



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR FISHERIES AND MARITIME AFFAIRS
Structural policy
General aspects of structural policy; Enlargement

DOC/EFFC/7/2007 - EN

Methodological Working Papers for the new Programming period, 2007-2013

Working Paper

WORKING PAPER ON EX ANTE EVALUATION

FOR THE EUROPEAN FISHERIES FUND

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INTRODUCTION

This guidance document is aimed at national authorities in charge of programming 2007-2013 EFF interventions and specifically at those responsible for organising the ex ante evaluation. It provides guidance which will also be of use for the evaluators who are appointed to carry out the ex ante evaluation.

The working paper clarifies, in an indicative way, the content and organisation of an ex ante evaluation. It builds on the practice gained in the ex ante evaluation during the 2000-2006 programming period while taking into account the new regulatory context for the 2007-2013 period, in terms of the content of the Operational programmes and requirements for their evaluation. Member States should use the guidance flexibly, adapting it to their specific requirements in order to ensure that the ex ante evaluation meets their needs.

The purpose of the ex ante evaluation is to optimise the allocation of resources and to improve the quality of the programming process. The ex ante evaluation should be an interactive process whereby judgement and recommendations are provided by experts on the content of the Operational programmes. It should be also iterative processes whereby the recommendations of the ex ante experts and relevant stakeholders are taken into account by the developers of the Operational programmes in subsequent drafts of different parts of the programmes are taken into account by the developers of the Operational programmes in subsequent drafts of different parts of the programmes. In this regard, it is important to facilitate a constructive dialogue between the people responsible for drawing of the Operational programmes and these experts. The relevant public authorities have responsibility for the content of the final text of the Operational programme.

The final ex ante evaluation report draws together the work undertaken and is forwarded to the Commission with the Operational programme. It therefore provides an important input for the understanding of the strategy and the allocation of financial resources which will be the subject of negotiations with the European Commission.

A justification should be provided for ex-ante evaluations recommendations not taken into account for programming and strategic resource allocation.

The first part of this working paper outlines the role of the ex ante evaluation in the context of the new European Fisheries Fund Regulation. It outlines the evaluation criteria for the ex ante evaluation, and the main evaluation questions which the evaluation should answer. This section should help those responsible for programme development to define the ex ante evaluation and should also help to focus the work of the evaluator. Parts Two and Three of the working paper provide guidance on the key components which should be covered and the process of undertaking the ex ante evaluation.

Annex I provides guidance on the ex ante evaluation in the context of SEA Directive, and Annex II on the Terms of Reference

PART 1: THE NEW EUROPEAN FISHERIES FUND REGULATION AND THE ROLE OF EX ANTE EVALUATION

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Regulation proposes a more strategic approach to the programming and the concentration of the financial resources with a greater focus on performance and results. An important element of the new approach to the programming and the ex ante evaluation process is to ensure that the European Fisheries Fund contributes in the most effective way possible to the achievement of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) goals and to make that contribution more visible.

1.1. The new Programming Structure

For the 2007-2013 programming period, the following steps in programming are foreseen:

- **National Strategic Plan:** Member States are required to draw up a National Strategic Plan for the implementation of the CFP and other specific aspects not covered by it (environmental, employment etc.) in their countries which outlines the strategy to be adopted for the different objectives, particularly those related to the implementation of the EFF Operational programmes.
- **Operational programmes:** The Article 19 of EFF Regulation provides the guiding principles for drawing up the Operational programmes. The Guiding principles strengthen the linkage between the Common Fisheries Policy, and the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, as the Fund represent a funding source for the achievement of these objectives in the Community fisheries sector. Operational programmes also become more strategic, focused more strongly than in the past on the priority axes level.

The Operational Programme will be more strategic and programme complements are no longer required. However, the management authority still needs to plan measures in detail (e.g. in working documents) to be able to carry out monitoring at the level of the measures.

1.2. Regulatory Requirements for Ex Ante Evaluation

Article 48 of the EFF Regulation requires an ex ante evaluation for the Operational programme.

The ex ante evaluation is to be carried out under the responsibility of MS, the authority responsible for the preparation of the programming documents. It aims to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources and improve programming quality. It shall identify and appraise medium and long-term problems/needs and objectives to be achieved, the results and impacts expected, the quantified targets, the coherence with the Community policies, if necessary of the strategy proposed supported in the National Strategic Plan, the Community value-added, the extent to which the Community's priorities have been taken into account, the lessons drawn from previous programming period and the quality of the procedures for implementation, monitoring, evaluation and financial management (Article 47 of EFF Regulation).

1.3. Ex Ante Evaluation of Operational programmes

This methodological working paper focuses on the content and organisation of the ex ante evaluation of the Operational programmes. The content of the Operational programmes is specified in the Article 20 of the EFF Regulation. The Programme Complement of the 2000-2006 period is no longer part of the formal programming documents. That said, Member States will need to plan, as part of the development of their strategies, the detailed content of operations to be co-financed by the Fund under each of the priority axes.

Evaluators will need information on such plans in order to be able to carry out their work.

1.4. Further Guidance Available

Revised guidance on indicators for evaluation and monitoring has been developed by the Commission in consultation with Member States in Working Paper No. [xx]. The Working Paper on indicators should be read and considered in conjunction with this guidance on the ex ante evaluation.

