**Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme**

**Guidance on monitoring** **Programme indicators**

**Definitions, data collection and evidence requirements**

**for project partners and Programme structures**

February 2023

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*The guide will be further developed after discussions with the Managing Authority, to accommodate the specific details for the Programme*

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# List of acronyms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CF | Cohesion Fund |
| CPR | Common Provisions Regulation no. 1060/2021 |
| EC | European Commission |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund |
| EU | European Union |
| JEMS | Joint Electronic Monitoring System |
| JS | Joint Secretariat |
| MA | Managing Authority |
| NA | National Authority |
| RCO | Regio Common Output Indicator |
| RCR | Regio Common Result Indicator |

# Purpose and intended audience of the guide

This guidance provides information on the indicators used to monitor the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria (Interreg RO-BG). It is intended to support primarily those involved in any stage of developing, appraising, managing or monitoring a project funded by Interreg RO-BG. It is also useful for those carrying programme-level responsibilities and need to work with indicators. Also, it could provide useful information to anyone who is interested in Interreg RO-BG indicators.

The possible uses of the Guidance include:

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| --- |
| By applicants and project partners |
| * During project development, to ensure a correct understanding of the indicators and of the requirements for data collection and reporting, so that they can correctly estimate the human, financial or technical resources required to obtain the necessary data and the appropriate verification evidence. * When developing project management procedures, to ensure that mechanisms and responsibilities for indicators monitoring are in place. * When compiling partners and project reports, to ensure that appropriate evidence has been provided. * When preparing documentation for an audit or monitoring visit |
| By the Programme authorities |
| * During projects appraisal, by assessors, to ensure a common understanding of the concepts and a unitary approach in respect to assessing indicators-related aspects. * During projects implementation, by national controllers and monitoring officers, when checking partners and projects reports or carrying out monitoring visits. * At projects closure, to ensure that all requirements have been met. * When collecting and reporting indicators at Programme level * When preparing annual reviews and the mid-term review of the Programme * When compiling statistical analysis and evaluation |

**This Indicator Guidance is not a stand-alone document.** Instead, it should be used together with the established monitoring procedures for Interreg VI-A RO-BG Programme. It should also be read in conjunction with [EU Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) 1060/2021](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1060), [EU Regulation 1058/2021 on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and on the Cohesion Fund (CF)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058), [EU Regulation 1059/2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the ERDF and external financing instruments](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1059) and the [EC guidance on ERDF/CF/JTF monitoring](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/evaluations-guidance-documents/2021/performance-monitoring-and-evaluation-of-the-european-regional-development-fund-the-cohesion-fund-and-the-just-transition-fund-in-2021-2027), the specific documents issued for each call for proposals, the Project Implementation Manual and applicable MA instructions. The Regulations, the Programme procedures, Call documents and the Project Implementation Manual take precedence over this guidance in case of any inconsistencies.

# Glossary of terms

For the purpose of this Guidance, the following definitions apply:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Baseline* | The value of an indicator describing the situation prior to the starting of the intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made.  For the Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme, it refers to the value of the indicator, for a specific objective, before the beginning of the implementation.  Baselines for Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme indicators can be found in the Programme document, for each specific objective. For all output indicators the baseline is set at zero. |
| *Common indicator* | Indicator established at EU level, to monitor all operations funded through the ERDF, CF and the JTF, including through territorial cooperation programme. All common indicators can be found in [Regulation 1058/2021](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058). |
| *Indicator* | A factor or variable used to measure progress towards the objectives. In this Guidance, it refers to output and result indicators used for monitoring progress in implementing Interreg VI-A RO-BG interventions. |
| *Intervention* | Action or group of actions implemented with the support of the program. It may be used interchangeably with operation. |
| *[[1]](#footnote-2)Intervention Logic* | A narrative or visual description of how the program is expected to work, the chain of elements that lead to the expected change. It usually presents the links between the needs, objectives, inputs, activities, expected outputs, results, impacts, external factors etc. |
| *Mid-term performance review* | An assessment in respect to the progress of the program towards its objectives, taking into account the distance from achieving the indicators’ milestones and elements such: as the wider socio-economic development evolution, new challenges identified in the program area, difficulties encountered during the implementation, etc. |
| *Milestone* | An intermediate value to be achieved at a given point in time during the program implementation in relation to an output indicator, under a specific objective.  For Interreg VI-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme it refers to the value of the indicator, for the entire specific objective, set to be achieved by end of 2024. It is used for output indicators only and is not applied at project level.  Milestones for output indicators can be found in the Programme document, in the dedicated sections for each SO. |
| *Monitoring* | A continuous and organized process of systematic data collection through the life cycle of the project or of the program, to oversee its progress. Usually, monitoring refers to tracking progress against previously established targets and objectives. |
| *Operation* | (a) a project, contract, action or group of projects selected under program |
| *Output indicator* | An indicator to measure the specific deliverables of an intervention. |
| *Performance* | In the context of this guidance, performance is defined as the program’s ability to achieve the milestones and targets established for its indicators. |
| *Performance framework (PF)* | A set of indicators according to which the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, shall review the performance of the program. The PF consists of:  a) the output and result indicators established for each specific objective (SO) of the programme.  b) milestones to be achieved by the end of the year 2024 for output indicators. (c) targets to be achieved by the end of the year 2029 for output and result indicators. |
| *Programme specific indicator* | Indicator established specifically for monitoring operations funded through Interreg VI-A RO-BG. |
| *Result indicator* | An indicator to measure the effects of the interventions supported, with particular reference to the direct addressees, population targeted or users of infrastructure. |
| *Target* | A value set for an indicator to be accomplished at the end of a given time frame. It helps verify progress of the intervention or shows results relative to what was planned.  At programme level, it refers to the value of the indicator, for the entire specific objective, set to be achieved by end of 2029. It is used for all indicators. Targets for all Interreg VI-A RO-BG indicators can be found in the Programme document.  At project level, the targets are to be achieved as instructed for each indicator (for example one year after the end of implementation) |

