



**REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND WATER ECONOMY
IPARD MANAGING AUTHORITY**

EVALUATION PLAN IPARD 2021-2027

(In accordance with Article 56 of the Sectoral Agreement)

March, 2023

Adopted by the IPARD III MC Committee with Decision No. XX

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1. Objectives and purpose of the Evaluation Plan

The evaluation system has the objective of providing to the institutions and stakeholders, engaged in the Programme management and implementation, reliable information about programme outputs, results and impacts so as to enable them to take pertinent management decisions. Hence the need for preparing evaluation plan, as integral part of the IPARD, for more targeted evaluation activities and better use of the evaluation results.

Planned and structured evaluation will ensure appropriate data and resources for the evaluation tasks. It will reduce the administrative burden and target the evaluation activities with the needs of IPARD stakeholders.

The evaluation plan shall also establish links between monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities, during the programming period. It will ensure that the robust evidence from the evaluation findings is communicated among all IPARD stakeholders.

Planning evaluation at the very beginning of the programme implementation will provide a comprehensive overview of the evaluation of rural development policy intervention in the IPARD area, so that all actors are aware of intended results.

2. Governance and coordination

In order to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation system is able to deliver results a well-designed and robust governance and coordination system is a prerequisite. The Framework Financial and Partnership agreement and Sectoral Agreement are setting the legal requirements and defining responsible bodies for implementation of the monitoring and evaluation tasks.

The overall responsibility for organizing the process of evaluation of the IPARD III Programme is in the Unit for IPARD Programming and Evaluation, within the IPARD Managing Authority. They are responsible for drawing up an evaluation plan and coordinate its implementation. The IPARD Managing Authority is also responsible for communicating each evaluation to the European Commission and for making evaluation reports public. In addition, the Head of the Managing Authority is facilitating cooperation amongst the monitoring and evaluation stakeholders and ensuring capacity building of stakeholders. The IPARD Managing Authority is also directly involved in collecting and processing monitoring data.

The Monitoring Committee has the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Programme and progress towards its objectives, principally through the use of indicators, and considers and approves the AIRs before they are sent to the EC. The Monitoring Committee shall examine activities and outputs related to the progress in the implementation of the evaluation plan and may issue recommendations to the IPARD Managing Authority regarding programme implementation and evaluation and then monitor actions taken as a result of its recommendations.

The IPARD Paying Agency has an important role in evaluation activities as they hold information regarding applications, supported projects, payments and controls. In other words much of the basic data required for conducting evaluation processes are hold in the Paying Agency. Therefore, the procedures and the Implementing Agreement between the IPARD Paying Agency and the IPARD Managing Authority will secure the timely access and delivery of the data for evaluation purposes.



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When necessary, in consultation with the State Statistical Office, relevant ministries, national and regional institutes and agencies and with other data suppliers the IPARD Managing Authority will define the format, manner and periodicity of data collection and provision of the indicators necessary for implementation of the evaluation tasks.

The IPARD recipients are directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation process in two ways. They are not only required to provide information pertinent to the programme's monitoring and evaluation but also through the organisations representing recipients, such as farmers' unions and associations they are involved in the MC.

Evaluators must be external and independent from the organizations that have any past, current or impending future connection with the design, formulation and implementation of the IPARD III Programme, projects or activities that are being evaluated. For this reason, the IPARD Managing Authority staff who are directly or indirectly involved in the IPARD III Programme being evaluated, cannot take part in the evaluation team. Therefore the process of selecting the evaluation consultant(s) will be done in the competence of the Unit for IPARD Technical Assistance and Publicity (UTAP) with responsibility to prepare the tender dossier on the basis of the ToR provided by Unit for Programming and Evaluation, establish tender evaluation committee and conduct the contracting procedure, in accordance with EC procurement guidelines (PRAG).

After its establishment, the National Rural Network shall participate in collection of various data and include the dissemination of evaluation findings and recommendations in their Action and Communication Plan.

3. Evaluation topics and activities

The IPARD III 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 IPARD Managing Authority.

The evaluations shall examine:

- the degree of utilisation of resources
- the effectiveness and efficiency of the programming
- the socio-economic impact and impact on the defined objectives and priorities.

In particular the effectiveness of the measures of the IPARD III Programme shall be assessed on the basis of their overall impact on:

- a. contributing to the preparation of the country for the implementation of the Acquis communautaire concerning the Common Agricultural Policy and related policies;
- b. contributing to the sustainable adaptation of the agricultural sector and rural areas in the country
- c. the objectives in the IPARD III Programme.

