

**IMPLEMENTATION REPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL
COOPERATION GOAL
PART A**

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(3)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Key information on the implementation of the cooperation programme for the year concerned, including on financial instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data.

Three more joint operations worth over €7m ERDF were approved during 2018, one in each of the Priority Axes. At the end of December 2018:

- 15 operations formally approved
- €50m ERDF committed
- 63% of the ERDF allocation for the Programme committed

A total of seven operations have been approved under PA1 (Cross-Border Innovation), five approved under PA2 (Climate change), two approved under PA3 (Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage), and one in PA 4 (Technical Assistance).

The Joint Secretariat (JS) continued to work pro-actively to progress other operations in the project pipeline with a view to approval of a number of these in the early part of 2019, including several in Priority Axis 3 which had been the subject of a specific call to raise the profile of and re-invigorate interest in the Programme.

Joint operations approved, as at the end of December 2018, are forecast to support over 598 enterprises and will link a further 60 enterprises and research institutions cooperating in research and innovation projects. Operations will support nearly 47 organisations working in partnership to enhance the marine and coastal environment. Support will be provided for 12 coastal communities to enhance cultural, natural or heritage tourism along the coasts of the cross-border region. Forecast data from approved operations show that more than 100% of the job creation target is forecast to be met by the end of the programming period (with around 27% achieved by the end of 2018).

Section 3.2 shows the progress made against the Programme's indicator targets for each Priority Axis.

During 2018, the Managing Authority (MA) and Joint Secretariat (JS) and partners in Ireland continued to promote and advance the profile of the Programme. This included a twitter campaign in March, organised events for Europe Day in May and regular news items on the programme website throughout the year. National broadcasters/media picked up a number of the news items issued, significantly raising the profile of the programme.

Programme Meetings

The PMC met once in 2018:

PMC8 – 12th July 2018 – Cardiff, Wales.

Although no major decisions were required at the meeting, the PMC were updated on the position with the programme including progress with delivery of the programme including the grant commitment profile and the position with projects in the business planning system, and an update on the progress being made with communications. The PMC also noted the position on transition measures in the light of deliberations within the UK on Brexit. An updated Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and timetable was subsequently approved by written procedure. The approved project CHERISH was presented to the PMC by its partners.

The PSC had been set up and mandated by the PMC to select operations for funding, with an inaugural meeting in 2015. The PSC met once during 2018:

PSC 3 – 15th/16th May 2018 – Cardiff, Wales

Agenda items included an update on EU Transition, programme progress including levels of commitment, a review of PSC procedures. The meeting focused on Gateway 1 decisions for nine Priority Axis 3 operations currently under assessment by the Joint Secretariat (8 of the operations considered were submitted via the call for projects issued in May 2017).

PSC business also continued to be conducted via the Programme Portal in alignment with the PSC Rules of Procedure. The PSC considered four Business Plans at Gateway 1 and five Business Plans at Gateway 2 (approval) during the period.

No Technical Group (TG) meetings were held during 2018, however 5 proposals were considered via written procedure. These were:

Priority Axis 1 – Brainwave, Aqua Coast; and

Priority Axis 2 – Wildlife in a Changing Climate (WICC), ECHOES and The Flood Partnership.

Communications

Publicity surrounding the Ireland Wales Programme remains positive with news stories prominent in both Wales and Ireland, with support to projects and the positive engagement across the Sea border subject to recognition from politicians, news outlets and stakeholders on both sides of the cross -border area.

@IrelandWales Twitter account broke the 1,000 followers milestone during 2018 and its content was viewed on almost 100,000 occasions during the year.

The website (<http://irelandwales.eu/>) continues to attract interest and was visited on 7,706 occasions during 2018. Each approved project is showcased and promoted with a brief description and a link to their project home website. An interactive map identifies the regions where Ireland Wales projects are delivering activity.

The JS has liaised closely with approved projects and focussed on maintaining a flow of regular twitter updates and news items for uploading to the Ireland Wales website.

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3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS

3.1 Overview of the implementation

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
PA1	Cross-Border Innovation	By the end of 2018 around 62% of the total allocation available had been committed to seven operations under the Priority (€19.7m of EU funds), one operation was approved in 2018; Catalyst a cross-border pilot which aims to use sustainable development as a catalyst to drive design and innovation for Welsh and Irish life science and the food and drink sector SMEs. During 2018 there were four proposals in the pipeline for the Priority including two in detailed business planning. Those in detailed business planning were: Selkie - which aims to increase innovation in ocean energy technology for both wave and tidal - and Cross Border Social Enterprise Accelerator - which aims to develop a pipeline of innovative social ventures and support them to become investable social enterprises in the smart specialisation sectors. At the business planning stage were: Healthy Oats – to research oats from oat breeding to new product development - and Brainwaves – which aims to develop innovative and sustainable added-value techniques for a resource recovery based approach to dairy wastewaters. Three operations: Aquacoast, Exportable and RuriLink were withdrawn during 2018. No significant problems with the Priority Axis were identified.
PA2	Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change	By the end of 2018 around 81% of the total allocation available had been committed to five operations (€22.4m of EU funds), with one operation approved in 2018; STREAM – developing a technological solution to monitor coastal and estuarine regions for impacts of climate change. At the end of 2018 there were four proposals in the pipeline, three were in the business planning stage: Wildlife in a Changing Climate (WICC) – looking at the effects of climate change on mammal populations; The Flood Partnership – work with local communities, local government and landowners to implement low cost landscape measures to minimise and eliminate flooding; - and ECHOES – addressing issues of climate change on migratory birds with a focus on white fronted geese; and one operation in detailed business planning, Coastal Communities Acting Together (CCAT) – monitoring impacts of climate change through a participative citizen science research project. No significant problems with the Priority Axis were identified.
PA3	Cultural and Natural Resources	By the end of 2018 around 23% of the total allocation available had been committed to two operations (€3.5m of EU

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
	and Heritage	funds). These were Celtic Routes, a pilot to test the feasibility of a series of newly created cross border tourism trails that combine natural, cultural and heritage assets in Ireland, and Wales and Re-discovering Ancient Connections – The Saints – reviving ancient links between St.Davids in Wales and St.Aidan (Ferns) in Ireland. At the end of 2018 there were five operations in the pipeline, all were in detailed business planning: LIVE – Eco-museums, e-Insist – develop cross border e-infrastructure, Ports Past & Present – enhance and diversify experience of travel between Ireland and Wales and open up new tourism opportunities, BetarLoop - creating and promoting a Biosphere Eco Tourism and Recreation Loop, and Time Credits 4 Tourism - developing a Time Credit network, creating a community-currency for heritage (earned by volunteering to maintain and promote tourist attractions) that can be spent at attractions in Ireland and Wales. Two operations, The Fitzstephen project and Atlantic Heritage trails were withdrawn during 2018, due to lack of capacity and resource within the partnerships. Overall, implementation in PA 3 had begun to accelerate in the latter part of 2018. The steps taken by the Managing Authority and JS to address the earlier delays in implementation can be found in Section 14. No significant problems with the Priority Axis were identified.
PA4	Technical Assistance	By end 2018 around 97% of the total allocation available remained committed to one operation under the Priority (€4.6m of EU funds). This operation is to enable WEFO and the Southern Regional Assembly to manage and implement the delivery of the Programme. The operation continued to progress during 2018, with indicators reported broadly in line with forecast, as detailed on page 13 of this report, and spend currently just under 20% of the committed funds. Both have been actively monitored, and the operation supported the Joint Secretariat during 2018 in the following activities: • Working with Lead Partners to finalise business plans; • Completing Funding Decision Reports; • Preparing documentation for PSC members' decision, via the portal; • Drafting Offer Letters; • Post approval visits; and • Supporting the Managing Authority

3.2 Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Priority axes other than technical assistance

Priority axis	PA1 - Cross-Border Innovation
Investment priority	1b - Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies

Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators - PA1.1b

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2018	Observations
F	CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	Enterprises	1,200.00	89.00	
S	CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	Enterprises	1,200.00	598.00	
F	CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Enterprises	1,200.00	89.00	
S	CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Enterprises	1,200.00	598.00	
F	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	Full time equivalents	35.00	12.00	
S	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	Full time equivalents	35.00	57.00	
F	CO26	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	Enterprises	70.00	46.00	
S	CO26	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	Enterprises	70.00	60.00	
F	CO27	Research, Innovation: Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects	EUR	791,984.00	9,203.00	
S	CO27	Research, Innovation: Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects	EUR	791,984.00	558,000.00	
F	CO28	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	Enterprises	30.00	5.00	
S	CO28	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	Enterprises	30.00	22.00	
F	CO29	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	Enterprises	600.00	8.00	
S	CO29	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	Enterprises	600.00	161.00	
F	CO41	Productive investment: Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Enterprises	50.00	46.00	
S	CO41	Productive investment: Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Enterprises	50.00	66.00	
F	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Organisations	45.00	17.00	
S	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Organisations	45.00	20.00	
F	PS01	Number of new or enhanced cross-border innovation networks	Networks	6.00	3.00	
S	PS01	Number of new or enhanced cross-border innovation networks	Networks	6.00	8.00	
F	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	Completed pilot projects	3.00	0.00	
S	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	Completed pilot projects	3.00	3.00	

(1)	ID	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	2014
F	CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	479.00	341.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	479.00	341.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	47.00	21.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO26	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	11.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO26	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	60.00	46.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO27	Research, Innovation: Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO27	Research, Innovation: Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects	558,000.00	558,000.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO28	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO28	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	20.00	9.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO29	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO29	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	141.00	72.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO41	Productive investment: Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	11.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO41	Productive investment: Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	54.00	40.00	0.00	0.00
F	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	18.00	14.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS01	Number of new or enhanced cross-border innovation networks	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS01	Number of new or enhanced cross-border innovation networks	6.00	2.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

(1) S=Cumulative value - outputs to be delivered by selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries], F=Cumulative value - outputs delivered by operations [actual achievement]

Priority axis	PA1 - Cross-Border Innovation
Investment priority	1b - Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies
Specific objective	SO1 - To increase the intensity of knowledge transfer collaborations involving research organisations and SMEs in line with the shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies

Table 1: Result indicators - PA1.1b.SO1

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2018 Total	2018 Qualitative	Observations
RI01	Levels of investment in R&D and innovation arising from cross-border collaboration in shared priorities as specified in smart specialisation strategies	TBC	0.00		0.00			
RI01A	Levels of investment in R&D and innovation arising from cross-border collaboration in shared priorities as specified in smart specialisation strategies	% increase	1,493,568,970.00	2015	1.00	120,700,038.00		See Section 9 for a discussion.
RI01B	Business spend on R&D (BERD)	% increase	2,451,253,000.00	2013	0.20	3,312,438,000.00		

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI01	Levels of investment in R&D and innovation arising from cross-border collaboration in shared priorities as specified in smart specialisation strategies			0.00		0.00		0.00	
RI01A	Levels of investment in R&D and innovation arising from cross-border collaboration in shared priorities as specified in smart specialisation strategies								
RI01B	Business spend on R&D (BERD)								

Priority axis	PA2 - Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change
Investment priority	5a - Supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches

Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators - PA2.5a

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2018	Observations
F	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Organisations	10.00	15.00	
S	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	Organisations	10.00	18.00	
F	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	Completed pilot projects	2.00	0.00	
S	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	Completed pilot projects	2.00	0.00	
F	PS03	Number of new awareness raising initiatives targeting coastal communities	Awareness raising initiatives	60.00	16.00	
S	PS03	Number of new awareness raising initiatives targeting coastal communities	Awareness raising initiatives	60.00	56.00	
F	PS04	Number of organisations cooperating in enhancing the marine and coastal environment	Organisations	24.00	23.00	
S	PS04	Number of organisations cooperating in enhancing the marine and coastal environment	Organisations	24.00	47.00	

(1)	ID	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	2014
F	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	15.00	2.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS03	Number of new awareness raising initiatives targeting coastal communities	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS03	Number of new awareness raising initiatives targeting coastal communities	44.00	9.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS04	Number of organisations cooperating in enhancing the marine and coastal environment	15.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS04	Number of organisations cooperating in enhancing the marine and coastal environment	37.00	4.00	0.00	0.00

(1) S=Cumulative value - outputs to be delivered by selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries], F=Cumulative value - outputs delivered by operations [actual achievement]

Priority axis	PA2 - Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change
Investment priority	5a - Supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches
Specific objective	SO2 - To increase capacity and knowledge of Climate Change adaptation for the Irish sea and coastal communities

Table 1: Result indicators - PA2.5a.SO2

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2018 Total	2018 Qualitative	Observations
RI02	Levels of knowledge of adaptation to climate change amongst communities and businesses	TBC	0.00		0.00			
RI02A	Levels of knowledge of adaptation to climate change amongst communities and businesses	% of communities and businesses	64.00	2015	70.00	59.00		See Section 9 for a discussion.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI02	Levels of knowledge of adaptation to climate change amongst communities and businesses			0.00		64.00		0.00	
RI02A	Levels of knowledge of adaptation to climate change amongst communities and businesses					64.00			

Priority axis	PA3 - Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage
Investment priority	6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage

Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators - PA3.6c

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2018	Observations
F	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	Full time equivalents	10.00	0.00	
S	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	Full time equivalents	10.00	6.00	
F	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	Completed pilot projects	2.00	0.00	
S	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	Completed pilot projects	2.00	0.00	
F	PS05	Number of new tourism networks promoting cultural, natural or heritage assets	Cross-border networks	12.00	0.00	
S	PS05	Number of new tourism networks promoting cultural, natural or heritage assets	Cross-border networks	12.00	4.00	
F	PS06	Number of coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	Communities	20.00	6.00	
S	PS06	Number of coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	Communities	20.00	12.00	

(1)	ID	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	2014
F	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	CO08	Productive investment: Employment increase in supported enterprises	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS02	Number of pilot projects completed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS05	Number of new tourism networks promoting cultural, natural or heritage assets	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS05	Number of new tourism networks promoting cultural, natural or heritage assets	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS06	Number of coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS06	Number of coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	6.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

(1) S=Cumulative value - outputs to be delivered by selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries], F=Cumulative value - outputs delivered by operations [actual achievement]

Priority axis	PA3 - Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage
Investment priority	6c - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
Specific objective	SO3 - To sustainably realise the potential of natural and cultural assets in increasing visitor numbers to coastal communities in the Programme area

Table 1: Result indicators - PA3.6c.SO3

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2018 Total	2018 Qualitative	Observations
RI03	Total number of overseas visitors to the coastal communities of the Programme area	Number of overseas visitors	6,902,000.00	2012	7,040,040.00			See Section 9 for a discussion. Figure relates to 2017 as this is the latest year for which data are available.

ID	Indicator	2017 Total	2017 Qualitative	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
RI03	Total number of overseas visitors to the coastal communities of the Programme area	10,483,492.00				6,902,000.00		6,902,000.00	

Priority axes for technical assistance

Priority axis	PA4 - Technical Assistance
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Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators - PA4.Technical Assistance

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2018	Observations
F	PS07	Number of training events held	Training Events	4.00	3.00	
S	PS07	Number of training events held	Training Events	4.00	4.00	
F	PS08	Number of project visits and participations in project events by JS	Project visits	300.00	49.00	
S	PS08	Number of project visits and participations in project events by JS	Project visits	300.00	300.00	
F	PS09	Number of PMC meetings	PMC meetings	14.00	6.00	
S	PS09	Number of PMC meetings	PMC meetings	14.00	15.00	
F	PS10	Number of press releases	Press releases	10.00	9.00	
S	PS10	Number of press releases	Press releases	10.00	10.00	
F	PS11	Number of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by TA	Number of FTEs		11.00	
S	PS11	Number of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by TA	Number of FTEs		11.00	

(1)	ID	Indicator	2017	2016	2015	2014
F	PS07	Number of training events held	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS07	Number of training events held	4.00	4.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS08	Number of project visits and participations in project events by JS	12.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS08	Number of project visits and participations in project events by JS	300.00	300.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS09	Number of PMC meetings	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS09	Number of PMC meetings	14.00	14.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS10	Number of press releases	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS10	Number of press releases	10.00	10.00	0.00	0.00
F	PS11	Number of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by TA	11.00	11.00	0.00	0.00
S	PS11	Number of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by TA	11.00	11.00	0.00	0.00

(1) S=Cumulative value - outputs to be delivered by selected operations [forecast provided by beneficiaries], F=Cumulative value - outputs delivered by operations [actual achievement]

