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IMMENSITY

IMMIGRANT'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC COHESION AND IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING STANDARDS

<u>Work Package 5 :</u>	Evaluation of the Project – Formulation of Plans for Immigrants' Return – Follow-up Plan
<u>Action 5.3:</u>	Ex-Post Evaluation: Study on the impact of the system in terms of target groups benefits that will include an overview of the Follow-up Strategy's results and impacts for the sustainability and expansion of the project.
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Part 1:
IDENTIFICATION SHEET

Part 1: IDENTIFICATION SHEET

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Abstract (for dissemination)	<p>The Ex post Evaluation report analyzes measures and evaluates the initial project's scope, objectives and activities opposed to the actual outputs of the Immensity project. Results and impacts are to be fully evident in short, medium and long term, however encouraging assumptions and forecasts can be drawn, primarily based on initial tendencies and reactions that the implementation of the project arose. Indeed the Ex-Post Evaluation Report is compiled at the completion of the project and not after a logical timeframe that would ensure valid evaluation of the project's results and impacts, this report will primarily focus on the assessment of the project's actual outputs and activities. The main objective of this report in regards to the results and impacts of the project is the identification and acknowledgment of the current tendencies & reactions that the project implementation caused and whether they will contribute to the attainment of the initially identified results and impacts</p>
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Part 2:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part 2: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims at analyzing, measuring and evaluating the overall project scope, objectives and intended activities with the actual outputs, results and impacts that this initiative managed to attain after its completion. However, it should be taken under consideration that the attempt to evaluate, especially, the actual results and long-term impacts, as those were envisaged through the design period of the project is a difficult procedure. It demands time resources in order to give the project the necessary time scale to develop on the field all possible positive actions deriving from its application on the target group. What this report attempted to identify, in respect to those two elements (namely results and impacts) is the identification and acknowledgment of the current tendencies concerning the attainment of those results and impacts or not.

The overall methodology, for such an ex-post evaluation report was built upon a logic and comprehensive way, trying to make a reasonable assessment of outcomes and their sustainability while exploring the current results and the trend that exist for the future impacts. More specifically, the methodology builds its structure in three parts, which compose the core elements of this ex-post evaluation.

The first part aims at identifying the conditions that affected the initiation of such a project, namely its background. The second part, entitled "Overall Assessment", consists, as obvious, the core of this ex-post evaluation report and aims to identify: the project's implementation issues; describe and compare the programmed outputs, results and impacts to actual implementation outputs, results and impacts; conduct an overall estimation whether the observed groups of activities that the project implemented during its operation were related and in what extent to the overall objectives of the project as they stated in its initial design period; provide information that will examine the contribution of activities that took place in this project and how those would have occurred much later and at a much lower scale in the EU territory; provide information on wider impacts on economy and society that this project managed to attain; and, last but not least, to summarise, and evaluate the proposed follow-up strategy that was accomplished after consultation among partners, in order to meet the expectations and the objectives for the new era of the network as a whole.

The analysis that follows, demonstrates that the Immensity project could be dully regarded as a very success case story, although there are present and crucial, many times, some inherent problems and deficiencies.

The overall rationale for the project orientation proved to be explicit and apparent enhancing the belief that the Immensity project originated its operation aiming to become a role model for similar initiatives and projects. The current achievements proved to be according to what had been programmed and envisaged from the consortium, the tendency for attaining the programmed results and impacts is positive, even though there are some result or impact indicators that seem overoptimistic to be accomplished on time and in the extent that these were referred in the Project's Application Form.

Part 3:

METHODOLOGY

Part 3: METHODOLOGY

Ex-post evaluation report makes explicit the assessment of results and effectiveness of the project. A major purpose for such a report is to enable policy makers, project designers, project implementing agencies and other governmental departments to make the fullest use of the experience gained from Immensity project in formulating, designing and implementing future initiatives with similar ideas or not as the Immensity partnership tried to achieve. It is therefore important to identify positive impacts and lessons as well as ways in which the project at hand may have been more effective or sustainable.

According to international literature an ex-post evaluation report should ideally follow project's implementation after one to three years. This fact is a prerequisite in order to make the identification of the real results and impacts of the project feasible, as it is known that these can be traced only after a period of one to three years after the project's finalization. Additionally, it must be noted that ex-post evaluation report has to be clear and concise with coherent findings and conclusions. It must be well balanced, objective and concise. The reason for brevity is not to limit the quality of analysis, but rather to ensure that the report is readable and used for the intended purpose.

Bearing in mind all these inputs as a background, this report builds its methodology according to a simpler and comprehensive way trying to make a reasonable assessment of outcomes and their sustainability while exploring the current results and the trend that exist for the future impacts. Many factors contribute to judging a project's success. The primary factor is the extent to which the project achieved its component and purpose level objectives and the degree to which outcomes are likely to be sustained. More specifically, recognizing the reality that this report must be formulated just at the end of the Immensity project and not in a suitable period for measuring the real results and impacts, the methodological framework that was created, focused mainly on:

- » Important issues affecting performance, success and sustainability and
- » Identifying possible remedial measures for improving project performance

More specifically, the methodology builds its structure in three parts, which compose the core elements of this ex-post evaluation. The first part aims at identifying the conditions that affected the initiation of such a project, namely its background. More specifically, this part analyses overall rationale i.e. which original need that prompted the launching of the Immensity. It also provides information about the specific purposes of the project in accordance with the principal inputs and outputs produced as those were identified and predetermined during the design of the project and concludes with a section aiming to

provide information and facts from the already completed ex-ante evaluation report in order to reconsider the expectations and the promises of this project (identification of the initial stand-point of the project) intending to evaluate, in the end, existing outputs and results produced.

