PERFORMANCE IN POLICY-MAKING

Using the EU results framework for sustainable urban planning

URBACT TOOLBOX

Analysing Problem
Engaging Stakeholders
Planning Actions
Sharing knowledge
Implementing
Resourcing
Measuring results

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FOREWORD

This guide is part of a set of URBACT guides and tools that focus on helping cities to perform better within URBACT networks, and – more in general – city practitioners that are responsible for sustainable urban planning.

It helps URBACT Local Groups coordinators and other stakeholders involved in urban planning to define, choose and measure SMART objectives and results of urban action plans, policy or measures in coherence with the EU results framework.

Readers will be guided through the process of policy making cycle by addressing evidence-based objectives, choosing the measurement criteria (indicators) and way to apply them to monitor, evaluate and improve sustainable urban development policies.

THE GUIDE AT A GLANCE

At a glance	This guide explains the intervention logic and the EU results framework to support ULGs and city staff to define measurables policy objectives. It supports the creation of a sound system for monitoring and evaluate progress of action plans.
Who is this for?	☒ Urban planner / designer ☒ Facilitator – coordinator – trainer participative processes ☐ Communication/media officer – manager ☒ Project / sectoral manager ☒ Elected officials ☐ Other …
Focus	☒ PLAN: prepare your action (s) ☐ DO: implement /test your action (s) ☒ CHECK: control, monitor and assess your action (s) ☒ ACT: make improvements to your action (s) ☐ SHARE: communicate with others your story (i.e. your action (s)
Level	☐ Beginners ☒ Advanced ☐ For all
Keywords	#monitoring #evaluation #measure #results

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of this guide

This publication provides some guidelines on how to use the EU-based results framework to city practitioners who are responsible for sustainable urban planning and development.

ULG coordinators and other stakeholders in URBACT Local Groups, who are in charge of drawing up URBACT Integrated Action or Transfer Plans remain the core audience for this document.

This guide is aligned with the European Commission's guidelines on result orientation and may be of use to those cities designated under Article 7 of the ERDF[1].

1.2. What is a Results Framework

All EU- co-funded programmes such as URBACT are designed using the same general results framework. This is a standardised, systematic approach for defining clear and quantified objectives, results and outputs. In this way the EU intends to provide a structured system for managing and improving investments. This also applies to policy-making.

The policy-making cycle is generally divided into three components: planning, implementation and evaluation.

GENERAL POLICY-MAKING CYCLE
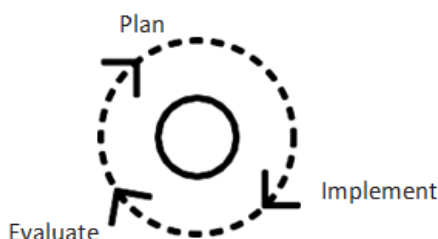
Although the results framework is clearly linked to evaluation, it can be used throughout the policy cycle to provide some guiding principles to all activities.

A results framework means defining results from the outset of the project; what is to be achieved through the project, by when, and how it will be measured. By keeping measurable and timely objectives in sight, practitioners can **monitor progress, adjust their activities if necessary, and assess whether they have met their initial objectives or not.**

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[1] *Guidance for Member States on Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (Article 7 ERDF Regulation) :*
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/ information/publications/guidelines/2015/guidance-for-member-states-on-integrated-sustainable-urban-development-article-7-erdf-regulation

The results framework is thus considered a key tool for effective and sustainable project management. It is worth mentioning that the results framework can also enable practitioners to open a participative process around the establishment of strategic objectives.

> **In this guide, we will refer to 'action plans' which are a core tools for policy-making in URBACT, and more specifically Integrated Action Plans, but the principles and examples of this guide apply also to URBACT Transfer Plans, sustainable urban projects or programmes in general: the results framework can be applied to all these kinds of operational strategies.**

ACTION-PLANNING CYCLE[2] AND WHEN TO USE THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