The evaluations 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 identifications of best practices. Evaluation reports shall explain the methodology applied, and include an assessment of the quality of the data and the findings.



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In the early stage of the implementation of the IPARD III Programme the evaluation activity (if needed) will be focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation processes. The aim is to produce evidence to enable the IPARD Managing Authority for any programme modifications or improvements in the procedural arrangements in the IPARD Paying Agency.

With the introduction of the LEADER measure and establishment of the National Rural Network specific requirements regarding the evaluation activities for these measures will be developed.

The ex-post evaluation will be conducted in order to summarize the progress against result and impact indicators and analyse the net effects. This will give the necessary evidence, lessons learned and it shall lead the IPARD Managing Authority to begin preparations for the new programming period.

4. Data and information

The processes of data determination, data collection, validation and verification of data and preparation of Monitoring Tables as tool for data gathering system of the physical, financial and environmental indicators, is described in the manual of procedures of the IPARD Managing Authority.

The IPARD MA is responsible for establishing a reliable system for collecting data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

The data should be collected through a number of different instruments and by different agencies. Data can be collected from primary and/or secondary sources. Primary data are collected using methods such as interviews, questionnaires, focus group interviews, observation, case-studies, diaries, critical incidents, portfolios etc. Primary data collection as costly method is often used to supplement the lack of data for measuring certain indicator or for quality assurance of secondary data and validity.

Secondary data are collected from databases and existing registries within the institutions, agencies or by non-governmental organisations.

To avoid duplicating efforts, running up unnecessary costs and tiring the informants, it is recommended wherever possible to rely on existing information (secondary data) such as:

- Management and monitoring data
- Studies and research relative to the field under consideration
- Published statistical sources
- Evaluation reports and their annexes

The IPARD Paying Agency shall act as monitoring and evaluation data provider to the IPARD Managing Authority, responsible to provide validated and accurate data for the physical, environmental and financial indicators as in the Monitoring tables prepared by the IPARD Managing Authority. In case errors are encountered, the IPARD Paying Agency is obliged to correct the encountered errors and submit corrections with explanation to the Managing Authority immediately after the errors are encountered.

The data shall be provided on monthly, semi-annual and annual basis according to the signed MoU between IPARD MA and IPARD Paying Agency. In addition to the monitoring data requirements as set in the Monitoring Tables, the IPARD Paying Agency shall provide additional data to the IPARD Managing Authority upon request according to the signed MoU. The request from the IPARD Managing Authority shall be supported with details of the required data and the format to be used if possible.



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The Monitoring Tables are prepared in the Unit for Monitoring and Reporting (IPARD Managing Authority), consulted with the Commission and approved by the IPARD Monitoring Committee.. Beside the IPARD Paying Agency the data shall also be collected from the existing registries of other data providers, as the State Statistical Office, MAFWE's and other Ministries, Agencies and Institutes various Registers. All these data providers provide validated data upon request. The evaluator will independently request all missing data required for evaluation activities but at the same time the IPARD Managing Authority shall be notified on such requests.

Diverse data can be also requested from the application forms for the purpose of preparing different analyses and reports. Moreover the recipients are obliged to provide data on investment/projects implemented for five (5) years after the last payment has been received.

Protection of personal data is provided within the scope of compliance with the provisions of EU and national legislation.

Possible introduction of electronic IPARD applications (for all or part of the measures), can significantly contribute to improved accessibility and processing of data.

5. Timeline

The IPARD Managing Authority shall ensure that IPARD III Programme evaluations are conducted within the time limits laid down in the IPARD III SA .

Evaluation is divided into three main phases:

- ex-ante evaluation (preliminary)
- interim evaluation (if appropriate)
- ex-post evaluation (subsequent)

Ex-ante evaluation shall form part of drawing up the IPARD III Programme and aim to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources and improve programming quality. Ex-ante analysis for the IPARD III Programme was performed prior to final submission of the Programme to the EC for adoption. It was performed by independent evaluators and the ex-ante report is included as a separate chapter in the IPARD Programme 2021-2027.

If the Commission considers as appropriate, an interim evaluation shall be performed.

At the latest by the end of the first year after the programme implementation period, an ex-post evaluation shall be conducted for the IPARD III Programme. That report shall be completed and submitted to the Commission not later than the end of that year.