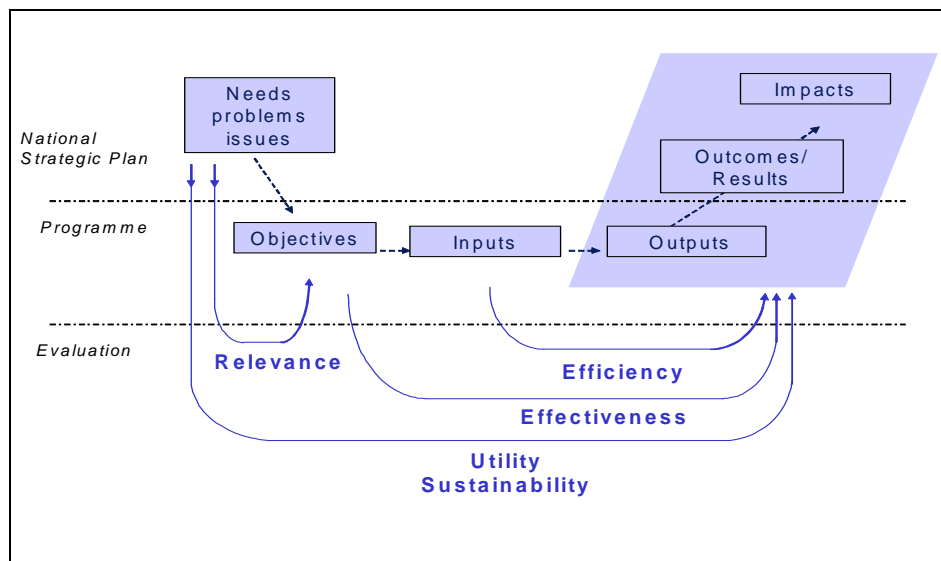
1.5. The Aim of the Ex Ante Evaluation – the Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions in general are based on judgement criteria which can be grouped into the following main categories:

- Those related to the relevance of the programme
- Those related to its effectiveness,
- Those related to its efficiency, and
- Those related to its utility and its longer term sustainability.
- Those related to coherence (internal and external)

These criteria are related to the Operational programme and its environment, as represented in Box 1.1 below.

Box 1.1 Logic intervention



For the ex ante evaluation, the main questions are relevance (of the strategy to needs identified), effectiveness (whether the objectives of the programme are likely to be achieved), efficiency (the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved), and utility (judging the likely impacts against wider social, environmental and economic needs).

More specific evaluation questions at ex ante evaluation stage are internal and external coherence and the quality of implementation systems. Internal and external coherence relates to the structure of the National Strategic Plan and its financial allocations and the linkage of the plan to other regional, national and Community policies, in particular with the Structural and Rural Development Funds.

Finally, ex ante evaluation needs to examine the potential risks for the Operational programme, both in relation to the policy choices made and the implementation system proposed. Those authorities responsible for drawing up the Operational programmes need to develop the detailed evaluation questions to be answered in relation to the Operational programmes to be evaluated.

As a broad outline, the evaluation should answer the following questions:

- *To what extent does the Operational programme represent an appropriate strategy to meet the challenges confronting the Member State for its fisheries sector?*
- *To what extent is the strategy well defined with clear objectives and priorities. What will be the results and impact of the strategy in quantified terms? Are they sustainable?*
- *To what extent are the implementation systems appropriate to deliver the objectives of the Operational programme?*
- *To what extent are operational programs cost effective?*
- *To what extent there is capacity for implementing the Operational program?*

- *To what extent can those objectives be realistically achieved with the financial resources allocated to the different priorities?*
- *To what extent is the strategy coherent with policies at regional, national (including the National Strategic Plan) and Community level? How will the strategy contribute to the achievement of the Common Fisheries Policy objectives?*
- *Are appropriate indicators identified for the objectives and can these indicators and their targets form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance?*
- *What will be the results and impact of the strategy in quantified terms?*
- *To what extent are the implementation systems appropriate to deliver the objectives of the Operational programme?*

The conclusions of the ex ante evaluation must provide a response to these key evaluation questions.

The important point is that those planning the evaluation specify questions in relation to different priorities, depending on their need for information in order to produce a better quality Operational programme.

1.6. Community Added Value

Throughout the development of the Operational programme and the process of the ex ante evaluation, there should be a concern to maximise Community added value. This concept can be defined on the basis of a range of criteria:

- Policy added value in relation to the Common Fisheries policy objectives;
- Policy added value in relation to the Community priorities,
- Economic and social cohesion related to fisheries areas;
- Financial added value, in terms of additionality and leverage effect;
- The added value of the partnership, multi-annual planning, monitoring, evaluation and sound financial management; and
- Added value which stems from the exchange of experience and networking at a trans-national, national or regional level.

In making their recommendations on improving the quality of the Operational programme, ex ante evaluators should be guided by a concern to maximise Community added value in relation to these criteria.¹

¹A useful discussion of the concept of community added value is contained in the following report: Bachtler & Taylor (2003). *The Added Value of the Structural Funds: A Regional Perspective IQ-Net*

2. PART 2: EX ANTE EVALUATION – KEY COMPONENTS

This part of the Working Paper outlines the content of the ex ante evaluation. Given the diversity in scale and content of the Operational programmes, the evaluation effort must be proportional to the size / magnitude of the OP (in terms of financial resources planned, expected results and impacts, interests of the main stakeholders, ...).

Five key components are described, which incorporate the content of the ex ante evaluation as outlined in the Article 48 of the EFF Regulation. Under each component, the responsible authority should consider if there are particular issues the evaluation should explore in more detail in order to improve the quality of the Operational programme.

