# Evaluating pilot actions

## Introduction

This paper gives a brief overview of the evaluation procedures and approach for JPI Oceans' pilot actions. It should be seen as an integrated part of the Implementation Plan (Iplan) for the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for JPI Oceans, and is intended to serve as an approach to ensure appropriate learning and assessment from the pilot actions. Hence, the evaluation approach taken includes a broader evaluation cycle and consists of building evaluation elements already into drafting proposals to the final evaluation of the actions.

Pilot actions are diverse, and may target quite different issues and objectives. Still, many issues are common across most if not all pilot actions. Hence, as will be evident in this paper, a set of generic questions may be envisaged, in addition to another set that is more specific to each pilot action. The paper outlines the basic elements of a procedure for evaluating pilot actions, with priority given to the evaluation of political, institutional or organizational issues associated with the success or failure of the action and its potential for up-scaling, as well as the evaluation of the outcomes or results.

## The nature and function of pilot actions in JPI Oceans

Pilot actions in the context of JPI Oceans are limited in time and scope. In the early stage of the JPI Oceans, pilot actions were useful initiatives, focusing on "low hanging fruit" to ensure momentum, and were therefore also initiated through a broad process. They were also used to test out new fit-for-purpose tools to exemplify that JPI Oceans explored new avenues beyond traditional calls for proposals as a means to implement programs. After the finalization of the SRIA and the Iplan, pilot actions have a more precise role in the eco-system of instruments and actions in JPI Oceans. They support the SRIA and the Iplan, and are often derived from these, and a main function is to assess the viability and relevance for a possible normal or up-scaled action for the JPI Oceans.

This means that the key purpose of pilot actions is to explore potential avenues for JPI Oceans' future directions. They are typically flexible in their implementation and may be seen as

* Tools to experiment new initiatives
* Small scale test projects launched to explore the viability of certain possible priorities
* Key mechanisms for learning and development
* Possible forerunners of up-scaled activities

## The procedure

### Drafting the proposal

The evaluation cycle starts off with the design of the pilot action. For the purpose of implementation as well as evaluation, it is of great importance that the pilot action in this stage is "dressed up for evaluation" implying that the evaluation has to be embedded from the design phase.

***Pilot action proposal:*** With the agreed initial support for the pilot action, a detailed proposal will be developed. The proposal should consist of:

* Background/rationale for the pilot action
* Clearly stated general goals, including reference to overlaps, inefficiencies and gaps to be addressed
* An elaborated hierarchy of objectives and targets/indicators of what is to be achieved with the pilot action. This is particularly important as a basis for a precise evaluation of outcomes and outputs
* A description of the approach to be taken and means of implementing the action, including specific sub-projects or activities
* An overview of deliverables and a timetable with key milestones
* An initial risk assessment outlining potential bottlenecks or hindrances, like political, institutional, financial or other factors
* A description of the organization supporting the action, including leadership, participation, responsibilities, and resources

***Fact sheet:*** The proposal will take the form of a fact sheet common for all pilot actions to ensure a joint framework that is easy to evaluate (see template in annex).

### Evaluation and selection of proposals

Selecting pilot actions will follow the pre-defined criteria and be decided by the Management board. The key areas to assess are:

* Basic requirements and feasibility
* Relevance and impact
* Added value for JPI Oceans

The agreed criteria for selecting pilot actions are:

* **Basic requirements & feasibility** 
  + The pilot action addresses cross-cutting issues in line with the goals and objectives of JPI Oceans, as expressed in the Vision document.
  + The pilot action will have a quick start, taking into account existing capacities and resources.
  + The pilot action requires the support of at least 4 countries represented in JPI Oceans.
  + The pilot action has a committed leader[[1]](#footnote-1).
* **Relevance & impact**
  + The pilot action explores and utilizes synergies and complementarities between countries and/or capacities and/or scientific fields and/or science-industry-society to reach a common goal.
  + The pilot action avoids unnecessary duplication of efforts by enhancing cooperation and/or coordination.
  + The pilot action can potentially produce tangible outcomes within a time frame of 1-3 years.
* **Added value for JPI oceans**
  + The pilot action tests modes of collaboration among countries for aligning national research programs, and for addressing the JPI-specific societal challenges in dialogue with representation of stakeholders (science, industry and policy) thereby contributing to an operational model for joint programming.
  + The pilot action strengthens structures or processes that facilitate future collaboration of partners in JPI Oceans.

