Expand and improve transport infrastructures	To strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth	Address Europe's intensive use of traditional energy sources	Facilitate innovation and promote entrepreneurship	Promote the information society for all
4. **Promote transnational synergies in sustainable urban and regional development**	**Objective 4.1**: Pool resources and skills in the field of sustainable urban and rural development	Potential for improvement of local transport	Potential for urban and rural development protecting/recovering the environment to make it sustainable.	Possible reductions in energy use	No direct link	Possible link depending on focus on networking
	Objective 4.2: Make cities and regions more influential and attractive through networking	No direct link	No direct link	No direct link	No direct link	Possible link depending on focus on networking
	Objective 4.3: Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest	No direct link	Direct and evident link	No direct link	No direct link	No direct link

In red: direct and evident link

- Figure 8 demonstrates that, at a strategic level, there is a relationship between the priorities and objectives of the Draft Operational Programme and the core Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives, as articulated in the Community Strategic Guidelines.

- However, it highlighted the lack of a specific objective that intends to promote the information society as there is not a direct and evident link for this purpose. Nevertheless, the evaluator observes that the importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is very present on the OP, and that projects promoting the use of ICTs fall within the scope of the following specific objectives:

    – Specific Objective 1.1 Develop Knowledge transfers between companies and research centres
    – Specific Objective 1.3 Stimulate restructuring and diversification by promoting regional endougenous potential
    – Specific Objective 4.1 Pool resources and skills in the field of sustainable urban and rural development.

  These specific objectives will foster the use of ICTs.

  The evaluator recommended considering the addition of a specific objective or to amend an existing objective to promote the ICTs.

- Finally, it has to be stated that the real contribution of the Programme objectives to Lisbon and Gothenburg will naturally be dependent on the nature of the activities actually supported. The potential contribution of actions supported to the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives should be a key concern in the development of more detailed implementation provisions and, in particular, in project selection criteria.

5.2.3 *Recommendations and Tracking*

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
24. To consider changing Priority 4 wording for "Promote transnational synergies for sustainable Urban and Rural development".	It matches better with actual Atlantic Region needs, the overall EU Policy (Gothenburg) and the ERDF regulation (priority areas of European territorial cooperation priority d). In any case, the evaluator estimates that the word "sustainable" should be included in the final wording	Adopted		Coherence with EU policy and ERDF regulation
25. Amend objective 4.2 to "Make the Atlantic Area cities and regions a more attractive place to invest"	The matrix reveals that the wording of previous versions of the specific objective 4.2 *Make cities and regions more influent through networking* is not related to any of this five Lisbon goals. Furthermore, the justification of this objective 4.2 and of the priority 4 in the draft OP is based on the idea mentioned in the OP that "there is no level playing field between entities of the Atlantic Area and very large metropolitan areas of the EU core pentagon" in section IV.D.2.b and that the Atlantic Area "must attempt to free itself to the extent possible from the domination of the major European cities". The evaluator is of the opinion that EU funding should never contribute to favour a certain region against another EU region, resulting in a situation where we can even question if there is a positive contribution for the EU as a whole as a result of the actions or projects financed. This fact is acknowledged in the OP, as in section III.D.1 where the priorities are related to the Lisbon Agenda and priority 4 is not mentioned among those that contribute to the strategy proposed by the Community Strategic Guidelines: 1. Making Europe and its regions more attractive places in which to invest and work and 2. Improving knowledge and innovation for work. It is related nevertheless by OP to a second part of the Community Strategic Guidelines dedicated to the territorial dimension of cohesion policy. The evaluator believes that priority 4 could be easily amended to fully contribute to "Making Europe and its regions more attractive places in which to invest and work". The specific objective 4.2 could be amended to *Make the Atlantic Area cities and regions a more attractive place to invest.*	Partially adopted		Coherence with Lisbon Strategy
26. There should be more emphasis on sustainable development.	Sustainable development should inform all Programmes' priorities.	Adopted		Coherence with Gothenburg & Lisbon Strategies
27. The following should be deleted: III.D.1 "Cooperation projects generate jobs, at least indirectly, but this is not their primary purpose". On the opposite, it will have to be challenged to demonstrate their contribution in this aspect and at least that they do not harm the growth and job creation.	"In fact, for the next generation programs, promoting territorial cohesion should be part of the effort to ensure that all of Europe's territory has the opportunity to contribute to the growth and jobs agenda." Quote from Community strategic guidelines on cohesion As growth and job creation is one of the main EU policy objectives. Cooperation projects are part of the whole Community policy package and this is one of the objectives that cooperation policy should contribute to achieve. Thus it is a primary finality. The same applies to sustainable development (Gothenburg).	Adopted		Coherence with Lisbon Strategy: Growth and Jobs

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
28. To eliminate the list that appears in each priority in "Complementarity with other EU programs"	The list would be constantly changing. It risk of not being exhaustive either.	Adopted		Accuracy
29. In section II.C.3.a, where we find: "The difficulty of finding reliable partners in certain regions" It should be deleted or expressed differently.	The EU Member States regions and stakeholders have to be considered as reliable. The valuable comment around this idea is that partnerships should not be forced or imposed	Adopted		Coherence
30. To delete in section II.E.3 opinions such as " les regions atlantiques doivent s'afranchir de leur dépendance excessive à son égard » or « pour tenter de réduire leur polarisation excessive sur leur capitales respectives ».	From the evaluator's point of views, these are just opinions. They are too subjective argumentations. The problem in the view of the evaluator is not an excessive communication or exchanges with the capital, but the lack of exchanges and appropriate communication with other cities and regions. It would be more appropriate in the context of this program to focus on promoting new exchanges and to communicate better the Atlantic area, making the emphasis that currently has a deficit of accessibility.	Partially adopted. The text has been amended as follows " very strong traditions of national centralism have polarised the Atlantic regions towards their respective capital cities. Despite the important relaying role that these cities will always have, the Atlantic regions must free themselves of their excessive dependence in this respect. The same goes for the central European pentagon. However there is a note that indicates that this sentence will be amended in the final version of the Operational Programme		Accuracy
31. In section IV .D, it is recommended to delete the following: The Atlantic Area "must attempt to free itself to the extent possible from the domination of the major European cities" In IV.D.1 propose deletion of **"to counterbalance, at least in part, the supremacy of the major European cities"**.	The development of networks of cities and regions can have a lot of positive and constructive effects on their own and the overall growth of the EU. The aim should not be to counterbalance supremacy of other EU cities, but to make a contribution for the regions directly affected and the EU community as a whole. It must be noted that the program is partly financed with EU funding.	Adopted		Coherence with EU
32. To amend on IV.A.1 "plus dynamiques, à économie innovante et diversifiée, et les régions moins prospères	» It seems with this affirmation that some regions will give and the others receive. It is unnecessary to the understanding of the idea of exploiting the complementarities.	Adopted		Consistency
33. To delete In IV.C.2.a "(harmonizing port charges, road haulage, etc)"	Those are policy options. The evaluator suggest to rather use the term "fair and effective pricing" Harmonizing port charges may not be the most appropriate or (fair and effective) charge system in this case, it is only one of the possibilities.	Adopted		Coherence with EU competition policy

5.3   Coherence with National Policies

5.3.1 General Assessment – Coherence with NSRFs

As it is stated in the OP for the Atlantic Area 2007-2013, the National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs) contain the national strategic priorities for cohesion over the 2007-2013 programming period, and were prepared by the national authorities of the Member States involved in the Programme on the basis of the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013.

The coherence of the Atlantic Area Operational Programme with the draft National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs) available to the evaluators has been partially assessed.

At the time of preparing the different versions of the ex ante reports, and during the whole process of Programming in the Atlantic Area, the relevant NSRFs were still under negotiation with the European Commission. The EC was negotiating on the basis of both, official versions of the NSRFs and draft forms of these documents.