A summary of the activities undertaken in relation to the evaluation plan and a synthesis of the findings of all evaluations of the programme that have become available during the previous calendar year shall be included in the Annual Implementation Reports and in the Final Report on the implementation of the IPARD III Programme.

The following indicative outline explains the time plan for evaluation activities for the IPARD III Programme:

2023 - Identifying programme-specific evaluation needs, defining programme-specific evaluation questions and indicators, identifying evaluation data requirements and screening data sources; deciding on the data to be collected for evaluation through the monitoring system from application forms, payment requests and other monitoring tools;



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2025 - The Managing Authority observe the progress of the Programme and collect recipients data via monitoring systems for output, target and complementary result indicators, in order to prepare the AIR; preparation of the ToR and tendering and contracting procedures for external evaluators/experts if needed;

2026 – The external evaluator/experts are contracted to collect additional information/data to fill data and information gaps and to conduct ad hoc evaluations;

2027 – Conducting ad hoc evaluation studies if needed;

2029 – Preparation of the Terms of Reference and conducting tendering procedure, to ensure that adequate time is given to the external evaluator to conduct a quality ex post evaluation;

2030 - All projects contracted under the IPARD 2021–2027 programming period will be finalised, including the collection of monitoring data on recipients for output, target and complementary result indicators. In addition, data on non-beneficiaries is collected, processed and synthesized in line with the selected evaluation methods and reporting requirements, in order to enable the assessment of programme impacts and achievement towards the EU and rural development objectives in the IPARD ex post evaluation of 2031;

2031 - By 30th June 2031 the MA prepares and submits the standard 2031 AIR (covering the year 2030) and by 31st December 2031 the ex post evaluation report;

The IPARD Managing Authority shall report each year on the results achieved under the evaluation plan to the IPARD III Monitoring Committee.

6. Communication

The IPARD Managing Authority is responsible and shall make available the results of the evaluation activities to the responsible actors involved in the IPARD system, to the IPARD recipients, scientific community, economic partners and different stakeholder. The evaluation findings (Evaluation Reports) shall take part of the Annual Implementation Reports which should be published regularly (on annual basis) on the official IPARD web site, and/or use any other type of publication.

After the establishment of the National Rural Network, the Action and Communication Plan of the Rural Network will also include the method of informing and notifying on the activities and results of evaluation.

The Evaluation Report identifies and appraises medium and long-term needs, the goals to be achieved, the results expected, the quantified targets particularly in terms of impact in relation to the baseline situation, the Community value-added, the extent to which the priorities defined have been taken into account, the lessons learned and the quality of the procedures for implementation, programme monitoring, evaluation and financial management.

The system for implementation of the evaluation results is developed and described in the IPARD Managing Authority working manuals of procedures.

The target audience (who for) and their information needs (what), than the methods and means of communication suitable for each audience (how) and the timing of communication (when) and the persons responsible (who) are described in the table below:



WHO	WHO FOR	WHAT	WHEN	HOW
IPARD Managing Authority, IPARD Paying Agency	IPARD structures (IPARD MA, IPARD PA, IPARD III MC members etc.)	Management of the programme and implementation processes	Within the AIR)	Internal meetings, Website, AIR
IPARD Managing Authority, IPARD Paying Agency	General public	Implementation processes, requirements, effects, impacts, etc.	After each modification of the programme/or when necessary	Website, meetings, workshops, newsletters, summary reports, public media etc.
IPARD Managing Authority, IPARD Paying Agency	EC, Governmental bodies (policy makers)	Management of the programme, implementation processes, results, effects, impacts,	According to the IPARD III SA and on request. Interim Evaluation Report and Ex-post Evaluation Report shall be sent to the Commission according to the provisions of the IPARD III SA.	Internal meetings, summary reports, AIR's

7. Resources

Implementation of the Evaluation Plan and consequently the IPARD III Programme evaluations will be implemented within the frames of the Technical Assistance measure. External independent evaluators/experts will be engaged to conduct the IPARD III evaluations.

Most of the activities within the evaluation system should be managed by IPARD MA's internal resources. Therefore, there is a clear need of qualitative and quantitative strengthening of IPARD MA's human resources for efficient execution of evaluation tasks.

Also development of skills at all levels and capacity building of other actors involved in the evaluation, then the development of procedures and tools for evaluation are essential parts of this activity.

The indicative budget for implementation of the Evaluation Plan is allocated under the budget for Technical Assistance measure for the 2021-2027 programming period.