*Source:* [*CPR 1060/2021*](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1060&from=EN)*,* [*Better Regulation Toolbox*](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/chapter-5-monitoring-application-interventions_en) *and adaptation hereafter*

# Introduction

**Monitoring indicators is an ongoing function of Interreg VI-A RO-BG management process, at project and programme level.** Monitoring entails systematically keeping track of whether the intended actions are implemented, outputs are produced, results are achieved and of whether implementation is on track to meeting the Programme objectives. Indicators are closely linked to the specific actions which will be carried out and to the expected results and they provide a means to measure the progress achieved and the distance towards the targets.

The relationship between actions, outputs and results is known as the ‘intervention logic’. A description of the intervention logic is detailed within Programme documents (e.g. in the Applicant’s Guide). If you are considering accessing Interreg VI-A RO-BG funding and are preparing the application for your project, it is recommended that you check the Intervention Logic and the Interreg Programme, so that you can gain a better understanding on the outputs and results and the results which the Programme seeks to achieve, and which indicators will be used to monitor your project’s contribution to the Programme.

**Program indicators for Interreg VI-A RO-BG are set, monitored and reported according to rules applicable across the EU.** Regulations[[2]](#footnote-3) include details in respect to how the indicators at program level are set, the data which needs to be collected and reported, instructions on how this should be done, as well as information on how the information will be used by the Programme authorities and the EC. Progress is assessed against the milestones and targets established when the programme was designed.

**Each project must contribute to achieving the programme indicators**, **as indicated in the application package of each call.** In the programme, each SO has a different set of indicators, depending on the interventions which will be implemented. For each call, the MA specifies the exact indicators to be monitored in the documents for each call for proposals and, wherever necessary, it estimates the minimum targets which need to be achieved by each project, so as to ensure that targets at programme level are achieved. Beneficiaries develop their applications based on the instructions in the call documents, and once the contracts are signed, the targets for the selected indicators become compulsory.

**During the implementation of the projects, data on indicators is collected, checked and reported in the Programme monitoring system (JEMS).** Indicators are collected at project level, the Lead partner bearing the responsibility of gathering the data and the supporting evidence, checking the accuracy of the information and reporting it in JEMS, following the instructions in the Project Implementation Manual. The monitoring officers in the Joint Secretariat (JS) support partners in their task and check the reported data for errors.

**Monitoring indicators helps the programme authorities see if the programme is going in the right direction towards meeting its objectives and if the funds are used effectively.** The JS/MA collects information across all operations to track overall performance of the Programme based on the information aggregated in the JEMS. This enables them to detect whether certain operations or types of operations are underachieving and request from the Lead partner to make the necessary changes to ensure that targets are met. Based on indicators data, the Programme structures can also inform stakeholders and the public about how the Programme resources were spent and what results were delivered for the target groups and communities it supported. Observing indicators can also trigger wider reflections in respect to the design or execution of the operations, both during the implementation and when carrying out evaluations. Monitoring indicators also provides inputs for the evaluation.