ACTION-PLANNING CYCLE

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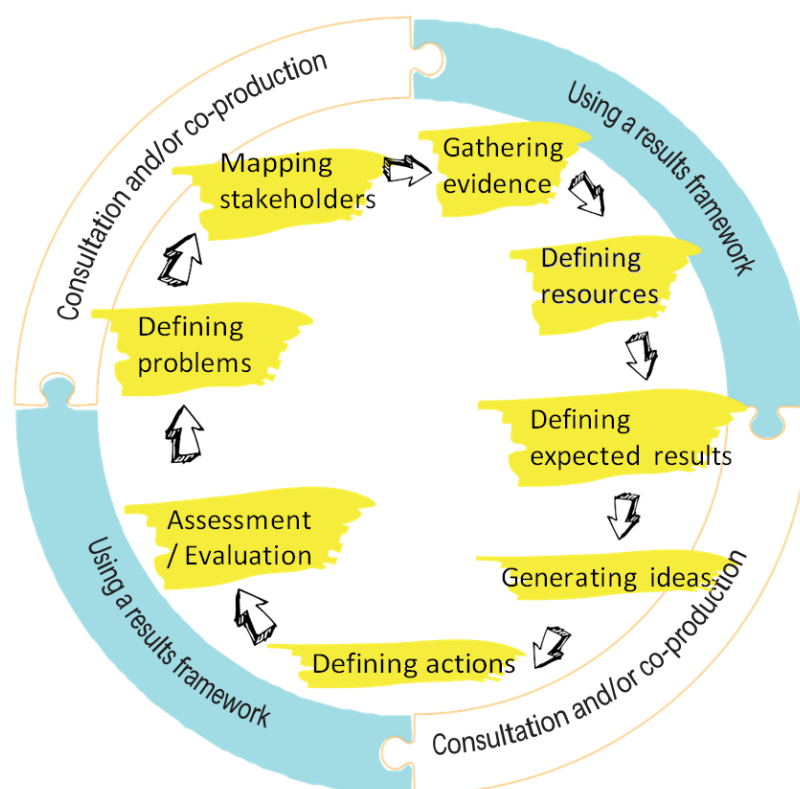
[2] *For more information on action-planning, refer to the URBACT Summer University 2016 material and to the URBACT II Local Support Group Toolkit in all EU languages: http://urbact.eu/urbact-local-groups*

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1.3. Proving and Improving: Making the results a core part of the work of participatory urban planning

Whether we are involved in an URBACT Local group or plan sustainable urban policies in a participatory way, we need to learn to love indicators. Indicators are essential to prove what an Integrated Action Plan or any other planning strategy have achieved to outside funders, to other stakeholders and to citizens. More importantly they enable us to improve what we are doing.

What are indicators? They are variables that we choose as reference for measuring policy, programme or project outputs and results. They can demonstrate in verifiable quantitative and – in some cases – qualitative terms that your plan and activities have had the desired impact, in our case in sustainable urban development.

By setting out what change we want to achieve through our actions and then measure whether we were successful, we will become better policy makers and be more effective in spending public money. Ultimately citizens will have a sense that local government is making a difference and that their cities and their lives can be transformed for the better.

2. DEFINITIONS

The result framework has a number of building blocks and key terms that are used across all Structural Funds programmes. To use this guide effectively, it is necessary to build and share a good understanding of this language[3].

2.1. Intervention Logic

The **intervention logic** is a way of describing a 'result frame- work'. It is a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of a programme or action plan. It should explain the logic of how an intervention contributes to the intended results; or to the results observed after implementation, if they are not those intended at first.

2.2. Specific Objectives and Intended Results

The **specific objective** defines the change in a certain existing socio-economic situation that a project, programme or action plan intends to achieve. It can be expressed as follows: to improve..., to reduce... or to increase.... An Integrated Action Plan should have one or more specific objectives.

Objectives should always be SMART which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

The specific objective presents the intended result of a programme or action plan.

> An example is mobility, the improvement of which is the aim of building transport infrastructures, for instance a new tram line. **The result is the changed situation in the future when the specific objective has been achieved.**

The notion of change can also relate to changes in behaviour, social practices, institutions, etc.

The **intended result** is an ambition. While this ambition has to be realistic and all efforts must be focused on reaching the result, it is still possible that this ambition is not achieved at the end of the project or programme, or after implementation of the action plan. Not (completely) achieving the result is not necessarily a failure. Evaluation of the programme or action plan will draw conclusions about the causes, consequences and remedies

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[3] *Certain terms that are sometimes used for describing aims and effects of policies or programmes are not part of the result framework language. The result framework does not refer to 'impact indicators' for instance. It also does not apply the often used term 'outcomes' – but refers to results instead.*

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The result framework: definitions of the main terms

The results framework can be applied to monitor and evaluate **projects**, **programmes** or **action plans** and **strategies**. In the definitions above, these terms can be swapped.

[6]

Specific objective:
The specific objective defines the change that the action plan intends to achieve.

Intended result:
The intended result is the ambition that we aim to achieve after implementation of the action plan.

Result indicator:
Results indicators are indicators that describe and measure a specific aspect of a result which can be measured. E.g. youth unemployment rate.

Intervention logic:
The intervention logic is a way of describing the overall results framework that will be applied to the action plan.

ACTION PLAN

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Specific objective

Intended result

SITUATION

Result indicator

CHANGE

Output

Output indicator

Output:
Outputs are the products of the actions/measures implemented through the action plan.

Output indicator:
Output indicators are indicators that describe and measure the physical product of spending resources.

Evaluation:
An evaluation is an independent analysis of the performance of the action plan.

Baseline
The baseline is the value of the indicator before the action plan has started.

Milestones:
A milestone is an expected intermediate value of an indicator at a pre-defined moment during the implementation - for instance half-way through.

Target:
The target is the intended value of an indicator after the completion of the action plan.

Monitoring:
Monitoring is the regular and systematic collection of data about the implementation of an action plan.

2.3. Result indicator

Result indicators are indicators that describe a specific aspect of a result, which can be measured. Selecting clear result indicators facilitates understanding of the problem and the policy need.

