



EVALUATION PLAN

**within the Instrument for EU Pre-Accession Assistance to Agriculture and Rural
Development of the RS for the programming period 2014 - 2020
(IPARD II Programme)**

Updated

Managing Authority

December 2021

1. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

For the purpose of ensuring sufficient and appropriate evaluation activities and to provide for appropriate resources able to support these activities, pursuant to Art. 57 of the Framework Agreement (FwA), Art. 54 and 56 of the Sectoral Agreement (SA) an Evaluation Plan (EP) has been drawn up for evaluation of the IPARD II Programme in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014 – 2020 (IPARD II Programme).

According to article 56(2) of the SA, the objectives of the EP are to:

- examine the progress of the IPARD II Programme in relation to its goals by means of result and, where appropriate, impact indicators;
- improve the quality of the IPARD II Programme and its implementation;
- examine proposals for substantial changes to the IPARD II Programme;
- prepare for interim and ex-post evaluation.

In line with the Art. 54 of the SA the following **principles for the evaluation** of the IPARD II Programme will be strictly implemented:

(1) Art. 55 of the FwA sets out general principles of evaluation of IPA II Assistance. According to this article, evaluations shall aim to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from Union funds and the strategy and implementation of the IPARD II Programme;

(2) The IPARD II Programme shall be subject to ex-ante and ex-post and, where considered as appropriate by the Commission, interim evaluations carried out by independent evaluators under the responsibility of the Republic of Serbia;

(3) The evaluations shall assess the implementation of the IPARD II Programme towards the achievement of objectives set out in Art. 16(5) of the FwA;

(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 II 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 II Programme, including the sustainability of actions and identifications 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 Managing Authority, the IPARD II Monitoring Committee and the Commission;

(7) The results of the ex-ante and the interim evaluations shall be taken into account in the programming and implementation cycle.

In order to successfully fulfil these objectives and principles, the evaluation activities of the IPARD II 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 II 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 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.

2. GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

This section describes the main bodies involved and their responsibilities in the monitoring and the evaluation of the IPARD II Programme. It also explains how evaluation activities are linked with IPARD implementation in terms of content and timing.

The actors involved in the monitoring and evaluation system are: The Managing Authority, the IPARD II Monitoring Committee, the IPARD Agency and independent evaluators.

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

Managing Authority

The Managing Authority (MA) is responsible for the process of organization and management of monitoring, evaluation and reporting system. In line with the Art. 54, 56 and 59 of the SA the MA is responsible for and the implementation of the EP and has to ensure as a minimum the following legal requirements:

- that ex-ante and ex-post and where considered by the Commission, interim evaluations are timely and in accordance with the monitoring and evaluation system;
- that European Commission is informed on each evaluation via annual implementation reports (AIRs);
- that each year a report on the results achieved under the EP is presented to the IPARD II Monitoring Committee¹ via AIRs;
- that the results of evaluation are published.

The Managing Authority is also responsible for managing all evaluation tenders, facilitating cooperation and access to relevant data amongst the monitoring and evaluation stakeholders, ensuring evaluation capacity building, checking the quality of evaluations, communicating the evaluation results to internal and external stakeholders, as well as to the wider public, following recommendations on evaluation reports and undertake activities in view of complying with them, and coordinating evaluation with Programme implementation.

The Managing Authority shall prepare deliverables as follows:

- Annual Implementation Report (AIR)²;
- Annual update of the EP.

¹ Article 56(3) of the SA

² Article 59(3) of the SA

Each year the MA will report to the IPARD II Monitoring Committee on conducted annual evaluation activities of the EP. The report will include assessment of the EP progress, proposed revisions and any necessary reallocation of resources.

IPARD II Monitoring Committee

The role of the IPARD II Monitoring Committee (IPARD II MC) is to monitor the efficiency and quality of the IPARD II Programme implementation, as well as review the progress in the utilisation of allocated funds towards the set objectives. No later than one year after adoption of the IPARD II Programme, the EP is submitted to IPARD II MC to analyse the evaluation activities and results of the EP implementation and may issue recommendations to the MA regarding EP implementation and then monitors the activities undertaken as a result of its recommendations. Also, considers and approves AIRs before they are sent to the European Commission (EC).

IPARD Agency

The IPARD Agency (IA), as data provider, defines the methods of collecting the required data in agreement with the MA. For the purpose of IPARD Programme monitoring and evaluation the IA has the role to:

- Collect information based on documents submitted through applications, information on supported projects and payments and information on conducted controls. Collection of data is made through the monitoring and evaluation tables given by the EC and through other tables of monitoring indicators required by the programming document as well as on the basis of other relevant requirements of MA.
- Makes relevant provisions and internal procedures to ensure that recipient's reports are on time and at the required scope.