Subsequently, the evaluator was not in the position of undertaking this assessment in an in-depth manner. Nevertheless, the evaluator observed potential synergies with other regional programmes covering the participating regions in the Atlantic OP and, moreover, acknowledged the analysis undertaking in Section III.E.3 on the consistency with the National Strategic Reference Frameworks included in the Operational Programme:

Three out of five participating Member States have addressed the European territorial cooperation objective in their respective NSRFs, namely Spain, France and Portugal. There is no incompatibility between the content of the Programme and the recommendations included in the NSRF of these Member States, whereas various policy options and key-principles put forward by the Spanish, French and Portuguese authorities are particularly well taken into account in the priorities of the Programme strategy.

5.3.2 Recommendations and Tracking

No recommendations made on this specific subject

5.4 Conclusions and answer to the key question

The evaluator concludes that the strategy outlined by the Atlantic Area Programme for the 2007-2013 programming period will contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Throughout the implementation of transnational cooperation projects, the Programme can help to improve transport infrastructures, to strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and

growth, address energy issues and facilitate, from a transnational perspective, innovation and entrepreneurship.

If there is a minus among this strong and valid contribution that the evaluators forecast that the Programme will have, we could mention that there is no clear link between the Programme and the Lisbon goal on promoting the information society for all, as no specific objective will be supporting projects on this subject. Nevertheless, the evaluator observes that the importance of information and communication technologies is very present on the OP, and that projects promoting the use of ICTs fall within the scope of various specific objectives.

Finally, it has to be stated that the real contribution of the Programme objectives to Lisbon and Gothenburg will naturally be dependent on the nature of the activities actually supported. The potential contribution of actions supported to the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives should be a key concern in the development of more detailed implementation provisions and, in particular, in project selection criteria.

6.0   Monitoring System and Indicators

6.1   Key Question

Are appropriate indicators identified for the objectives and can these indicators and their targets form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance?

6.2   Introduction

This section contains an analysis of the proposed systems of indicators for future measuring and for the evaluation of the performance of the Programme.

The evaluators have assessed whether such indicators can form the basis for quantifying transnational cooperation operations in the Atlantic Area in the period 2007-2013.

This chapter is mainly divided in two parts. Firstly, the evaluators provide with some ideas, suggestions and guidelines for establishing in an efficient manner a system to enable Programme authorities to quantify the achievements of the Programme, following a methodology based on past experience in the Atlantic Area and other geographic spaces across the EU. Secondly, the evaluation analyzes the proposed monitoring system as a whole.

6.3   Reflections and suggestions on the structure of the monitoring system

*6.3.1 Link indicators and hierarchy of objectives and intervention logic*

Observation

The structure for the set of indicators needs to be in line with the hierarchy of objectives and the intervention logic containing the priorities and measures for the new Atlantic Area programme as defined in the OP. The link between the indicators and the objectives is however not always clear. In other words, according to the evaluator, it will not be always possible to evaluate in which sense a specific measure or action contributed to achieving the objective on the basis of the defined indicators. Indicators should also be linked to a level of objectives. That's why no output indicators should be linked to priority objectives.

Suggestion

For each indicator that you define it should be able to place it in the following figure:

Figure 9: Hierarchy of indicators
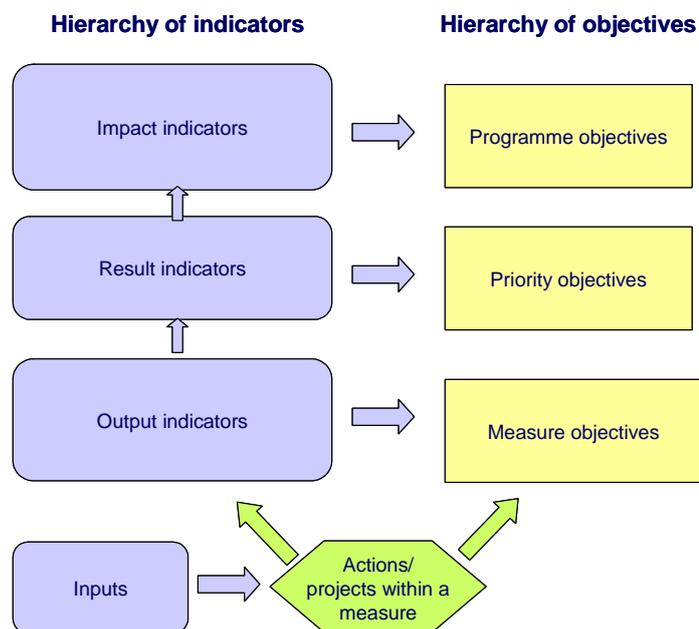
In the indicator table, the evaluator suggests to use the same structure for all types of indicators. Currently, output indicators are categorised in a different way than the result and impact indicators. We suggest to link output indicators to measures that are in turn part of priorities. By doing this, the link between output and result indicators is made clearer.

6.3.2 Number of indicators

Observation

Experience shows that if a very extended list of indicators is foreseen, many of them stay blank during the programme period or are not correctly and incomplete. Additionally, a large set of indicators provokes often resistance at all parties involved in measuring the indicators.

Ideally very few (5 to 10) impact indicators should be put forward, reflecting the overall programme objectives.

Suggestion

Try to develop a compact set of good and relevant indicators, keep especially the number of impact indicators limited.

Figure 10: Indicators pyramid
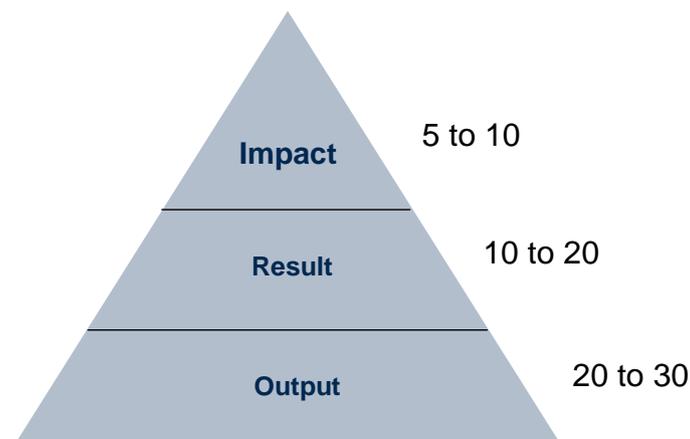
Thinking in advance about the needed implementation actions to make a certain indicator available and measurable can help you to reduce the amount of indicators. It can be possible that a certain indicator theoretically is a very good and interesting indicator but in practice is very hard to collect due to all kind of factors:

- Big technical adaptations are necessary
- Data not available in all countries

The added value of having the indicator should be sufficiently in equilibrium with the efforts needed to make the indicator available.

6.3.3 Lisbon and Gothenburg indicators

Suggestion

As 75% of the structural funds received by a Member State need to be earmarked to the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives this has to be reflected in the choice of the programme indicators.

All result indicators should be measured in each reporting period as the frequency is a determining factor for measurement.

Impact indicators on Lisbon and Gothenburg can be included in the final activity report, since generally impact indicators can only be measured in the longer run. The project promoters can be asked to give an indication of how the project has contributed to L&G objectives at certain periods in the programming period (mid-term evaluation, final evaluation). In turn this can lead to an indication of how the portfolio of projects has contributed to the L&G objectives.

6.4 Reflections and suggestions on indicators in particular

6.4.1 *Type of indicator*

Suggestion

We give for each of the type of indicator a clear definition, followed by a graphical decision tree.

Input indicators
Resource or input indicators refer to the budget or other resources (like for example, human capital) allocated to each level of the assistance. Financial input indicators are used to monitor progress in terms of the (annual) commitment and payment of the funds available for any operation, measure or programme in relation to its eligible cost.

