Assessment Grid for Evaluating Strategic Policy Frameworks for Digital Growth & Next Generation Network Plans

This assessment grid follows a step by step approach to evaluate Strategic Policy Frameworks for Digital Growth and Next Generation Network (NGN) plans. The steps presented here follow closely the structure of the RIS3 Guide,[1] the guidance presented in the Digital Agenda Toolbox[2] and the ex-ante conditionalities for European Structural and Investment Funds (for Thematic Objectives 1.1, 2.1 and 2.2).[3] This assessment grid does not replace these guidance documents, but rather provides further assistance to policy-makers and experts in evaluating the strategy development processes of regions and Member States at the interface of two of the EU's flagship initiatives, the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE) and the Innovation Union.

The guiding questions are sorted along the different steps of the strategy development process. The eight steps of this assessment grid are:

1. Context of the Strategic Policy Framework
2. Analysis
3. Governance
4. Priorities
5. Policy mix
6. Synergies with other programmes and funds
7. Monitoring and evaluation
8. Recommendations

In the assessment grid below some of the questions are underlined; this indicates that the question is relevant for regions (generic wording including inter, cross-border and transnational regions) and Member States (MS) investing in broadband under Thematic Objective 2.2 of the European Structural and Investment Funds.

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[1] http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3pguide.
[2] http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/dae-toolbox.
[3] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/eac_guidance_esif_part2_en.pdf.

1. In what kind of document is the Strategic Policy Framework for Digital Growth and/or Next Generation Network plan presented?

1.1   Is the Policy Framework part of the MS's/region's overall research and innovation strategy (RIS3) or is it established in a separate document (e.g. national or regional "digital agenda" or "Next Generation Network Plan")?

1.2   If the Policy Framework is presented in a separate document, how does it relate to the overall research and innovation strategy of the MS/region?

2. Is the Strategic Policy Framework for Digital Growth evidence-based?

2.1   To what extent does the Policy Framework include/build on a sound analysis of the MS's/region's existing situation with regard to scientific/technological and economic specialisations in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) or refer to such an analysis/related studies?

2.2   To what extent is it based on a sound assessment of the competitive ICT assets of the region, including an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/bottlenecks (SWOT) taking into account key indicators of the DAE Scoreboard?[4]

2.3   Does the Policy Framework include an analysis of balancing support for demand and supply of ICT? More specifically, please state if the analysis covers all the relevant socio-economic issues (such as age structure, education, income, level of ICT training/skills, employment status, affordability of service, productivity, etc.) which characterise the local and regional context to establish the right balance between support for demand (to improve Internet penetration and the use of ICT services and applications in households, businesses and public administrations, increase Eskills, etc.) and supply measures (availability of equipment, infrastructures, services and applications, and of ICT professionals/practitioners). Please list all demand and supply measures.

2.4   Besides a SWOT analysis, what other quantitative and qualitative information/methods provided data to the Policy Framework (e.g. cluster analysis, value chain analysis, peer review, foresight, and international comparison study)?

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[4] The European Commission has adopted the DAE as part of the overall Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It proposes 132 specific policy actions across 7 domains: digital single market; interoperability and standards; trust and security; fast and ultra-fast Internet access; research and innovation; digital literacy, skills and inclusion; and ICT-enabled benefits for EU society. This combined set of actions is designed to stimulate a virtuous circle of investment in and usage of digital technologies. The DAE Scoreboard assesses progress with respect to the targets set out in the Digital Agenda. In addition, it provides analysis and detailed data on all the policy areas covered by the Digital Agenda (https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/scoreboard).

2.5   Does the Policy Framework take into account the competitive position of the MS/region and the potential areas of specialisation with regard to other countries/regions in the EU and beyond, as well as its position within global value chains?

2.6   Are sufficient efforts being made in the analysis to avoid imitation, duplication and fragmentation in identifying regional specialisations, in particular with regard to what is happening in neighbouring regions?

2.7   If the region or MS is opting for investments in Broadband (TO 2.2), does the Policy Framework include an assessment of needs and available resources based on an economic analysis taking account of existing private and public infrastructures and planned investments for broadband?