The second part, entitled "Overall Assessment", consists, as obvious, the core of this ex-post evaluation report and aims to identify the extent to which the major outcome objectives have been achieved, the sustainability of benefits in physical, financial and social terms etc, the un-quantified though real economic benefits and costs which cannot be calculated in the economic analysis, the un-quantifiable socio-economic impact and the extent of institutional development, particularly, it will therefore, try to:

- » Identify the project's implementation issues, including any major changes from the design, whether or not covered by approved change frames. Any project activities relevant to implementation efficiency will be discussed including major factors which contributed to or detracted from efficiency. This section will focus on the items contributing to project success or problematic areas during the implementation period in order to gain experiences for future projects.
- » Describe and compare the programmed outputs, results and impacts to actual implementation outputs, results and impacts as those described in the designing of the project
- » Conduct an overall estimation whether the observed groups of activities that the project implemented during its operation were related and in what extent to the overall objectives as they stated in its initial design period.
- » Provide information that will examine the contribution of activities that took place in this project and how those would have occurred much later and at a much lower scale in the EU territory
- » Provide information on wider impacts on economy, society and environment that this project managed to achieve
- » Summarise, and evaluate the proposed follow-up strategy that was accomplished after consultation among partners, in order to meet the expectations and the objectives for the new era of the network as a whole.

The third and the final part of the methodological framework of this ex-post evaluation is a review of the project in order to identify and verify general lessons learned after its completion. This section is particularly important in the context of feedback and dissemination of ex-post evaluation results in the region.

Part 4:
BACKGROUND

Part 4: BACKGROUND

4.1 RATIONALE

In order to implement proper immigration management practices, there are specific problems and barriers which should be eliminated. In general, there is a lack of adequate information towards immigrants who want to exploit possible existing structures to achieve social inclusion and economic prosperity. Information campaigns and seminars are not adequately developed in the area or country to raise awareness and to cultivate a friendly culture towards the target groups.

The most important problem is the negative attitude and perceptions that may exist against immigrants. Usually, people believe that they tend to have criminal behaviours, or that they are responsible for local unemployment as they constitute cheap labour force. Some additional problems are:

Major Problems and malfunctions with regard to the political environment

- » The immigrants create pressures in the context of searching for a house of low budget rent, which results in alterations of the profile of some urban areas.
- » The inefficient management of educational and health system to incorporate immigrant students.
- » Racism and xenophobia resulting in social exclusion.
- » Inadequate training seminars to upgrade skills of target groups.
- » Discrimination, based on xenophobia, resulting in difficult access to labor market for immigrants.
- » Inadequate cooperation between origin countries and hosting countries to jointly respond to needs and coordinate actions.
- » Lack of adequate data and statistical analysis on migration at local and regional level.

One of the most important parameter that generates social exclusion of the target groups is xenophobia, which includes both social and economic implications. The mistrustful attitude of local citizens can be attributed to:

Major Problems and malfunctions with regard to the social environment

- » Not satisfactory economic situation of citizens. The unemployment increase and the inadequate quality of life result in considering immigrants as competitors in the same society and in excluding them from opportunities.

- » The lack of infrastructure on behalf of the state or regional authority to receive and facilitate their residence and the general lack of a consistent immigration policy.
- » Insufficient know-how to practically guide and support immigrants in socio-economic activities.
- » Local citizens are not willing to undertake the kind of jobs undertaken by immigrants.
- » Lack of proper information, as children repeat and reproduce xenophobic point of views that they have heard in the environment, without actually believing or knowing what they say.
- » Inadequate education courses at school to inform children and to cultivate a multicultural society.
- » Absence of social events to address the participation and interaction of both immigrants and local citizens.
- » Inadequate information mechanisms and dissemination channels at regional level to raise awareness of enterprises, citizens and other social partners
- » Lack of infrastructure (seminars, training courses) to support immigrants' entrepreneurship.
- » Few female immigrants participate in employment market.
- » Poor public debate or academic research on specific immigration issues (social inclusion, entrepreneurship).
- » Institutional framework exists for launching immigrants' entrepreneurship, but procedures are limited to theory and do not facilitate their return to origin country or bilateral trade.

Major Problems and malfunctions with regard to the economic environment

The most important problems of economic character encountered in dealing with immigration issue are:

- » Striking shift in economic policy (around 1986), resulting major changes in cost of production that appointed the need for cheap labor force (immigrants).
- » The crisis in the secondary sector (weeding out of less profitable capital, reduction of industries, constructions) aggravating employment.
- » Inadequate financial support for immigrants' entrepreneurship.
- » High unemployment level in the region, aggravated by the occupation of immigrants in local positions.
- » Low local demand for technical works and constructions.
- » Large amount of immigrants are not registered in social security as workers.

- » Inadequate modernization and quality improvement to cope with international competition.
- » Unexploited potential of further developing skills and knowledge of immigrants.

Most of the project partners have received over the past years migratory waves and however, their efforts they still lack of a coherent strategy of suggesting solutions and assistance tailored to immigrants as regards to their entrepreneurship efforts.

Additionally, in all participating countries, it was observed that policies and actions to overcome barriers and bottlenecks were not systematic and coherent. IMMENSITY's main idea is the social & economic inclusion of legal economic immigrants & repatriates in destination countries, with a specific focus on women, via stimulation of their entrepreneurship/self-employment potential & improvement of living standards in the origin countries by promoting & supporting bilateral trade. IMMENSITY's long term goal is to support the return of these immigrants to their origin countries and the reestablishment of their businesses there. This will be achieved primarily via the Immigrant Entrepreneurs' Reception Offices that will foster the beneficiaries' entrepreneurship/ self-employment initiatives, by building on their cultural affinity and established contacts with origin countries.

For this effort, IMMENSITY consortium used its experience, knowledge, information and channels of communication with direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project, in order to:

- » Enhance the development of the immigrants and repatriates' entrepreneurship/self-employment potential through Pilot Structures providing online/offline services, e.g. information, consulting, training, and business mentoring, in the destination countries;
- » Further promote bilateral trade between countries of origin & receiving regions as a way to improve quality of life in origin countries;
- » Study the carefully planned return of immigrants to their origin countries and the re-establishment of their businesses in their homelands and
- » Finally, diffuse and disseminate the project's purpose, overall and specific objectives, activities and results, in as much as possible great space inside the CADSES area.

The project "IMMENSITY" is a project running under the European Programme INTERREG III B CADSES Neighbourhood Programme (2000-2006) and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme for

the Central, Adriatic, Danubian and South Eastern European Space (CADSES) was approved by the European Commission on 17 December 2004. The INTERREG III B CADSES NP Operational Programme aims at achieving a higher territorial and economic integration within the co-operating area, promoting a more balanced and harmonious development of the European space. More specifically, its general and specific objectives are pursued through the development:

1. of a joint strategy and programming in the fields of spatial development, social and economic cohesion, transport systems and information society, promotion of landscape, natural and cultural heritage, environment protection, resource management and risk prevention;
2. of partnership and a "bottom up" and integrated approach;
3. of complementarity with the mainstream interventions of the structural funds and
4. of effective co-ordination with the Union's instruments for external policy

There is obviously great relevance existing between the objectives of the INTERREG III B CADSES Programme, as those were presented above, and the overall rationale that dominates the IMMENSITY project/idea.