3.3 Table 3: Information on the milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018 total	Final target (2023) total	2018	Observations
PA1	F	FI01	Total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority	EUR	4,751,906	39,599,224.00	4,913,090.51	
PA1	I	IS01	Number of projects approved with enterprises cooperating with research institutions	Number of projects	5		4.00	
PA1	O	CO26	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	Enterprises	0	70.00	46.00	
PA2	F	FI02	Total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority	EUR	4,157,919	34,649,320.00	3,850,163.37	
PA2	I	IS02	Number of projects approved with organisations cooperating on a cross-border basis to enhance the marine and coastal environment	Number of projects	4		5.00	
PA2	O	PS04	Number of organisations cooperating in enhancing the marine and coastal environment	Organisations	0	24.00	23.00	
PA3	F	FI03	Total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority	EUR	2,257,156	18,809,632.00	12,628.00	
PA3	I	IS03	Number of projects approved involving coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	Number of projects	4		2.00	
PA3	O	PS06	Number of coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	Communities	0	20.00	6.00	

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	2017	2016	2015	2014
PA1	F	FI01	Total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority	EUR	254,355.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA1	I	IS01	Number of projects approved with enterprises cooperating with research institutions	Number of projects	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA1	O	CO26	Research, Innovation: Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	Enterprises	11.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA2	F	FI02	Total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority	EUR	199,653.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA2	I	IS02	Number of projects approved with organisations cooperating on a cross-border basis to enhance the marine and coastal environment	Number of projects	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA2	O	PS04	Number of organisations cooperating in enhancing the marine and coastal environment	Organisations	15.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA3	F	FI03	Total amount of eligible expenditure entered into the accounting system of the certifying authority and certified by the authority	EUR	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA3	I	IS03	Number of projects approved involving coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	Number of projects	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PA3	O	PS06	Number of coastal communities participating in cross-border cooperation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism	Communities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

3.4. Financial data

Table 4: Financial information at priority axis and programme level

As set out in Table 1 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 (Model for transmission of financial data) and table 16 of model for cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal

Priority axis	Fund	Calculation basis	Total funding	Co-financing rate	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries	Number of operations selected	Total eligible expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid by 31/12/2018 and certified to the Commission
PA1	ERDF	Total	39,599,224.00	80.00	24,876,171.00	62.82%	24,214,602.00	5,502,918.50	13.90%	7	4,913,090.51
PA2	ERDF	Total	34,649,320.00	80.00	28,015,745.00	80.86%	27,554,205.00	3,879,886.54	11.20%	5	3,850,163.37
PA3	ERDF	Total	18,809,632.00	80.00	4,363,344.00	23.20%	4,164,737.00	12,899.62	0.07%	2	12,628.00
PA4	ERDF	Total	5,939,883.00	80.00	5,735,197.00	96.55%	5,735,197.00	1,139,323.19	19.18%	1	
Total	ERDF		98,998,059.00	80.00	62,990,457.00	63.63%	61,668,741.00	10,535,027.85	10.64%	15	8,775,881.88
Grand total			98,998,059.00	80.00	62,990,457.00	63.63%	61,668,741.00	10,535,027.85	10.64%	15	8,775,881.88

Where applicable, the use of any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme should be provided (for example IPA and ENI, Norway, Switzerland)

Not applicable to the Programme.

Table 5: Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention

As set out in Table 2 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 (Model for transmission of financial data) and tables 6-9 of Model for cooperation programmes

Priority axis	Fund	Intervention field	Form of finance	Territorial dimension	Territorial delivery mechanism	Thematic objective dimension	ESF secondary theme	Economic dimension	Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support	The total eligible expenditure declared by eneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
PA1	ERDF	062	01	01	07	01		02	UKL12	1,386,459.00	1,386,459.00	784,541.70	1
PA1	ERDF	062	01	01	07	01		11	IE021	3,336,795.00	3,336,795.00	725,651.72	1
PA1	ERDF	064	01	01	01	01		24	IE021	1,281,916.00	1,025,533.00	412,674.46	1
PA1	ERDF	064	01	03	01	01		02	IE024	2,282,090.00	2,282,090.00	656,309.77	1
PA1	ERDF	064	01	05	01	01		20	UKL18	11,961,292.00	11,574,583.00	2,289,842.76	1
PA1	ERDF	064	01	05	01	01		24	UKL14	4,627,619.00	4,609,142.00	633,898.09	2
PA2	ERDF	087	01	01	01	05		22	IE021	6,722,945.00	6,722,945.00	1,137,521.63	1
PA2	ERDF	087	01	01	07	05		22	IE023	4,071,492.00	4,066,702.00	695,583.11	1
PA2	ERDF	087	01	05	01	05		02	IE024	5,410,225.00	5,410,225.00	0.00	1
PA2	ERDF	087	01	05	03	05		02	UKL12	6,633,329.00	6,423,252.00	830,712.28	1
PA2	ERDF	087	01	05	03	05		22	UKL14	5,177,754.00	4,931,081.00	1,216,069.52	1
PA3	ERDF	091	01	02	03	06		23	UKL14	1,989,687.00	1,989,687.00	12,899.62	1
PA3	ERDF	091	01	05	03	06		23	UKL14	2,373,657.00	2,175,050.00	0.00	1
PA4	ERDF	121	01	07	07			18	UKL1	5,735,197.00	5,735,197.00	1,139,323.19	1

Table 6: Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area

1. Operation (2)	2. The amount of ERDF support(1) envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations	3. Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)	4. Eligible expenditure of ERDF support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority	5. Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)
Catalyst	73,906.00	0.09%	0.00	

(1) ERDF support is the Commission decision on the respective cooperation programme.

(2) In accordance with and subject to ceilings set out Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS

Cross-border collaboration

The mid-term evaluation of the Programme found that the cross-border collaboration taking place within it is working well and is receiving highly positive feedback from Programme beneficiaries (organisations delivering the projects) and wider stakeholders.

The evaluation found that this cross-border collaboration is occurring at multiple levels. At a Programme beneficiary-level, the Programme has enabled new collaborations (collaborations between organisations who had not worked together before), such as between Bangor University's School of Ocean Sciences and Bord Iascaigh Mhara, and strengthened existing collaborations, some of which were enabled through previous Ireland-Wales Interreg Programmes. These collaborations are, in some cases, growing outside the Programme through, for example, joint applications for other funding sources. Within some projects, the evaluation found evidence of growing multi-level cross-border collaboration, such as in the PA1 CATALYST project, which reported beneficiary with beneficiary, beneficiary with SME, and SME with SME collaboration.

The evaluation found that the benefits of this cross-border collaboration were beginning to emerge. For example, the collaboration in the PA2 CHERISH project led to the development of joint Welsh-Irish standards for the monitoring of coastal heritage impacts of climate change.

The Programme's lead beneficiaries reported few challenges resulting from the cross-border collaboration beyond some administrative issues, which have largely been resolved.

Objectives and balance

The evaluation found that the ongoing projects align closely with the vision of the Programme to 'provide the framework for organisations in the cross-border area to actively cooperate to address challenges and shared priorities of common interest on both sides of the Irish Sea...' and the specific objectives of each of the Priority Axes – in particular, Priority Axes 1 and 2. The lower level of budget committed and expenditure to date under Priority Axis 3 suggests that this is the area in which the Programme faces the greatest challenge with regards to meeting its objectives. The evaluation found that the Programme and its partners are aware of this challenge and have made efforts to address this, such as the May 2017 specific call for projects, promoted by social media and supported by meetings with key stakeholders and a webinar.

The evaluation found that the Programme and its projects continues to contribute towards the Atlantic Strategy and in particular its priorities relating to promoting entrepreneurship and innovation (alignment with Priority Axis 1) and protecting, securing and developing the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment (closest Priority Axis 2). This contribution and alignment is monitored through the business planning process - one of the three core criteria assessed during Gateway 1 assesses the alignment of projects with the Atlantic Strategy (where relevant).

Cross-Cutting Themes

The evaluation found that the projects under the Programme integrated the Cross-Cutting Themes of Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming (including promotion of the Welsh language) and Sustainable Development into their activity in a variety of ways. Approaches taken for the SD CCT include the development of Eco-codes, the integration of institutional sustainable development policies, and some specific actions, including the running of workshops on climate change targets hard-to-reach groups and coastal walk activities in disadvantaged areas. The evaluation found no clear difference in approach to integrating the themes between the different Priority Axes, although clearly the nature of activity of some of the projects in PA2 mean that they naturally closely align with the SD CCT.