Output-indicators
Output indicators aim at measuring activities directly realised by the projects. These activities or outputs are the first step in realising the measure objectives or the operational objectives of the project and are measured in physical or monetary units.

Result -indicators
Result indicators aim at measuring the results and direct effects of the projects and show whether the specific objective of the project has been achieved. They provide information on changes to, for example, the behaviour, capacity or performance of direct beneficiaries. Such indicators can be of a physical or financial nature and they are linked with priority objectives.

Impact-indicators
Impact indicators refer to the consequences of the programme beyond the immediate effects on its direct beneficiaries, and are linked to the objectives of the programme. Two concepts of impact can be defined:

- Specific impacts are those effects occurring after a certain lapse of time but which are, nonetheless, directly linked to the operation taken. Usually they are measured through auto evaluation methods or qualitative estimates by programme managers or project promoters jointly
- Global impacts are longer-term effects affecting a wider population. Clearly, measuring this type of impact is complex and clear causal relationships often difficult to establish. However, to be able to produce meaningful result the baseline for every impact indicator should be measured prior to the start of the programme.

The following decision tree can also help for the definition of the type of indicator.

Figure 11: Indicator decision tree

Indicators should be linked to the hierarchy of objectives of RDP's
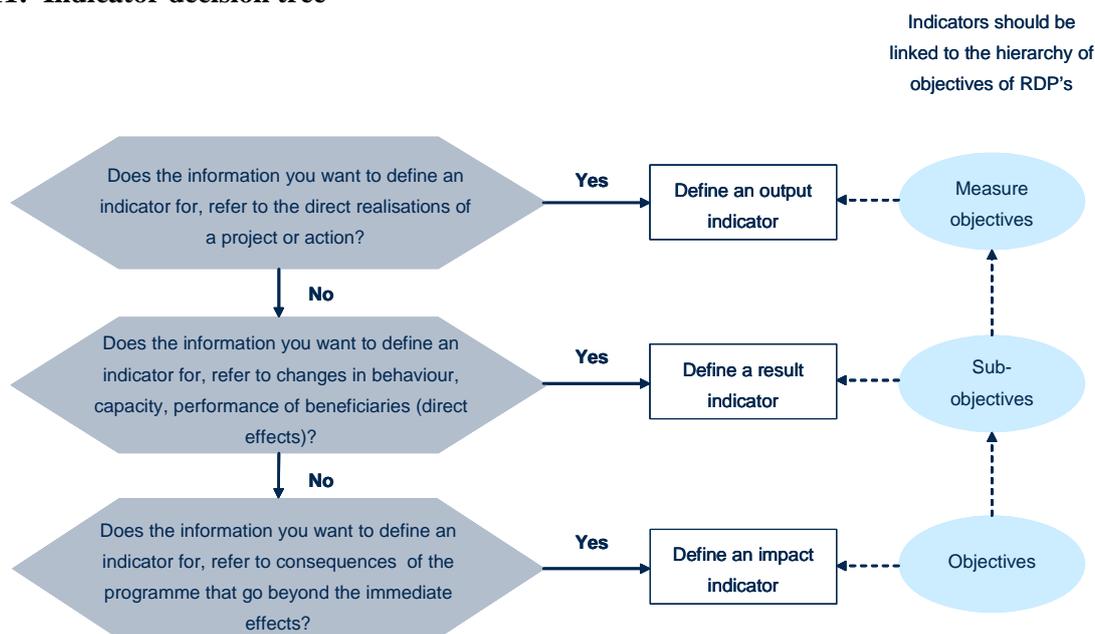
6.4.2 Measurability of certain indicators

An observation we make is that not all indicators are measurable (example result indicator "development of a strong brand identity"). A way to tackle this problem is by introducing a degree of contribution (scale 1 to 5) (Lickert scale) of each project with respect to its objectives. The downside of this type solution is that the results of these indicators can not be aggregated across the programme anymore. A loss of objectivity and reporting efficiency is the result as well as the violation of the SMART rule (specific, measurable, etc.). In case this type of indicator is maintained we suggest to implement a system of auto-evaluation where the promoter and the programme secretariat (together) evaluate the contribution of each project on a scale of 1 to 5.

6.4.3 Set of common indicators

The evaluator's past monitoring and evaluation experience shows that providing a standard set of indicators is only one of the necessary steps to reach a profound, transparent and uniform monitoring system.

Furthermore, it is crucial to provide a well-defined interpretation framework for each of the selected indicators. Therefore, we suggest to make an indicator fiche for each of the selected indicators. This indicator fiche is the "identity card" of the indicator. It is a clear guideline for the user on:

- How to understand the indicator (definition, link to the objectives and activities, …)
- How to measure the indicator (unit of measurement, level of input, responsible actor for input, sources, …)

- How to interpret the indicator (defining norms, does a certain output or result confirm to that norm, ...)

Completing an indicator fiche is an exercise that allows all indicators to be tested before adopting them. Here below we present a possible template for such an indicator fiche.

Name of the indicator	Explanation
Definition of the indicator	Describes the composition, content and meaning of the indicator.
Type of indicator	Indicates if it is an input, output, result or impact indicator. It also indicates the objective and the measure to which it relates.
Subdivision	Sometimes, it is desirable to divide an indicator into subcategories, in order to provide more detail. E.g., a distinction according to gender, age, type of activity, type of geographic region, …
Unit of measurement	E.g., absolute number, number of full time equivalents (FTE), percentage, monetary unit, …
Level of collection	Indicates the lowest level on which the indicator needs to be collected: beneficiary level, project level, national measure level, national programme level.
Responsible actor for collection	Indicates the person, responsible for the *collection* of the necessary data to quantify the indicator. This actor must register these data in a clear and structured way so as to make it easy for reporting.
Collection method and source	Indicates how the (data for the) indicator should be collected (project administration, existing databases, documents, administrations, surveys, statistics, …). For each method, the responsible actor/ institution needs to be indicated as well (the promoter, Eurostat, national institute for statistics, OECD, EU institution, …)
Frequency	With which frequency does the indicator need to be measured? With which frequency does the indicator need to be reported?
Target	Where possible a target could be defined for the indicator. It can be a quantifiable objective that has to be reached after a certain period of time. A target will only be defined in the case of output indicators since they are defined at the level of the measure.
Interpretation	Indicates when a specific value on the indicator has to be evaluated as positive or negative. When there is a target value defined, the indicator can be compared to this value to make a judgement about the indicator, e.g. an indicator can be evaluated as good when it's value is higher than the target value. When there are no target values defined more general interpretation guidelines have to be given, e.g. the higher the indicator, the better or the lower the better. It is also possible to evaluate the indicator by analysing it's evolution over time or by comparing it with available benchmark data.

6.4.4 Comments on the proposed monitoring system as a whole

The final draft of the Operational Programme provides already with an initial set of indicators in its APPENDIX 4.

The complete set of indicators, related targets and baseline information will be included and commented upon in the Programme Implementation and Management Handbook (PIMH), to be produced at the early stages of the Programme's implementation. The exact interpretation of each indicator should be then clarified, and regularly improved with insights provided by the practical experience of data collection.

The evaluator welcomed the effort to keep limited the number of indicator in the proposed set of indicators, as it was stated in the previous parts of this Chapter.