The project entitled, "**Immigrant's Entrepreneurship for Socio-Economic Cohesion and Improvement of Living Standards**", "IMMENSITY", submitted in the 4th Call for Proposals of INTERREG III B CADSES Programme, under priority 1: "Spatial development approaches, social cohesion" and precisely the measure 1.4: "Spatial Impact of Immigration".

4.2 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF DESIGN

IMMENSITY's main idea is encountering the social & economic inclusion of legal economic immigrants & repatriates in destination countries, with a specific focus on women, via stimulation of their entrepreneurship/self-employment potential & improvement of living standards in the origin countries by promoting & supporting bilateral trade. Its long term goal is to support the return of these immigrants to their origin countries and the reestablishment of their businesses there. This will be achieved primarily via the Immigrant Entrepreneurs' Reception Offices that will foster the beneficiaries' entrepreneurship/ self-employment initiatives, by building on their cultural affinity and established contacts with origin countries.

IMMENSITY's main activities included:

- » Formulation of strategic and operational plans;
- » Establishment of new pilot structures (Immigrant Entrepreneurs' Reception Offices);
- » Formulation of plans for return of economic immigrants to origin countries.

As main elements/inputs of such an idea, the IMMENSITY project pursued in:

- » The development of the immigrants and repatriates' entrepreneurship/self-employment potential through Pilot Structures providing online/offline services, e.g. information, consulting, training, and business mentoring, in the destination countries
- » The promotion of bilateral trade between countries of origin & receiving regions as a way to improve quality of life in origin countries.
- » The carefully planned return of immigrants to their origin countries and the re-establishment of their businesses in their homelands.

It must be noted that the IMMENSITY project used in all the types of actions which the Programme authorized the consortium to apply great intension, according to its regulations and permissions. These actions can be grouped in four main categories i.e. planning activities (transnational studies and strategies); networking; pilot actions; information, training and awareness raising. All these groups of activities, that is to say, how these translated in the IMMENSITY project as a reality through the studies, strategies, the pilot virtual network, the seminars and workshops, etc. were presented

above in a more detailed way. All these actions have been the primary elements (inputs) of the project in order to succeed in the implementation of its initial goals and purpose.

Finally, it must be noted the existence of two different but important factors that affected the overall implementation of the project. The first point reflects the active role that the Albanian and the Bulgarian partners took in all the stages of this project. The second point concerns the role of the Greek partner and more specifically the action for developing and operating enthusiastically and with good results the Pilot structure in their Region.

4.3 OVERVIEW OF THE ON GOING EVALUATIONS

The present part of the ex-post evaluation report aims at providing information and facts from the already completed on-going evaluation reports (8 evaluations each form a partner) in order to study the programme's activities and their results in the context of the IMMENSITY project. The ultimate goal was to evaluate after all the existing outputs and results produced.

It must be noted that the ex-ante evaluation report attempted to study the expected impacts of the proposed policies and actions that each partner formulated for his region and examine the appropriateness of these actions for the participating countries. At the same time it examines coherence and relativity to the problems identified and evaluates their overall consistency and relevance to the needs they are planning to address

The methodology used for the evaluation of the proposed policies and actions proved that the specific tasks, initiatives and policies, that every partner formulated for his region, were built and in a great relevance and under strong consistency with the overall objectives of the IMMENSITY project, as those were articulated previously. The fact that the on-going evaluation reports were focused on the assessment of the all activities that took place during the phase of implementation and development of IMMENSITY, demonstrates that the partners had identified the need for a strategic approach in the difficulties and the constraints of immigrants' entrepreneurship

The partners' efforts are characterized as limited in the systematic, strategic and comprehensive approach of immigrants' issues related with the improvement of their living standards. Their efforts were, until now, hindered in a very strict environment. The IMMENSITY project forced its partners to wide their scope of interest, offering multiplier effects, in this way, to the entire region in terms of economic, social and regional development. This fact made the consortium to consider and thereafter to decide, that the on-going evaluation reports should be focused on the expected impacts of the proposed policies and actions already formulated and to examine, additionally, their appropriateness for participating countries and the CADSES area in general.

Concluding, it must be noted that the on-going evaluation reports concluded that the activities and reports produced were the appropriate ones to address the weaknesses but also the opportunities of the areas under consideration; in order to meet the objectives of the problem.

Last, but not least, the on-going evaluation reports studied, in brief, the implementation procedures and mentioned the fact that the implementation procedures are rather limited, primary due to institutional role that forbid, the responsible supporting organizations, them from actually applying actions without prior approval from other authorities.

Part 5:
OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Part 5: OVERALL ASSESSMENT

5.1 IMPLEMENTATION PERFORMANCE

This part of ex-post evaluation report aims to assess the implementation performance of the IMMENSITY project. The study of the procedures and the activities conducted in the implementation phase of the IMMENSITY project is being judged essential, aiming to identify faults or deficiencies, delays or success stories/activities that took place during the project management. This specific attempt, of recording such information, aims at becoming the backbone for future projects or initiatives that will be launched after the completion of IMMENSITY, in terms of management issues. These future projects will be feasible to build their success stories in the experience and knowledge that was gained from an already completed project.

Consequently, an overall assessment of what has been programmed for the appropriate and reliable administration of the project and what, finally, was achieved, helps, the evaluation of the project in terms of its implementation performance.

More specifically, the wide range of the partners pooled from different cultures and dissimilar experiences challenged the proper implementation performance of the project but the skills and the competencies of the Lead Partner and the acquiescence from all the members of the consortium were evened up at the end, the majority of the problems with the most successful way.

5.2 PROJECT OUTPUTS

The IMMENSITY project formulated, planned and implemented a series of activities in order to stimulate social & economic inclusion of legal economic immigrants & repatriates in destination countries, with a specific focus on women, via stimulation of their entrepreneurship/self-employment potential & improvement of living standards in the origin countries by promoting & supporting bilateral trade.