Indicators collected from the Interreg VI-A RO-BG also support monitoring at EU level.Data is used by the EC to show the progress of the interventions supported under the Territorial Cooperation Goal of the EU Cohesion Policy. Indicators can also be used to assess the overall progress in respect to wider objectives, for example in the context of transnational strategies, such as the [EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR).](https://danube-region.eu/about/targets/) Data on indicators from Interreg VI-A RO-BG and from all the other programmes financed under the Cohesion Policy can be found at [keep.eu](https://keep.eu/) and [cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/).

# Indicators used for monitoring Interreg VI-A RO-BG

**The Interreg VI-A RO-BG is monitored by output and result indicators, as defined below[[3]](#footnote-4).**

* Output indicators are used to keep track of the specific deliverables (outputs) of interventions supported[[4]](#footnote-5).
* Result indicators are used for observing the direct effects (results) produced by the outputs, immediately after the intervention has taken place. Result indicators refer to the direct addressees, population targeted or users of infrastructure.

**Programme indicators are “common”, i.e., established at EU level.** Common indicators are standardized indicators defined at EU level, as per the ERDF Regulation 1058/2021, Annex 2. Their use ensures comparability across the EU and increases the quality of monitoring data. Interreg indicatorsreflect the specific character of the interventions and aim to better capture the outputs and results of cooperation actions supported by the Programme.

***Cooperation across borders (cross border character and impact)*** is at the core of all Interreg VI-A RO-BG interventions. Its interventions are designed to respond to the ***common challenges identified jointly in the border regions*** of Romania and Bulgaria and to exploit the untapped growth potential in these areas, supporting the harmonious development of the territory.

Previous programmes have confirmed that ***strong cooperation between project partners*** from both countries is the cornerstone of successful implementation and lasting results. This is why, one key aspect monitored across the programme interventions relates to the ***organizations cooperating across borders during and after the projects end.***

# Data collection

**Indicators are directly linked to the projects.** They refer to the project setup (such as the number of *organizations cooperating across borders*), the actions implemented (for example the number of *pilot actions* implemented), the outputs (for example, *kilometres of cycling infrastructure* or *participations in joint training schemes*) and results produced directly in the projects (such as *visitors to cultural sites*, *population benefiting from flood protection measures*, or *annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure*).

**Project partners are responsible for gathering data on the indicators.** Information should be gathered both in respect to the progress in achieving the indicators’ targets, as well as the required evidence to prove the respective values. Evidence may refer to project records (such as participant lists), statistical or administrative data issued by authorities (such as that referring to population), or data collected by third parties (such as data on users of infrastructure, which can be collected by operators or specialized contractors). Minimum requirements are described for each indicator in Section 9 of this document. The projects shall report the technical and financial progress according to the Programme rules. The reporting shall indicate the status of archiving the output indicators by the project.

**Collecting data on progress, particularly for result indicators, may require specific activities to be carried out by the project partners.** These activities may include installing monitoring equipment or establishing specific procedures, conducting surveys or analyses. It is recommended that the appropriate resources be allocated to these activities and that the necessary governance elements are in place to ensure that the information needed for indicators is properly collected. For some result indicators (for example *Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported*),project partners may also be required to provide baselines for their projects. Specific instructions will be included in the guidelines for each call.

If you are preparing an application for Interreg VI-A RO-BG, please ensure that appropriate resources are allocated and that the necessary elements are in place, to safeguard indicators collection. Please refer to the indicators’ methodological descriptions in Section 9 for the definitions and for specific methodological details and the requirements for each indicator.

# Data reporting

**Project partners are responsible for reporting data on indicators collected from their projects.** Data in respect to indicators’ achievements must be reported upon submitting project reports and, also, upon request from the Programme authorities. Reporting is done in accordance with the Project Implementation Manual and data is uploaded/filled in JEMS.

The lead partner is officially responsible for reporting data for all indicators monitored in the project. As such, the lead partner is expected to collect and/or collate relevant data from project partners. It is recommended that clear working procedures and responsibilities be established at project level, from the beginning. It is also possible that monitoring data be collected by third parties, such as contractors carrying out certain activities in the project; in this case, the lead partner should take responsibility for assembling, checking and reporting the monitoring data.

**Projects must ensure that reported data should be accurate, complete and timely.** This means that indicators should be calculated according to the methodological instructions, that the correct measuring unit is used, that double counting is avoided, at project level. Reported achievements should be proven by the evidence collected by project partners, during the implementation. The methodological instructions include suggestions on possible evidence for each indicator.