3. Is the Policy Framework based on an appropriate stakeholder involvement?

3.1   Has the Policy Framework been developed through a wide process of direct stakeholder involvement, including mainly regional government/regional agencies, ICT companies, research institutes, universities but also other/new stakeholders with the potential for innovative contributions (relevant citizen and consumer groups as well as business associations, and the national regulatory agencies for telecommunications, Digital Champions), through measures such as surveys, consultations, dedicated working groups, workshops, etc.? Please list which stakeholders have been involved and how this was done.

3.2   Is there one identified leader for the design and implementation of the Policy Framework, or many? Who is taking the lead? Are institutionalised coordination mechanisms foreseen among different ministries and different level of government (national and regional) and/or triple or, preferably, quadruple helix partnership platforms?[5] Do these latter groups have decision making power or are they merely to be consulted?

3.3   How will stakeholders be involved during the implementation stage of the Policy Framework?

3.4   Has this process been adequately described or referred to in the submitted document?

3.5   Is the priority-setting in the Policy Framework based on an identification of market opportunities/economic potential informed by an entrepreneurial search/discovery process, i.e. by a process designed to identify and test specific entrepreneurial opportunities in ICT where relevant entrepreneurial stakeholders are observed, consulted and involved?[6]

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[5] Triple helix platforms bring together academia and research institutes, business and government, while quadruple helix platforms enlarge this circle of actors to include representatives from civil society and citizen groups.
[6] In this context entrepreneurial search or discovery is to be understood broadly, as a combinatorial process that is not confined to the private sector, but is a synthesis and integration of dispersed and

4. Does the Policy Framework set innovation and knowledge-intensive development priorities in ICT?

4.1   Does the Policy Framework outline a limited set of innovation and ICT-driven development priorities?

4.2   Does the Policy Framework propose a vision for the region for each of the identified priorities? Is this vision clearly described, credible and realistic?

4.3   Does the analysis explore ICT as both an enabling factor and as an area of prioritised specialisations?

4.4   Does the Policy Framework envisage developing ICT products and services, eCommerce and enhancing demand for ICT and strengthening ICT applications for eGovernment, eLearning, eInclusion, eCulture and eHealth, or another ICT area?

4.5   Does it explore how ICT can work as an enabler of traditional industries or as a means to upgrade them?

4.6   Are these priorities sufficiently specific in identifying existing/potential niches for smart specialisation and related upgrading of existing or potential future activities? To what extent are these unique?

4.7   Do the chosen thematic priorities reflect the analysis of the regional economic structure, competences and skills in ICT?

4.8   Does the Policy Framework take into account considerations for achieving critical mass and/or critical potential in the priority areas selected?

4.9   Do the national or regional NGN Plans take account of regional actions in order to reach the EU high-speed Internet access targets? Do they focus on areas where the market fails to provide an open infrastructure at an affordable cost and of a quality in line with EU competition and state aid rules, and to provide accessible services to vulnerable groups?

5. Does the Policy Framework develop a roadmap, actions and an adequate policy mix to achieve the outlined objectives?

5.1   To what extent does the Policy Framework contain realistic and adequate roadmaps, action lines and policy mix to achieve the objectives?

5.2   Does the Policy Framework indicate the division of responsibilities between private, public actors (at different levels and with different areas of responsibility), academia and NGOs for the implementation of these action lines/roadmaps?

5.3.   Does the Policy Framework support/facilitate the following? Please specify.

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fragmented global and local knowledge (technological, business and societal) to inform RIS3 choices and identify opportunities for the region to expand/ into new domains.

- Affordable, good quality and interoperable ICT-enabled private and public services;

- Increased ICT uptake by citizens, including vulnerable groups, businesses (esp. SMEs) and public administrations;

- EU wide initiatives within ICT, such as enhancement of standards and inter-operability;

- Both demand for and supply of ICT in a sustainable way;

- Improvement of demand-side conditions and, in particular, public procurement as a driver for innovation;

- If applicable, ways to reinforce ICT capacity-building and skills development;

- ICT as an enabler of other activity areas: Are there actions for creating linkages between ICT and other sectors/disciplines/industries/clusters? Are there activities to support SMEs and traditional sectors through an increased use of ICT?

- Activities to reach the EU high-speed Internet access targets (NGN). Are these based on sustainable investment models that enhance competition and provide access to open, affordable, quality and future proof infrastructure and services that take into account technological neutrality, EU competition and state aid rules, and provision of accessible services to vulnerable groups?