On the specific set of indicators proposed in APPENDIX 4, a number of points are highlighted in the present ex ante evaluation:

− The output indicators and results indicator included in APPENDIX 4, although they are no definitive, need further refinement by the Programme's Management Structure.
− According to the evaluator's opinion, even the number of indicators is limited, there is still a lack of clarity in the proposed system of indicators. The evaluator will be inclined to make a division between Programme Management indicators and Projects/Operations indicators.
− Within Programme management indicators, the evaluators would propose to make a subdivision between financial indicators and physical indicators.
− Among project's indicators a division should be established, between output indicators, result indicators and impact indicators.
− Output indicators should be further elaborated, including typologies of likely outputs of every transnational project, such as:

  o Number of people participating in the activities and/or using operation's outputs;
  o Number of eligible organisations involved/participating in operations;
  o Number of Joint activities;
  o Number of publications;
  o Number of dissemination tools, etc

− On the proposed result indicators, definitions should be kept really clear, and result indicators aim at measuring the results and direct effects of the outputs steaming from the projects. That is why the evaluator encourages to be really clear in making the difference between output and result indicators.
− Finally, on the impact indicators, the evaluator, being realistic about the real consequences of the Atlantic Programme beyond the immediate effects, ie. result indicators, strongly recommends to refine the existing ones, for instance it is believed that the indicator on the "Estimated share of population of the AA cooperation area having heard of the AA

cooperation" should be further elaborated and revised. The evaluator could think about a couple of examples that could be used as impact indicators:

- o Increase in the number of cooperation agreements (inside and outside the Programme)
- o Number of regional or national policies influenced by the project's findings and results

6.4.5 Recommendations and Tracking

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
34. Limit the number of indicators in a transnational cooperation Programme		Adopted	Clarity and tailor made for its purpose	
35. The evaluator will be inclined to make a division between Programme Management indicators and Projects/Operations indicators		Adopted	Reason behind is to set a up an straight-forward system of indicators	
36. Within Programme management indicators, the evaluators would propose to make a subdivision between Financial indicators and physical indicators		No adopted	Put in place what is considered a clear and straight forward system of indicators	
37. Among project's indicators a division should be established, between output indicators, result indicators and impact indicators		Adopted		
38. Output indicators should be further elaborated, including typologies of likely outputs of every transnational project, such as: – Number of people participating in the activities and/or using operation's outputs – Number of eligible organisations involved/participating in operations – Number of Joint activities – Number of publications, – Number of dissemination tools, etc		No adopted	Put in place what is considered a clear and straight forward system of indicators	
39. On the proposed result indicators, definitions should be kept really clear, and result indicators aim at measuring the results and direct effects of the outputs steaming from the projects. That is why the evaluator is reluctant to accept proposed indicators such as "number of public authorities represented" as a result indicator, as this would be an indicator measuring activities directly realised by the projects, ie, an output indicator		Partially adopted	Put in place a clear and straight forward system of indicators	
40. Finally, on the impact indicators, the evaluator being realistic about the real consequences of the Atlantic Programme beyond the immediate effects, ie. result indicators, strongly recommends to refine the existing ones, for instance it is believed that the indicator on the "Estimated share of population of the AA cooperation area having heard of the AA cooperation" should be further elaborated and revised. The evaluator could think about a couple of examples that could be used as impact indicators: – Increase in the number of cooperation agreements (inside and outside the Programme) – Number of regional or national policies influenced by the project's findings and results		No adopted	Being realistic about measuring transnational cooperation impacts	

6.5 Conclusions and answer to the key question

The OP for the Atlantic Area sets up an initial indicators system that will provide with the necessary grounds to develop a compact, straight-forward and user-friendly set of indicators that will allow project participants and, overall, Programme management structures, to accurately measure and quantify the outcomes of the Programme.

All the evaluation process has provided evidence about the difficulty of finding a system for measuring transnational cooperation exercises and efforts have been put in place to arrive to a solution to form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance.

The complete set of indicators, related targets and baseline information will be included and commented upon in the Programme Implementation and Management Handbook (PIMH), to be produced at the early stages of the Programme's implementation. The exact interpretation of each indicator should be then clarified, and regularly improved with insights provided by the practical experience of data collection.

7.0   Implementation and management systems

7.1   Key Question

Are implementation systems appropriate to deliver the objectives of the Programme?

7.2   General Assessment

Ensuring proper implementation arrangements is essential for any Structural Funds Programme, but especially so for a trans-national programme where larger numbers of stakeholders and actors add complexity.

The Member States involved, and those currently managing the current Programme 2000-2006, have gained much experience through the INTERREG IIC and the INTERREG IIIB programmes, and the existing management arrangements are the basis for the new trans-national programme as well. That is re-assuring from an evaluator's perspective, as previous experience by Ireland, the UK, France, Spain and Portugal can be retained.

Descriptions provided in the Programme regarding the assignment and roles of the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authorities are sufficient for their purpose, and following the evaluators' perception, quite comprehensive.

They follow and are in accordance with:

- − Regulation 1083/2006, in what it concerns management, monitoring and financial rules (articles 58 onwards);
- − Regulation 1080/2006, specially in what regards specific provisions on the European Territorial Cooperation Objective, articles 12 to 21

Therefore, the proposed management structure in the Operational Programme is regarded as sufficient and it is fully compliant with the ERDF regulation 1080/2006.

It also complies with Article 14 of the ERDF regulation 1080/2006 that states that "Member States participating in an operational programme shall appoint a single managing authority, a single certifying authority and a single audit authority, the latter being situated in the Member State of the managing authority." "The managing authority, after consultation with the Member States represented in the programme area, shall set up a joint technical secretariat."

The Monitoring Committee is clearly seen as the lead body for the Atlantic Area Programme and will assume overall responsibility. The description of its tasks and responsibilities is in line with Articles 63 and 65 of the General Regulation 1083/2006. The Monitoring Committee will delegate, however, some of its powers to the Steering Committee. This delegation could place mainly in the area of project selection and on the coordination of the monitoring of projects. The

split of tasks between the two bodies is well determined. In the functioning of these two bodies, it is important to look for synergies and take measures to strengthen efficiency (e.g.back-to-back meetings where composition of these Committees overlaps).

It is foreseen that the Monitoring Committee will set up its own rules and procedures and adopt them in agreement with the Management Authority.

The description of this latter body (Management Authority), as well as the one Certifying Authority and the Audit Authority are also satisfactory.

The national correspondents will continue to exist, based on the experiences with this network in previous Programme periods. It is to be underlined that the National correspondents play a fundamental role in the mobilisation of projects on the ground, and that they are not part of the project selection process.

In the previous programme the managing authority was the Poitou-Charentes Region in France working in the name of all the Member States and assisted by a Joint Technical Secretariat located at Poitiers. Joint monitoring and management committees and a joint payment authority were established ensuring smooth operation transnationally.

In spite of a new managing authority, the evaluator acknowledges the collaboration that exist between the 2000-2006 managing authority and the Joint Technical Secretariat and the new 2007-2013 managing authority. This collaboration is essential in order to transfer previous experiences and ensure the right implementation of the new Programme from its very beginning.

The description of this Joint Technical Secretariat is clear and comprehensive, and it has to be noted that the list of tasks and responsibilities does include a reference to project selection as it will "issue periodic calls for proposals, register the applications received and conduct the project assessment procedure in view of the Monitoring Committee sessions dedicated to project selection" – Section VI.A.5.b

Although the Operational Programme provides with satisfactory information on the management structures, and given the fact that transnational cooperation programmes turn out to be complex in their management, the Programme foresees the production of a Programme Implementation and Management Handbook (PIMH). More detailed information about the respective responsibilities and tasks to be performed by the various bodies that compose the management structure and their mutual relationships will be provided in this internal document.

Regarding project selection, the evaluator welcomes offering guidance to project applicants having submitted an idea. However, it should be further emphasized that the joint data base of project ideas that is mentioned in V1. B. 1 should be open to any qualified project applicant. In order to prevent that this mechanism transform the Programme into an "insiders" game.

Builiding on the conclusions of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), it would be useful to see how environmental criteria will be applied when selecting projects, and compliance with enviromental objectives and regulations should be made explicit in the Operational Programme.

The evaluator welcomes the transparency that will provide including the project scoring and ranking system as well as a complete set of selection criteria in the information and application pack. The evaluator believes prospective project applicants might take those into consideration in during the designing and planning process. This information can be vital for project promoters and other stakeholders in the Programme.