Approaches taken to address the EO&GM CCT include the setting of gender balance targets for research teams, boards and committees; the designation of project Equality Officers, and project adoption of the Athena SWAN charter for equality. Projects integrated/promoted the Welsh and Gaelic languages in various ways, including the development of trilingual project websites.

The Programme supported projects in development to integrate the Cross-Cutting Themes by providing guidance in the form of a Cross-Cutting Themes Matrix, produced in January 2017. The evaluation found that the lead beneficiaries of most of the projects were aware of the guidance, and those who were aware of it were satisfied with it, although there was uncertainty amongst some lead beneficiaries as to whether their project's approach to evidencing activity addressing the CCTs was appropriate.

Result indicators

SO1 has an overall result indicator (R101B) of: Levels of investment in R&D and innovation arising from cross-border collaboration in shared priorities as specified in the smart specialisation strategies. A baseline survey was carried out in 2015 and this was updated as part of this evaluation. Surveyed businesses reported lower propensity to invest in collaborative R&D than those businesses surveyed in 2016 (£15,321 to £13,125 in Ireland, £13,125 to £7,143 in Wales), even though the overall investment in business R&D in Ireland and Wales increased by some 35 per cent over the period. Drawing on feedback from stakeholders, it is likely that this indicator may have been affected by uncertainty over Brexit. The evidence would support this; with a greater fall propensity to invest amongst Welsh businesses than their Irish counterparts. Given the changing context and the difficulties of assigning causality of impact to a relatively modest programme, it might be worth considering the mid-term survey as a revised baseline, against which to measure impacts amongst beneficiary businesses, drawn from the individual evaluations of projects within the programme.

SO2 has an overall result indicator (R102) of: Levels of knowledge of adaptation to climate change amongst communities and businesses. This indicator was again measured by refreshing the surveys of businesses and communities conducted at the baseline stage. The results showed a reduction in the proportion of both businesses and communities who were aware of initiatives aimed at adapting to the effects of climate change from 64 per cent at baseline to 58 per cent in 2018. There is no obvious explanation for this reduction but it is a small decrease and, at this stage it is a little early to consider the contribution of the programme to the result indicator.

Overall the lack of recorded progress suggests that it may be more effective to carry out a contribution analysis of the programme in order to understand impact. This approach examines the extent to which the theory of change for the project hold true (especially in terms of assumptions being validated) and then constructs a narrative using a combination of data and case studies to describe how the programme has driven change within the context of the overall impact objectives. This approach allows relatively low-level interventions to be assessed within the context of substantial external pressures.

Management and implementation

The evaluation found that the management and implementation of the Programme was regarded positively by stakeholders, particularly in a challenging context of uncertainty surrounding the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. The evaluation understands that the Programme and its Joint Secretariat have faced several challenges with regards to the management of the Programme, including maintaining sufficient attendance at PMC meetings, but it has worked to resolve them, where possible.

The evaluation found that Programme beneficiaries were largely very positive about the support received from Operations/Project Officers during both the business planning stages and project implementation. The business planning process itself was described by beneficiaries and stakeholders as comprehensive and robust, but correspondingly resource- and time-intensive, even for larger organisations.

With regards to communications and awareness-raising, the evaluation found that the Programme has benefited from the awareness developed through beneficiaries' involvement in previous programmes. The evaluation did not collect evidence about wider awareness of the Programme with the programme area.

Name	Fund	From month	From year	To month	To year	Type of evaluation	Thematic objective	Topic	Findings
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5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN

(a) Issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken

During 2018 the programme authorities continued their efforts to progress proposals through the assessment process to approval. Given the historical shortfall in operations in Priority Axis 3, to some degree, the Joint Secretariat prioritised work on the 25 proposals submitted in response to the specific call for Priority Axis 3 projects which had been approved by the PMC. Progress was not as quick as anticipated in 2018 due to a number of factors requiring significant input from the JS working with the PA 3 partners – a number of applications submitted through the call required more intense dialogue with the JS so that partners could address improvements to the quality threshold. Some partners were facing restrictions in capacity and insufficient resource within the project partnerships and withdrawal of some partners was also an issue. Whilst the net outcome is likely to improve in 2019, depending on the overall position with implementation of the programme, it is possible that additional measures will be required to attract a small number of additional good quality projects in this Priority Axis.

There was a reduction in enquiries from potential partners in both Ireland and Wales as the UK moved closer to leaving the EU in March 2019. The Managing Authority and its operational partners mandated the JS to ensure prioritisation of those projects already in the planning system with a view to maximising ERDF commitment levels by March 2019. At the close of business in 2018, aside from the operations already in the pipeline, there were no new proposals at pre-planning and the number of enquiries to the Ireland Wales mailbox had reduced significantly. Work had been prioritised on progressing the good number of projects already in business planning to try to maximise commitment levels by March 2019 due to wider uncertainty over Brexit. Work on generating new business had therefore not been prioritised at this juncture.

The Managing Authority took a number of steps in 2018 to keep programme partners informed about developments related to Brexit. In July 2018 an update was posted on the Ireland Wales website relating to the UK Government announcement that organisations which secure funding through EU programmes (including European Territorial Co-operation) before the end of 2020 will have their funding guaranteed. In September 2018, the Managing authority wrote to Lead Partners of all Ireland Wales operations to draw attention to a UK Government technical notice relating to ETC, which enabled the Managing Authority to continue to sign contracts with Beneficiaries in Wales after exit for the duration of the Programme. The Managing Authority made it clear that the Welsh Government will continue to consult with the UK Government on the details of further technical notices or any other information relating to the EU Programmes and the UK Treasury guarantee.

An increased focus for the JS during 2018 was monitoring and providing support to the fifteen operations post approval. The JS initiated induction meetings for all newly approved projects and followed this up with regular contact and quarterly face-to-face meetings. This has resulted in the JS establishing good working relationships with project delivery bodies and staying close to any emerging issues. Additionally, work will continue on capturing success stories from those projects which have been supported by the programme.

(b) OPTIONAL FOR LIGHT REPORTS, otherwise it will be included in point 9.1. An assessment of whether progress made towards targets is sufficient to ensure their fulfilment, indicating any remedial actions taken or planned, where appropriate.

See Section 9.1

6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY (ARTICLE 50(9) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)

A citizen's summary of the contents of the annual and the final implementation reports shall be made public and uploaded as a separate file in the form of annex to the annual and the final implementation report

You can upload/find the Citizen's summary under General > Documents

7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)

8. PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS (ARTICLE 101(H) AND ARTICLE 111(3) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(B) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013)

8.1. Major projects

Table 7: Major projects

Project	CCI	Status of MP	Total investments	Total eligible costs	Planned notification/submission date	Date of tacit agreement/ approval by Commission	Planned start of implementation	Planned completion date	Priority Axis/ Investment priorities	Current state of realisation — financial progress (% of expenditure certified to Commission compared to total eligible cost)	Current state of realisation — physical progress Main implementation stage of the project	Main outputs	Date of signature of first works contract (1)	Observations
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(1) In the case of operations implemented under PPP structures the signing of the PPP contract between the public body and the private sector body (Article 102(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

Significant problems encountered in implementing major projects and measures taken to overcome them

Not applicable to the Programme.

Any change planned in the list of major projects in the cooperation programme

Not applicable to the Programme.

8.2. Joint action plans

Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans

Not applicable to the Programme.

Table 8: Joint action plans (JAP)

Title of the JAP	CCI	Stage of implementation of JAP	Total eligible costs	Total public support	OP contribution to JAP	Priority axis	Type of JAP	[Planned] submission to the Commission	[Planned] start of implementation	[Planned] completion	Main outputs and results	Total eligible expenditure certified to the Commission	Observations
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Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

Not applicable to the Programme.