The table below shows the planned outputs that the project attempted to accomplish and the actual outputs that the consortium experienced at the end of the project with the most profound way.

PROJECT OUTPUTS TABLE

	Description	Unit	Programmed Output Indicators	Time frame	Actual Outputs
1	Existing Situation Analysis. Identification of Problems and Needs: Desk/field research for facts & figures on target groups' population, employment, entrepreneurial initiatives (esp. for women), on governmental initiatives/policies designed to help their social/economic inclusion. Identification of barriers faced and opportunities in the import/export sectors.	Study	5	6/2006	5 Studies
2	Finalization of Synthetic Diagnosis on Existing Situation Analyses of 5 Regions (inclusion of facts & figures for Bulgaria, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova) for strategic & operational plan formulation	Diagnosis	1	8/2006	1 Synthetic Diagnosis

	Description	Unit	Programmed Output Indicators	Time frame	Actual Outputs
3	Production of the Project's Literature for dissemination and diffusion of its scope and results (multilingual content)	a. Brochures b. Documents	a. 5.000 Brochures on the project b. 500 documents on Regional Strategic & Operational Plans for the Pilot Summaries	1/2007	a. 5.000 Brochures on the project b. 500 documents on Regional Strategic & Operational Plans for the Pilot Summaries
4	Finalization of research and collection of material for use in the formulation of strategic & operational plans on Pilot Structures	a. Guide b./c. Reports	a. Good Practices Guide b. Benchmarking Report c. Internal Reports on the Institutional Settings and Frameworks per EU Region	2/2007	a. Good Practices Guide b. Benchmarking Report c. 5 Internal Reports on the Institutional Settings and Frameworks per EU Region
5	Successful implementation of the major dissemination events (part 1)	Public Consultations	5 Public Consultations for feedback on draft Strategic and Operational Plans	3/2007	5 Public Consultations
6	Finalization of the Strategic and Operational Plans for Pilot Structures	Study	5 Final Strategic and Operational Plans	3/2007	5 Final Strategic and Operational Plans
7	Successful implementation of the major dissemination events	Conference	Conference for Official Presentation of the Strategic and Operational Plans	4/2007	1 Conference

	Description	Unit	Programmed Output Indicators	Time frame	Actual Outputs
8	Establishment of the Pilot Structures in the EU regional authorities	Pilot Structures	5 Pilot Structures (Immigrant Entrepreneurs Reception Offices)	4/2007	5 Pilot Structures (Immigrant Entrepreneurs Reception Offices)
9	Definition of the Functional and Technical Requirements of the Portal	Report	1 Functional and technical requirements report	6/2007	1 Functional and technical requirements report
10	Launching of the Portal to be used by the Pilot Structures	Portak	1 fully operational Portal	10/2007	1 fully operational Portal
11	Production of the Pilot Structures' Literature for dissemination in the Demonstration Workshops	a. Publications b. CD ROMs	a. 5000 publications for EU MS b. 5000 CD ROMs for EU MS	10/2007	a. 5000 publications for EU MS b. 5000 CD ROMs for EU MS
12	Finalization of the Plans for the return of economic immigrants to their origin countries (1 plan per EU region)	Study	5 Plans for the return of economic immigrants to their origin countries	11/2007	5 Plans (Studies) for the return of economic immigrants to their origin countries
13	Successful implementation of the major dissemination events (part 3)	Workshops/Seminars	5 Workshops for the demonstration of Pilot Structures to local, regional and national stakeholders (1 in each EU participating region)	12/2007	5 Workshops (1 in each EU participating region)

	Description	Unit	Programmed Output Indicators	Time frame	Actual Outputs
14	Finalization of the Follow-up Plan	Follow –up Plan	1 Follow-up Plan	1/2008	1 Follow-up Plan
15	Ex-Post Evaluation of the Pilot Structure and the project as a whole	Ex- Post Evaluation	Ex-Post Evaluation Report	1/2008	1 Ex-Post Evaluation Report
16	Successful implementation of the major dissemination events (part 4)	Conference	Closing Conference	1/2008	1 Closing Conference (Athens)

Through a quick scan of the above table the following issues are apparent and must be mentioned separately in order to better appreciate the actual outputs of the project:

- » 5 studies of existing situation analysis have been planned for the Identification of Problems and Needs: Desk/field research for facts & figures on target groups' population, employment, entrepreneurial initiatives (esp. for women), on governmental initiatives/policies designed to help their social/economic inclusion.
- » A Synthetic diagnosis
- » 5 Strategic Plans
- » 5 Pilot Structures
- » 1 Network
- » Several Publications
- » Best Practice Guide
- » Benchmarking Guide
- » Conferences, Public Consultations, Seminars and workshops

Finally, there were observed minor deviations in the respect of the time frame in which deliverables and meetings were due. However, this seemed not to affect the overall project as almost all deliverables were produced in the best terms. As per the meetings, conferences are concerned they took place in all partners countries under a rotation giving the opportunity to the lead partner to organize the closing one in Thessaloniki.

5.3 PROJECT RESULTS

Following the same rationale, this part of the report is assessing the indicators for programmed results with the actually achieved ones. It should be taken into consideration the fact that the results of the project will continue after its completion and an additional crucial period – about 12 months- must be completed in order to make the results visible, which, according to international literature, must be searched in a medium-dated period after the completion of the project. This perception can be furthermore enhanced through the examination of the proposed Monitoring Indicators. These indicators require a time period of 12 months after project finalization in order to be measured and consequently to be compared from external auditors in order to identify whether these results have been achieved and to what extent according to the programmed ones.

More specifically, the majority of the Indicators of the project concern the operation of the IMMENSITY Portal and the operation of Pilot Structures through a series of crucial elements that examine its performance. Additionally, it must be noted that the IMMENSITY Portal and the Pilot Structures, the most prominent elements of the project, launched their operation five months before the end of the project therefore the results are still in progress.

Hence the majority of result indicators, concerning the IMMENSITY online structure, cannot be measured in this report, but probably this analysis can reveal some primary trends/tendencies that refer to them and show the possibility to achieve those results or not. If in all these assumptions consider the fact that the present ex-post evaluation report is formulated just after the finalization of the project, counts its ineffectiveness to measure and consequently compare the results according to the project is obvious and will be visible after the completion of the project, in a period of 12 months after the its finalization.