**The MA/JS will undertake work to ensure data quality.** As per the CPR Art. 69, Member States are responsible to ensure the quality, accuracy and reliability of the monitoring system and of data on indicators. To this end, the JS/MA will verify the data submitted by the beneficiaries, as part of the monitoring process and will ensure that the data on indicators at programme level is complete and accurate, in line with the EU provisions. The purpose of these verifications may refer to issues such as, but not limited to: the methodology used for calculation; unit of measurement; punctuation, rounding and typing errors; time of measurement; supporting evidence proving achievements. Automatic checks and validations may also performed through JEMS, particularly to avoid double counting at SO and program level, for example in the case of counting organizations cooperating across borders. Additional verification checks and audits may also be performed during the projects’ implementation or after completion.

Occasionally, the MA may be required to report data on indicators to other stakeholders, such as the Monitoring Committee, the Ministry of European Investments and Projects, other ministries or other stakeholders. The content and timing of these reports depends on the information needs of their recipients. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that available data is as accurate and up to date as possible, reflecting the achievements of all operations at that point in time.

**Reports should only include achieved values.** Reported values should only include achievements as a result of implementation of projects activities and not estimations. Achievement should only be recorded as instructed, for example: upon completion of the activity, at project end, one year after the project end etc. Values can be considered achieved when meeting the conditions specified in each indicator fiche, in line with the general provisions for the respective indicator and the specific conditions mentioned in the guide for applicants.

Information should be provided on the total values achieved by the project up to the cut-off date of the report and to the values obtained during the reporting period. For example, when a project reports on achievements for months 6-12 of implementation, it should report on and differentiate between values achieved during months 1-12 and 6-12. Reported values are assembled by the MA/JS to calculate achievements at SO and programme level, against the targets.

**Data transmission and storage is performed electronically**. Data is transmitted through the programme electronic system, JEMS. Explanations regarding how information is input into the system is included in the Project Implementation Manual and JEMS Manual.

**Indicator data is used to track progress in relation to achieving the proposed objectives.** At project level, progress is analysed against the targets set to be achieved by the end of the implementation or sometime after. If these targets are not achieved, corrections may be applied, as specified in the subsidy contract. At programme level, progress is assessed against the milestones set for 2024 and the targets set for 2029.

# Publishing indicators data

**Data on programme indicators is a public information**. As per the EU regulations, data on indicators’ achievements will be published on the official programme website [interregviarobg.eu](https://interregviarobg.eu/), upon each reporting. Data on indicators is also published on the [Open Data Portal for the European Structural Investment Funds of the European Commission.](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/) This data is aggregated and doesn’t include reference to individual projects.

**It is however recommended that data on indicators also be made public at project level, as well**. This would support accountability and transparency and may be particularly relevant in the case of the project of strategic importance, as well as for projects implemented by public authorities. This can be done either on the projects’ website, if available, or on the Programme website.

**Information on program indicators should be published keeping in mind the public who will access and use it.** Data on indicators may be of equal interest for decision-making at local level and for research purposes. It could provide relevant information for citizens, businesses and other stakeholders. It is thus recommended that the materials prepared for publishing and the channels used for their distribution consider the information needs of the audience and their familiarity with the programme.

When publishing data on indicators, one should keep in mind that information is useful as long as it is timely, accessible and usable. The principles for [Open Data](https://opendatacharter.net/principles/)[[5]](#footnote-6) offer further guidance in this respect. At the same time, it is recommended that information is communicated in various formats (databases, as well as infographics, which are easily understood by non-expert audiences) and through different channels. Particular attention should be given, to ensuring the protection of personal or sensitive data. The Programme Communication Strategy and the Project Implementation Manual provide further guidance on how to communicate data, including for indicators.

# Other documents containing information on Program indicators

The following documents contain important information in respect to Interreg VI-A RO-BG indicators. It is important to note that, in case of inconsistencies with the current guidance, the information in the Application package, the Project Implementation Manual or other instructions issued by the MA, the latter take precedence.

***Application manual***

* Information on the Programme indicators used for that particular call.
* Brief explanations on how indicators are expected to reflect the actions carried out during the implementation and the outputs produced.
* Explanations on data collection: calendar, methods, sources, specific requirements.
* Indications on expected evidence /supporting documents.
* Minimum targets expected at project level, whenever the case
* Evaluation criteria related to indicators, including, for example, those referring to project coherence or linkages between actions/ output / results / resources.
* Brief explanations on the monitoring activities which the project partners are expected to carry out in respect to indicators.