The IPARD Agency shall ensure the setup of an electronic system to:

- Store the collected information.

The IPARD Agency shall establish the electronic recipients' database with unique reference number of recipients which will allow data analysis defined on the base of territorial structure of the Republic of Serbia.

- Secure a timely data flow to the MA.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Managing Authority and the IPARD Agency the data and the tables (hardcopy and electronic version) shall be provided regularly as follows:

- All tables at least once a year for the AIR;
- All or main tables after each call for proposals for the needs to plan next calls;
- All or main tables before the IPARD II MC meeting (semi-annually);
- Ad-hoc (upon request of the MA).

Independent evaluators

All evaluation activities will be carried out by external experts who are functionally independent from the MA and the IA. Evaluators will be contracted in accordance with public procurement

provisions – PRAG rules and financed from “Technical Assistance” Measure, or other available sources.

National Rural Network

Contribution of the National Rural Network in implementation and achieving the goals of the IPARD II Programme from the point of view of evaluation within their cooperation with the MA of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFWM) can be accomplished through data collection from the field and assistance in promotional activities of the MAFWM on the local and regional level.

The National Rural Network will also have a role in sharing and disseminating monitoring and evaluation findings, which is to be decided at a later stage.

3. EVALUATION TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES

The development of the EP has taken into account any relevant recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD II Programme.

Evaluation activities will show the progress, impact, achievements, effectiveness, efficiency and importance of the IPARD II Programme for the rural development in the Republic of Serbia. Evaluation activities will ensure an adequate analysis of the Programme contribution to the objectives. They will be implemented with an emphasis on the following specific IPARD II topics:

- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting capacity building;
- Availability of data for context indicators and methodological compliance of calculations;
- Observation of development trends and context analysis;
- Assessment of the sustainability of the established target values;
- Monitoring ongoing changes in the context in which programme interventions will be sustainable in relation to the set baselines;
- Absorption capacity and administrative simplifications;
- Assessment of financial allocation by measures and barriers to access to finance;
- Progress monitoring in relation to the set target indicators values and impact indicators;
- Assessment of the use of resources for “Technical Assistance” Measure..

These IPARD topics will be subject of evaluations in accordance with the current priorities within the periodic evaluations during the programme implementation (on-going evaluations), as well as within the ex-post evaluation of the IPARD II Programme.

4. DATA AND INFORMATION

This section provides a brief description of the system to record, maintain, manage and report statistical information on IPARD Programme implementation as well as the provision of monitoring data and information relating to Programme evaluation.

Indicators

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 II Programme the following common indicators significant from the point of view of evaluation are foreseen:

1. Context indicators;
2. Common indicators – target indicators;
3. Output indicators.

1. Context indicators

Data for common context indicators are collected by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the Environmental Protection Agency, the national FADN database, Eurostat and other relevant data providers. Some of the context indicators are not available because they are not collected or monitored in the Republic of Serbia (this primarily refers to the environmental protection indicators), while for some context indicators the calculation methodology is not harmonized with the methodology applied in the EU.

2. Common indicators - target indicators

The sources of data for the quantifying of target indicator values are relevant statistical databases of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and operations databases managed by the IPARD Agency. The expected values of envisaged target indicators are given in the Chapter 6.4. of the IPARD II Programme.

3. Output indicators

Relevant performance indicators are monitored on the basis of data from the operational database of the IA and are provided through the Tables for monitoring and evaluation of the IPARD II Programme, provided by the EC. Data for monitoring and evaluation in the form of these tables are submitted to the MA by the IA and serve as a basis for analysis for reporting to members of the IPARD MC and the EC on the results and achieved programme objectives. All key data for each activity selected for funding, as well as completed activities, are recorded in an operational database, maintained and updated by the IA.

At the request of the MA and / or a contracted evaluator, all recipients of IPARD II assistance should, in accordance with the provisions of the SA, cooperate in providing data or providing insight into project or business documentation for the purpose of conducting evaluations. Therefore, recipients are obliged to submit data and information for monitoring and evaluation. This includes the provision of data and information by IPARD recipients, not only through submitted project proposals and process requirements, but also through sample-based research (interviews, focus groups, etc.).

External data sources

Given the diverse nature of monitoring the effects of the Programme, there are a large number of potential external sources of information that can be helpful in informing about programme performance and its impact. Some of them are as follows:

- Statistical data of other organizational units of the MAFWM (Register of Agricultural Holdings, FADN database and other relevant data);
- Databases and information from other sources (Farm Structure Survey, SORS);
- Additional surveys of recipients to capture broader impacts;
- Evidence from the research institutes and non-governmental organizations;
- Independent reviews of the Programme through public procurement, and
- other unmentioned external sources of relevant data and information.

