**EVALUATION PLAN**

**OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS IN MONTENEGRO UNDER IPARD III 2021-2027**

**IPARD MANAGING AUTHORITY**

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ABREVIATIONS

AIR - Annual Implementation Report

FFPA - Financial Framework Partnership Agreement

MAFWM - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

MONSTAT - Statistical Office of Montenegro

M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation

NIPAC - National IPA Coordinator

IPARD - Instrument of Pre-Accession of Rural Development

TNA - Training Need Assessment

LAG - Local Action Group

LDS - Local Development Strategies

LEADER - Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale

# OBJECTIVES AND NEEDS

For the purpose of ensuring sufficient and appropriate evaluation activities and to provide for appropriate resources able to support these activities, pursuant to Articles 56 of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA), Article 56 of the Sectoral Agreement an Evaluation Plan has been drawn up of the IPARD III programme in Montenegro for the period 2021-2027.

The objectives of the Evaluation plan are to:

* Ensure that satisfactory and adequate evaluation activities are undertaken to provide the necessary information for IPARD III programme steering;
* Ensure the availability of sufficient and suitable resources (human and financial);
* Ensure that appropriate data is available at the right time and in the right format for the purpose of the IPARD III programme evaluation, especially for the Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), the interim and the ex-post evaluations.

In line with the article 56 of the Sectoral Agreement the following principles for the evaluation of the IPARD III programme will be strictly implemented:

1. For the purposes of Article 54 of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, evaluations shall aim to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from Union funds and the strategy and implementation of the IPARD III programme.
2. The IPARD III programme shall be subject to ex-ante and ex-post evaluation and, where considered as appropriate by the Commission, interim evaluations carried out by independent evaluators under the responsibility of Montenegro.
3. The evaluations shall assess the implementation of the IPARD III programme towards the achievement of objectives set out in Article 16(7) of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement.
4. The evaluations shall examine the degree of utilisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming, its socio-economic impact and its impact on the defined objectives and priorities. They shall cover the goals of the IPARD III programme and aim to draw lessons concerning rural development policy. They shall identify the factors which contributed to the success or failure of the implementation of the IPARD III programme, including the sustainability of actions and identification of best practices.
5. Evaluation reports shall explain the methodology applied and include an assessment of the quality of the data and the findings.
6. The quality and implications of evaluations shall be assessed by the IPARD Managing Authority, the IPARD III monitoring committee and the Commission.
7. The results of the ex-ante and the interim evaluations shall be considered in the programming and implementation cycle.

In order to successfully fulfil these objectives and principles, the evaluation activities of the IPARD III programme will be implemented by:

* Targeted, diverse and tailored approach: the monitoring and evaluation activity will be targeted on capturing whether the programme is delivering on the identified policy priorities. For this purpose, different evaluation techniques shall be used for monitoring and evaluating different aspects of the IPARD III programme. This will also allow sufficient flexibility in annual planning to address evaluation needs as they emerge.
* Timely provision: ensure the monitoring and evaluation activity is undertaken at the right time in order to inform all those involved in programme management, policy-makers and stakeholders of the impact and effectiveness of the IPARD III programme.
* Dialogue and transparency: early dialogue between relevant stakeholders for relevant and timely feedback and fostering evaluation transparency to have the greatest benefits from evaluation report.

This EP is drawn up by the IPARD Managing Authority, in consultation with the NIPAC, for the IPARD III programme in accordance with Article 56 of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement. The evaluation plan shall be submitted to the monitoring committee no later than one year after the adoption by the Commission of the IPARD III programme.

# GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

The monitoring and evaluation system for the IPARD III programme consists of those actors, mechanisms and activities involved in the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation.

Detailed monitoring and evaluation arrangement are defined into Operational Agreement between the IPARD Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency for the implementation of IPARD III programme on the basis of indirect management by the Commission in Chapter 2. Monitoring of IPARD III programme and 3. Evaluation.

Monitoring methods

The progress efficiency and effectiveness of the IPARD III programme in relation to its objectives shall be measured by means of indicators relating to the baseline situation as well as to the financial execution, outputs, results and impact of the Programme.

Evaluation methods

The IPARD Managing Authority is responsible for evaluating the Programme implementation in order to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from Union funds and the strategy and implementation of the Programme by the means of examining the degree of utilisation of resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming and its socioeconomic impact on the defined priorities, and shall, as a general rule be accompanied by achievement related criteria and indicators.

# STAKEHOLDERS MAPPING

The actors involved in the monitoring and evaluation system are: the IPARD Managing Authority, the IPARD Agency, the IPARD III monitoring committee, and independent evaluators.