***Financing contract / Project Implementation Manual / Other Instructions***

* Partners’ responsibilities regarding data collection, reporting, quality assurance and storage.
* Supporting documents on indicators achievements.
* Information on corrective measures, in case targets are not met
* Instructions on using JEMS for recording/ reporting data on indicators
* Requirements on publishing indicators data at project level, whenever the case

Other information and guidance on the ERDF indicators is available in the ***Commission Staff Working Document on Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027***[[6]](#footnote-7). It is particularly useful for those wanting to understand more about:

* Descriptions of indicators
* General information on setting program objectives
* General information on collecting and reporting indicators at program level
* General information on evaluation at program level
* General information on the use of data at EU level

# ANNEX: Methodological descriptions of Interreg VI-A RO-BG indicators

The current section presents a methodological description for each program indicator. Please note that these descriptions are to be read in conjunction with the specific documents issued for each call for proposals, the Project Implementation Manual and applicable MA instructions, which take precedence over this guidance in case of any inconsistencies.

**The purpose of this section is to provide a working tool with the essential information for those who use, collect and report indicators.** They include definitions of the indicators and of the main concepts, as well as methodological descriptions in respect to the data collection and reporting process, including timing, aggregation rules, and suggested evidence for proving achievements. More details on each indicator may be presented in the application documents for each call for proposals and/or in the Financing contract, the Project Implementation Manual or other Instructions issued by the MA.

Please note:

Details presented as “EC instructions” are taken from the Commission Staff Working Document *Performance, monitoring and evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the Just Transition Fund in 2021-2027*.

## List of output and result indicators used for monitoring Interreg VI-A RO-BG

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Policy Objective | Priority | Specific Objective | Output indicators (Code and short name) | Result indicators (Code and short name) |
| PO3 | 1 | 3.2 | RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations |
| PSO2 Length of waterway supported in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (km) |
| RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders | RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion |
| PSO1 Length of rail reconstructed or modernised – in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area (km) | RCR 58 Annual users of newly built, upgraded,  reconstructed or modernised railways |
| RCO 53 New or modernised railway stations and stops |
| RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders | RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion |
| RCO83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed | RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations (no.) |
| PO2 | 2 | 2.4 | RCO84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | RCR 104 Solutions taken up or up scaled by organizations |
| RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders | RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion |
| RCO26 Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change | RCR35 Population benefiting from flood protection measure |
| RCO24 Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness,  warning and response systems against natural disasters | RCR 37 - Population benefiting from protection measures against climate related natural disasters (other than floods or wildfire) |
| RCO122 Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against non-climate related natural risks and risks related to human activities | RCR96 Population benefiting from protection measures against non-climate related natural risks and risks related to human activities |
| 2.7 | RCO36 Green infrastructure supported for other purposes than adaptation to climate change | RCR95 Population having access to new or improved green infrastructure |
| PSO3 Tools implemented for mitigating pollution | PSR3 Population living within the area covered by the tools implemented for mitigating pollution |
| RCO 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organizations |
| RCO 87 Organizations cooperating across borders | RCR 84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion |
| PO4 | 3 | 4.2 | RCO85 Participations in joint training schemes | RCR81 Completion of joint training schemes |
| PSO4 Investments in education, training and life-long learning services | PSR4 Annual users of the supported investments in education, training and life-long learning services |
| RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders | RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion |
| PO5 | 4 | 5.2 | RCO58 Dedicated cycling infrastructure supported | RCR64 Annual users of dedicated cycling infrastructure |
| RCO01 Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large) | RCR84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion |
| RCO02 Enterprises supported by grants |
| RCO76 Integrated projects for territorial development |
| RCO87 Organizations cooperating across borders |
| RCO77 Number of cultural and tourism sites supported | RCR77 Visitors of cultural and tourism sites supported |

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The main regulatory requirements are established in the *Common Provisions Regulation 1060/2021* and the *EU Regulation 1058/2021 on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and on the Cohesion Fund (CF)* and [*EU Regulation 1059/2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the ERDF and external financing instruments*](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1059) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Definitions of output and result indicators are presented as per Art. 2 of CPR [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Financial indicators are not covered by this guide. Program indicators referring to financial values, such as *RCO24 Investments in new or upgraded disaster monitoring, preparedness, warning and response systems against natural disasters* are considered output indicators. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Principles - International Open Data Charter](https://opendatacharter.net/principles/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. https://ec.europa.eu/regional\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/performance2127/performance2127\_swd.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)