According to the table concerning Indicators that is encompassed in the Project Proposal, several indicators were predetermined, aiming to monitor the performance of the project in respect to its planned results. In this case the composition of a table with qualitative results suggests in which way the project has already and shall in future play an important role in the fulfilment of the project's target assisting immigrants to improve their living standards through the promotion of entrepreneurship and self employment

Category / Subcategory	Area of Intervention	Qualitative Assessment
22	Social Inclusion (incorporating immigrants/repatriates to the socio-economic environment of destination countries)	The project suggest solutions for the social inclusion of Immigrants via Strategic Plans and Follow up Strategies
23	Developing educational and vocational training not linked to a specific sector (persons, firms) (providing immigrants/ repatriates consulting/training/information services to boost their entrepreneurship and reinforce their position in the labour market of both origin and destination countries)	The results shall go on as the Pilot Structures shall continue to work on this issue
25	Positive labour market actions for women (focus and special emphasis on immigrating / repatriating women in terms of encouraging their entrepreneurial skills and spirit and providing sustainable support both before and after the initiation of an enterprise)	The results shall go on as the Pilot Structures shall continue to work on this issue
16/163	Assisting SMEs and the craft sector / Enterprise advisory service (consulting, training and information services to economic immigrants and repatriates)	The results shall go on as the Pilot Structures shall continue to work on this issue
32/324	Telecommunications infrastructure and information society / Services and applications for SMEs (consulting, training and information services through Internet for economic immigrants and repatriates in order to start and/or grow their enterprises in the importing and exporting of goods and services)	The results shall go on as the Pilot Structures shall continue to work on this issue

Category / Subcategory	Area of Intervention	Qualitative Assessment
42/413	Technical assistance and innovative actions (ERDF) / Studies (formulation of Plans for the return of immigrants to their origin countries and the re-establishment of their businesses there)	The formulated reports and studies provide excellent material to enhance immigrants in their potential future return in home countries
41/414	Technical assistance and innovative actions (ERDF) / Innovative Actions (Establishment of Pilot Structures – Immigrant Entrepreneurs’ Reception Offices – to each of the participating EU regions)	The results shall go on as the Pilot Structures shall continue to work on this issue

The trend for meeting the programmed results is quite positive until now, offering all the necessary preconditions for tangible, concrete and visible results as these had been programmed and quantified during the design period of the project.

- The Follow-up Strategy aiming to secure further funding/investment and expansion of the pilot virtual network is another Indicator that is easy to make assumptions and forecasts, since this action is currently in progress and will try to observe and certify all the necessary actions for the continuation of the network, both in terms of sustainability and expandability.
- The rest indicators are quite qualitative ones and any attempt for approaching the trends that exist will be useless and inappropriate.

5.4 PROJECT IMPACTS

IMMENSITY's main idea is encountering the social & economic inclusion of legal economic immigrants & repatriates in destination countries, with a specific focus on women, via stimulation of their entrepreneurship/self-employment potential & improvement of living standards in the origin countries by promoting & supporting bilateral trade. Its long term goal is to support the return of these immigrants to their origin countries and the reestablishment of their businesses there.

According to its Application Form the IMMENSITY is expected to have a series of positive impacts on:

- » The development of the immigrants and repatriates' entrepreneurship/self-employment potential through Pilot Structures providing online/offline services, e.g. information, consulting, training, and business mentoring, in the destination countries
- » The promotion of bilateral trade between countries of origin & receiving regions as a way to improve quality of life in origin countries.
- » The carefully planned return of immigrants to their origin countries and the re-establishment of their businesses in their homelands

Following the same rationale, as this is presented above for the case of evaluating project results, the assessment of project impacts will inevitably have the same conclusion. More specifically, if the evaluation of results was not feasible due to the need for a timeframe of 12 months that is required in order for them (the results) to become visible and concrete, it is profound that the evaluation of impacts, that can only be traced after a period of 24-36 months after the project finalization, is a fact even more impracticable and improper.

The present ex-post evaluation report should be in a position to evaluate the impacts of this project according to the indicators that had been formulated during its design period. However, this fact is not feasible since the impacts of a project need a time frame of approximately 24-36 months after its completion in order to become explicit and clear to the direct beneficiaries but also to the society as a whole. As a consequence, the current report can only make an overview with qualitative and quantitative elements of the proposed Indicators

Description	Unit	Quantified Output Indicators	Qualitative Assessment
Improved knowledge on social and economic issues & data of economic immigrants and repatriates in planning documents	No. of better informed stakeholders	800	This activity will go on at least 12 months after finalization of project therefore it is estimated that the number of stakeholders shall attain the desirable output
Strategic and operational plans to be used by the participating regions for interventions (pilot structures)	No. of planning documents	5	This activity provided excellent results and the application of the Strategy in the future will enhance furthermore the impacts of the project
Improved qualifications and entrepreneurial skills of the target groups in the participating regions	% Increase in target group qualifications	Improved by 60%	This activity will go on at least 12 months after finalization of project therefore it is estimated that the number of stakeholders shall attain the desirable output
Replicability of the project's initiatives / actions by other regional authorities and socio-economic partners in the CADSES area	No. of entities	4	This activity will go on at least 12 months after finalization of project therefore it is estimated that the number of stakeholders shall attain the desirable output

Description	Unit	Quantified Output Indicators	Qualitative Assessment
Economic development and improvement of quality of life in the destination countries through trade	% increase in bilateral trade	6%	This activity will go on at least 12 months after finalization of project therefore it is estimated that the number of stakeholders shall attain the desirable output and perhaps raise more than 6%
Boosting of economic development and activities in the destination countries (regions) by fostering entrepreneurship	% increase in local economic activity	8%	This activity will go on at least 18 months after finalization of project therefore it is estimated that the number of stakeholders shall attain the desirable output and perhaps raise more than 8%
Contribution to the reduction of the migratory flows towards destination countries through socioeconomic inclusion of beneficiaries in the receiving communities and assistance for their return to the origin countries	% reduction in migratory flows	5%	This activity will go on at least 24 months after finalization of project therefore it is estimated that the number of stakeholders shall attain the desirable output

It must be noted that although these impacts that were presented above are going to be observable in a great period after the analysis of the present ex-post evaluation report, the tendency for achieving them seems to be optimistic. This assumption can be enhanced if one considers the great adjustment that IMMENSITY project did during its implementation.