On the control of financial flows, the Operational Programme specifications on this are regarded to be sufficient, although the final text has not been finalised.

The evaluator welcomes the paragraph regarding the automatic decommitment rule as this has given rise to concerns amongst project promoters in the current period.

Regarding the validation of project expenditure, Article 16 states "In order to validate the expenditure, each Member State shall set up a control system making it possible to verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared for operations or parts of the operations implemented on its territory, and the compliance of such expenditure and of related operations, or parts of those operations, with community rules and its national rules". Furthermore, the evaluator considers that validation of expenditure at national level can make it easier for project partners. Nevertheless, the ERDF regulation do not impose that the same National Contacts perform any information and/or assisting functions.

The communication and publicity strategy is key to achieving the Programme priorities and objectives. The Operational Programme, in what regards communication and publicity, is considered to be sufficient and in line with the Regulations. Nevertheless, in the Atlantic Area OP, only the key-features and main principles have been outlined. For this reason, the evaluator highlights the importance of drawing up the communication plan that will be included in the PIMH. In particular, it will be important to pay specific attention to those target groups that have not been reached by previous programmes.

These are the main points in the assessment of the ex ante evaluation in what involves implementation systems. A set of concrete recommendations on this subject is included below.

7.1.1 Recommendations and Tracking

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
41. Reconsider that National Contact Points are enabled for "verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure incurred by project partnerships" at National level. An alternative to a single "controller" for the whole Atlantic Area is to allow Member States to designate a National Contact for information purposes, and a different "National Controller"	The function of communicating and assisting is of a different nature than "acting as a controller". Member States might find appropriate to have a national audit type body "acting as a controller"	Adopted		
42. To state more explicitly that the monitoring committee is the lead body for the Programme and will assume overall responsibility		Not adopted	Clarity	
43. It should be further emphasized that the joint data base of project ideas that is mentiones in V1. B. 1 should be open to any qualified project applicant.	To prevent that this mechanism transform the Programme into an "insiders" game.	Adopted		
44. On section VI. B. 2 . b. the types of possible project partners "transnational bodies and partnerships" should be clarified	As it stands now, it is quite vague.	Adopted		Clarity
45. Compliance with enviromental objectives and regulations should be made explicit in section VI. B. 1 Projects: from generation to selection in the OP.		Partially adopted	The procedure will be further described in the PIMH	Conclusions of SEA
46. A mandatory standard environmental note should be part of the application pack		Not adopted	Contents of the application pack will be described in the PIMH	Conclusions of SEA
47. Possible environmental effects have to be assessed within "Assessing project applications". Although detailed modalities of the assessment procedure will be described in the PIMH, the evaluator believes this should be at least mentioned in the OP		Partially adopted	Assessment procedure will be described in the PIMH	SEA
48. In the list of admissibility conditions appearing under section VI.B.4.a. condition 9 "the project complies with all relevant national and EU laws and regulation; " Environmental compliance should also be mentioned, and in particular the provisions of Article 17 (sustainable development) of General Regulation 1083/2006		Adopted	Section VI.B.3 Assessing and selecting project applications	SEA
49. To create a diagram to offer to prospect project applicants a very simple outline of the management structure		Not adopted	This could be included in the PIMH	Clarity
50. To create a diagram to offer to prospect		Not adopted	This could	Clarity

project applicants a very simple outline of key features of the management system (including selection, monitoring, etc)			be included in the PIMH	

7.2 Conclusions and answer to key question

Descriptions provided in the Programme regarding the assignment and roles of the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority and the Audit Authorities are sufficient for their purpose, and following the evaluators' perception, quite comprehensive.

They follow and are in accordance with Regulation 1083/2006, in what it concerns management, monitoring and financial rules (articles 58 onwards); and Regulation 1080/2006, specially in what regards specific provisions on the European Territorial Cooperation Objective, articles 12 to 21

Therefore, the proposed management structure in the Operational Programme is regarded as sufficient and it is fully compliant with the ERDF Regulations.

The Monitoring Committee is clearly seen as the lead body for the Atlantic Area Programme and will assume overall responsibility. The description of its tasks and responsibilities is in line with Articles 63 and 65 of the General Regulation 1083/2006.

In the previous programme, the managing authority was the Poitou-Charentes Region in France working in the name of all the Member States and assisted by a Joint Technical Secretariat located at Poitiers. Joint monitoring and management committees and a joint payment authority were established ensuring smooth operation transnationally.

In spite of a new managing authority that will be located in Region Norte (Portugal), the evaluator acknowledges the collaboration that exist between the 2000-2006 managing authority and joint technical secretariat and the new 2007-2013 managing authority. This collaboration was essential in order to transfer previous experiences and ensure the right implementation of the new Programme from its very beginning.

8.0   Conclusions

The purpose of the ex ante evaluation has been to provide inputs which improve the coherence and quality of the Atlantic Area Operational Programme 2007-2013. These inputs have been provided at various stages through the development of the Atlantic Programme.

At the end of this interactive process, the final ex ante evaluation report draws together the work undertaken and is forwarded to the Commission with the Programme. It therefore provides with an important input for the understanding of the strategy and the allocation of financial resources which will be the subject of negotiations with the Commission.

As the draft Programme is made ready for submission to the Commission, a final evaluation report was also prepared, bringing together all elements of the evaluation. Article 12 of the ERDF Regulation (No 1080/2006) specified the overall content required in Operational Programmes for the Territorial Cooperation Objective and the evaluation acknowledges that all the information required is included in the Programme.

The present chapter contains a summary of all main conclusions achieved by the evaluation team throughout the whole evaluation period in the different sections of the present report.

A total number of 50 recommendations and suggestions were elaborated during the whole process of the evaluation and they have all been included in a synthetic manner in different tables (recommendation tracker) in each of the relevant sections. Also, in annex 2 of the report, the full recommendation tracker in attached.

This recommendation tracker includes a description of each of the descriptions and recommendations, the rationale behind them, the adoption or rejection, and , in a number of them, the reasons for which the working group for the 07-13 Atlantic Area OP adopts them or not.

These 50 recommendations and suggestions were made on the different parts of the Programming document, this is to say, there are recommendations on the relevance part of the OP, on the internal and external coherence of the Programme, on the indicators system projected by the Operational Programme and, finally on the implementation system.

Out of these recommendations, 31 were adopted and included in the Operational Programme during the drafting and preparation period, 8 were partially adopted and 11 were not considered to be adopted in the final draft of the Programme.

Recommendations concerning relevance and internal coherence and external coherence were mostly adopted whereas suggestions on the indicators system and the implementation count with more partially adopted and rejected recommendations. It has to be considered that a number of them will be likely to be taken into account when the Programme Implementation and Management Handbook (PIMH) is produced at the early stages of the Atlantic Area Programme's implementation.

Conclusions are divided in five sub-headings that correspond to the five main chapters into which the evaluation has been undertaken: relevance, internal coherence, external coherence, monitoring systems and indicators and finally, implementation and management structures.

Relevance

The Operational Programme for the Atlantic Area 2007-2013 represents an appropriate strategy to meet the challenges confronting this specific geographic space in the European Union.

The socio-economic analysis included in the OP and the resulting needs analysis for the Trans-national Cooperation Programme for the Atlantic portraits the Atlantic Area in a satisfactory manner and illustrate the main needs that can be tackled within the competences of the Programme.

The evaluator has appreciated an effort to concentrate the analysis only on those issues that are within the competence of the Programme and on which a transnational cooperation approach is appropriate.

The evaluator has also appreciated that the selection of these issues is based on a through revision of the ERDF Regulation 1080/2006, the previous versions of the Programme, including its fact-finding studies, and the mid-term evaluations carried out in 2003 and 2005.

Sections II.B.1, II.B.2, II.B.3 and II.B.4 contain a selection of sophisticated and in-depth analysis on the specific issues of economic development, environment and maritime heritage, accessibility and transport and territorial structure.