### Evaluation

After selecting pilot actions according to the selection and decision procedures laid down by the Management Board, the action is implemented. Depending on the size and timeline of the action, as well as possible urgent issues, the governing structure of the action should decide on the following alternatives, were the latter is mandatory:

* A mid-term review or monitoring to follow up the implementation and ensure that necessary corrections and change of direction of the action are taken. This assessment should be flexible, small scale and based on a selection of the questions developed for the evaluation as such (see annex), as well as preliminary assessments of the output/outcome indicators stated in the goal hierarchy.
* A final evaluation consisting of two parts:
* A broader assessment of the political and institutional environment of the pilot action using the enclosed generic questionnaire as a guideline. The intention of this is to identify critical issues of a political or institutional/organizational nature that represent challenges for the implementation of the action and/or its upscaling to a joint JPI Oceans action. The responsibility for this lies with the leadership of the pilot action or the respective Management Board representative in question. This means that this part of the evaluation needs to relate the outcomes to the very objectives of JPI Oceans as a platform for aligning European efforts and creating synergies.
  + An output/outcome evaluation with a view to report on the specific indicators or targets specified in the proposal. These are typically scientific or technological in nature.

The evaluation will serve as a decision-making tool feeding key lessons back into the strategic process of the JPI Oceans. Hence, the final evaluation should be in the form of a simple SWOT-analysis bringing the elements of the evaluation together in a coherent view on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the action.

## Specific roles in the evaluation process

The evaluation and its various steps need to be supported by a simple organizational solution that may consist of the following:

* + The lead country has the main responsibility for drafting the proposal with the fact sheet according to the guidelines above, to ensure that subsequent evaluation activities can be easily conducted. The lead country is also responsible for the evaluation as a whole, in particular assessing the need for a mid-term review and the final evaluation.
  + Project managers are responsible for drafting the report(s) on the tangible results, outputs and outcomes of specific activities of the pilot actions, for example scientific and technological results.
  + The secretariat will be involved with a person allocated to a specific pilot action to ensure learning, feed input to the governance bodies and function as an organizational "memory" for the JPI Oceans as a whole. The secretariat will provide support, quality control and inputs to the project management/lead country.

## An expanded set of selection criteria for pilot actions

Based on the above, a number of criteria for selecting and evaluating pilot actions have been developed. As many of the selection criteria also represent evaluation crieria, the table below highlights both. It should also be noted that evaluating the pilot actions needs to be based on the very objectives that are formulated for each one. The yes/no in the evaluation column means that this criteria is relevent/useful for evalution in terms of factual outcomes/results.

Table 6. Selection and evaluation crieria for pilot actions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *General eligibility* | | *Selection* | *Evaluation* |
| 1 | May the pilot action cause a prejudice to any of the partners in JPI Oceans? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 2 | Does the pilot action clearly address cross-cutting issues between the marine environment, climate change and the maritime economy, relevant for JPI Ocean (as described in the vision document)? Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *NO* |
| 3 | Does the pilot action fit the goals and objectives of JPI Oceans?  Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *YES* |
| *Relevance* | | |  |
| 4 | Does the pilot action test procedures, instruments and ways of co-operation, that may become part of standard tools and instruments of JPI Oceans?  Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *NO* |
| 5 | Does the pilot action have a clear European dimension in terms of its objectives? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 6 | How many countries have expressed their interest in participating in the pilot action? | *give #* | *YES* |
| 7 | Does the pilot action reflect societal, scientific and/or economic needs, calling for an integrative, coordinated approach? Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *NO* |
| *Added value* | | |  |
| 8 | Does the pilot action address an issue that clearly profits from a multi-national approach, as compared to national actions? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 9 | Does the pilot action contribute to avoiding duplication at the national, and creating critical mass at the European level? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 10 | Does the pilot action contribute to reducing fragmentation on a European level? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 11 | Does the pilot action explore and/or utilize supranational synergies and complementarities? Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *YES* |
| 12 | Why should this action be implemented by JPI Oceans as opposed to another national or international body? | *explain* | *NO* |
| *Impact* | | |  |
| 13 | Does the pilot action impact on societal, economic, scientific, technological and/or political drivers of importance to the goals and objectives of JPI Oceans? Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *NO* |
| 14 | Does the pilot action establish structures or processes that facilitate future collaboration of partners in JPI Oceans? Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *YES* |
| 15 | Can the pilot action be conducted with the current capacities and resources of the interested countries? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 16 | Can the pilot action be realized within a realistic time frame? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 17 | Does the pilot action overlap with or duplicate ongoing initiative at the European level? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| *Other issues* | | |  |
| 18 | Does the pilot action require a substantial amount of seed money? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 19 | Is it feasible to implement the pilot action with in-kind contributions? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 20 | Will the pilot action deliver tangible outcomes? Which ones in particular? | *explain* | *YES* |
| 21 | Will the pilot action deliver outcomes on a relatively short term (< 2 years)? | *YES/NO* | *YES* |
| 22 | Will the pilot action deliver outcomes aimed at (1) providing policy advise, (2) scientific progress, (3) societal relevance, (4) economic development | *Yes/NO* | *YES* |