> Examples for the case of urban trams could be average travel time between two places, CO_2 emissions and traffic fatalities.

It will facilitate a later judgement about whether or not objec- tives have been met. In this context it is useful to set targets for result indicators (see definition following on p.12).

2.4. Output indicator

The output indicator is an indicator describing the physical product of spending resources (money, time, effort) through pol- icy interventions.

> In the example of the urban tram, it could be kilometres of tram track that have been laid.

Example of specific objectives and their related result and output indicators

	Specific objective	Result indicator	Output indicator
What is it?	**Description of the change you want to achieve in the existing situation: the in- tended result**	**A variable that describes a relevant aspect of your intended result, to measure the change in the situation**	**A variable that de- scribes the outputs that your action plan will pro- duce. Outputs are the direct products of your action plan.**
Examples	Increase the number of young people in jobs (or reduce the youth unemployment rate)	**Youth unemployment rate** Baseline: 10 000 **20%**(2016) Target: 20 000 **15%** (2020)	- nr. of young people accessing training - nr. of young people accessing career advise -nr. of young people accessing work experience placement
	Reduce intercultural tensions between the different communities of the city	Nr. of racism-related in- cidents and hate crimes reported in police statistics (average per week) Baseline: 45 (2016) Target: 20 (2019)	- nr. of inter-cultural dia- logue events organised -nr. of awareness cam- paigns delivered - nr. of new inter-com- munity neighbourhood groups established
	Improve the suit- ability of 1950's housing stock for self-sustained living for the elderly	% of inhabitants who qualify their housing situa- tion (defined as quality of their house and availability of essential services and facilities) as adequate for self- sustained ageing (based on survey among inhabit- ants) Baseline: 25% (2016) Target 60% (2024)	- nr. of social housing apartments made 'future proof' - nr. of 'elderly living support services' estab- lished

2.5. Baseline

The Baseline is the value of the indicator before the policy intervention in question has started.

For result indicators the baseline describes the pre-existing situation that the Integrated Action plans or intends to change (the intended result). It should be measured at the appropriate geo- graphical level (for example the city region, the municipality or the neighbourhood) and will refer to the population of persons, enterprises etc. that the specific objective seeks to change. **It is normally not zero** – there is some level in the population already (e.g. for literacy, mobility, drop-out, innovation etc.).

> In the example of the urban trams, the baseline could be the average travel time or the number of traffic fatalities before the implementation of the action plan.

For output indicators, the baseline value will normally be zero. This indicator is a tracker that counts the numbers of outputs produced in implementing your Integrated Action Plan.

2.6. The Target

Both result and output indicators should have a target. **The target is the intended value of an indicator after the completion of the action plan.**

Targets should be set in relation to the available resources (finance, time), based on available knowledge or assumptions of unit costs for certain activities and outputs.

> In the urban tram example, the target value for the output indicator length (kilometers) of new tram tracks can be set by matching available data on cost-per-km for railway and metro lines with the available budget.

Setting targets for result indicators can be more challenging, since they reflect an intended change in an existing situation where external factors may also come into play.

Such factors should be considered as much as possible in setting realistic targets. **Inevitably such targets are a best estimate, which may need to be re-assessed and revised.**

> In the urban tram example, the result indicator 'average travel time' may for instance be influenced by autonomous demo- graphic or transport-related developments.

2.7. Milestones

To facilitate monitoring of the progress of a programme or action plan during its implementation, it is also possible to define one or more milestones for an indicator. **A milestone is an expected intermediate value of an indicator at a pre-defined moment during the implementation – for instance half-way through.** Comparing actual intermediate achievements with the predicted milestone value can reveal under- or over-performance. This gives valuable clues to steer the programme or Integrated Action Plan for its remaining duration.

2.8. Monitoring

Monitoring is the regular, systematic collection of data about the implementation of the action plan. This will typically include information about the progress of activities and the delivery of outputs - using the indicators - and about the use of available financial, staff and other resources.

The collected monitoring information allows you to analyse your progress and adjust your activities as needed to reach your objectives. The monitoring information is also valuable input for your dialogue with the stakeholder groups, to share ownership of success, obstacles and amendments to the plan, as well as learning for all.

The frequency of monitoring and reporting will depend on the duration and nature of your Integrated Action Plan or strategy. For a plan with a 2-year life span this could be every 3 to 4 months.

2.9. Evaluation

Evaluation is the independent analysis of and reflection on the performance of an action plan. It is meant to collect independent feedback on the achievements, scope and quality of outputs and results. **Evaluation also aims to investigate what changes the action plan has really brought about (the impact of the plan).**

For Integrated Action Plans in URBACT cities (with limited lifespan and resources involved), evaluation can be done once, after the implementation of the plan.

For larger, longer running plans or programmes evaluation should also take place during the implementation to analyse the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and consistency of the interventions.