Overall, a strong correlation between the SWOT (needs and challenges for the Atlantic Area) and the programme objectives exists and only some few points were pointed out as possible aspects to be improved such as the need to increase attention to Information and Communication Technologies.

Internal coherence

The various components of the Programme are structured in 4 Priorities and 12 specific objectives and they have proved to be consistent with each other. These specific objectives have been drawn with a strong component of thematic concentration, in particular, on the maritime dimension of the Atlantic Area.

Using the inter-relationships highlighted in the objective tree as a basis of the ex ante evaluation report, the evaluator has appreciated a strong relation between the overall aim of the Programme which is to achieve significant and tangible progress in transnational cooperation geared towards cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development of the Atlantic Area and its maritime heritage and the specific objectives set up by the Programme.

In this way, achieving a tangible transnational cooperation among the Atlantic actors has been the leading feature at the time of Programming; this is to say, the specific objectives are geared in areas

where the transnational cooperation approach is the optimum, over particular, local and regional initiatives.

Also, all specific objectives are meant to contribute to achieve a cohesive, sustainable and balanced territorial development; the process of pulling together resources and partners of the Atlantic Area together will itself have long term beneficial externalities and side effects on a sustainable and balanced territorial development and, in any case, the specific objectives on accessibility and internal links and the ones focusing on entrepreurship and innovations will have a high contribution in their expected results towards this part of the Programme's overall objective.

Finally, on the maritime heritage part of the overall objective, practically one full Priority is devoted to this end and also specific efforts will be concentrated on the promotion of the Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest.

External coherence

The evaluator concluded in the ex ante evaluation report that the strategy outlined by the Atlantic Area Programme for the 2007-2013 programming period will contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Throughout the implementation of transnational cooperation projects, the Programme can help to improve transport infrastructures, to strengthen the synergies between environmental protection and growth, address energy issues and facilitate, from a transnational perspective, innovation and entrepreneurship.

If there is a minus among this strong and valid contribution that the evaluators forecast that the Programme will have, it is to be mentioned that there is no clear link between the Programme and the Lisbon goal on promoting the information society for all, as no specific objective will be supporting projects on this subject. Nevertheless, the evaluator observed that the importance of information and communication technologies is very present on the OP, and that projects promoting the use of ICTs fall within the scope of various specific objectives.

Indicators system

The OP for the Atlantic Area sets up an initial indicators system that will provide with the necessary grounds to develop a compact, straight-forward and user-friendly set of indicators that will allow project participants and, overall, Programme management structures, to accurately measure and quantify the outcomes of the Programme.

All the evaluation process has provided evidence about the difficulty of finding a system for measuring transnational cooperation exercises and efforts have been put in place to arrive to a solution to form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance.

The complete set of indicators, related targets and baseline information will be included and commented upon in the Programme Implementation and Management Handbook (PIMH), to be

produced at the early stages of the Programme's implementation. The exact interpretation of each indicator should be then clarified, and regularly improved with insights provided by the practical experience of data collection.

Implementation and management systems

Descriptions provided in the Programme regarding the assignment and roles of the different management structures are sufficient for their purpose, and following the evaluators' perception, quite comprehensive.

They follow, and are in accordance, with Regulation 1083/2006, in what it concerns management, monitoring and financial rules (articles 58 onwards); and Regulation 1080/2006, specially in what regards specific provisions on the European Territorial Cooperation Objective, articles 12 to 21.

Therefore, the proposed management structure in the Operational Programme is regarded as sufficient and it is fully compliant with the ERDF Regulations.

In the previous Programme (CIP INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area 2000-2006), the managing authority was the Poitou-Charentes Region in France working in the name of all the Member States and assisted by a Joint Technical Secretariat located at Poitiers. Joint monitoring and management committees and a joint payment authority were established ensuring smooth operation transnationally.

In spite of a new managing authority that will be located in Region Norte (Portugal), the evaluator acknowledged the collaboration that existed between the 2000-2006 Managing Authority and Joint Technical Secretariat and the new 2007-2013 Managing Authority. This collaboration was essential in order to transfer previous experiences and ensure the right implementation of the new Programme from its very beginning.

Ex Ante Evaluation of the Trans-National Territorial Cooperation Objective for the Atlantic Area Operational Programme 2007-201

ECOTEC
ECORYS en España

Annex 1 – Required content of European Territorial Cooperation OPs

REGULATION (EC) No 1080/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund

Article 12

Each operational programme under the "European territorial cooperation" objective shall contain the following information:

1. an analysis of the situation of the cooperation area in terms of strengths and weaknesses and the strategy chosen in response;

2. a list of the eligible areas within the programme area including, as regards programmes for cross-border cooperation, the flexibility areas as referred to in Article 21(1);

3. a justification of the priorities chosen having regard to the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion, the national strategic reference framework where the Member State has chosen to include actions financed under the European territorial cooperation objective within it, and the results of the ex ante evaluation referred to in Article 48(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;

4. information on the priority axes and their specific targets. Those targets shall be quantified using a limited number of indicators for output and results, taking into account the principle of proportionality. The indicators shall make it possible to measure the progress in relation to the baseline situation and the achievement of the targets of the priority axis;

5. for information purposes only, an indicative breakdown by category of the programmed use of the contribution from the ERDF to the operational programme in accordance with the implementing rules adopted by the Commission in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 103(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;

6. a single financing plan, with no breakdown by Member State, comprising two tables:

  (a) a table breaking down for each year, in accordance with Articles 52, 53 and 54 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the amount of the total financial appropriation envisaged for the contribution from the ERDF. The total ERDF contribution provided for annually shall be compatible with the applicable financial framework;

  (b) a table specifying, for the whole programming period, for the operational programme and for each priority axis, the amount of the total financial appropriation of the Community contribution and the national counterparts, and the rate of the ERDF contribution. Where, in accordance with Article 53 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, the national counterpart is made up of public and private expenditure, the table shall give the indicative breakdown

between the public and the private component. Where, in accordance with that Article, the national counterpart is made up of public expenditure, the table shall indicate the amount of the national public contribution;

7. information on complementarity with measures financed by the EAFRD and those financed by the EFF, where relevant;

8. the implementing provisions for the operational programme, including:

(a) designation by the Member States of all the authorities referred to in Article 14;

(b) a description of the monitoring and evaluation systems;

(c) information about the competent body for receiving the payments made by the Commission and the body or bodies responsible for making payments to the beneficiaries;

(d) a definition of the procedures for the mobilisation and circulation of financial flows in order to ensure their transparency;

(e) the elements aimed at ensuring the publicity and the information of the operational programme as referred to in Article 69 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;

(f) a description of the procedures agreed between the Commission and Member States for the exchange of computerised data to meet the payment, monitoring and evaluation requirements laid down by Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006;

9. an indicative list of major projects within the meaning of Article 39 of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 expected to be submitted during the programming period for Commission approval.