Part Three of this Working Paper (see point 3.1 below) provides some further guidance on the process of deciding at which level the ex ante evaluation will be undertaken and the implications of this decision for designing the evaluation.

Under each of the key components, the evaluators should review and incorporate lessons learnt from previous evaluations and consider also the potential to maximise Community added value, as outlined in the previous section. Evaluation evidence is available from the ex ante evaluation, mid term evaluation and particularly the update of the mid term evaluation for the 2000-2006 period, as well as the ex post evaluations of the 1994-1999 period, including the “Ex post evaluation of the FIFG for 1994-1999” carried out by the Commission. Member States have also undertaken a range of ad hoc or ongoing evaluations on particular themes or implementation aspects and the lessons of these evaluations should also be used.

For new Member States the evaluators should review and incorporate lessons learnt from previous thematic evaluations related to fisheries made at the beginning of their programming period 2004-2007.

In this part of the Working Paper boxes suggest methods which may be appropriate in relation to the issue being evaluated. This draws on material in the Guide to the Evaluation of Socio-Economic Development. Further material can be found in Part Four of the Guide and in the accompanying Sourcebook on Methods and Techniques. Examples of the application of different methodological approaches are also presented.

All ex ante evaluations will require a combination of methodologies and the terms of reference for the evaluations should give only an indication of the methodologies to be employed. Evaluators should propose a precise mix of methodologies which they will use to address the different components of the evaluation and to answer the key evaluation questions.

The ex ante evaluation should be an iterative and interactive process between MS Operational programs managers (or developers) and with evaluators undertaking the different components of the evaluation at different times as the Operational programme is prepared. At the end of the process, the evaluator pulls the components together into a final evaluation report which represents an evaluation of the Operational programme as submitted to the European Commission and also reflects the changes and improvements to the Operational programme which have been made through the evaluation process.

2.1. Appraisal of the situation of the fisheries sector and the relevance of the strategy to the needs identified

Each Operational programme will start with an analysis of the development disparities in the sector and the potential of the national fisheries sector in relation to the priority axes. It is important to ensure complementarities between the EFF and other Funds (ERDF, EARDF, ESF). Ideally coherence between the funds should already be addressed at the strategic level (NSP and NSRF). This will lead to an identification of the disparities, gaps and potential for development. This appraisal should start with a general SWOT analysis of the fisheries sector situation followed by more detailed analysis by priority axis mentioned in the EFF Regulation. The analysis should cover at the very least the following issues, and develop the elements of the SWOT analysis not included in the National Strategic Plan:

- *Identification of most important needs, interests of key actors and factors that influence their motivation, and major trends on the fisheries sector;*
- *Identification of the underlying (assumed) causes of disparities;*
- *Identification of fisheries policy areas and specific policies to which EFF support can bring a significant effect taking particular account of the most serious problems at local, regional and national level;*
- *Inventory of actions in relation to the most important needs, particularly those related to the fishing fleet;*
- *External analysis of risks and opportunities;*
- *Internal analysis of strengths and weaknesses;*
- *Assessment of which experiences, outcome, results and impact for the programming period 2000-2006 should be taken on board.*

The evaluator should assess the relevance of the strategy to the identified problems and needs. The strategy of an Operational programme is made up of its objectives and the priorities, chain and main lines of action to achieve these objectives. In this step, the evaluator should assess the relevance of the Operational programme objectives and strategy to those needs.

The ex ante evaluation should examine the sustainability, from a economic, managerial, social and environmental perspective of the fisheries strategy and the inter-relationships between these four dimensions.

Additional work may need to be undertaken by the evaluator to complement the existing analysis, which may lead to recommendations for improvements to the analysis contained in the Operational programme or for change to the priority needs identified. These improvements may concern the analysis of the existing situation or of the potential of the sector or in relation to other policy domains.

At the end of the process the evaluator will assess if the repartition of the financial amounts allocated to each priority corresponds to the main priorities outlined in the Operational programme.

2.2. Evaluation of the rationale of the strategy and its consistency

This component represents the core of the ex ante evaluation and includes complex and inter-related issues which will provide the basis for a judgement on the appropriateness of the strategy and policy instruments proposed in support to the National Strategic Plan. Two main aspects are involved: the rationale of the strategy and its overall consistency.

The EFF Regulation emphasises that EFF resources are targeted at the most important needs in order to bring about significant effects (concentration). Actions must promote the Common Fisheries Policy objectives, priorities and targets in each Member State within the framework of the National Strategic Plan. Member State must also concentrate support on the implementation of the country specific recommendations agreed at EU level (i.e. fleet management etc.). In this context, the ex ante evaluation should address the following issues:

- The *financial weight* of each priority axis in relation to the most important needs identified at strategic level that will be sustained by the EFF;
- The importance and relevance of policy instruments (grants, subsidies) *co-financing national policies* (leverage effects, effects on systems and structures, feasibility and side effects);
- Assessment of how the EFF intervention could contribute to the Lisbon and Gothenburg targets;
- Assessment of how the Member State will ensure adequate translation of principles stated in the EFF regulation such as partnership, gender equality and gender mainstreaming, transnational co-operation and innovative actions.

Examining the rationale of the strategy and policy instruments will require an in-depth analysis of the objectives and priorities of the Operational programme. The ex ante evaluator should examine the theory underlying the strategy and assess its validity. Identifying and examining trade-offs can be a complex exercise², but the main concern is to understand the balance reached between interventions which will promote investment in the fisheries sector and long term sustainability³. The consistency of the strategy should be evaluated. This will require:

- an analysis of the relationships and complementarities between the different priority axes, including the contribution of each priority axes to the Operational programme objectives and how the combination of policy priorities will contribute to achieving these objectives. The extent to which financial resources are likely to be sufficient should also be determined. Any conflict between priority axes should be highlighted. The evaluator should consider if an alternative “policy mix” might be more likely to achieve the Operational programme’s objectives.