URBACT Integrated Action Plans or Transfer Plans are a form of 'mini programme'. The result framework can easily be applied to their development and implementation. More generally, a strategy and action plan normally consists of the following elements:

- **a definition of a problem or challenge** in a city, including some evidence about the problem and its evolution,

- **a strategy** for addressing the challenge (including objectives), and specification of the results that will show that the city has achieved the objectives,

- **a set of actions** (normally projects) that will achieve the results and some estimate of the resources required, the time-frame and the partner that will lead the process,

- **output and result indicators** to measure what has been done (outputs) and what has been achieved (results).

For more information about how to develop an action plan using the URBACT method, check the URBACT online Toolbox.

3. USING THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING

The Integrated Action Plans and Transfer Plans developed as part of URBACT networks should include some basic information about how success will be measured, and more particularly how outputs and results will be collected. This task should be bread and butter of all urban planning at large. Some general guidelines to do so include:

Defining the results framework from the start

Applying the results framework to an Integrated Action Plan requires that the URBACT Local Group and/or any city planning responsible team/individual think about specific objectives and results and how to measure them from the outset.

Making it relevant to all stakeholders

To make indicators relevant they must be owned by the key stakeholders involved in the Integrated Action or Transfer Plan. They should be understood by the group, reported on regularly (for example outputs can be reported on quarterly, results less frequently) and used to steer the implementation of the planning.

Valuing the debate on objectives and results

It means putting a lot of effort into defining exactly what the specific objectives of the Plan should be, and wording these carefully.   This can be a tortuous discussion and is best treated as a negotiation because different stakeholders may have different versions of what they wish to achieve. It helps to have an expert or facilitator with you during this discussion A neutral facilitator can help to ensure that the specific objective and result are coherent and match the selected indicators.

Measuring results at a later stage

Result indicators cannot be measured very early in the delivery process. They are best measured at half time and at the end of the implementation of the URBACT Integrated Action Plan.

3.1. Specific objective: What is the change you want to achieve?

Defining the specific objective(s) of your action plan is a collaborative process that requires the active involvement of your URBACT Local Group.

The diagram below and following table set out a path to identify its specific objective. It is intended to help

the coordinator of the URBACT Local Group or the facilitator of the session to have a script of questions that can lead discussion.

Questions to help structure the discussion about specific objectives

Steps to move from data to specific objectives

Data	Development need	Specific Objective
The first step is to make sure that all stakeholders have the necessary information about the current situation in your city.	Next, you can jointly define what the exact need for development in your city is. What is the problem, challenge or issue in your city that you need to deal with?	Based on the identified development need, you can jointly define what exactly is the change that you want to achieve in the existing situation.
Read the network's State of the Art and ensure that all involved partners have. If working in an ULG for a network, if necessary, translate it in your national language.	It is best to use a participative technique such as the Problem Tree* to deepen the group's shared understanding of development needs and to distinguish between causes and effects. *For more details, you can check the *Problem Tree toolsheet* on the URBACT online Toolbox*	Use a participative approach with the group to frame specific objectives and results. Use post-it notes and flip charts to group and organise discussion around pro- posed objectives. Use questions about how the group or area will have changed in the future to frame the discussion. In the case of a network focusing on public open space a useful starting question would be: 'How do we want the neighbourhood park to have changed by 2025, as a result of our interventions?'

Tips to define your specific objective

1.   Keep it **simple** and **focused** - Avoid complex terminology.

2.   Stick to **key terms**: specific objective, result, baseline, tar- get and output (avoiding outcome and impact). Explain each of them and have a hand-out to summarise them.

3.   Keep objectives to **single sentences**.

4.   Ensure that each specific objective selected by the group is only one objective not several and that it is genuinely specific.

5.   Use a verb that expresses the **change** in the situation that you want to achieve: e.g.: 'to reduce …', 'to improve …', 'to widen access …'. Note the difference with words like 'to support…', 'to facilitate …' – which describe actions, but not the result you want to achieve.

Making your objective more specific

In a city that faces problems of social deprivation in certain districts, an important objective could be 'to improve quality of life in the poorest neighbourhood of our city'.

However, for developing a concrete result driven action plan this objective is not really helpful. This objective is too general and not specific enough. It does not give any clear direction on how the action plan should intervene. It would be better to re- place it with several specific objectives such as:

• To improve the quality of public spaces in the neighbourhood

• To increase public safety alongside residents' perceptions that the neighbourhood is safe

• To reduce anti-social behaviour – aiming at gangs and drug dealers.

The specific objective as a compromise

There could be many other issues that such an action plan might focus on including health, housing quality and cost, in- come of residents, access to amenities, and community cohesion. The **priorities** for the specific objective will have emerged after lengthy discussions in the URBACT Local Group and engaging with residents and other key stakeholders. It will inevitably be a compromise.

3.2. Setting result indicators to measure what will be achieved

The result indicator should have the following characteristics:

- It **should reflect change at the level of the population** (not just those helped by the action).

- It should be responsive to your intervention (i.e. should shift as a result of a successful implementation) and **should reflect the intervention logic** behind the specific objective.

- It **should have a baseline**, which is the situation at the start of (or just before) the intervention.

- **There should be data** either already available or that can be produced at reasonable cost (e.g. statistics, surveys, registrations) to measure the result indicator.