The role and responsibilities of involved bodies in the monitoring and evaluation system are given:

IPARD Managing Authority

The IPARD Managing Authority is responsible for drawn up the evaluation plan and its implementation after submitted to the IPARD III monitoring committee no later than one year after the adoption by the Commission of the IPARD III programme, and has to ensure as a minimum the following requirements:

* Planned evaluation activities are timely and in accordance with the monitoring and evaluation system;
* The European Commission is informed on each evaluation activities via AIRs;
* Progress of the implementation of Evaluation plan is presented to the IPARD III monitoring committee each year;
* Results of evaluation are published.

The IPARD Managing Authority is also responsible for managing all evaluation tenders, facilitating cooperation amongst the monitoring and evaluation stakeholders and ensuring their capacity building as well as communicating the evaluation results to internal and external stakeholders, as well as to the wider public.

The IPARD Managing Authority summarises the data on indicators for monitoring the effectiveness and the quality of the implementation of the Programme from the tables received from the IA. The data and tables shall be submitted in accordance with Operational Agreement between IPARD MA and IPARD Agency.

IPARD Agency (IA)

For the purpose of monitoring and evaluation the IPARD Agency collects information based on documents submitted through applications, information on supported projects and payments and information on conducted controls.

The IPARD Agency shall ensure the setup of a system to secure a timely data flow to both the IPARD Managing Authority and evaluators. At the request of the evaluators, the IPARD Agency will ensure provision of all additional information and documentation as required.

The IPARD Agency will work closely in coordination with the IPARD Managing Authority to ensure the timely provision of all data on operations and necessary monitoring data.

It is within their responsibility to put up and maintain a proper data management system that is able to collect, store and provide all relevant data concerning the application and relevant project and submit this data to the IPARD Managing Authority in short notice for evaluation.

IPARD III monitoring committee

The role of the IPARD III monitoring committee is to monitor the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of the IPARD III programme implementation, as well as review the progress in the utilization of allocated funds towards the set objectives.

Among other tasks, the IPARD III monitoring committee analyses the activities, results and recommendations of the Evaluation plan implementation. Also, IPARD III monitoring committee may issue recommendations to the IPARD Managing Authority regarding IPARD III programme implementation (including evaluation) and may monitor actions taken as a result of its recommendations. It examines and approves AIRs[[1]](#footnote-1) before they are sent to the EC.

Independent evaluators

The ‘formal’ evaluation activities will be carried out by external experts who are functionally independent from the IPARD Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency. Evaluators will be contracted in accordance with public procurement provisions – PRAG rules and financed from “Technical assistance” measure.

# TIMELINE

It is essential to ensure that all activities relating to the evaluation are carried out in appropriate time, respecting the implementation workflow in relation to time when certain information is necessary. Timely planning will enable planning and foreseeing of assignments for each body involved in the M&E system. Activities of M&E will provide necessary information at a suitable moment, particularly information for the purpose of drawing up of AIRs and the final implementation report for the IPARD III programme.

The indicative timeline of implementation of the planned activities of the Evaluation plan is given in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Activities*** | ***Year of implementation and duration*** | ***Reporting*** |
| Building-up of evaluation capacities of the IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency | In continuation - In accordance with experience through implementation of the IPARD II and IPARD III programme, and based on a proper TNA and Training plan. | Information will be provided to the IPARD III monitoring committee with the annual review of the implementation of the Evaluation plan in each AIR, not later than June 30th for previous year, and in the Interim Evaluation report, as well as Ex-post report. |
| Assessment of the monitoring system established in the IPARD Managing Authority / IPARD Agency (evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of the collection of data) and further development of the system. | Not later than the end of first year of implementation of the IPARD III programme. | Information will be provided to the IPARD III monitoring committee with the annual review of the implementation of the Evaluation plan and in each AIR. |
| Review/assessment of data availability for common context indicators and assessment of weaknesses and gaps in data collection including analysis of development trends and context of rural policy implementation. | During the implementation of the IPARD III programme. | Information will be provided in each AIR and in the Ex-post report. |
| Interim evaluation of the IPARD III programme in accordance with Article 59 of the Sectoral Agreement. | If the Commission considers as appropriate, in the third year following the year of adoption of the first entrustment of budget implementation tasks for the IPARD III programme, an interim evaluation shall be performed | Interim Evaluation report will be discussed by the IPARD Managing Authority and will be submitted and presented to the IPARD III monitoring committee.  Follow up recommendations will be reported to each AIR. |
| Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs;  Assessment sector/measure specific issues when absorption develops different than expected;  Assessment of absorption obstacles, including evaluation of appropriateness of the eligibility and selection criteria for the measures;  Establishing monitoring system for measures in accordance with planned dynamic for entrustment of budget implementation tasks;  Encourage M&E system for LAGs (as part of the preparation for measure 5 “Implementation of local development strategies –LEADER approach”);  Assessment of efficiency of promotional campaign activities on absorption of EU funds;  Analysis of the development trends and context analysis of the IPARD III programme; Contribution of the National Rural Network in implementation and achieving the goals of the IPARD III programme;  Assessment of coordination between national rural development measures and IPARD III programme. | During the implementation of the IPARD III programme by internal and external support. | Information will be provided to the IPARD III monitoring committee, in each AIR and in the Interim evaluation report, as well as Ex-post evaluation report. |
| Specific ad-hoc evaluation activities | They will be implemented during the period of the implementation of the IPARD III programme, based on identified needs of the evaluation reports and recommendations from the IPARD Managing Authority. | Information will be provided to the IPARD III monitoring committee with the annual review of the implementation of the Evaluation plan in each AIR. |
| Dissemination of evaluation results | This will be implemented during the period of IPARD III programme implementation. | Information will be given in each AIR. |
| Ex-post evaluation of the IPARD III programme in accordance with Article 60 of the Sectoral Agreement | At the latest by the end of the first year after the programme implementation period, an ex-post evaluation shall be prepared by Montenegro for the IPARD III programme. | That report shall be completed and submitted to the Commission not later than the end of that year. |