9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Priority axis	PA1 - Cross-Border Innovation
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As part of the Mid Term Evaluation, survey work was undertaken to repeat the baseline surveys undertaken in early 2016 to collect data for the result indicator, ‘Levels of investment in R&D and innovation arising from cross-border collaboration in shared priorities as specified in the smart specialisation strategies’. This work suggests that businesses in Wales and Ireland were less likely to invest in research, development or innovation as a result of cross-border collaboration when surveyed in 2019, than businesses surveyed in early 2016. The data for the result indicator from this survey work gives a value of 120,700,038 euros, substantially lower than the baseline value of 1,493,498,502 euros. Given the major event in 2016 of the UK’s vote to leave the EU it is likely that this would have much more influence over the result indicator than the programme activities. Given that, as at the end of 2018, the programme has supported 46 enterprises to participate in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects, there is evidence that the programme is encouraging businesses to participate in cross-border collaboration which may lead to investment in shared priority areas. The complementary result indicator, Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD), does show an increase on the baseline value.

Further findings from Mid Term Evaluation:

Alignment of projects against objectives

The specific objective of Priority Axis 1 is to increase the intensity of knowledge transfer collaborations involving research organisations and SMEs in line with the shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies. The Programme document describes indicative types of action to be supported under this SO, including the transfer of knowledge between academia and SMEs; the piloting of initiatives to test innovative products, processes or services; cross-border demonstration, testing, and marketing of new products etc; creation of cross-border innovative clusters or networks; and joint cross-border design of innovative solutions. The Programme document also states that it will focus on the priority areas of Marine and Environmental Sciences (including renewable energy), Food and drink, and Life Sciences.

The seven projects approved under Priority Axis 1 to date align well with its objectives. For example:

- the CALIN project supports R&D programmes for SMEs in the Life Sciences sector
- the CATALYST project works to drive innovation within Welsh and Irish businesses in both the Life Sciences and Food and Drink sectors
- the More Than A Club project works with local professional football clubs in Ireland and Wales to

help them set up social enterprises addressing social needs within disadvantaged communities

- the BUCANIER project works to increase innovation capacity within SMEs and social enterprises in the Food and Drink, Renewables and Life Sciences sectors through delivering innovation masterclasses, mentoring and creating new networks for knowledge sharing
- the ISPP project worked to increase knowledge sharing between SMEs and academia in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
- the piSCES project works to reduce the costs for and carbon footprint of the fish processing industry by developing and testing a new ‘smart grid’ electricity network
- the Dwr Uisce project works to build the capacity for innovation in the water industry by investigating how new practices can meet the challenges faced in Wales and Ireland due to environmental and climate change.

Overview of activity within Priority Axis and challenges

Activity under Priority Axis 1 is progressing well. The evaluation understands that some projects are slightly behind profile on expenditure and are anticipating a reprofile, so it is expected that expenditure will increase rapidly moving forward. Projects under Priority Axis 1 did not report encountering any significant barriers to delivery to date, beyond minor issues around staff recruitment and administration. Concerns were raised by a social enterprise beneficiary that the sustainability of the project was made uncertain by the restriction on generating revenue whilst in receipt of funding.

Nature of cross-border collaboration

The seven projects approved under Priority Axis 1 include a total of 26 beneficiaries/partners drawn from 19 different organisations. Five beneficiaries/partners are involved in two or more projects under this Priority Axis. Some of the beneficiaries were involved in projects under the previous Ireland-Wales Programme or had worked together on a project previously, but others were not involved and indeed did not have any links with their project partners before this Programme.

The evaluation found evidence of emerging cross-border collaboration at multiple levels within projects in this Priority Axis, such as in the CATALYST project, through which collaboration has not only occurred at multiple levels but also extended beyond the Ireland-Wales Programme to joint applications to other funding sources. Emerging benefits of this collaboration include significant levels of knowledge and best-practice sharing.

Emerging impacts

At this stage, it remains too early to clearly identify impacts from the activity under Priority Axis 1, but

beneficiaries report that they have received positive feedback from stakeholders and project participants.

Priority axis	PA2 - Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change
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As part of the Mid Term Evaluation, survey work was undertaken to repeat the baseline surveys undertaken in early 2016 to collect data for the result indicator, 'Levels of knowledge of adaptation to climate change amongst communities and businesses'. This found that 59% of communities and businesses said they were aware of climate change adaptation measures in their local community, a decrease on the baseline value of 64%. This is a small decrease and, at this stage it is a little early to consider the contribution of the programme to the result indicator. As at end of 2018, the programme had supported 16 new awareness raising initiatives targeting coastal communities so hopefully, over time, this will increase the awareness of communities and businesses in the programme area.

Further findings from Mid Term Evaluation:

Alignment of projects against objectives

The specific objective of Priority Axis 2 is to increase capacity and knowledge of climate change adaptation for the Irish Sea and coastal communities. The Programme document further describes this objective through a series of indicative actions that could be funded, which include actions such as development of further knowledge and understanding of the environment of the Irish Sea, joint research to address specific gaps in the evidence base, development of new tools to assess and adapt to the impact of climate change, and development of mechanisms and platforms to promote sharing of knowledge on the impacts of climate change.

In this regard, the five projects that have been approved under the Priority Axis to date appear to align well with its objectives. For example:

- the STREAM project promotes joint research on the impact of climate change in Irish Sea estuarine and coastal waters, including the development of new tools (e.g. sensors) to monitor these impacts;
- the Ecostructure project seeks to develop new, eco-engineering solutions for design, construction and maintenance of coastal defence structures, which are more sensitive to coastal habitats and biodiversity;
- the Bluefish project seeks to address knowledge gaps regarding the effects of climate change on the commercial fish and shellfish sectors (e.g. in terms of exposure to parasites/pathogens, invasion by non-native species), while also providing adaptation strategies to address these effects;
- the Acclimatize project seeks to close the knowledge gap relating to the pollution of "at risk" bathing waters in urban areas and rural areas by identifying and quantifying pollution streams and

determining associated climate change impacts on pollutions;

- the CHERISH project seeks to increase cross-border knowledge and understanding of the impacts (past, present and near-future) of climate change, storminess and extreme weather events on the cultural heritage of reefs, islands and headlands along the Irish Sea.

In addition, dissemination of knowledge is a common theme across most funded projects, in particular through the use of web portals or mobile applications alongside workshops, newsletters, seminars etc.

Overview of activity within Priority Axis and challenges

Activity under Priority Axis 2 is progressing well.

Prospects for the further uptake of remaining funding under the Priority Axis also seem positive, as WEFO data on indicative financial commitments (for January 2019) suggest that other proposals, which are currently in the “business planning” stage of the application process, would be sufficient to take up the balance of funding available, if approved.

One of the funded projects has only recently completed its mobilisation phase, while other funded projects are generally about half-way through their project timelines. Expenditure, therefore, would be expected to increase as projects progress further.

Projects thus generally appear to be on track in terms of progress, and they do not seem to have encountered any significant barriers to progress. Delays in staff recruitment were experienced within a few projects, though these delays did not cause insurmountable problems for the projects, while some projects, by their nature, also experienced some minor weather-related delays.

Nature of cross-border collaboration

The five projects approved under Priority Axis 2 to date include a total of 20 different partners (10 Ireland, 10 Wales), drawn from 12 different organisations. There are five organisations that are involved in two or more projects under Priority Axis 2 – Aberystwyth University is involved in four projects, Swansea University is involved in three projects, and Bangor University, UCC and UCD are all involved in two projects.

A number of projects are also building on collaborations that were approved under the 2007-13 Ireland-Wales Programme. These include the STREAM project (WIT and Swansea University collaborated on the WIN-IPT project in 2007-13), the Bluefish project (Aberystwyth University and UCC collaborated on the SUSFISH project in 2007-13) and the Acclimatize project (UCD and Aberystwyth University collaborated on the Smart Coasts project in 2007-13).

The collaborations being delivered under Priority Axis 2 are further drawing on several benefits, which

include the leveraging of complementary skills and expertise among Irish and Welsh partners, and exchange of good practice or new ways of thinking. The geographic focus of the Priority Axis (i.e. on the Irish Sea and its coastal communities) also makes the cross-border collaboration very specific to the Programme area.

Emerging impacts

It is too early at this stage to identify emerging impacts arising from Priority Axis 2, given the stage of progress that funding projects are at. However, several projects have noted strong positive feedback among wider stakeholders, and positive engagement with the project among such stakeholders.

Priority axis	PA3 - Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage
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The latest data for the result indicator is for 2017, showing 10,483,492 overseas visitors to the programme area, an increase of over 3 million on the baseline. The programme was intended to contribute an increase in visitors of around 140,000. Given the slow progress to date, it is too early to assess the contribution of the programme to the result indicator but the growth in tourism numbers is an encouraging trend, although the baseline (in 2012) was for a number of years before the start of the programme.

