

Reasoning for the R410 result indicator “Level of cross-border cooperation”

The cooperation programme intends to develop strategic frameworks, shared perspectives and concrete pilot action in specific policy areas where cross-border cooperation is expected to make a difference.

Given problems require the efforts of many different actors working together to mitigate or even resolve common challenges. Better cooperation of key actors extends the reach to tackle challenges. The cooperation programme is one influencing factor - amongst others - to promote cooperation of actors in specific policy fields.

Therefore, it is proposed to focus result indicators on the (evolving) intensity of cooperation of key actors/key institutions in the programme area in order to improve the framework conditions in specific policy fields.

Since the cooperation programme cannot directly generate major physical impact in economic, social or territorial terms, the focus should be set on the specific observation variable “cooperation” which is within the scope of the programme and can be directly influenced.

Target is an increasing intensity of cooperation to contribute to a higher degree of integration of the heterogeneous SK-HU cross border region.

The intensity or level of cooperation as an indicator is often used in social sciences. Cooperation is generally treated as meaning the cooperative way that two or more actors / entities in the specific programme area work together towards a shared goal (specific objective).

The programme specific result indicator in its general form is defined as:

The intensity of cross border cooperation of key actors/key institutions in the programme area to achieve the results defined in the cooperation programme.

The result indicator will be measured at the level of detailed results (specific level) and subsequently aggregated at the level of the specific objective (overall level).

The “cooperation” indicator is designed as a “survey based composite indicator” which reflects the intensity of cooperation of key actors in the programme area in the different fields of action addressed by a specific objective.

The total cooperation intensity is calculated from the partial values, which reflect the cooperation behaviour in selected areas of interest (linked to the results intended).

Thus a direct connection with the fields of action /intended results of the programme where changes are expected is given. The change in the various fields of action can be observed in a detailed way (as internal information), and simultaneously a synthetic single value (e.g. 2.4) for reporting can be provided.

For the understanding of change, it is important not only to observe a single value, but to reflect the changes in the various fields of action addressed by the programme. So much more plausible and robust findings may be obtained.

Practical implementation regarding the R410 result indicator

Primary data collection by a survey

The baseline of the result indicator will be established through a survey (preferably cost efficient online-survey) among key actors/key institutions in the programme area.

Surveyed key actors will consist of actual programme beneficiaries, key stakeholders in the programme area as well as there is a sample of the entire population of potential beneficiaries (target group) in the programme area in a specific policy field (e.g. environment, culture, transport, employment, mobility, governance).

It is important to note that the established methodology for setting the baseline can be used throughout the programming period (an investment that pays off).

Also the ongoing observation of changes in the baseline values at certain cut off dates related to the “enhanced” reporting needs - collection of data in 2018, 2020, 2023.

Data on actors collected by the JS (contact database) can help to identify and to specify the target population more in detail (e.g. a list of respondents in various policy fields was collected; however, this dataset does not comprise contact persons and email addresses). The various types of actors which are involved are basically policy makers, private sector, other public sectors, interest groups, higher education institutions, and intermediaries.

The institutions will be contacted per email with invitations to attend an efficient online-survey containing a limited number of questions related to the “expected results” of the Specific Objective.

The questionnaire should be written bilingual in Hungarian and Slovak.

It is proposed to use an online questionnaire to collect data that included the observed variables as well other demographic and descriptive information about the collaborations to which respondents and their organizations belonged.

The questionnaire shall be limited to essential questions to assure a sufficient rate and quality of response. The questions should be directly connected to the fields of action addressed by the programme, this for clarity and transparency sake.

The survey can also be used to simultaneously communicate information about the programme to the target group (“multi-purpose tool”).

The same questionnaire could be used in the Application Forms and Reporting Templates of the projects to be filled in by the beneficiaries. In this way there is “live monitoring” of the contributions to the baseline and the SO as projects are implemented. The conclusions are then triangulated via the cross-cut evaluation.

To operationalize the level of cooperation in a specific field of action it is suggested to use closed-ended question within a matrix (see example below). Respondents from the programme area are asked to what extent they cooperate with each other partner in the programme area in a specific field of action. Answer options are on a 1 to 7 scale with 1 indicating “no interaction at all” and 7 indicating a fully developed cooperation level.