- **There should be a target value for the action plan to achieve** (e.g. that electric commercial vehicles should reduce CO_2 or PM10 emissions in the city by 50%).

In certain cases, the expected results will not materialise immediately at the end of an intervention. It may take some time before the effects of the activities of a project take place or be- come visible.

A training project for unemployed young people may result in reduced unemployment rates only several months after the end of this project.

This delay in the emergence of results should be considered when planning final result measurements and evaluation of an intervention.

Defining the Population for the result indicator

A well-constructed result indicator should measure the change in the underlying target population not merely the change among those that have been assisted.

> It means that when you measure 'getting young unemployed people into work*, you cannot just measure the impact on those unemployed that your actions directly helped. You need to look at the change in overall youth unemployed in the relevant area.

A qualitative result indicator will be measured through surveys for instance; whilst a quantitative result indicator will come from a hard data set.

Indeed, it could be that you were able to help your clients into work, but that this came at the expense of other vulnerable young unemployed people who were pushed back in the queue for jobs and were not able to get the job.

> In an action plan that aims to improve the quality of public open space in a city district, a qualitative[1] result indicator should not focus only on the users of these spaces to get data on whether residents are pleased with the result.

Measuring numbers alone might miss key aspects of inclusivity. It could be that the young people like the new square, but that the elderly feel intimidated and will not use it.

A way of overcoming this drawback would be to survey a sample drawn from the whole population in the neighbourhood of the square rather than just from users of the park. This will help to avoid what is known as selection bias.

An alternative method would use focus groups drawn from different age, gender and ethnic profiles to establish the base- line value and again to measure the actual result.

3.3. Setting output indicators to measure what will be achieved

The output indicator is an indicator describing the physical product of spending resources (money, time, effort) through pol- icy interventions.

The output indicator should have the following characteristics:

-   It **should be directly linked to the activities** or actions funded under the action plan.

-   It should **describe the products of the actions** (e.g. number of classes or courses, kilometres of track, square metres of business units, hectares of public open space).

-   Normally **the baseline should be zero.**

- The target value should be set to **provide sufficient outputs to achieve the relevant result** indicator[4].

- **Milestones can also be set quarterly or annually**, which can help to monitor progress in delivering the output target.

Defining the target value for the output indicator.

Targets and budgets need to be scaled accordingly. If a project plans to create a thousand start-up businesses by improved coaching, then the number of business advisers will need to be sufficient to achieve this target.

If thirty hours of coaching will be offered per enterprise, it is relatively easy to calculate the total number of hours of consultancy, and its **cost**. The resource required can be estimated by calculating unit costs based on historic programmes.

Similarly, if the cost of building a workspace of one hundred square metres is known, then it is possible to estimate the cost of building or converting 1000 square metres.

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*Examples of output indicators**

- Number of students taught on courses that were funded.

- Number of University SME linkages defined as contracted agreements between both parties.

- Square metres of incubation centre or science park buildings constructed.

- Number and square metres of heritage buildings renovated.

- Kilometres of road constructed.

*European Commission Guidance document on monitoring and evaluation, 2014-2020: List of common indicators on page 20: http://ec.europa.eu/ regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

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Note that it is useful to put some scale on some of these out- puts. We could just measure the number of courses, but we know that courses vary in *size* and participant *numbers* are a key factor. So, the number of student places on courses might be a better output indicator.

A further enhancement might be to measure the *intensity* of support; for example, by defining the output as number of participant hours received on courses. Similarly, we could measure the number of co-working spaces. But we know that it makes a difference to the amount of businesses they can support - depending on whether these are large or small - so we can add a surface area measurement or the number of workstations.

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[4] *Analysis of previous interventions and evaluations will provide a good guide to how much a unit costs and what contribution it makes to result indicators.*

Examples of specific objectives and their result an output indicators

Specific Objective	Result indicator				Output Indicators
		Baseline	**Target**	**Source**	
Reduce school dropout rates in the 14-16 age group	Share of students not at- tending school regularly	10% (2014)	5% (2020)	Dept. of Education statistics	- nr. of students enrolled in homework sup- port plan
Increase the energy efficiency of office buildings in the metropolitan area	Average energy usage of office space (kWh/m2/year)	242 (2015)	220 (2019)	Local Ener- gy Agency data	- m2 office space refurbished - nr. of office workers trained in e-efficiency
Improve the safety of public spaces in a deprived neighbourhood	Perceived level of safety among residents (on 10-point scale)	4,5 (2016)	6 (2019)	Survey among neighbour- hood residents	- m2 of remodelled public space - nr. of members in social media 'District Watch' group
Improve the social integration of first-generation migrants in the community	Integration index – composed score (5-point scale) on - language skill - membership of clubs - informal contacts with population	2,2 (2015)	3,5	Survey among migrants	- nr. of participants in language courses - nr. of local clubs and associations involved

In general, it is much easier to estimate and measure outputs than results. Outputs are directly linked to the activities of the projects in the action plan, and the scale of these activities is directly related to the financial inputs that are made. For example, with 2000 Euros of financing you can run 12 classes. With 4000 Euros of funding the figure increases to 24 (all other things being equal such as the cost of trainers and overheads).