5.5 RELEVANCE

After the evaluation of the project's outputs, results and impacts and the management issues that occurred during its implementation phase, there are some other major elements that must be presented in order to accomplish a well-structured ex-post evaluation report, although this report is not conducted in the proper time frame as this would be after the completion of the project.

One of such essential sections, that this report examines, is the study of the degree of relevance between the actual groups of activities (actual outputs) that the project implemented/produced and the overall objectives initially set by the IMMENSITY project.

The methodology applied, for the evaluation of the relativity between activities that were completed during the project implementation phase and the project objectives, has followed the same rationale as this applied during the ex-ante evaluation report (Relevance Appraisal Methodology); the steps of this methodological tool are as follows:

1. Codification of the project's objectives
2. Gradation of the relevance of each group of activity to the overall objectives set by the IMMENSITY Project, according to the following climax:
 - 0: no relevance
 - 1: low relevance
 - 2: medium relevance
 - 3: high relevance
3. The relativity degree of each group of activity is calculated as the fraction of the sum of its relevance scores per project objectives by the product of the number of the project's objectives (3) times the maximum degree of the relevance climax (3).
4. The relativity degree of each project's objective is represented by the fraction of the sum of its relevance scores per group of activity by the product of the number of the group of activities times the maximum degree of the relevance climax (3).
5. The relativity degree of the groups of activities to the project's objectives is then calculated as the average of the relevance degree of all the groups' activities or the average of the relevance degree of all the objectives of the project.

The aim of this comparison is to verify that the activities proposed, agreed and implemented by the consortium actually contribute to the completion of the objectives set by the project.

According to a comprehensive and thorough analysis of both the application form and the, until now, deliverables/outputs of the project, this report concluded that the actual outputs (groups of activities) of the project can be clustered in the following ones:

- I. Existing situation analyses of immigrants / repatriates -Facts & figures on target groups' population, employment, entrepreneurial initiatives (esp. for women), on governmental initiatives/policies designed to help their social/economic inclusion and their return to the origin country. Identification of barriers faced and opportunities in the import/export sectors.
- II. Development of Strategic and Operational Plans for the establishment of Pilot Structures in each region including actions to be undertaken in the short/long term for the proper function, guidelines for all participating regions and sustainability principles. Analysis of social and economic impacts of the proposed interventions.
- III. Formulation of Plans for the return of economic immigrants to their origin country based on data, investigation and results of previous reports.
- IV. Development of the project's portal linking all relevant stakeholders, providing access to all available information, actions undertaken, emerging opportunities, progress of activities, etc.
- V. Design and development of the Pilot Structures (Immigrants Entrepreneurs' Reception Offices and Portal) offering offline and online Information, Consulting & Training services to the specified target groups of the project and operation of the portal offering online the same services in multilingual interfaces.
- VI. Awareness-raising to key stakeholders (e.g. ministers, secretaries general from regional authorities, mayors, prefects, civil servants, representatives from chambers of commerce and industry, social partners, representatives from the EC DG Regional Policy and DG Enterprise, representatives from the CADSES Programme Management structures, etc.) through organization of conferences, publications, information brochures and packages and communication of the CADSES programme, the project's objectives, the development of strategic & operational regional plans and the existence and potentials/ possibilities of the Pilot Structures.

VII. Detailed Follow-up Strategy, containing proposals for specific and substantiated activities for the sustainability and further expansion of the project's results into other CADSES regions and the EU in general.

VIII. Public consultations for feedback on the regional strategic and operational plans and awareness raising of stakeholders (in each of the 5 EU regions concerned).

The objectives of the IMMENSITY project have been identified and codified as follows:

A. Objective A: The development of the immigrants and repatriates' entrepreneurship/ self-employment potential through Pilot Structures providing online/offline services, e.g. information, consulting, training, and business mentoring, in the destination countries

B. Objective B: The promotion of bilateral trade between countries of origin & receiving regions as a way to improve quality of life in origin countries.

C. Objective C: The carefully planned return of immigrants to their origin countries and the re-establishment of their businesses in their homelands

Project's Group of Activities	Project's Objectives	OBJECTIVE A	OBJECTIVE B	OBJECTIVE C	Appraisal Degree of the Project's Group of Activities to the Project's Objectives
Existing situation analyses of immigrants / repatriates -Facts & figures on target groups' population, employment, entrepreneurial initiatives (esp. for women), on governmental initiatives/policies designed to help their social/economic inclusion and their return to the origin country. Identification of barriers faced and		1	2	1	0,45

Project's Group of Activities \ Project's Objectives	OBJECTIVE A	OBJECTIVE B	OBJECTIVE C	Appraisal Degree of the Project's Group of Activities to the Project's Objectives
opportunities in the import/export sectors				
Development of Strategic and Operational Plans for the establishment of Pilot Structures in each region including actions to be undertaken in the short/long term for the proper function, guidelines for all participating regions and sustainability principles. Analysis of social and economic impacts of the proposed interventions.	2	2	1	0,55
Formulation of Plans for the return of economic immigrants to their origin country based on data, investigation and results of previous reports	1	1	1	0,33
Development of the project's portal linking all relevant stakeholders, providing access to all available information, actions undertaken, emerging opportunities, progress of activities, etc.	3	3	3	1
Design and development of the Pilot Structures (Immigrants Entrepreneurs' Reception Offices and Portal) offering offline and online Information, Consulting & Training services to the specified target groups of the project and operation of the portal offering online the same services in multilingual interfaces.	3	3	3	1
Awareness-raising to key stakeholders (e.g. ministers, secretaries general from regional authorities, mayors, prefects, civil servants, representatives from chambers of	3	3	2	0,89

Project's Group of Activities \ Project's Objectives	OBJECTIVE A	OBJECTIVE B	OBJECTIVE C	Appraisal Degree of the Project's Group of Activities to the Project's Objectives
commerce and industry, social partners, representatives from the EC DG Regional Policy and DG Enterprise, representatives from the CADSES Programme Management structures, etc.) through organization of conferences, publications, information brochures and packages and communication of the CADSES programme, the project's objectives, the development of strategic & operational regional plans and the existence and potentials/ possibilities of the Pilot Structures.				
Detailed Follow-up Strategy, containing proposals for specific and substantiated activities for the sustainability and further expansion of the project's results into other CADSES regions and the EU in general.	2	3	2	0,78
Public consultations for feedback on the regional strategic and operational plans and awareness raising of stakeholders (in each of the 5 EU regions concerned).	3	3	3	1
Relevance Degree of the Project's Objectives to the Project's Group of Activities	0,75	0,83	0,66	0,75

Given the methodology described in part above, the relativity degree of the Project's Group of Activities to the Project's Objectives is estimated to be 0.75, meaning that these activities "serve" the project's objectives by 75%.