Further findings from Mid Term Evaluation:

Alignment of projects against objectives

The objective of Priority Axis 3 is ‘To sustainably realise the potential of natural and cultural assets in increasing visitor numbers to coastal communities in the Programme area’. To date, two projects have been committed by the Programme: ‘Celtic Routes’ and ‘Rediscovering Ancient Connections – The Saints’.

These projects are both, in contrasting ways, aligned with the Priority objectives.

For instance, Celtic Routes aims to use cross border market research, branding and ‘pathways’ to encourage visitors to explore new areas of Wales and Ireland en-route to their final tourist destination, recognising that tourists travelling through the cross-border region are most commonly in ‘transit’ rather than ‘touring’ mode (That is, on their way to other, more high-profile destinations elsewhere in either Wales or Ireland). By contrast, the Saints project is about building on the shared heritage of ancient connections and working with communities to use this heritage to attract tourism and visitors to the cross-border region.

There is some concern expressed by stakeholders that the nature of the Priority means that inevitably projects supported are highly likely to more localised and less strategically focused than those supported under the other Priority axes. The development of these two projects is still only at a relatively early stage

and therefore the extent to which this concern may be justified is difficult to assess.

Further, given that tourism and visitor ‘capture’ are highly localised in their effects, it may inevitably be the case that these projects could place partners in competition for the tourism numbers. However, since the two projects so far supported are based on highly specific local attributes and assets, the promoters hope that building collaborations along the same themes will create stronger brands that can be exchanged across borders and between communities.

Overview of activity within Priority Axis and challenges

With regard to Celtic Routes, a considerable amount of planned project mobilisation activity has taken place and in May 2019 public launches involving ‘brand partners’ in the tourism industry were held in both Wales and Ireland. Even so, Celtic Routes is some 6 months behind the original schedule. In the case of the Saints, little activity has so far been possible.

It appears that although there were some delays with full time staff being appointed to the project in both Ireland and Wales, the main time delay is said to arise from rescheduling of key project mobilisation activities. For example, the need to commission market research and branding consultants ahead of public launch and engagement with brand partners and stakeholders.

Nature of cross-border collaboration

For the approved PA3 projects, the nature and success of cross border collaborations will be critical in assessing the current projects’ success. In particular, this is due to the potential for competition amongst partners for visitors and therefore the partners’ attitudes regarding collaborations and joint marketing across the Irish Sea will need to be key measures of success.

Based on current experience of the projects, it is inevitably still too early to be able to make an objective assessment regarding cross border collaborations, however it does appear that there are some encouraging signs emerging.

For example, with both projects, the Irish project partners have maintained a senior Director-level involvement and shown a willingness to participate in the project discussion alongside their project officers. With the Celtic Routes project, the initial mobilisation stage and the preparatory work around branding and the planned learning journeys between tourism stakeholders in both regions will be crucial.

Emerging impacts

In the case of Celtic Routes, some previously unanticipated outcomes are being registered. For example, the developmental work undertaken during project mobilisation has proved more beneficial and impactful than was envisaged, with the market intelligence report providing independent and up to date analysis that is felt to have reinforced the project aims and focused minds and ideas amongst the partners. Similarly, the

branding discussions have proved useful in cementing the collaborations.

Priority axis

PA4 - Technical Assistance

No evaluation information available to report at present.

9.2. Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of specific actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations

The Cross Cutting Themes (CCT's) are embedded into the Co-operation Programme through horizontal measures, which raises the profile of the importance of equality, non-discrimination and gender perspective. This continues to encourage a learning process in relation to equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming across a diverse range of organisations.

A CCT assessment is carried out at Business Plan stage and recommendations made for improvements. Guidance has been developed by the Managing Authority which provides specific information on how beneficiaries can address equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming within their operations.

All Business Plans are formally assessed by the Joint Secretariat against the selection criteria approved by the PMC. The selection criteria includes an assessment of how the proposed operation will maximise its contribution towards the Cross Cutting Themes including Equal Opportunities.

Applicants are asked to describe: how the operation will fulfil its statutory obligations under all legislation relating to the CCTs, how the operation will align with and support all relevant policies and strategies relating to the CCTs, how the operation will maximise its potential to contribute towards the CCTs objective, how the provision for inclusive growth will be maximised within the operation, and how any indicators that will contribute towards the CCT objectives will be delivered.

The operation is ranked against the selection criteria including an assessment of contribution towards the CCTs which is considered by the PSC as part of the overall selection criteria.

At the Programme level, an update report will be provided to the PMC in 2019, to monitor progress in this area once implementation of operations accelerates.

9.3.Sustainable development (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (e) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of the actions taken to promote sustainable development in accordance with that Article

The model used to build this Cross Cutting Theme (CCT) into the Co-operation Programme is implemented through horizontal measures, which raise the profile of sustainable development and encourage a learning process across a diverse range of organisations.

A CCT assessment is carried out at Business Plan stage and recommendations made for improvements. Guidance has been developed by the Managing Authority, which provides specific information on how beneficiaries can sustainable development within their operations.

All Business Plans are formally assessed by the Joint Secretariat against the selection criteria approved by the PMC. The selection criteria includes an assessment of how the proposed operation will maximise its contribution towards the Cross Cutting Themes including sustainable development.

Applicants are asked to describe: how the operation will fulfil its statutory obligations under all legislation relating to the CCTs, how the operation will align with and support all relevant policies and strategies relating to the CCTs, how the operation will maximise its potential to contribute towards the CCTs objective, how the provision for inclusive growth will be maximised within the operation, and how any indicators that will contribute towards the CCT objectives will be delivered.

The operation is ranked against the selection criteria including an assessment of contribution towards the CCTs which is considered by the PSC as part of the overall selection criteria.

9.4. Reporting on support used for climate change objectives (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Calculated amount of support to be used for climate change objectives based on the cumulative financial data by category of intervention in Table 7

Priority axis	Amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (EUR)	Proportion of total allocation to the operational programme (%)
PA2	22,412,596.81	80.86%
Total	22,412,596.81	28.30%

The above table shows the calculated amount of support to be used for climate change objectives based on approved Operations. The calculation is made based on a methodology, developed by the European Commission, which applies a specific weighting to the expenditure recorded against the codes of categorisation that have been assigned to operations in Table 5 of Section 3.4. The relevant weighting of 0%, 40% or 100% that apply to each code of intervention can be found at Annex 1 of the implementing regulation 215/2014. As at end December 2018 the amount of EU Grant of operations that is to be used in support of climate change objectives is €22.4m (just over 28% of the total allocation of the Cooperation Programme).

Priority Axis 2 of the programme specifically targets climate change adaptation. During 2018, the STREAM (Sensor Technologies for Remote Environmental Aquatic Monitoring) project was approved and will bring together partners on both sides of the Irish Sea to better understand the impact of climate change; lower the cost of marine observation and accelerate the process of data provision. STREAM will develop sensors capable of providing real-time environmental data through web portals, mobile applications and mass-produced sensors for organisations responsible for protecting and improving Welsh and Irish waters. Data collected will be shared locally to keep coastal communities informed about the local impacts of climate change.

Significant interest and engagement in this Priority Axis and its subject matter was evident. Collectively, in addressing issues such as understanding weather systems, impacts on our coastlines and bathing waters and vulnerability of species in the Irish Sea, Ireland Wales operations are making key contributions to help preserve and enhance our shared marine and coastal environment for the enjoyment of future generations in the face of the increasing impacts of climate change.

A key output for the activity continues to be raising awareness amongst those communities and organisations that could potentially be affected; business plans are identifying the importance of ensuring that their findings are made available to the key policy makers in both Ireland and Wales.

9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 1, (c) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the role of partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including involvement of the partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme

The partnership approach established when developing the Co-operation Programme document continues with engagement from across the sectors. The Operations Officers have played a key role in promoting the programme to beneficiaries across the sectors and a wide range of partners were engaging with the programme by the end of 2018.

Both the Programme Monitoring and Programme Steering Committees have been established on the partnership principle and take full account of the best practice set out in the European Code of Conduct on Partnership. The Programme committees have a balanced membership from both Ireland and Wales, a broad gender balance and are drawn from across the sectors.