² For one approach to this issue, see the following report which was undertaken for the European Commission: GHK (2002). *Thematic Evaluation on the Contribution of the Structural Funds to Sustainable Development*. European Commission. Available on the DG Regional Policy website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/rado_en.htm

³ For programmes which, after screening, have been found not to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (see Point 2.3 and Annex 3), the evaluator should also consider possible environmental effects.

- The analysis should also assess the degree of policy risk involved in the choice of priorities. To what extent are risks implicit in the proposal of innovative policies and how can these risks be minimised?
- However, it is important that EFF interventions should maximise economic and social cohesion in fisheries dependant areas and contribute to attain the targets of the CFP. The ex ante evaluation should explore and assess the balance between more standard measures which are “easier” to implement and those which are inherently more risky but which might have a greater positive impact.

Box 2.1: Example: Examining the Rationale of a Strategy

Example : shellfish farming in France

The general objective of the aquaculture measure, as it is described in the Single Programming Document FIFG 2000-2006 outside of Objective 1 in France, was to facilitate the sustainable development of the companies while respecting the environment and improving the sanitary conditions.

One of the objectives clearly assigned to the sub measure “shellfish farming” was the stabilization of the number of companies. If we look for the rationale behind this objective and why, in particular, the objective has been expressed in number of companies rather than number of persons employed, we can find out that this strategy was meant to avert two risks :

- **the risk for the upkeep of the territory : with a too small number of shellfish farms (below a critical threshold) we could run the risk of proliferation of the *gigas* oyster;**
- **the risk to see the shellfish farming activity “eaten” by tourism (there is a permanent demand for places for pleasure boats in ports).**

This rationale can explain the non-selectivity of the subsidy and the absence, until 2005, of a lower limit for the size of eligible projects. It can also explain the expression in number of companies (instead of number of persons employed) of the objective : 5 companies of 2 people occupy more the territory and have a bigger socio-economic weight than 2 companies of 5 people.

2.3. Appraisal of the coherence of the strategy with regional and national policies and the Guiding principles provided for in Article 19 of EFF Regulation

Given increased emphasis on the strategic nature of EFF intervention and the need for it to contribute to the achievement of the Common Fisheries Policy as well as the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives, an important component of the ex ante evaluation is an appraisal of the coherence of the strategy proposed with regional, national and Community policies.

The Guiding principles provided for in Article 19 identify Community priorities for support in the EFF Operational programmes with a view to strengthening synergies with other Community policies. They form the basis for preparing the Operational programme. Therefore it is important that the ex ante evaluation verifies those synergies and the potential to deliver relevant elements of the strategies concerned. The evaluator should examine the interaction between the different priorities and the coherence of the intervention logic of the Operational programme and its priorities with the National Strategic Plan and the Guiding principles mentioned above.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive⁴ requires Member States to assess the effects of plans and programmes on the environment. In this part of the evaluation, the ex ante evaluator should assess the extent to which the outcomes of the strategic environmental assessment have been taken into account in the Operational programme. The authorities responsible for the development of the programme may decide to undertake all or parts of the strategic environmental assessment through the ex ante evaluation, in which case the terms of reference for the evaluation will need to specify the additional tasks for the evaluation. Further guidance on strategic environmental assessment is provided at Annex 1

The evaluator should assess whether equality between men and women and non-discrimination issues have been appropriately taken into account, in line with Article 11 of the EFF Regulation.

2.4. Evaluation of Expected Results and Impacts

The Operational programmes are required to contain a limited number of relevant indicators with quantified targets to be achieved by the end of the programming period. The Commission has provided revised guidance on indicators in Working Paper No. [xx] and this guidance should be used in the development of the quantified objectives.

Output, result and impact indicators and their targets should be proposed by the competent authorities, based on the planned financial allocations. Depending on the objectives of the Operational programme, this could include an estimation of the likely impact in terms of the number of vessels scrapped or the number of new processing industries created. The evaluator should verify the appropriateness of the structure and hierarchy of the objectives and the indicators identified as well as the proposed quantification, on the basis of past experience and appropriate benchmarks.

The establishment of impact indicators is a complex task which may require some evaluation work on the part of the evaluators, if benchmarks and past experience do not provide a sufficient basis for establishing and quantifying them. The Terms of Reference for the ex ante evaluation should clarify if such work is required and what it should consist of.

The evaluator should verify the causality between outputs, results and impacts and make recommendations for improvements, if appropriate.

⁴ Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment

Both the developers of the Operational programmes and the evaluators should seek to ensure that the system of indicators remains manageable and useable, in line with the Commission's guidance in Working Paper No. [xx].

Box 2.2: Methods and Techniques for Evaluation of Results and Impacts

Methods identified will depend very much on the scale of the intervention. Statistical models may be appropriate in some cases to estimate impacts drawing on different types of data. These can include input/output analysis or econometric models. Other impact assessment methods may be used, for example in relation to the environmental impact assessment. Results of previous evaluations may provide appropriate benchmarks which may also be used.

It may be necessary to identify generic indicators in order to reduce the overall number of indicators. Participative methods with key stakeholders and impact mapping can assist in this process.