It can thus be concluded, that, in terms of the activities that the IMMENSITY consortium envisaged and implemented in order to meet the project's objectives, the relevant degree is quite important. Especially the evaluation on the completion of the second objective of the project seems to be very important, while the remaining two objectives seem to present a lower degree of relativity with the actual activities that took place during the operation of the project. This specific methodology would be extremely useful if it were known both the results and the impacts of the project offering a holistic view for the relativity degree of what had been initially programmed and what was actually derived/observed.

5.6 EU VALUE ADDED

A national project dealing with the spatial impact of immigration would have a minimal impact on the aims and objectives of ESDP. Spatial planning is a key component for strengthening the European integration process and, as such, ESDP and CEMAT focus on the cross-border transnational and interregional cooperation for planning interventions & implementing actions. Besides, interventions for immigration could not be limited to one-two regions, since they would underestimate the global nature of the problem. The involvement of 5 EU regions, 1 AC (BG), 1 non MS (AL) and 1 branch of the International Organization for Migration in research, good practices, policy making and networking will produce added value that would be unfeasible if IMMENSITY was implemented only at national or even cross-border level. The transnational European added value is evident also in the work plan and division of roles among partners, exploiting properly their deep know-how, expertise and experience in each topic. The IMMENSITY consortium built its idea in the identified need for overcoming the gap that exists in the strategic approach for supporting immigrants in order to enhance their living standards and their life quality

In all participating countries studies on the needs and problems of immigrants and their cohesion were suggesting policies and actions to overcome barriers and bottlenecks. However, a transnational, concerted policy document, which adopts EU spatial development principles and guidelines focusing on social and economic cohesion, was lacking. It is, then, obvious the value added that this project attempted to carry out in the EU space, during its implementation

Two are the major elements that enhance the belief that this project through its activities added value that would otherwise have occurred in a much later and at a much lower scale, in the EU territory. These actions, which remain the most prominent ones of whole the project, are the development and operation of the Portal and the innovative Pilot Structure (5 structures one in each participating region). This project that would otherwise not be feasible without the funding from EU resources enhanced participating regions to find common solutions and identify best practice; develop a pilot structure and finally, formulate specific follow-up strategy for the sustainability and expandability of the project. All these facts verify the great added value that was created from the IMMENSITY project, although its clear and concrete results and long-term impacts are still not visible and explicit due to lack of the appropriate timeframe that needs to be passed after the project's completion.

The main output (in terms both of results produced as well as of resources required) of the IMMENSITY project are:

- » the creation and operation of the IMMENSITY portal, a virtual network that provides a series of integrated support services on the basis of existing support structures at national and transnational level, as this has already be mentioned;
- » the important, offered services from this pilot structure to the target groups justifying the necessity and appropriateness of implementing such an action with an undoubtedly added value;
- » the formulation of Strategic Plans and studies for the careful and long term return of immigrants in their origin countries and the enhancement of bilateral commerce.

These outputs fulfill with the most distinctive way, the objectives initially set by the IMMENSITY partnership and consequently justify why such a project was necessary and essential. Moreover, all other actions and initiatives undertaken in the framework of the project have to a greater or smaller extent contributed to achieving, in a greater and higher level, all the crucial added value for the EU territory that is necessary to justify the correctness and the appropriateness of such a project. It should, nevertheless be mentioned that the achievement of the results and impacts initially set by the project can not be fully measured and traced at this point as they continue to develop over a period of 12-36 months after the project's finalization. The results and future impacts of the project need to be monitored for a longer time period after the project's completion so as to formulate a clear view on the actual results and long-term impacts and conclude to the extent of the added value that this project offered to the EU territory.

5.7 SOCIO – ECONOMIC IMPACT

The present ex-post evaluation report had to measure, identify and evaluate the extent of the impact that the IMMENSITY project had in the participating regions in terms of their social and economic development. However, this fact is impracticable due to lack of appropriate time that is needed in order to measure and evaluate the actual results and impacts of a project like IMMENSITY that has just come to end. Considering this barrier, this part attempted to outline the main elements of the IMMENSITY project that verify the future results and impacts and more specifically how these can, in fact, have a positive impact in socio-economic life of the regions mentioned above.

Within CADSES area there is extended movement of economic immigrants which face major difficulties to enter the labour market in the destination countries and are driven to social exclusion. Furthermore, the immigration flow causes regional disparities and weakens the labour force and economy of the origin countries. IMMENSITY's consortium and area of intervention cover a wide part of the CADSES area which is a solid prove of the project's intention to bring together all areas concerned, so as to establish mutual understanding and cooperation. The valuable contribution of the project is the promotion of immigrant self employment in the participating regions, with the aim to develop their entrepreneurial potential that can be afterwards exploited in the origin countries when they will return at their homelands. This is translated into broad implementation of Spatial Development issues, such as boosting entrepreneurship and bilateral trade, throughout the CADSES area.

The project is planned to contribute to regional cohesion by promoting the social and economic inclusion of immigrants to countries of destination. Furthermore, it supports the social cohesion in the origin countries, by assisting the return of immigrants which will use their experience and skills so as to upgrade the socio-economic level of their homelands. The project is expected to boost employment and diminish the exclusion of the target groups and especially women from the labour markets by developing their entrepreneurship. The results from the background analysis of the immigrants and repatriates will serve to identify means and propose methods for a. the promotion of trade activities with the origin countries and b. their systematic and smooth rehabilitation to the society and economy of the origin countries after possible return. All actions are planned to foster entrepreneurship of the target groups and support the creation of new jobs and enterprises by providing favorable conditions to the immigrated labour force.