5. TIMELINE

It is essential to ensure that all activities relating to monitoring and evaluation are carried out in appropriate time, respecting the implementation workflow in relation to time when certain information is necessary. Timely planning of IPARD program evaluation activities will enable timely anticipation and implementation of relevant tasks of each body involved in the IPARD monitoring and evaluation system. Timely implemented monitoring and evaluation activities will provide necessary information at a suitable moment, particularly information for the purpose of drawing up of AIRs and the final report on the IPARD II Programme implementation, as well as timely information relevant for decision-making on the further course of Programme implementation.

The indicative time frame for implementation of the planned evaluation activities is given in the Table 1.

Table 1: Indicative time frame for planned IPARD Programme evaluation activities and reporting

Activity	Type of evaluation	Time frame	Indicative budget allocation ³ (EUR)	Reporting
2021				
Ex-ante evaluation of the IPARD III Programme	External	July - adoption of the IPARD III Programme by the EC	45,000	IPARD II MC, EC (AIR 2021), The Government of the RS
Needs assessment, including assessment of SWOT analysis of the current situation	External	July-September		
Evaluation of the intervention strategy, including selection of measures, targeting of beneficiaries and setting of goals	External	July-September		
Evaluation of the proposed implementation system, including monitoring, evaluation and financial management	External	July-September		
2022				
Ongoing evaluation of the IPARD II Programme for 2020-2021 implementation period	External	January-July	30,000	IPARD II MC, EC (AIR 2021), Government of the RS
Follow-up of recommendations of ongoing evaluation of the IPARD II programme for 2018-2019 implementation period	External			
Assessment of the obstacles to	External			

³ Action Plan for Measure 9: Technical Assistance for the relevant year adopted by the IPARD II MC.



IPARD absorption (including barriers to access to finance) and administrative simplification based on follow-up of recommendations of ongoing evaluation of the IPARD II programme for 2018-2019 implementation period and further improvement in this area				
Assessment of the IPARD II monitoring and evaluation system, including appraisal of monitoring and data collection for result indicator relating to the number of new created jobs within Measure 3 and Measure 7	External			
Appraisal of targets, achieved results and impacts of the IPARD II Programme	External			
Appraisal of evaluation capacity building	External			
2023				
Ongoing evaluation of the IPARD II Programme for the implementation period up to 2022	External	February - July	45,000	IPARD II MC, EC (AIR 2022, AIR 2023), Government of the RS
Assessment of progress of the achieved values in relation to the target values of the indicators and output indicators	External			
Assessment of selection criteria by measures and preparation of recommendations for their improvement	External			
Assessment of the use of the Measure 9 fund	External			
2024				
Ex-post evaluation of the IPARD II Programme	External	April - December	45,000	IPARD II MC, EC (Final implementation report), Government of the RS
Analysis of the effects of the IPARD II Programme by measures	External			
Assessment of the impact of IPARD support on recipients in areas with difficult conditions for agriculture	External			
Assessment of the impact of	External			

IPARD support on agricultural holdings for young farmers				
Assessment of the impact of the IPARD II Programme on development trends and context analysis: observation of changes in the baseline values of common context indicators	External			
Identification of factors that contributed to the success / failure of the Programme	External			
Lessons learned	External			

6. COMMUNICATION

Activities for disseminating the results of evaluations will be developed in cooperation with the organization unit of the Managing Authority responsible for IPARD Programme promotion and in accordance with the overall communication strategy of the IPARD Programme.

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

- **Internal** – targeting employees and decision makers in the Managing Authority and IPARD Agency, particularly in relation to follow-up of evaluation recommendations and for the overall implementation of IPARD II Programme. Monitoring and evaluation results will be shared internally to facilitate effective programme implementation.
- **External** – targeting the stakeholders. Externally contracted experts for evaluation implementation, in addition to the elaboration of the evaluation report, will have the obligation to present evaluation reports to the Managing Authority and IPARD Agency, as well as at the meetings of the IPARD II MC and/or National Rural Network after its establishment. Annual report of the evaluation activities undertaken will be provided to the IPARD II MC.
- **External** – targeting the general public. In accordance with the principles of transparency of IPA assistance, evaluation reports will be published on the IPARD 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. 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 Managing Authority will disseminate information on evaluation by means of public of annual reports of implementation of the IPARD Programme. If there is a need, other appropriate tools of public information will be used, such as newsletters, publications, public communications etc.

7. RESOURCES

An adequate level of human resources for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is provided within the Managing Authority within the Group for Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting of IPARD Programme, and within the IPARD Agency within the Group for Reporting. The internal



resources shall be supported by specific capacity-building actions financed through Measure 9, following the training needs assessments.

Financial resources for the implementation of the evaluation of the IPARD Programme will be provided through the budget under Measure 9 or other available sources.