2.5. Appraisal of the proposed implementation systems

The Operational programmes contain details on the implementing provisions, including the designation of bodies and procedures for implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems, partnership arrangements, publicity and procedures for the exchange of computerised data to meet payment, monitoring and evaluation requirements. The quality of these implementation systems is essential for the achievement of the objectives of the Operational programme. At this stage of the evaluation, the evaluator should assess the implementing provisions proposed for managing, monitoring and evaluating the Operational programme. This should include an examination of previous experience and an appraisal of risk – possible bottlenecks which might impede implementation of the Operational programme and recommendations for preventive actions should be made. The quality and extent of partnership arrangements should also be evaluated.

3. PART 3: EX ANTE EVALUATION – THE PROCESS

This part of the Working Paper deals with the process of organising and managing an ex ante evaluation.

3.1. Evaluation Planning and Timetable

The ex ante evaluation is carried out under the responsibility of MS, e.g. the authorities responsible for the preparation of the Operational programme. The relevant competent authority is designated by the Member State.

The preparation of draft Operational programme will need to be co-ordinated so that the evaluators have access to the relevant chapters at the appropriate time. The interaction between those responsible for drawing up the Operational programme and the evaluators will also need to be co-ordinated.

The terms of reference should emphasise the need for clear conclusions and recommendations. In Annex II main elements that should be taken into account to prepare the Terms of Reference are given.

Once the decision is made for the ex ante evaluation, planning the timetable should be in line with planning for the preparation of the Operational programme. The interactive nature of the ex ante evaluation means that the evaluator should undertake work in stages, depending on when elements of the programme are available from those responsible for its preparation. A typical timetable and phases of an ex ante evaluation for an Operational programme is outlined in Box 3.1 below. The table also illustrates typical steps in the process of strategic environmental assessment (SEA), showing how they fit into the logic of the programming process and how they can be carried out in parallel.

In the example below, the ex ante evaluation has duration of 7 months; with planning starting at least four months before the ex ante evaluator is appointed. Clearly, depending on the scale and complexity of the Operational programme, the process may take more or less time and the precise modes of interaction between those responsible for developing the Operational programme and the evaluators will vary according to individual circumstances. It is recommended that some days work is reserved for the evaluator to undertake additional analysis during the negotiations with the Commission on the Operational programme.

Box 3.1: Ex Ante Evaluation – Example of Planning			
Stage of Operational Programme Preparation	Stage of Ex Ante Evaluation	Calendar starting in Month 1	Comparable Stages in SEA
Decision on ex ante evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Terms of Reference drawn up (optional) 		Determine whether SEA required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible Authority draws up Terms of Reference and organises a tender 	1-2	Determine environmental issues, objectives and alternatives to be considered in SEA

			(scoping) Consult environmental authorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the fisheries sector undertaken for the Operational programme Broad lines of strategic chapters of the Operational programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluator Appointed 	2-3	Broad lines of SEA report. Start data collection.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the fisheries sector and resulting needs assessment and appraisal of the relevance of the proposed strategy to the needs identified 	3-4	Assess effects of programme objectives (including alternatives) on environmental objectives. Feed results into development of strategic chapters of OP.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the fisheries sector revised Strategic chapters of the Operational programme prepared 		4-5	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the rationale and overall consistency of the strategy Appraisal of the coherence of the Operational programme with the Guiding principles provided for in Article 18a of EFF Regulation 	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic chapters revised Quantified objectives for the Operational programme priorities identified 		5-6	Assess effects of proposed measures and cumulative effects of entire programme. Feed results into definition of quantified objectives of OP.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal of the quantified objectives and evaluation of estimated impact 	6-7	Assess criteria for evaluating projects proposed in the programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision of quantified objectives Implementation system for the Operational programme described 		7	Evaluate proposed monitoring system
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appraisal of the proposed implementation systems 	7	Complete environmental report and consult env authorities and public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final revisions of draft Operational Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of the Ex Ante Evaluation report which synthesises the evaluation work undertaken and describes the process 	8	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of the Operational programme and the Ex Ante 		8	Take report and consultation into account

Evaluation report to the Commission			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some further analytical work by the ex ante evaluator, if necessary 	10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on the Operational programme 		11-12	Inform public and any authorities of justified decision

The iterative nature of the ex ante evaluation and the Operational programme preparation should be emphasised. As different elements of the evaluation are completed, they may cause the Operational programme developers to re-visit earlier stages. For example, the evaluation of the impact of the strategy, might lead to a reconsideration of the policy mix.

Drawing up the terms of reference for the ex ante evaluation is an important element of planning for the ex ante evaluation. Guidance on drawing up terms of reference is provided in the Guide to the Evaluation of Socio-Economic Development (Part 2.1 – Designing and Planning Your Evaluation).

The terms of reference should include all the key components described in Part Two of this Working Paper, with the description under each component adapted to the specificity of the Member State concerned in the Operational programme being evaluated. The process of programme preparation and the extent of and the timetable for interactivity required should also be described.

3.2. Managing the Evaluation

The planning process should include consideration of how the evaluation will be managed. A nominated person within the competent authority should have responsibility to manage relationships with the ex ante evaluators. Experience shows the benefits gained from having a steering group to guide the evaluation process, involving the range of interests concerned in drawing up the Operational programme.

Establishing a steering group also allows the possibility of involving some members of the wider partnership (who will later form the Monitoring Committee) at the Operational programme design stage. The involvement of one or more outside experts in a steering group may also be of benefit.

3.3. Proportionality

The Regulation introduces the concept of proportionality (Article 9 and Article 47). In relation to ex ante evaluation; Article 47 specifically introduces proportionality to be undertaken.