However, the **effect** that outputs have on results is often more tenuous and can be affected by factors outside the control of the intervention. Simply providing workspaces by itself may not turn around and boost a flat local economy. There needs to be demand for space and perhaps a series of integrated and linked initiatives that stimulate the start-up market in the city.

These are subjects for evaluation and cannot be understood simply by observing indicators.

3.4. Collecting data for result indicators

It is important that data collection for result indicators is realistic in terms of cost and effort. The types of methods that might be used to collect data for the results indicators include the following:

- **Data collected from city**, regional or national statistical sources.

- **Surveys** among (a relevant sample of) the target population of your action plan can provide data on what happened as a result of interventions.

- **Interviews and focus groups** with representatives of the target population of your action plan can help you find out experiences and perceptions of the results of your activities.

- **Storytelling, case studies and anecdotal evidence** can be useful. However, these are difficult to quantify. They mainly provide additional context information that can be used in evaluations to assess and illustrate the real contribution of an intervention to the changes that are observed.

Surveys and interviews

There are a number of considerations that need to be taken into account when using subjective data collection measures, such as surveys and interviews. These include:

- **Objectivity** - particularly whether certain correspondents will give biased opinions.

- **Continuity over time** - more subjective techniques can be resource intensive and to be useful will need to be continued over the time period of the URBACT Integrated Plan and perhaps for a period afterwards.

- **Quantification** – can you convert a subjective assessment into a value that can be compared with others?

- **Internal versus external measurement** – external is more independent but may be more costly.

- **Practicality** – is it practical to collect information in this way?

Self-assessment tools

Self-assessment tools can be used to determine changes in performance, skill or perception of a target population. They of- ten use a 'Development continuum' as a way of setting out in a matrix the level of progress towards *subjectively* assessed good practice criteria. These types of tables are frequently used in self-assessment exercises and each criterion is scored on a five- point scale where 1 represents weak, and 5 represents strong (see Table on following page). Converting the criteria to a number is useful as this allows the aggregation of scores and they can also be presented graphically.

Example of self-assessment grid for good practice exchange in the URBACT Programme

Thematic Knowledge and awareness of good practice from elsewhere	1 = I have some understanding of the thematic topic of the URBACT project and in sustainable development, but very little knowledge of good practice from elsewhere (beginner level). 2 = beginner + 3 = I have a fair understanding of the thematic topic of the URBACT project and in sustainable development, and I have detailed knowledge of some good practice examples from elsewhere. (intermediate level). 4 = intermediate + 5 = I have an excellent understanding of the thematic topic of the URBACT project, including sustainable development and I have detailed knowledge of a substantial range of good practice examples throughout Europe (advanced level).	The increase in participants' knowledge in sustainable development is a key aim of the programme. This might include thematic understanding gained through a better awareness of good practice elsewhere as well as a better understanding of other local stakeholders.

Example of Radar plot of self-assessment scores for URBACT Local Groups

3.5. Monitoring and Evaluation

A well-structured strategy or action plan will include details about **how** and **by whom** indicators will be monitored and ultimately how it will be evaluated.
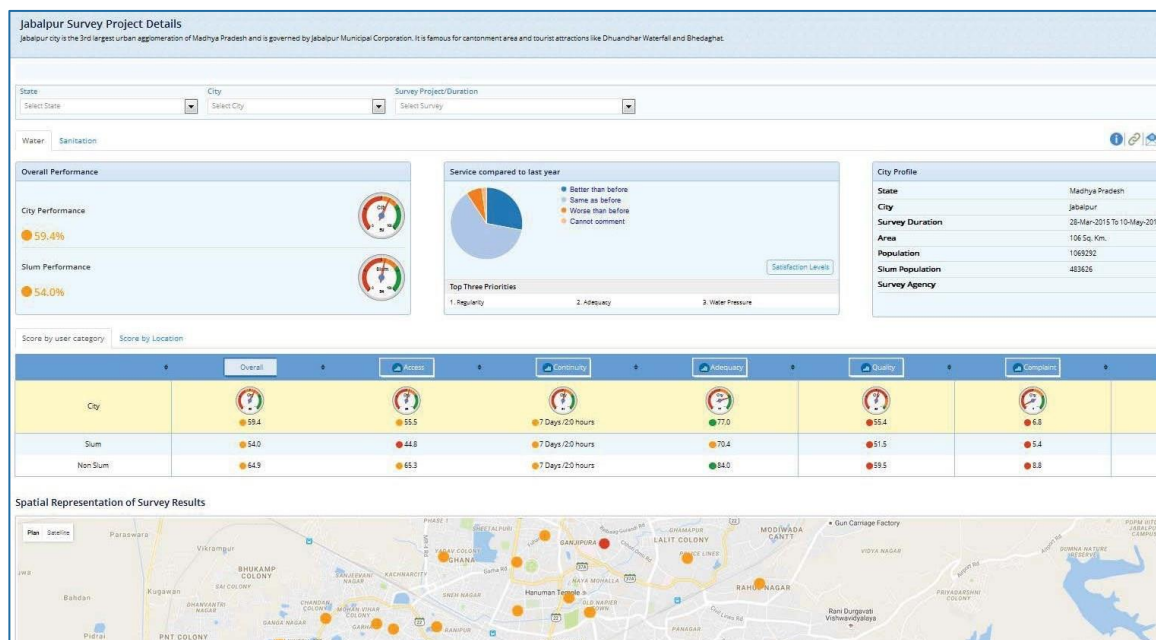
Monitoring