5.4   To what extent does the Policy Framework include a sufficiently balanced mix of soft innovation support services and financial instruments? How is the mix of grants, loans and financial engineering (venture capital) structured? Is it appropriate to meet the objectives?

5.5   In which ways does it foster internationalisation of SMEs and external linkages of regional clusters/initiatives?

5.6   Will there be cooperation with other regions within the Policy Framework? Please describe in which ways, e.g. through mainstream Structural and Investment Funds and/or cooperation through INTERREG and other networks.

5.7   If the region or Member State is opting for investments in Broadband (TO 2.2) does the NGN plan contain sustainable investment models that enhance competition and provide access to open, affordable, quality and future proof infrastructure and services.

6. Does the Policy Framework produce synergies and alignment of different policies and funding sources?

6.1   Does the Policy Framework describe budgetary sources and indicative budget allocations? Please specify.

6.2   Is the Policy Framework based on inter-departmental/inter-ministerial/inter-agency coordination for relevant policies, in particular between research/science and economic policies, but also with regard to other relevant areas such as education, employment, and rural/urban development policies, as well as important DAE areas like health, security, transportation, public sector, culture? Does it take into account the existing level of policy coordination within the region/MS?

6.3   Is the Policy Framework and its priority-setting complementary to national-level priorities? For example, is it in line with the National Reform Programme and existing innovation or digital programmes, also in the above mentioned policy areas? Please specify.

6.4   Please describe how the Policy Framework envisages complementarities, synergies and/or integrated territorial investments between different European, national and regional funding sources, in particular between ERDF and Horizon 2020 but also with other key programmes such as ESF, EAFRD, COSME, JEREMIE, Connecting Europe Facility, ENIAC, ARTEMIS JTIs, Factories of the Future, Green Cars initiatives, EIT KICs and Labs and knowledge regions?

6.5   Does this Policy Framework envisage a dynamic process between "more developed regions", "regions in transition", "less developed regions"?

6.6   If the region or Member State is opting for investments in Broadband (TO 2.2) does the strategic document outline measures to stimulate private R&D&I investments, for instance through public-private partnerships? Is there a financial commitment of the private sector to the Policy Framework?

7. Does the Policy Framework set achievable goals and measure progress? How does it support a process of policy learning and adaptation?

7.1   To what extent does the Policy Framework outline an adequate system for monitoring and evaluation? Please specify.

7.2   Does the document identify concrete, achievable goals? Does it identify output and result indicators and a realistic timeline for these goals?

7.3   Does the Policy Framework foresee the measurement of progress in the relevant areas which are aligned with existing relevant EU, national or regional DAE-relevant priorities?[7] Does it entail measurements of the progress of ICT use and its impact (e.g. productivity gains) at national or regional level? Are the indicators consistent

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[7] If the Policy Framework is part of a national or regional RIS3, its monitoring should be carried out as part of the monitoring of this framework.

with those used by the DAE Scoreboard? Does it contain additional MS/region specific indicators to track progress of the implementation measures?[8]

7.4   Does the monitoring of the Policy Framework integrate the country-specific recommendations (European Semester survey)?

7.5   Does the Policy Framework include a governance mechanism to react and act upon findings from the monitoring and evaluation system? Does it support a process of continuous policy learning and adaptation? If not, are actions foreseen to build up capabilities for that?

7.6   Is there a communication plan to reach out to stakeholders and the general public? To what extent does the Policy Framework develop mechanisms to generate support from and the active participation of vital groups for the implementation?

8. What are the conclusions and which advice can be given to improve the Policy Framework?

8.1   If the Policy Framework is based on an earlier document, has it been appropriately reviewed and updated? What is going to be done differently with the Strategic Policy Framework for Digital growth compared to the previous document?

8.2   Can the Policy Framework address digital growth to stimulate affordable, good quality and interoperable ICT-enabled private and public services and increase uptake by citizens, including vulnerable groups, businesses and public administrations as well as cross border initiatives? What are its strong aspects? What are its weaker parts?

8.3   What needs to be changed? Feel free to add any other comment you may have that could help the MS/region to improve its Policy Framework within the RIS3 process.

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[8] The monitoring mechanism should take into account key indicators of the DAE Scoreboard but can contain additional indicators to track the progress of the implementation measures.