The scale of the Operational programme should be considered in the context of the methodologies proposed. In particular for the evaluation of impacts, methodologies used should reflect the size of the interventions. For very large EFF Operational programmes some macro-economic modelling may be appropriate and macro economic impact assessment would be valuable at the national level also.

Proportionality should also be reflected in the number and type of indicators proposed by the responsible authorities and by the evaluators in undertaking the ex ante evaluation. The Commission recommends the use of a limited number of core indicators where possible, with common definitions agreed and used across a range of the Operational programmes. Working Paper No [xx] provides further guidance in this regard.

3.4. Respective Responsibilities of the Evaluator and Authorities Responsible for Operational Programme Preparation

There should be clarity throughout the process on the respective roles of the ex ante evaluators and the authority responsible for the Operational programme preparation. Responsible authority should develop each component of the Operational programme. The evaluator then evaluates its appropriateness and quality and makes recommendations for improvements. The competent authorities then decide which recommendations to take on board and the changes to be made to the relevant parts of the Operational programme. The evaluator has a particular contribution to make in assessing likely impacts, which in some cases cannot be estimated by the responsible authorities and require evaluation work.

3.5. Independence of the Evaluation Process

The ex ante evaluator must be independent of future managing, certifying and audit authorities. The evaluator should be selected by means of a competitive tendering process according to the internal organisation in the Member State.

The interactive nature of the ex ante evaluation process requires that the evaluator should work closely with the authority responsible for the preparation of the Operational programme. However, it is important that the evaluator retains his independence throughout the process, giving expert judgements on the different elements of the Operational programme. On the other hand, the responsible authority should respect the fact that it is the role of the evaluator to constructively criticise in the interests of improving the quality of the Operational programme, to ensure coherence and to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources in accordance with EFF Regulation Article 47(1).

3.6. Financing the Evaluation

The ex ante evaluation may be financed from the budget for technical assistance of the Operational programme or may be financed from the technical assistance budgets of 2000-2006 programmes. Current rules and procedures concerning eligibility and rates of contribution are applicable.

The evaluation can be a costly exercise. The cost of the evaluation should be proportional to the expenditure foreseen in the Operational programme and its complexity. The budget will need to take account of any additional evaluation questions included and the types of methodologies foreseen. For example, if impact indicators are to be quantified by the evaluator, this may require additional resources. Equally, if the evaluation includes more in-depth analysis of a particular sector or type of intervention, this should be reflected in the available budget.

3.7. Consultation with Partners and Stakeholders

Depending on national and regional institutional arrangements, the partnership which will be involved in the Monitoring Committee may have a role in responding to the results of the ex ante evaluation and deciding on changes to the Operational programmes as they are being developed. The Commission welcomes the involvement of the partnership in the ex ante evaluation process.

Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders should also form part of the methodology adopted by the evaluators. Stakeholders in the Operational programme have valuable insights which the evaluators should draw upon in answering the evaluation questions.

3.8. Integrating the Results of the Evaluation into Programmes

The purpose of the ex ante evaluation is to provide inputs which improve the coherence and quality of the Operational programmes and to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources. These inputs will be provided at various stages through the development of the programme. As the draft Operational programme is made ready for submission to the Commission, a final evaluation report has to be prepared, bringing together all elements of the evaluation. This evaluation report should include a section on the extent to which previous recommendations have been included in the Operational programme. Equally, the Operational programme should contain a short section outlining the ex ante evaluation process, main conclusions and the extent to which recommendations have been incorporated. For the evaluation recommendations that have not been taken into account, a justification should be provided.

3.9. Quality of the Evaluation

The Commission invites the competent authorities to assure the quality of the ex ante evaluation. The Guide to the Evaluation of Socio-Economic Development (www.evaled.info) provides quality criteria for both the evaluation report and the evaluation process which may be useful. The quality criteria are listed in Box 3.2 below.

While the quality criteria for the evaluation report guide a judgement on the quality of the final product, the quality criteria for the process provide a useful checklist for the authorities responsible for the ex ante evaluation, in listing the different aspects of good management of an evaluation process. Their use can help to build evaluation capacity within administrations, particularly for those with limited experience of managing evaluations.

3.10. Forwarding the Evaluation to the Commission

The ex ante evaluation report should be forwarded to the Commission with the Operational programme.

3.11. Publication

It is good practice to publish evaluation reports, in the interests of transparency and the stimulation of public debate on evaluation findings. The EFF Regulation requires that the results of the ex ante evaluation are published and the SEA Directive requires the publication of the environmental report and the draft programme to which it relates. One way to do this is to place the entire evaluation report on the website of the Operational

programme or Managing Authority but care should be taken to avoid excluding certain groups.