Each cooperation intensity level is explained by certain criteria. Lowest level of cooperation occurs when there is little communication and partnership quality. The highest level of cooperation occurs when there is frequent communication and decisions are made by consensus and outcomes are concrete and useful. The criteria clearly aim at more professionalization in cooperation. It is also possible that some actors have no interaction with other groups, especially at baseline situation, and this possibility is reflected in the instrumentation by allowing respondents to choose “1” to indicate no collaboration whatsoever.

Table 1. Aspects to be considered when rating the cooperation intensity

Scale	Aspects to be considered when rating the cooperation intensity
1 No interaction at present (No)	It is possible that some actors have no cross border interaction with other groups especially at the baseline situation or cooperation existed in the past but has been declined for various reasons
2 Occasional contacts (Poor)	Occasional contacts between SK and HU actors without concrete implementation activities
3 Discussion phase (Fair)	Cooperation between SK and HU actors is in the discussion phase without concrete implementation activities
4 Planning phase (Good)	Cooperation between SK and HU actors is in the more structured planning phase even though without concrete implementation activities
5 First results (Very good)	Cooperation between SK and HU actors has been established and first results with respect to common challenges have been achieved
6 Broader results (Excellent)	Cooperation between SK and HU actors has been established and is working and broader results towards shared goals have been achieved, however, some weaknesses in operating the cooperation still exist
7 Effective and sustainable cooperation (Fully developed)	<p>The highest level of targeted cooperation between SK and HU actors occurs when all the criteria are fully met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership composition is relevant and appropriate • Cooperation activities are well managed and there is an efficient internal communication • There is a sound financial basis for cooperation activities • Training and capacity building activities are offered • The outcomes are concrete and usable • Synergies with other policies, programmes and projects are achieved • Sú dosiahnuté synergie s ostatnými politikami, programami a projektmi

Analysis of data collected

Different data collected through the survey have to be aggregated in order to build a single result indicator value. The calculation of the result indicator is done as follows:

The Result indicator value is: Total score (number of responses multiplied by the scale value) divided by the total number of responses.

The indicator clearly reflects the development of cooperation. A shift towards higher scale categories will increase the value of the result indicator. It is ensured that the number of responses (which may change over the years) does not affect the result.

Table 2. Illustration how to establish the composite indicator value (calculation methodology)

Scale of cooperation	1 No	2 Poor	3 Fair ·	7 Fully developed
Related criteria, for instance (example)					
Quality of communication between actors	Non existing	Poor	Fair		Excellent
Competence of partnerships	Non existing	Poor	Fair		Excellent
Concreteness and usability of outcomes	Non existing	Poor	Fair		Excellent
Number of responses of key actors per fields of action where cooperation is expected*					
Cooperation in the field of nature and culture heritage	10	15	5		1
Cooperation in the field of transport	5	15	0		0
Cooperation in the field of employment and labour mobility	8	18	30		5
Cooperation in the field of governance	8	18	30		5
Calculation					
No of responses	31	66	65		11
Total score: number of responses multiplied by the scale value	31	132	195		77
Total score 2015 divided by no of responses	$435 / 173 = 2,5$ (baseline value 2015)				
Target value in 2023	$2,5 \times 20\% + 2,5 = 3,0$				
Effect resulting from the cooperation programme	+ 0,4 (assessed by an external evaluator)				
Effect resulting from other influencing factors	+0,1 (assessed by an external evaluator)				

* Responses are counted as average of 1-7 answers within the cooperation field

Scale of cooperation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	No	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	Fully developed
Number of responses of key actors per fields of action where cooperation is expected:							
Cooperation in the field of nature and culture heritage	5	13	17	18	22	13	4
Cooperation in the field of transport	20	9	15	9	4	5	0
Cooperation in the field of employment and labour mobility	11	14	15	9	12	4	2
Cooperation in the field of governance	9	17	18	14	12	10	2
Calculation							
no of responses	45	53	65	50	50	32	8
Total score: number of responses multiplied by the s	45	106	195	200	250	192	56
Total score 2015 divided by no of responses	1044/303 = 3,44 (baseline value for 2015)						
Target value in 2023	3,44*1,2 = 4,13						

Responses are counted as average of 1-7 answers within the cooperation field.