Monitoring is the routine collection of information about progress of the activities, outputs and results of the projects within the action plan. It is normally carried out by a leading actor such as the coordinator of an URBACT Local Group, usually by the local authority. Monitoring data should be regularly reported (for ex- ample quarterly) to the relevant group.

Monitoring data can be used to analyse progress and adjust activities as needed to reach the objectives. It should also be used as part of the dialogue with the URBACT Local Group, to share ownership of success, obstacles and amendments to the plan, as well as learning for all involved actors.

As a tool to support the sharing and use of monitoring data, you can develop a **dashboard** for your action plan. A dashboard is an easy-to-read overview of the key monitoring data, showing the current status and progress towards targets of the various indicators in a visual way. Dashboards can include various forms of visual data presentation, such as diagrams, graphs, or traffic- light colour coding to illustrate performance.

Example of a dashboard designed for a water and sanitation programme[5]

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[5] https://www.wsp.org/FeaturesEvents/Features/using-technology-track-how-citizens- experience-water-service-delivery-india

Evaluation

It is good practice to foresee an independent evaluation of your plans when it is implemented. This is true also for Integrated Action or Transfer Plans and there may be resources in ERDF technical assistance budgets to finance the cost of external consultants. However, they are not a requirement of the regulations as the main evaluation effort for EU Structural Fund programmes goes into programme level evaluations.

Evaluation at programme level is normally carried out at three points during programming:

- **Ex ante** (before) evaluations are done before starting implementation as a way of testing the design of the plan and the relevance of indicators.

- **Interim** evaluations are carried out part-way through. They give an opportunity to review how well the interventions are going and to steer the process. They may have a formative or learning role.

- **Ex post** (after) evaluations are carried out upon completion of the interventions or at the end of the programme.

For an URBACT Integrated Plan the interim and ex-post evaluations are likely to be the most used. Ex post evaluations give the greatest opportunity for measuring the results that have been achieved by the Integrated Action Plan, while interim evaluations enable the implementation to be adapted and lessons to be learnt.

There is value to having evaluations carried out by an independent person or contractor because it is difficult to be both the subject and object of analysis. This needs not be a large consultancy company, but could be an academic from a local university.

Self-evaluation can also be a useful exercise and is less resource intensive. Some form of self-evaluation on an annual basis can be very useful and could be facilitated by an external expert. It needs to be well prepared and as far as possible there should be data on output, performance and results indicators so that discussions are based on evidence.

4. REFERENCES AND WHERE TO LEARN ABOUT THE RESULT FRAMEWORK AND INDICATORS

Indicators have been developed to measure everything from air pollution to gross domestic happiness. However, some things are easier to measure than others and there is considerable literature available.

> The EU Urban audit produced comparable indicators across a wide range of cities. List of cities covered in each Member State: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4422005/6840613/RYB-2015-Annex2-Cities-CandK.pdf

> Database of urban statistics: http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/external/urban-audit-database

> The guidance on evaluation and monitoring for the new results framework produced by DG Regional and Urban policy in 2014 contains an annex with a useful set of output indicators as well as an explanation of terms. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

> The reference framework for sustainable cities lists urban indicators here: http://rfsc.eu/european-framework/

> The World Bank produced a useful guide on "Designing a results framework for achieving results": http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/331541563854787772/Designing-a-Results-Framework-for-Achieving-Results-A-How-to-Guide

FINAL WORD

The result framework from EU Cohesion Policy to Integrated Action Plans

The Cohesion policy is the investment policy for growth and jobs of the European Union. Until 2020 the EU will invest over € 300 million in the cities and regions of Europe to support smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. About the same amount is foreseen to be earmarked in the period from 2021-2027. These investments are delivered through many Structural Funds programmes at regional or national level in all EU countries. On top of this, Cohesion policy supports transnational cooperation between European cities and regions with programmes such as URBACT.

To make sure that these funds are used effectively and really contribute to the European Union goals **all EU programmes are designed using the same result framework. This is a standardised, systematic approach for defining clear and quantified objectives, results and outputs.** This allows programmes to monitor progress and adapt their implementation as needed. It is also used to demonstrate and evaluate the actual results and achievements of the programme.

URBACT also applies this result framework as a tool for its networks. Using it will help cities to set concrete objectives for their Integrated Action Plan and plot a course of action to achieve them. By developing this framework jointly with the URBACT Local Group it helps to build a shared understanding and commitment of all stakeholders.