Annex 2 – Full Recommendation Tracker

RECOMMENDATION TRACKER:

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
1. To add an introduction including a summary table with the main relevant data concerning the socio-economic analysis.	To provide the reader with a quick overview of the Atlantic Space. This approach is the one used for the current 2000-2006 OP	Adopted II.A.2. and Appendix 6		Lack of general overview
2. The initial analysis should be preceded by basic data and indicators such as Growth rate, Demographical dynamics and trends, Employment rate, etc.	To provide the reader with a quick overview of the basic socio-economic data of the Atlantic Space. This approach is also used for the current 2000-2006 OP	Adopted II.A.2. and Appendix 6		Pertinence
3. Try to use more universal statistical sources: Eurostat, IMF, etc.	Currently the sources mentioned text are the work carried out by the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON), the "Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective" and the "Atlantic Transnational Network"	Adopted		Pertinence
4. Avoid so many references and invitations to consult other studies and documentation ("Atlantic Transnational Network" or "Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective"). This should be kept to the minimum, and appear as footnotes.	Potential applicants may not be familiar with these sources. The Atlantic Area OP 2007-2013 should be a self-standing document.	Partially adopted	The text still makes a lot references to outside documents	Completeness
5. Comments on regions that are not longer part of part of the Atlantic Area for 2007-2013 should be deleted. For instance: II.B.1.a. (current paragraph 28): Castile	The analysis has to be kept to the eligible area	Adopted		Pertinence
6. Maps should be complete and made more easily understandable	In some cases is not possible to read the data of the colour scale or/and the basic data is not provided.	Adopted		Usefulness of maps
7. Indicators used should be sufficiently defined: -The formula to get to the RDI should be stated. -The formula to get to the indicator used to asses the degree of integration into the knowledge economy should be disclosed	Some of the indicators used are not universal or widely accepted and used. Thus they should be further defined. Pg. 8 RDI (Relative Development Index) is not defined, though it mentions that is the aggregate of 8 socio-economic variables without mentioning which. Pg. 11 The degree of the integration into the knowledge economy (or Lisbon strategy), although in this case the 5 variables are mentioned: Productivity, employment rate, R&D expenditure, personnel working in the R&D sector, and proportion of the schooled population having completed higher education studies, the weighting of each variable is not mentioned, and innovation is not part of this indicator.	Adopted		Improving reliability, clarity and accuracy If the indicator is not well defined, we do not really know what is exactly measuring and quantifying. In this way, there could be a different Relative development Index, leading to different conclusions.
8. The section determining the list of the eligible areas within the Programme is not placed in accordance to the ERDF Regulation. The suggestion comes up when thinking about the convenience of keeping the same order that the Regulation follows.	Most of the 2007-2013 OPs will probably follow the structure set up by the Regulation.	Adopted		Coherence

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
9. To bring the analytical text, the SWOT analysis, the challenges and the Priorities description more in line with each other. Try to draw a clearer link between the analysis and the Priorities and objectives.	The draft OP relates the priorities with the Challenges and the SWOT analysis. However, the SWOT should only be fed by the preceding text. And the challenges should cover all the contents of the SWOT analysis	Adopted		Consistency
10. To strengthen the link between the SWOT analysis and the Priorities and specific objectives	The relevancy matrix demonstrates that the individual objectives chosen can not yet in all cases be backed up by the SWOT analysis	Adopted		Consistency
11. Prioritisation and ranking of the SWOT elements	Number of individual bullet points is very large, which makes interpretation difficult	Adopted		Clarity
13. Increase attention to Information and Communication Technologies		Partially adopted	Thematic Concentration	
14. The specific objectives should appear in the Index	This will provide a better overview of the program	Adopted		To improve clarity
15. When describing Priority 3, it is recommended to explain clearly that accessibility has to refer to both transport within the Atlantic Space and outside this particular area.		Adopted		Clarity
16. Consider deleting the weakness referred to "Under exploitation, fallow land in the less successful farming areas" under the Environment and Maritime Heritage Priority.	The SWOT analysis has to be tailored to the four big thematic Priorities. Otherwise, we would take a risk of not covering any single area of the Atlantic Space.	Adopted		Coherence
17. To delete "Contrary to what a widespread attitude might suggest, the main reason is not the availability of ERDF funding allocated to territorial cooperation"	It is unnecessary and not very appropriate in the context of an Operational Programme	Not adopted III.A.		Coherence
18. Avoid overlap Between objectives 2.2 and 2.4 (sustainable management of resources of marine spaces/ protection of natural spaces and coastal zones) Protection of coastal zones and quality of water are present in both specific objectives.	The distinction does not appear clear in the general context of the Programme	Adopted	Objective 2.4 is drafted including protection of water resources	Clarity
19. Avoid overlap between Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 (optimisation of existing transport infrastructure and multi-modal strategies / interoperability). Multi-modal strategies and interoperability can be viewed as tools for optimising existing transport infrastructure.		Adopted	Fomer objective 3.1 has been eliminated	Duplicity
20. Avoid overlap between Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 (Pool resources and skills for sustainable urban and rural development/make cities and regions more influent through networking) both objectives converge in cities putting resources together to have joint expertise. The evaluator recommends rethinking about possible ways forward to guarantee no overlapping in the Operational Programme.		Partially adopted		
21. The scope of objective 1.3 "stimulate economic conversion and diversification by promoting regional endogenous potential" goes well beyond innovation, as it includes a wide array of other areas for transnational cooperation. The evaluator could suggest to analyse the convenience of including the objective into Priority 4		Not adopted		

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
22. On the Objective 2.3 "Exploit the renewable energy potential" and its inclusion under Priority 2 "Protect, secure and enhance the marine and coastal environment", the evaluator observes that if the specific objective remains with an scope related specifically to marine renewable energy (as the evaluator indeed recommended), this particular objective on different energy renewable sources could suit better under Priority 3, on accessibility and internal links.		Not adopted		
23. The evaluator invited to consider whether Objective 4.3 on " Conserve and promote Atlantic cultural heritage of transnational interest" could suit better under Priority 2, unless Priority 4 is reinforced in its urban planning role.		Not adopted		
24. To consider changing Priority 4 wording for "Promote transnational synergies for sustainable Urban and Rural development".	It matches better with actual Atlantic Region needs, the overall EU Policy (Gothenburg) and the ERDF regulation (priority areas of European territorial cooperation priority d). In any case, the evaluator estimates that the word "sustainable" should be included in the final wording	Adopted		Coherence with EU policy and ERDF regulation
25. Amend objective 4.2 to "Make the Atlantic Area cities and regions a more attractive place to invest"	The matrix reveals that the wording of previous versions of the specific objective 4.2 *Make cities and regions more influent through networking* is not related to any of this five Lisbon goals. Furthermore, the justification of this objective 4.2 and of the priority 4 in the draft OP is based on the idea mentioned in the OP that "there is no level playing field between entities of the Atlantic Area and very large metropolitan areas of the EU core pentagon" in section IV.D.2.b and that the Atlantic Area "must attempt to free itself to the extent possible from the domination of the major European cities". The evaluator is of the opinion that EU funding should never contribute to favour a certain region against another EU region, resulting in a situation where we can even question if there is a positive contribution for the EU as a whole as a result of the actions or projects financed. This fact is acknowledged in the OP, as in section III.D.1 where the priorities are related to the Lisbon Agenda and priority 4 is not mentioned among those that contribute to the strategy proposed by the Community Strategic Guidelines: 1. Making Europe and its regions more attractive places in which to invest and work and 2. Improving knowledge and innovation for work. It is related nevertheless by OP to a second part of the Community Strategic Guidelines dedicated to the territorial dimension of cohesion policy. The evaluator believes that priority 4 could be easily amended to fully contribute to "Making Europe and its regions more attractive places in which to invest and work". The specific objective 4.2 could be amended to *Make the Atlantic Area cities and regions a more attractive place to invest.*	Partially adopted		Coherence with Lisbon Strategy
26. There should be more emphasis on sustainable development.	Sustainable development should inform all Programmes' priorities.	Adopted		Coherence with Gothenburg & Lisbon Strategies