The membership of the both the PMC and PSC was determined by the Welsh & Irish Governments and the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) in Ireland respecting the relevant EU legislation and advice of European Commission officials. The Welsh & Irish Governments and SRA comply with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/ 2014).

PMC membership was determined via a nomination process which secured a good balance and symmetry between key partnership organisations on both sides of the Irish Sea which reflects the strategic objectives of the Programme. They were co-opted on a representative basis, from partners and statutory bodies, including local government, higher education, the public and private sectors, trade unions and the voluntary sector. Representatives covering the cross-cutting themes and sustainable development were also co-opted.

The Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat monitor attendance of members at PMCs. The Managing Authority has the authority to consider replacement membership in the event of frequent non-attendance. It has not been necessary to invoke this clause in the PMC Rules of Procedure to date, however the Managing Authority and its operational partners are closely monitoring the position with attendance.

10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 1 (A) AND (B), OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013

10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations

To date, the main evaluation work has been the Mid Term Evaluation which has provided information for this report. The contractors for the Mid Term Evaluation, Miller Research, will be presenting their findings at the PMC meeting on 6 June 2019.

An update on the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy was given at the PMC meeting in July 2018 and some amendments were agreed.

WEFO has continued to support beneficiaries in conducting operation level evaluations.

Status	Name	Fund	Year of finalizing evaluation	Type of evaluation	Thematic objective	Topic	Findings (in case of execution)	Follow up (in case of execution)
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10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

Good progress was made in implementing the communications strategy during 2018 including a range of information and publicity activities to promote funded projects, and utilisation of channels such as the Ireland-Wales website and twitter account, which were established at the outset of the programme.

Website

The Ireland-Wales website includes information and statistics on all approved projects, plus news and breaking stories from the programme including new project announcements and key events such as the meeting between then Welsh Government Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford and Irish Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe.

The website was visited on 7,706 occasions during 2018.

Twitter

The Ireland-Wales twitter account broke the 1,000 followers milestone during 2018 and its content was viewed on almost 100,000 occasions during the year.

The growth in audience was due to increased project activity creating more opportunities to develop content in partnership with active Ireland-Wales projects.

The WEFO and Southern Regional Assembly corporate twitter accounts also supported the development of the Ireland-Wales twitter channel through increased promotion and engagement.

PR and Project announcements

Three new projects were announced during 2018:

- Celtic Routes
- Catalyst
- STREAM

Following the approval of these projects, press notices were issued to the media announcing the funding and containing Ministerial quotes from both the Irish and Welsh Governments. The announcements were promoted on social media, various websites and by the projects' participating organisations.

WEFO has also issued branded plaques and posters to projects following their approval and formal announcement.

Events and PR opportunities were also held to mark the launch and progress of active projects such as the official launch of Catalyst in October and a half-time performance from participants of the More than a Club project at the UEFA Nations League match between Ireland and Wales in Dublin.

A key meeting to discuss the importance of the Ireland-Wales programme between the then Welsh Government Finance Secretary, Mark Drakeford and Irish Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe was held in February and publicised in the media, online and through social media. This engagement was followed by a visit to University College Dublin by the Welsh delegation to meet people involved in a range of projects supported by the programme.

During 2018, promotion of the Ireland-Wales programme was also included in publicity for EU programmes more widely, including Welsh Government press notices, speeches and events. For example, the programme was promoted within publicity around an EU-funded tourism initiative which complemented the Celtic Routes project. The Ireland-Wales programme was also referenced at the 2018 Marine Energy Wales annual conference and in the Horizon 2020 in Wales Annual Report.

As project delivery continues to accelerate, we will identify opportunities to publicise further achievements and milestones, including working with participating organisations to continue to raise the profile of the programme.

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE ADDED DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 2 (A), (B), (C) AND (F), OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013)

11.1. Progress in the implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including integrated territorial investments, sustainable urban development, and community led local development under the cooperation programme

No actions applicable to the Co-operation programme have been implemented during the reporting period.

11.2 Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the ERDF

During 2018 and particularly, but not exclusively, in response to the 2017 call in PA 3 a wider range of organisations showed an interest and accessed the programme, including several new partners. This required the Ireland Wales Operations Officers to provide extensive advice and guidance to assist potential beneficiaries with access to the programme. The Ireland Wales Operations officers continued to work to promote and raise awareness of the programme and the website and promotion via social media are other mechanisms is being actively utilised to attract a wider range of organisations including newcomers.

The Operations Officers provide continuous advice to partners including post-funding which helps beneficiaries with effective reporting on progress of their operations, to address post-approval technical issues relating to implementation and ultimately add value to effective use of the ERDF funding.

11.3 Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (where appropriate)

As stipulated by the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, recital 19, article 8(3)(d) on the "Content, adoption and amendment of cooperation programmes" and article 14(4) 2nd subparagraph (c) "Implementation reports", this programme contributes to MRS(s) and/or SBS:

All three operational Priorities have some alignment with the Atlantic Strategy and its Action Plan although clearly the geographical reach of the Ireland Wales cross-border programme covers only part of the Sea Basin territory. All three operations approved in 2018 can be considered as aligning to the Priorities of the Strategy concerning promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation and protecting, securing, developing the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment and cultural co-operation.

The Programme's selection process requires an assessment of the extent that joint operations fit with each of its nine selection criteria. These are split into three core criteria analysed at a Gateway 1 stage and a further six selection criteria analysed at Gateway 2 – detailed business planning stage. One of the three core criteria addresses strategic fit including an assessment of the alignment of the cross-border operation with the Atlantic Strategy, where this is relevant.

- ☐ EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)
- ☐ EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
- ☐ EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- ☐ EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)
- ☒ Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy (ATLSBS)

Priority(s) and objective(s) that the programme is relevant to:

	Priority	Objective
☒	1 - Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	1.1 - Sharing knowledge between higher education organisations, companies and research centers
☒	1 - Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	1.2 - Enhancement of competitiveness and innovation capacities in the maritime economy of the Atlantic area
☐	1 - Promote entrepreneurship and innovation	1.3 - Fostering adaptation and diversification of economic activities by promoting the potential of the Atlantic area
☐	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.1 - Improving maritime safety and security
☒	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.2 - Exploring and protecting marine waters and coastal zones
☒	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.3 - Sustainable management of marine resources
☒	2 - Protect, secure and develop the potential of the Atlantic marine and coastal environment	2.4 - Exploitation of the renewable energy potential of the Atlantic area's marine and coastal environment
☐	3 - Improve accessibility and connectivity	3.1 - Promoting cooperation between ports
☐	4 - Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development	4.1 - Fostering better knowledge of social challenges in the Atlantic area
☒	4 - Create a socially inclusive and sustainable model of regional development	4.2 - Preserving and promoting the Atlantic's cultural heritage

Actions or mechanisms used to better link the programme with the Atlantic SBS

A. Are the Sea Basin Strategic coordinators (mainly National Coordinators, Priority Area Coordinators or members, and/or Objective coordinators or members) participating in the Monitoring Committee of the programme?

Yes ☐ No ☒

B. In selection criteria, have extra points been attributed to specific measures supporting the ATLSBS?

Yes ☐ No ☒

C. Has the programme invested EU funds in the ATLSBS?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Does your programme plan to invest in the EUSAIR in the future? Please elaborate (1 specific sentence)

Currently, there are no plans to invest in ATLSBS

D. Obtained results in relation to the ATLSBS (n.a. for 2016)

n.a.

11.4 Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation

The Priority Axis 3 project Rediscovering Ancient Connections - The Saints demonstrates implementation in the field of social innovation.

This project will develop a range of measures to stimulate and support local business. The exchange of knowledge between local business in St. David's (Wales) and those in Ferns will be integral to this and will include a Start Your Own Business Course, Business Mentoring and the development of an Enterprise and Innovation Hub in Ferns Community Centre.

There are a range of community-based projects which will emerge from engagement with communities in both territories during the project lifetime. A number of potential opportunities have been identified by community partners such as: heritage-based projects, community textile projects, young musician events and community orchards which all hold great potential for linking communities in the two territories and creating product that visitors will enjoy.

A crucial element of this project is to establish what the community wants/needs (within the context and parameters of the project outcomes), and enable these aspirations to be realised through the allocation of project resources (project officer time and project funding), working in partnership with them.