# DATA AND INFORMATION

A clear definition and understanding of each indicator, together with the data collection methodology to calculate their value is the basis for implementation of any evaluation.

In the IPARD III programme of Montenegro the following indicators are foreseen:

* Context, including impact indicators;
* Target indicators; and
* Output indicators.

**Context, including impact indicators**

Values of common context indicators are collected mainly by the MONSTAT and they are presented in Chapter 3.6 of the IPARD III programme. Some of the context indicators are not available as they are not collected in Montenegro and not monitored yet. These are mostly indicators referring to the environment. During the programming period the lack of data will be analysed in detail and adequate steps will be taken to ensure the proper availability of quality data according to the results of analysis. Special emphasis will be given to the impact indicators.

**Target indicators**

The source of data for the quantifying of target indicator values will be databases[[2]](#footnote-2) managed by the IPARD Agency.

Target indicators are presented in the IPARD III programme through each of the measure description.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Output indicators**

Relevant output indicators are monitored in the operations database and provided by monitoring tables that will be generated by the IPARD Agency. All key data for each operation chosen for financing, as well as for completed operations, will be recorded in the electronic operations database, updated and managed by the IPARD Agency. The access to operations database will be enabled to the IPARD Managing Authority. Based on collected data from the operations database, monitoring tables will be completed, at least, on a monthly basis. Using data from the delivered report and monitoring tables, the IPARD Managing Authority will draw up regular monitoring reports and AIRs.

At the request of the IPARD Managing Authority and/or contracted evaluator, all contracted recipients of the IPARD III programme shall co-operate in view of delivering data or enabling insight in project and business documentation for the purpose of evaluation implementation. Recipients will be obliged to provide information for monitoring and evaluation. This includes submission of information not only via the applications and claims process, but may also envisage sample surveys.

Given the diverse nature of the IPARD III programme, there are a number of other potential sources of information which may be drawn on to help inform the performance and assess its impact, such as:

* Internal statistical data within the MAFWM;
* Official data of MONSTAT and other producers of statistics;
* Evidence from the Research Institutes and NGOs;
* Additional and bespoke surveys of recipients to capture broader impacts.

# EVALUATION TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES

Evaluation activities will show the progress, impact, achievements, effectiveness, efficiency and importance of the IPARD III programme for the rural development in Montenegro. Evaluation activities will ensure an adequate analysis of the IPARD III programme contribution to the objectives. All evaluation activities will be coordinated by means of the IPARD Managing Authority staff involved in evaluation issues.

The development of the Evaluation plan has also considered all relevant recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD III programme.

Since good quality evaluation cannot be performed without a well-established monitoring system, the most important activities at the beginning of the implementation process will be assessment of the established M&E system in IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency and further development of the system.

The established system of collecting and storing of data will be checked at the IPARD Agency level. Also, a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) will be carried out and appropriate capacity-building activities implemented, including training for the IPARD Managing Authority staff.

The methodology for the M&E system for these measures shall be established. Specific guidance concerning the requirements for LAGs, as a good basis to report their performance will be developed. In addition, the following M&E activities will be carried out with emphasis on specific IPARD III topics:

* Building-up of evaluation capacities;
* On-going assessment of the monitoring system;
* On-going observation of changes in the context in which the programme interventions take place against set baselines (using common context indicators);
* Interim evaluation of IPARD III programme in accordance with the Article 59 of the Sectoral Agreement;
* Progress monitoring in relation to set values of target indicators and planned output indicators and drawing up AIRs;
* Assessment of absorption obstacles, including evaluation of appropriateness of the eligibility and selection criteria for the measures;
* Establishing monitoring system for measures in accordance with planned dynamic for entrustment of budget implementation tasks;
* Assessment of efficiency of promotional campaign activities on absorption of Union funds;
* Analysis of the development trends and context analysis of the IPARD III programme;
* Contribution of the National Rural Network in implementation and achieving the goals of the IPARD III programme;
* Assessment of coordination between national rural development measures and IPARD III programme;
* Dissemination of evaluation results;
* Ex-post evaluation of the IPARD III programme in accordance with the Article 60 of the Sectoral Agreement.