Box 3.2: Quality Criteria

Box 3.2: Quality Criteria	
Quality of the Evaluation Report	Quality of the Evaluation Process
(1) Meeting Needs: The evaluation report adequately addresses and correspond the Terms of Reference.	Coherent objectives and programme: The Operational programme objectives were coherent and the programme was able to be evaluated.
(2) Relevant scope: The rationale of the Operational programme, its outputs, results, impacts, interactions with other policies and unexpected effects have been carefully studied.	Adequate Terms of Reference: The Terms of Reference were well drawn up and proved useful and did not need to be revised.
(3) Open participation: The interested parties – both the developers of the Operational programme and the stakeholders have been involved in the design of the evaluation and in the discussion of the results in order to take into account their different points of view.	Tender selection: This was well conducted and the chosen tenderer was able to undertake the evaluation to a good standard.
(4) Defensible design: The design of the evaluation was appropriate and adequate for obtaining the results (within their limits of validity) needed to answer the main evaluative questions.	Effective dialogue and feedback: An inclusive forum and process was created that provided feedback and dialogue opportunities with programme developers and stakeholders that improved the quality of the evaluation.
(5) Reliable data: The primary and secondary data collected or selected are suitable and reliable in terms of the expected use.	Adequate information: Required monitoring and data systems existed and were made available/ accessible for programme developers and stakeholders.
(6) Sound analysis: Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in accordance with established conventions, and in appropriate ways to answer the evaluation questions correctly.	Good management: The evaluation team was well-managed and supported by programme developers.
(7) Credible results: The results are logical and justified by the analysis of data and by suitable interpretations and hypotheses.	Effective dissemination to programme developers: The reports/outputs of the evaluation were disseminated to programme developers including steering committee members who responded appropriately with timely feedback comments.
(8) Impartial conclusions: The conclusions are justified and unbiased.	Effective dissemination to stakeholders: The reports/outputs of the evaluation were suitably disseminated to all stakeholders and where necessary focused on lessons learnt.
(9) Clear report: The report describes the context and goal, as well as the organisation and results.(in a clear and accessible way.)	
(10) Useful recommendations: The report provides recommendations that are useful to stakeholders and are detailed enough to be implemented.	

ANNEX 1 : EX ANTE EVALUATION AND THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1. LEGAL BASIS

Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive) was adopted in July 2001. Member States have had to apply it since 21 July 2004. It requires a wide range of plans and programmes to undergo an environmental assessment before they are adopted.

This Annex explains the objectives of SEA and provides guidance on its use for the appraisal of the environmental impact of European Fisheries Fund Operational programmes. For more in-depth information on the implementation of the SEA Directive, the Commission's Guidance on the '*Implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment*' can be consulted⁵.

2. APPLYING SEA TO EFF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The purpose of the SEA Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. To this end Member States are required to identify and assess the likely environmental effects of plans and programmes already during the preparation stage and before adoption.

The plans and programmes which fall within the scope of the SEA Directive are:

- those in the Member States and those co-financed by the European Community which are:
- prepared and / or adopted at a national, regional or local level, or
- which are prepared for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government; and
- which are required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions.

Plans and programmes co-financed by the European Community are treated under the SEA Directive in the same way as other plans and programmes, as are modifications of plans and programmes.

The scope of the directive is very broad. The following sectors are covered by the SEA Directive: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use (plans which set the framework for future development consent for projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC (the "Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive")).

⁵ <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/eia/home.htm>.

In case of a plan or programme having likely effects on Natura 2000 sites an SEA is also required (article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive)).

Other plans and programmes with significant environmental effects (which set the framework for future development consent of projects) also need an SEA.

If plans or programmes set the framework for future development consent of projects but are not covered by Article 3(2), quoted above, competent authorities in Member States must screen them to determine if they are likely to have significant environmental effects. If so, they would require SEA under Article 3(4) of the Directive. A similar determination would be needed for the plans and programmes, referred to in Article 3(2), which determine the use of small areas at local level or which are minor modifications to Article 3(2) plans or programmes. Authorities should bear in mind that the kind of detailed plans referred to as working documents in section 1.1 of the main paper could be caught by the SEA Directive if they meet the criteria in Articles 2 and 3.

SEA and EFF Operational Programmes

Application of the provisions outlined above suggests that Operational programmes co-financed by the EFF will require an SEA.

It is the responsibility of Member States to decide how best to meet the requirements of the SEA Directive in relation to the Operational Programmes co-financed by the EFF. Established procedures for SEA can be used or the Member State can decide to incorporate the SEA into the ex ante evaluation process. Operational Programmes will take account of the results of the SEA, while the ex ante evaluation should assess how the outcomes of the SEA Directive have been taken into account in the Operational Programme (see point 2.3 of this Working Paper).

3. MAIN ELEMENTS OF SEA

The main steps of an environmental assessment required by the SEA Directive are outlined below.

Most of these steps will be the responsibility of those who are preparing the Operational programmes. Depending on the approach taken in the Member State, ex ante evaluators for Operational programmes may be asked to prepare the environmental report, facilitate consultations or make recommendations on how the results of the report and/or consultations should be reflected in the Operational programme.

Scoping of the environmental report

Before drafting the report, environmental authorities must be consulted to determine the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the report. This scoping activity is the responsibility of those drawing up the programme. If it is decided to undertake some or all of the work of the environmental assessment through the ex ante evaluation, the terms of reference for the ex ante evaluation will need to be developed to incorporate these details.

The preparation of the environmental report

The environmental report must describe the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Operational programme as well as reasonable alternatives. The content of the Report is described in Annex I of the Directive. The environmental report should be prepared simultaneously with the development of the Operational programmes to avoid delays and to ensure that the results of the report are used during the planning process. This use of one common process fosters the integration of environmental impacts into the final Operational programme. Member States must also ensure that environmental reports are of sufficient quality to meet the requirements of the Directive (Article 12(2)).

Consultation

The Directive requires that environmental authorities and the public must be consulted as part of the SEA process. Detailed arrangements for consultation are normally regulated by the national legislation transposing the Directive. Consultation is required in the following circumstances:

In identifying programmes which require a SEA, the designated authorities with environmental responsibilities must be consulted. They must also be consulted when deciding on the scope and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report.