A separate strand of the project will use the research-based story of ancient connections and Saints (from the 'Exploring a Shared Past' project) as raw material to develop a network of community-based tourism ambassadors in the territories. This will include shop workers, taxi drivers, B&Bs, hoteliers, visitor attractions staff and anyone else likely to come into contact with visitors, all being trained to a consistent standard of knowledge in the story, alongside Welcome Host-style training as required.

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Information and assessment of the programme contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Article 9 of Regulation 1303/2013 identifies the ‘Thematic Objectives’ that all ES&I-funded programmes will support, in order to contribute to the union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Each Priority and its Specific Objective within the Programme contributes in some way to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The following outlines the progress made against each of the Programme’s Thematic Objectives:

Thematic Objective 01: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation

Priority 1 of the programme aims to help address the jobs and growth agenda and a focus on innovation, including research and development, is central to this.

The Priority is closely aligned to the strategic priorities of both the Welsh and Irish Governments and the European Union and aligns closely with the regional programmes in Ireland and Wales. It aims to contribute towards the Europe 2020 headline target of improving the conditions for research and development, in particular with the aim of bringing combined public and private investment levels in this sector to 3% of GDP. This Priority also offers the opportunity to develop relationships between Welsh and Irish HEIs and Research Institutes and can therefore assist with providing a platform for accessing Horizon 2020 funding.

By the end of 2018 €19.7m of ERDF had been committed to seven operations under this Priority and Thematic Objective.

Examples of operations approved include:

- the Celtic Advanced Life Science Innovation Network (**CALIN**) operation is delivering a pan-Ireland-Wales platform for industry driven innovation in the area of Nanohealth (the application of nanotechnology to healthcare) by connecting businesses with the Welsh and Irish academic knowledge base. The change sought through CALIN is smart growth in advanced life sciences, which will culminate in driving sustainable business growth through the development of new technologies, products, processes and services. Growth in productivity will promote the creation of high value jobs and will make the region more attractive to investment in the life science sector.
- **Irish Sea Portal**, a cross-border pilot, the aim of which is to test the feasibility of a larger project (The Irish Sea Portal (ISP)) which will provide a platform that can meet the requirement for knowledge flow in order to generate growth in fisheries and aquaculture. The Pilot will facilitate the formation of one cluster in order to test the principles of the ISP.
- **Catalyst**, a cross-border pilot which aims to use sustainable development as a catalyst to drive design and innovation for Welsh and Irish life science and the food and drink sector SMEs.

Thematic Objective 05: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management

Priority 2 of the programme contributes to this Thematic Objective. The Irish Sea forms both the border which divides the Member States and the connection which unites the Programme area. It offers a multitude of opportunities for collaboration.

By the end of 2018 €22.4m of ERDF had been committed to five operations under this Priority and Thematic Objective.

Examples of operations approved include:

- **CHERISH** (Climate Heritage & Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands) aims to increase cross-border knowledge and understanding of the impacts (past, present and near-future) of climate change, storms and extreme weather events on the cultural heritage of reefs, islands and headlands of the Irish Sea.
- **Bluefish** is developing knowledge and understanding of the marine resources of the Irish Sea and Celtic Seas by addressing knowledge gaps regarding the effects on and potential vulnerability of selected commercial fish and shellfish from predicted climate change.
- The **STREAM** (Sensor Technologies for Remote Environmental Aquatic Monitoring) operation will bring together partners on both sides of the Irish Sea to better understand the impact of climate change; lower the cost of marine observation and accelerate the process of data provision.

Thematic Objective 06: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

Priority 3 of the programme contributes to this Thematic Objective and focuses primarily on sustainability, with a strong inclusive growth theme running through it. This balances the emphasis on smart and sustainable growth in the aforementioned Priorities.

By the end of 2018 €3.5m of ERDF had been committed to two operations under this Priority and Thematic Objective.

An example of an operation approved is:

- **Celtic Routes** which aims to encourage visitors to explore new areas of Wales and Ireland by transforming less well known areas from transit zones to new touring sites, increasing the time visitors spend in these regions and capitalising on the opportunities to boost local economies.

14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN — PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)

Where the assessment of progress made with regard to the milestones and targets set out in the performance framework demonstrates that certain milestones and targets have not been achieved, Member States should outline the underlying reasons for failure to achieve these milestones in the report of 2019 (for milestones) and in the final implementation report (for targets).

The European Commission wrote to the Managing Authority drawing attention to the Programme Performance Framework and those achieved values for indicators reported in the 2017 AIR, registering concern about whether the programme was on track to achieve some of its milestones by the end of 2018.

The Managing Authority wrote to the Commission in December 2018 confirming that the majority of Performance Framework targets had been met and that there was no serious failure as per Article 6 (3) and (4) of Commission Regulation (EU) No 215/2014. The Managing Authority responded to a number of issues referred to by the Commission.

Whilst the December 2018 levels for PA1 and PA 2 related to expenditure paid and verified fell short of the end 2018 targets (84% and 54% of the PA targets respectively), there was sufficient expenditure in the system in order for the Managing Authority to be confident that it would exceed PA 1 and PA 2 targets by March 2019, based on expenditure relating to activity up to end 2018. The PA 1 expenditure target was subsequently exceeded. The target for the key implementation step under PA 1 (Number of projects approved with enterprises cooperating with research institutions) was short by one approved project. However, these projects have already delivered almost two thirds of the related output target for 2023. Expenditure for PA 2, at 93%, was within the allowable tolerance of 85%. The target for the key implementation step under PA 2 (Number of projects approved with organisations cooperating on a cross-border basis to enhance the marine and coastal environment) was exceeded.

As far as PA 3 was concerned, the Managing Authority recognised that there was a considerable shortfall in the two indicators relating to eligible expenditure and in achieving the milestone of projects approved involving coastal communities participating in cross-border co-operation around cultural, natural or heritage tourism. The Managing Authority acknowledged that there were delays in mobilising partnerships to bring forward projects in this PA, however, this problem was identified by the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat at an early stage as they were monitoring the situation closely. An approach to mitigate the risk to the programme was agreed by the PMC, publicity surrounding the PA was increased and, as previously reported, a specific call was launched. This resulted in seven operations being supported by the PSC at Gateway 1 stage. By the end of 2018 one project had been formally approved by the PSC with a number of others sufficiently progressed through Gateway 2 with a view to the PSC making decisions in early 2019. This should enable the programme to make progress against the Performance Framework targets in this PA.

The Programme authorities will continue to work to make further progress against all the Programme indicator targets in 2019.

DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent By
Ireland Wales AIR 2018 Summary	Citizens' summary	27-Jun-2019		Ares(2019)4093133	Ireland Wales AIR 2018 Summary	27-Jun-2019	nlawtoca

LATEST VALIDATION RESULTS

Severity	Code	Message
Info		Implementation report version has been validated
Warning	2.48.1	Annual value entered in table 1 is below the baseline value and moving away from the target for priority axis: PA2, investment priority: 5a, specific objective: SO2, indicator: RI02A, year: 2018 (59.00 < 64.00). Please check.
Warning	2.49.1	Annual value entered in table 1 exceeds the target value for priority axis: PA3, investment priority: 6c, specific objective: SO3, indicator: RI03, year: 2017 (10,483,492.00 > 7,040,040.00). Please check.
Warning	2.50.1	Annual value entered in table 1 is greater than the baseline value and moving away from the target for priority axis: PA1, investment priority: 1b, specific objective: SO1, indicator: RI01B, year: 2018 (3,312,438,000.00 > 2,451,253,000.00). Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 107.14% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA4, investment priority: -, indicator: PS09, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 108.00% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA1, investment priority: 1b, indicator: CO41, year: 2017. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 132.00% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA1, investment priority: 1b, indicator: CO41, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 133.33% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA1, investment priority: 1b, indicator: PS01, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 134.29% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA1, investment priority: 1b, indicator: CO08, year: 2017. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 150.00% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA2, investment priority: 5a, indicator: CO42, year: 2017. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 154.17% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA2, investment priority: 5a, indicator: PS04, year: 2017. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 162.86% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA1, investment priority: 1b, indicator: CO08, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 180.00% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA2, investment priority: 5a, indicator: CO42, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.52.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 195.83% of the total target value for "S", priority axis: PA2, investment priority: 5a, indicator: PS04, year: 2018. Please check.
Warning	2.53.1	In table 2, the annual total value entered is 150.00% of the total target value for "F", priority axis: PA2, investment priority: 5a, indicator: CO42, year: 2018. Please check.