This also contributes to the improvement of social and economic welfare of all participating regions. The project considers issues regarding management of the mobility of labour force by improving its quality and producing important benefits for both destination and origin countries.

As per the gender issues and equal opportunities, which are important angles of IMMENSITY, the project is in line with the objectives of the European Strategy on Gender Equality as it promotes gender mainstreaming approaches during the inception and the implementation phases of the project. Particular emphasis is placed on the needs of immigrant women as entrepreneurs, upgrading their entrepreneurial skills and addressing other barriers that may encounter in their effort to start-up a business. Consequently the project develops entrepreneurial initiatives, training programs and support networks that are suitable for women beneficiaries. The project contributes also to the empowerment of disadvantaged people in terms of IT literacy, physical mobility difficulties, and economic deprivation. As such it will provide free IT training where needed, make off-line structures accessible for all, but also make the on-line interface of the Pilot Structure access-friendly for disadvantaged people on the basis of international standards & practices of the Information Society

Away from the clear and explicit economic added value that such a project can offer, it is inherent in the project's idea the reality of social dimension that such an initiative can incorporate in his operation. The social dimension of the project can obviously be identified and provide positive results and impacts in the participating regions, acting, probably, and as a role model for future projects that will target in areas of CADSES territory.

5.8 INNOVATION: THE PILOT STRUCTURES

The IMMENSITY project presents many Innovative Elements. It implemented innovative methods, provided improvements in the institutional settings and adopted Pilot Structures that served the purposes of the project. Some of the innovative elements are presented here below:

- » it focused on development and support of immigrants and repatriates placing emphasis on women. The actions concerned equally the origin and receiving countries, as in addition the entrepreneurship of immigrants, i.e. Plans for their Return;
- » new type of business relationships and collaboration, competitiveness, bilateral trade and penetration in new global markets
- » the creation of pilot structures (reception offices) in the regional authorities involved, an innovative as well since no similar ventures have been initiated yet in a transnational context;
- » the formulation of Plans for the Return of economic immigrants in the origin countries

The Pilot Structures (Immigrants Entrepreneurs' Reception Office) provide Information, Consulting & Training services to the specified target groups of the project. Additionally, within the Pilot Structure the operation of a portal with online services in multilingual interfaces. The Pilot Structures in the participating regions have form of a Reception Office, established in a relevant department of the Authority so as to foster entrepreneurship/self-employment of immigrants.

This institutional innovation ("Immigrant Entrepreneurs Reception Office") that operated in a pilot form during the lifespan of the project offering a series of offline and online services (mentoring, information, and training) to the target groups was an important added value element of the IMMENSITY project.

A Portal that was developed in the framework of the aforementioned Pilot Structure to offer online business support services i.e. information, consulting and training services assisted tremendously the operation of the Pilot Structure.

IMMENSITY achieved to compile integrated strategic & operational plans in all regions involved as a measure to address crucial socioeconomic issues faced by the immigrant &

repatriating communities. The establishment of physical pilot structures in the participating regions, charged with fostering entrepreneurship of the target groups constitutes an important innovation, which will contribute significantly to the improvement of institutional settings of the organizations concerned and will facilitate the procedures necessary for promoting entrepreneurship of immigrants. The actions of the project, such as the Pilot Structures, will serve as a model so as to transfer new methods and tools to any interested authority or public administration willing to tackle similar issues effectively. At the same time, they will favor networking among origin and destination countries via the services they will offer (e.g. matchmaking facility between organizations).

Part 6:

CONCLUSIONS

Part 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

As most projects would not have been carried out without funding from INTERREG III B CADSES Programme, the IMMENSITY project is still one of these cases, managing, although to reveal, with the most profound way, the importance and the need for continuation of the Programmes and Initiatives funding from EU, aiming at facing regional divergence and unbalanced development and achieving spatial development and social cohesion

IMMENSITY project, through this analysis, revealed its power and its strong rationale that although its actual results and long-term impacts are still waiting to be identified and explored. The IMMENSITY project can be characterized as a quite successful case story, mainly based on the overview of its achievements and outputs and the attainment of the set goals accomplished so far. The project's innovative idea of enhancing immigrants entrepreneurship and self employment through capacity building using tools and means of Information and Knowledge Society; through a Portal and assisted by Innovative Pilot Structures; proved to be very rational and effective. Critical factor for the success of this project was the IMMENSITY partnership's good cooperation and coordination which made the implementation of the project's activities and policies both feasible and successful.

Some important remarks regarding IMMENSITY are presented below:

- » The development and operation of a Pilot Structure in accordance with the formulation of specific studies regarding Strategy for the improvement of immigrants' living standards
- » In terms of management issues and actual outputs, the conclusion of this ex-post evaluation reveals a great attainment concerning what had been initially programmed and what was measured
- » Concerning the results and impacts, the assessment demonstrated some forecasts and assumptions only, mainly due to the fact that this report was conducted immediately after the finalization of the project. However, the tendency for achieving these, aforementioned, results and impacts is encouraging/positive
- » In terms of meeting the initially set objectives of the project through the group of activities that were implemented, the Relevance Appraisal Methodology that was used revealed a percentage of 75%, meaning that these group of activities that were finally adopted, "serve" the project's objectives by 75%.

- » The evaluation of the socio-economic impact and the EU added value that the project produced, was proved to be positive enough, concerning, again the fact, that in order to accomplish such an analysis is being required a time frame of approximately 12-36 months after the completion of the project.

- » The evaluation of the socio-economic impact and the EU added value that the project produced, was proved to be positive enough, concerning, again the fact, that in order to accomplish such an analysis is being required a specific time frame (namely 18-24 months after project's completion)

One of the most important aspects of the project was that it dealt not only with the social and economic inclusion of immigrants in the destination, but also with the improvement of living standards in the origin countries. Whereas most projects produce benefits and concern mainly the immigration flow in receiving communities, IMMENSITY proceeds furthermore by formulating concrete Plans for the Return of immigrants in their homelands and the re-establishment of their businesses. The returning immigrants will transfer the knowledge and business expertise they have gained in the destination countries and will continue the economic cooperation with the former destination countries, promoting, thus, socio-economic development to both destination and origin countries.