- The draft programme and the Environmental Report must be made available to the environmental authorities and to the public. The environmental authorities and the public (as defined in the Directive) must be given an early and effective opportunity to express their opinions.
- Provision is also made for transboundary consultations with other EU Member States if their environment is likely to be significantly affected by the plan or programme.

The results of the environmental report and the opinions expressed during the consultation process must be taken into account during the preparation of the Operational programme. If necessary, the draft Operational Programme must be revised accordingly. When the Operational programme is adopted, information must be made available to the designated environmental authorities and the public how the environmental report and the results of consultation have been taken into account.

Taking account of the environmental report and the results of the consultations

The environmental report and the opinions expressed during the consultation process must be taken into account by the responsible authority during the preparation of the programme. Although the authority is not bound by the results of the environmental assessment, it may find it necessary to introduce amendments to the draft programme.

Notification of decision

The designated environmental authorities, the public (and any Member State consulted) must be informed of the adoption of the programme and certain additional information (including how environmental considerations and the results of consultation have been taken into account) must be made available to them.

Monitoring

Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the programme should be monitored in order, *inter alia*, to identify unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial actions. This will usually include the selection of appropriate indicators.

ANNEX II – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Starting point:

The Terms of Reference (ToR) must specify the starting point for the ex-ante:

- The ToR should include a description of the objectives of the programmes if they are already established. If these objectives are not set as yet, the evaluator must contribute to their definition by undertaking a needs analysis.
- The objectives should take into account the evaluation of former programmes if they exist and the orientations of the NSP. The evaluator will be asked to assess these two points and to propose modified objectives if necessary.
- In any case the evaluator must help the contracting authority to define the indicators for Axis 4, as there is no former experience in applying these principles to the development of areas depending on fisheries.

Needs analysis:

If the needs are not yet clearly established, the evaluator must undertake this analysis, which will be part of the future OP. This first analysis can also be undertaken by the authority in charge of the preparation of the OP, as they are well informed of the situation of the fisheries sector in their area of intervention. It is suggested that the evaluator should utilise participative methods involving stakeholders, especially for Axis 4.

The OP should include the following elements to justify the choice of the objectives:

- Analysis of the major trends in the fisheries sector as they affect the areas concerned
 - This analysis should be undertaken for each of the 4 main Axes of the EFF that are going to be mobilised in the future OP.
 - For Axis 4, there must be some elements of territorial appraisal, going beyond the sectoral description that should be presented for the other Axes.
 - Identification of the eligible areas covered by the OP
 - Description of the geographical characteristics of the eligible areas
 - Demography of the areas concerned
 - Economic structure of the areas (with a special emphasis on the role of fisheries-related sectors)
 - Environmental situation of the areas concerned Environmental situation of the areas concerned, and assessment whether the foreseen measures comply with relevant EU legislation, in particular Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive) and – once adopted – Directive [] (Marine Strategy Directive [Proposal COM(2005)505final])
 - Specific territorial assets that could be better valorised
- SWOT analysis
 - External analysis of Risks and Opportunities
 - Internal analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

- Definition of the priority needs that the programme could address, taking into account the limited means available and the priorities established in the NSP.

Elaboration of the intervention's logic

The evaluator should:

- Give their opinion on the objectives for the programme as a whole and for each of the priority Axes:
 - Integration of the lessons from the past, in particular taking into account, where relevant, the update of the mid-term evaluation (2000-2006).
 - Relevance regarding the needs, notably of the proposed breakdown of financial allocation between the measures
 - Internal coherence between the objectives,
 - External coherence with the NSP and the EFF objectives,
 - External coherence with other Community policies and guidelines (see Article 19 of the EFF Regulation)
- Assist the planning authorities in the definition of the content of each of the “priority axes” and “measures” foreseen. For each measure, the evaluator should provide the planning authority with comments on the following points:
 - Relevance of the measure regarding the needs,
 - Internal coherence of the measure,
 - External coherence with the other measures, the NSP and the EFF objectives,
 - External coherence with other Community policies and guidelines (see Article 19 of the EFF Regulation)
 - Coherence of the expected impact coherent with the means available
 - Appropriateness of the indicators proposed (quantitative and qualitative) for results and impacts
- Assist the planning authorities with the setting-up of an implementation system for each of the measures
 - Quality of the Audit track (role of the different bodies involved, control procedures, accounting methods, reporting procedures, etc.)
 - Appropriateness of the provision for monitoring, including the gathering of the information needed for the annual report to the EC
 - Appropriateness of the provisions for evaluation
 - For the Axis 4:
 - Selection procedure of the areas that will benefit from funding under the Axis 4 (publicity, selection criteria including composition of the local partnership, calendar, procedure, etc.)
 - Specific indicator system appropriate for a territorial approach (utilisation of participative approaches, innovation in the actions undertaken, integration of the actions, functioning of the partnership, utilisation of networking, setting-up of cooperation actions).

An iterative process:

The ToR should foresee that the evaluator will be implied in the planning process at different stages, and that the tasks described above will be delivered along a period of 8

months to one year. The table presented in the document on the ex-ante is very useful in that respect.

The evaluator should be available for the planning authorities all along the process of developing the OP. The reports are only formal milestones which should not take the lead on the on-going support.

Reports:

The ToR should include a list of deliverables, which will build up to the final ex-ante evaluation report. The OP should include the recommendations of the evaluator and explain how they were addressed in the design of the final programme.

Main steps are:

- Report on the needs appraisal
- Report on the intervention's logic
- Report on the way the recommendations from the Commission should be taken into account.

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