## Template for fact sheet for pilot actions proposals

**JPI Oceans actions - factsheet**

**Title joint action:   
SRIA strategic area:   
Lead country:   
Responsible MB member:   
Supporting countries:   
Required resources:**

Background – State of play

*What is the background of the action and what is the current state of play (including needs and gaps) with regards to the chosen topic of the action.*

Rationale

*Please give a short rationale (including which failures[[2]](#footnote-2) it addresses) and description of the objectives of the action. Please explain why and in what way does the action require cross-border coordination and cooperation? Why should this action be implemented by JPI Oceans instead of another national or international body?*

expected Impact

Please describe the impact according to the SMART approach with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time based indicators for evaluation during and at the end of the action.

**Science**

*Please indicate the potential scientific output and impact of the action.*

**Innovation**

*Please indicate the potential impact with regards to innovation.*

**Science-Policy**

*Will this action feed into a specific policy mechanism? Please indicate policy relevant impacts.*

**Marine Research Infrastructures & data**

*Please indicate the potential impact with regards to access and coordination of infrastructures and data.*

**Human Capacities**

*Will this action build new and/or increase existing human capacities?*

related initiatives

*Please list related, ongoing initiatives, projects and programmes relevant to the proposed action. Which links have been or will be established with related initiatives and/or external entities (organizations, institutions etc.)? Please clarify their role and commitment with respect to the action.*

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION Timeframe

*Please indicate the next steps the lead country or potential other partners will take, with a short timeline until and beyond the start of the action, including a justification of the feasibility.*

Risks

*Please indicate what kind of risks would be there in the further development of the activity: potential overlaps, lack of involvement of key stakeholders, time constraints, etc.?*

Implementation options – tools

*Please indicate which tools are planned to be used and which existing and/or additional resources (funds, infrastructure, human capital etc.) the action requires.*

* **Research and innovation:**  *joint calls, joint public procurement, engaging structural funds;*
* **Connectivity:** *research alliances, knowledge hubs, networks of people, network of bilateral agreements, mutual opening of programs, interaction with existing ERA-nets or BONUS,**establishment of ERA-Net Cofund;*
* **Capacity building:** *training, mobility of human resources, accessing/sharing marine infrastructures, procedures/agreements for transnational access and sharing of infrastructures, access to data;*
* **Supporting actions:** *feasibility study, impact assessments, workshops, foresight, emergencies, emerging issues****.***

## Baseline questionnaire/interview guideline

**Initiation and planning**

1. Were the goals/objectives of the pilot action proposal sufficiently clearly stated?
2. If not, how would you state them?
3. Were there any specific problems in the planning process?
4. Did the pilot action change course during the project, and if so, why?
5. For MB member: When the ideas were presented in the JPI Management Board (MB), what were the aspects that convinced you / your country to participate in the pilot action?
6. Did you at that time have a clear role and model of participation in mind for your country?
7. Was national participation by institutes or others initiated already before the MB decision?

**Partnership, management, funding and organisation**

1. What actions were taken following support of the Pilot Action in the MB:
   * Making contact with researches to participate in the pilot action
   * Created financial opportunities for participating
   * Organising a project team to participate
   * Independent review
   * Others
2. Who/which institutions became involved in your country?
3. Were all relevant partners nationally able to participate? If not, why?
4. What resources were made available for the action (cash or in kind)?
5. If yes, were these appropriate?
6. Were there any specific coordination measures necessary nationally?
7. How would you assess the lead country's leadership of the pilot action?
8. Are there specific recommendations for this role?
9. How effective is the role and contribution from the lead officer/JPI Oceans secretariat?
10. How should this role be developed to support the pilot action?

**Perceived impacts and added value**

1. Has the pilot action generated specific cost effectiveness or savings?
2. Which synergies on European level have been or can be achieved?
3. Does the pilot action address and contribute to solving existing duplication of efforts?
4. What kind of hurdles have been experienced so far in the process?
5. Which particular bottlenecks or problems have been experienced that reduce the potential for up-scaling to a normal joint action?
6. Was the early assessment of feasibility appropriate?
7. Could the activities of the pilot action have been better run outside the JPI Oceans? If yes, why?
8. How can JPI Oceans facilitate the implementation and/or upscaling of the action?
9. Which future actions/activities are needed to succeed with the overall intention of the pilot action?

1. *i.e., a member country of JPI Oceans* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Apart from scientific or innovation gaps and infrastructure, science-policy or human capacity needs, it could also to some extent address institutional, networking or market failures or specific coordination weaknesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)