For URBACT Local Groups it will also be a great tool for steering and improving actions during their work – increasing the chances of actually reaching the objectives. Finally, it is a tool for accountability, evaluation and learning after the implementation of the Integrated Action Plan.

When all URBACT cities use the same framework to define and monitor their plans, it allows to better assessing the performance and impact of URBACT Integrated Action Plans, Networks and the URBACT programme as a whole.

Reporting on the results and outputs of your URBACT Integrat- ed Plan to those in other programmes

As well as defining results for your own purposes you may need to report results to other bodies, and especially to funders. It is a perennial problem that the best and most appropriate indicator framework that you have designed for your own URBACT Integrated plan does not necessarily match that of the ERDF, ESF and national/regional programmes that have provided the funding for the plan or individual projects within it.

You need your output and results indicators so that as a city you can measure how much change you are achieving in your result indicators and therefore the progress you are making to achieve your own specific objectives.

However, **the other programme needs monitoring information on outputs and results so that these can be aggregated for the programme to measure its success.** These programme indicators are reported to the National and EU levels in annual reports to Monitoring Committees.

To avoid duplication, where possible you should try to align your own indicators to fit into those of the programme concerned. This means that while going through your own indicator design process you **may**

need to adapt some of your indicators to meet the needs of the funding programmes that have supported individual actions.

In general, each vertical priority in an EU programme will have a result indicator. There will be at least one and possibly several output indicators. The diagram below shows how an Integrated Territorial Investment for a city has to report back to two priorities from a national programme and one from a regional programme and a second from the ESF. Each project will normally only receive funding from one EU programme priority and the manner of reporting will be pre-defined in the parent programme document and in the contract with the Managing Authority.

Report what is required to these other bodies, but keep your group's main attention focused on what the city is trying to achieve through its own results framework. This is how performance can be managed at city level.

It may also make sense to have some harmonisation about indicators across partner cities in a network. However, in practice local conditions and the requirements of the funding programmes are likely to make this difficult. At the very least cities can learn from each other about good ways to structure indicators and to measure progress towards objectives.

Example of an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) that draws from Regional and national ERDF and ESF operational programmes
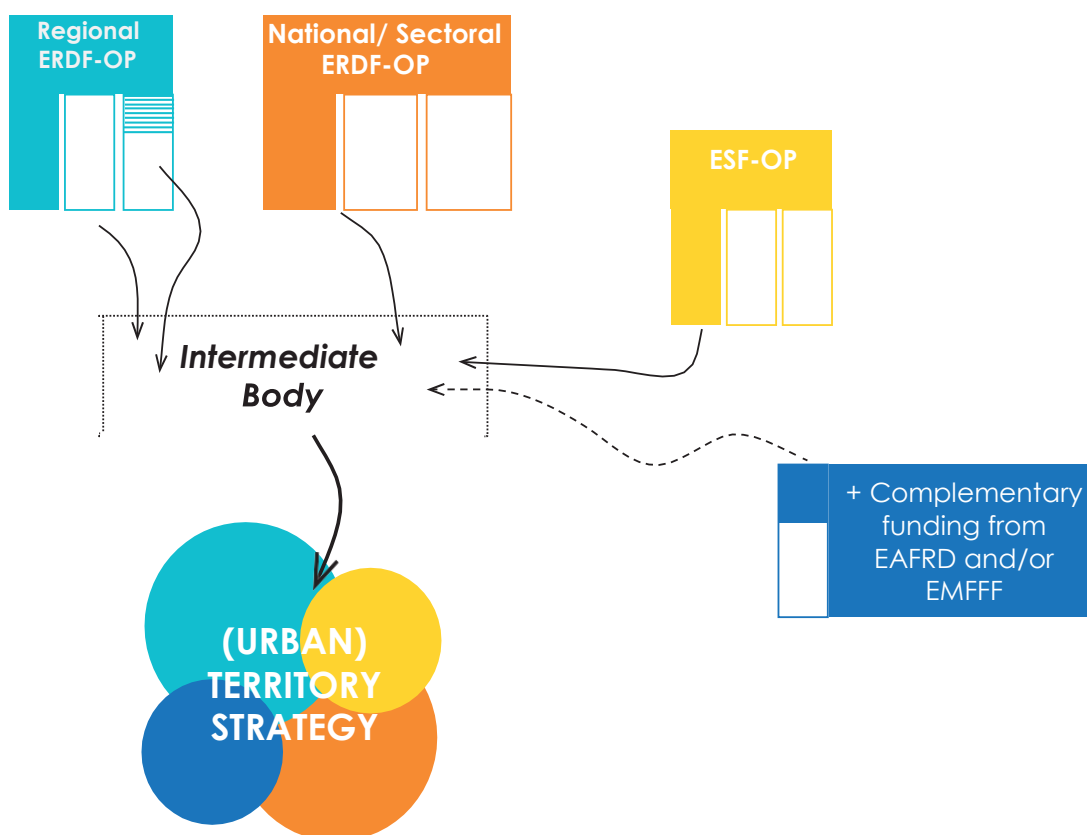
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