In addition to previously mentioned evaluation activities, specific “ad-hoc” evaluation activities will be carried out during the IPARD III programme implementation based on the needs and results of external evaluations, appropriate recommendations of the IPARD Managing Authority, the IPARD III monitoring committee and other evaluation stakeholders.

Each year through AIR, the IPARD Managing Authority will report to the IPARD III monitoring committee performed evaluation activities of the Evaluation plan.

# COMMUNICATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Appropriate activities for disseminating the results of evaluations as well as the assessment of information needs for each target group will be foreseen in the evaluation activities based on the Evaluation plan. Activities will be developed in close co-operation with the department responsible for programme promotion in the IPARD Managing Authority and in accordance with the overall communication strategy of the IPARD III programme.

The dissemination of evaluation results will indicatively be carried out in two ways:

* “In house” – targeting employees and decision makers in the IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency, particularly in relation to implementation of evaluation recommendations and for the overall implementation of IPARD III programme. Monitoring and evaluation results will be shared internally to facilitate effective and efficient delivery of the IPARD III programme. If appropriate, externally contracted experts for evaluation implementation will, in addition to the elaboration of the evaluation report, have the obligation to present evaluation results through workshops to the IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency and, where needed, at the meetings of the IPARD III monitoring committee and/or National Rural Network after its establishment. Furthermore, annual report of the evaluation activities undertaken will be provided to the IPARD III monitoring committee.
* Outside dissemination of information – targeting the general public. In accordance with the principles of transparency of IPA assistance, evaluation reports will be published on the IPARD III web pages. In addition to this report, the evaluators will also deliver a summary report with clearly shown results of evaluations, which will also be available to the public, if appropriate. These summary reports will be presented in a user-friendly way to enable a wide range of stakeholders to easily access information on how the programme is performing and what monitoring and evaluations are planned for the future. In addition to the above mentioned, the IPARD Managing Authority will disseminate information on evaluation by means of AIR. If there is a need, other appropriate tools will be used, such as publications, communications to the public etc.

The IPARD Managing Authority shall monitor the follow-up of the use of evaluation results/recommendations and a summary report prepared annually for submission to the IPARD III monitoring committee.

# RESOURCES, TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In accordance with the Rulebook on systematization and organisation of the MARD an adequate level of human resources for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is predicted within the IPARD Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency. Currently the IPARD Managing Authority has 2 employees responsible for M&E issues and in the future 1 more employee is perceived (3 in total). Currently IA has 1 employee for this issue. The “in-house” resources shall be supported by specific capacity-building actions financed through Technical Assistance, following the TNA.

Since the formal evaluation activities will be outsourced and carried out by independent experts selected via public procurement tenders, appropriate and sufficient financial resources, for all activities, are provided through “Technical Assistance”. If needed, the IPARD Managing Authority could use additional financial resources for timely provision of Evaluation plan implementation.

The ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD III programme is completed and performed by „Ecorys Croatia“ S.p.A., and the financial resources have been insured from MIDAS project – MNE-MIDAS2-8820-ME-CQ-21-1.2.3.15.

# TRAINING ON EVALUATION

The training on evaluation will aim to create or strengthen administrative capacity to fulfil evaluation tasks and activities for effective use of evaluation results.

The training for the IPARD Managing Authority will aim at building necessary knowledge and skills for:

* identifying programme-specific evaluation needs and planning of the evaluation activities;
* defining evaluation questions and indicators;
* drafting terms of reference of evaluations;
* evaluation methodology;
* evaluation steering;
* evaluation quality.

A TNA will be carried out and appropriate capacity-building activities for the IPARD Managing Authority and IPARD Agency staff implemented.

Also, in later stage, as part of preparation for measure 5 “Implementation of local development strategies – LEADER”, special studies will be provided through Evaluation plan, with purpose to encourage LAGs in fulfilment M&E requirement regarding programming and implementation of LDSs in line with LEADER approach. Specific guidance concerning the requirements for preparation of LDSs and reporting their performance will be developed.

This approach will create a solid basis for the evaluation activities, as well as for the IPARD Managing Authority, also on local government level and will contribute to building up evaluation culture in rural areas in Montenegro.

1. Each AIR will consist chapter regarding implementation of EP. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Those data are mainly predefined in MANUAL OF PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Review of indicators is presented in Chapter 3.6 of IPARD III programme: A summary table of the intervention logic showing the measures selected and quantified target. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)