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
27. The following should be deleted: III.D.1 "Cooperation projects generate jobs, at least indirectly, but this is not their primary purpose". On the opposite, it will have to be challenged to demonstrate their contribution in this aspect and at least that they do not harm the growth and job creation.	"In fact, for the next generation programs, promoting territorial cohesion should be part of the effort to ensure that all of Europe's territory has the opportunity to contribute to the growth and jobs agenda." Quote from Community strategic guidelines on cohesion As growth and job creation is one of the main EU policy objectives. Cooperation projects are part of the whole Community policy package and this is one of the objectives that cooperation policy should contribute to achieve. Thus it is a primary finality. The same applies to sustainable development (Gothenburg).	Adopted		Coherence with Lisbon Strategy: : Growth and Jobs
28. To eliminate the list that appears in each priority in "Complementarity with other EU programs"	The list would be constantly changing. It risk of not being exhaustive either.	Adopted		Accuracy
29. In section II.C.3.a, where we find: "The difficulty of finding reliable partners in certain regions" It should be deleted or expressed differently.	The EU Member States regions and stakeholders have to be considered as reliable. The valuable comment around this idea is that partnerships should not be forced or imposed	Adopted		Coherence
30. To delete in section II.E.3 opinions such as " les regions atlantiques doivent s'afranchir de leur dépendance excessive à son égard » or « pour tenter de réduire leur polarisation excessive sur leur capitales respectives ».	From the evaluator's point of views, these are just opinions. They are too subjective argumentations. The problem in the view of the evaluator is not an excessive communication or exchanges with the capital, but the lack of exchanges and appropriate communication with other cities and regions. It would be more appropriate in the context of this program to focus on promoting new exchanges and to communicate better the Atlantic area, making the emphasis that currently has a deficit of accessibility.	Partially adopted. The text has been amended as follows " very strong traditions of national centralism have polarised the Atlantic regions towards their respective capital cities. Despite the important relaying role that these cities will always have, the Atlantic regions must free themselves of their excessive dependence in this respect. The same goes for the central European pentagon. However there is a note that indicates that this sentence will be amended in the final version of the Operational Programme		Accuracy
31. In section IV .D, it is recommended to delete the following: The Atlantic Area "must attempt to free itself to the extent possible from the domination of the major European cities" In IV.D.1 propose deletion of **"to counterbalance, at least in part, the supremacy of the major European cities"**.	The development of networks of cities and regions can have a lot of positive and constructive effects on their own and the overall growth of the EU. The aim should not be to counterbalance supremacy of other EU cities, but to make a contribution for the regions directly affected and the EU community as a whole. It must be noted that the program is partly financed with EU funding.	Adopted		Coherence with EU

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
32. To amend on IV.A.1 "plus dynamiques, à économie innovante et diversifiée, et les régions moins prospères	» It seems with this affirmation that some regions will give and the others receive. It is unnecessary to the understanding of the idea of exploiting the complementarities.	Adopted		Consistency
33. To delete In IV.C.2.a "(harmonizing port charges, road haulage, etc)"	Those are policy options. The evaluator suggest to rather use the term "fair and effective pricing" Harmonizing port charges may not be the most appropriate or (fair and effective) charge system in this case, it is only one of the possibilities.	Adopted		Coherence with EU competition policy
34. Limit the number of indicators in a transnational cooperation Programme		Adopted	Clarity and tailor made for its purpose	
35. The evaluator will be inclined to make a division between Programme Management indicators and Projects/Operations indicators		Adopted	Reason behind is to set a up an straight-forward system of indicators	
36. Within Programme management indicators, the evaluators would propose to make a subdivision between Financial indicators and physical indicators		No adopted	Put in place what is considered a clear and straight forward system of indicators	
37. Among project's indicators a division should be established, between output indicators, result indicators and impact indicators		Adopted		
38. Output indicators should be further elaborated, including typologies of likely outputs of every transnational project, such as: − Number of people participating in the activities and/or using operation's outputs − Number of eligible organisations involved/participating in operations − Number of Joint activities − Number of publications, − Number of dissemination tools, etc		No adopted	Put in place what is considered a clear and straight forward system of indicators	
39. On the proposed result indicators, definitions should be kept really clear, and result indicators aim at measuring the results and direct effects of the outputs steaming from the projects. That is why the evaluator is reluctant to accept proposed indicators such as "number of public authorities represented" as a result indicator, as this would be an indicator measuring activities directly realised by the projects, ie, an output indicator		Partially adopted	Put in place a clear and straight forward system of indicators	

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
40. Finally, on the impact indicators, the evaluator being realistic about the real consequences of the Atlantic Programme beyond the immediate effects, ie. result indicators, strongly recommends to refine the existing ones, for instance it is believed that the indicator on the "Estimated share of population of the AA cooperation area having heard of the AA cooperation" should be further elaborated and revised. The evaluator could think about a couple of examples that could be used as impact indicators: – Increase in the number of cooperation agreements (inside and outside the Programme) – Number of regional or national policies influenced by the project's findings and results		No adopted	Being realistic about measuring transnational cooperation impacts	
41. Reconsider that National Contact Points are enabled for "verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure incurred by project partnerships" at National level. An alternative to a single "controller" for the whole Atlantic Area is to allow Member States to designate a National Contact for information purposes, and a different "National Controller"	The function of communicating and assisting is of a different nature than "acting as a controller". Member States might find appropriate to have a national audit type body "acting as a controller"	Adopted		41. Reconsider that National Contact Points are enabled for "verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure incurred by project partnerships" at National level. An alternative to a single "controller" for the whole Atlantic Area is to allow Member States to designate a National Contact for information purposes, and a different "National Controller"
42. To state more explicitly that the monitoring committee is the lead body for the Programme and will assume overall responsibility		Not adopted	Clarity	42. To state more explicitly that the monitoring committee is the lead body for the Programme and will assume overall responsibility
43. It should be further emphasized that the joint data base of project ideas that is mentiones in V1. B. 1 should be open to any qualified project applicant.	To prevent that this mechanism transform the Programme into an "insiders" game.	Adopted		43. It should be further emphasized that the joint data base of project ideas that is mentiones in V1. B. 1 should be open to any qualified project applicant.
44. On section VI. B. 2 . b. the types of possible project partners "transnational bodies and partnerships" should be clarified	As it stands now, it is quite vague.	Adopted		44. On section VI. B. 2 . b. the types of possible project partners "transnational bodies and partnerships" should be clarified

Recommendation/ suggestion	Rationale	Adopted/ rejected	Reasoning	Consequences/ risks
45. Compliance with enviromental objectives and regulations should be made explicit in section VI. B. 1 Projects: from generation to selection in the OP.		Partially adopted	The procedure will be further described in the PIMH	45. Compliance with enviromental objectives and regulations should be made explicit in section VI. B. 1 Projects: from generation to selection in the OP.
46. A mandatory standard environmental note should be part of the application pack		Not adopted	Contents of the application pack will be described in the PIMH	46. A mandatory standard environmental note should be part of the application pack
47. Possible environmental effects have to be assessed within "Assessing project applications". Although detailed modalities of the assessment procedure will be described in the PIMH, the evaluator believes this should be at least mentioned in the OP		Partially adopted	Assessment procedure will be described in the PIMH	47. Possible environmental effects have to be assessed within "Assessing project applications". Although detailed modalities of the assessment procedure will be described in the PIMH, the evaluator believes this should be at least mentioned in the OP
48. In the list of admissibility conditions appearing under section VI.B.4.a. condition 9 "the project complies with all relevant national and EU laws and regulation; " Environmental compliance should also be mentioned, and in particular the provisions of Article 17 (sustainable development) of General Regulation 1083/2006		Adopted	Section VI.B.3 Assessing and selecting project applications	48. In the list of admissibility conditions appearing under section VI.B.4.a. condition 9 "the project complies with all relevant national and EU laws and regulation; " Environmental compliance should also be mentioned, and in particular the provisions of Article 17 (sustainable development) of General Regulation 1083/2006
49. To create a diagram to offer to prospect project applicants a very simple outline of the management structure		Not adopted	This could be included in the PIMH	49. To create a diagram to offer to prospect project applicants a very simple outline of the management structure
50. To create a diagram to offer to prospect project applicants a very simple outline of key features of the management system (including selection, monitoring, etc)		Not adopted	This could be included in the PIMH	50. To create a diagram to offer to prospect project applicants a very simple outline of key features of the management system (including selection, monitoring, etc)