

ERA-LEARN 2020 Framework of impact assessment of P2P networks

Introduction

The ERA-LEARN 2020 project dedicates a specific work-package (WP3) to monitoring and impact assessment, which aims to implement a more integrated and systematic framework for monitoring and assessing the impact of public-to-public (P2P) networks and associated co-funded projects. ***The aim is to understand how P2Ps are to be evaluated as well as the value and usefulness of impact assessment of P2Ps including ERA-NETs, ERA-NET Cofund, JPIs and Article 185 initiatives.***

This report is a first attempt to create a common framework for impact assessment of P2Ps. Although the term 'impact assessment' is used to address the impacts i.e. long-term effects and less so the outputs and outcomes of an activity/intervention, in this report 'impact assessment' is seen in the wider sense addressing also evaluation of an intervention's effectiveness, efficiency, etc. as well as its outputs and outcomes. Thus the terms 'evaluation' and 'impact assessment' are used interchangeably.

The report draws upon

- a broad literature review on the state-of-the-art practices in evaluation and impact assessment of research programmes, as well as existing guide books for impact assessment of programmes, initiatives, and research networks;
- the work carried out already by certain P2Ps that have developed their evaluation frameworks and already carried out evaluation/assessment exercises; and
- the results of the discussions during the ERA-LEARN 2020 workshop on evaluation of P2Ps that was carried out in Brussels, 18th May 2016.

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1. Special features of P2Ps

Public-to-Public partnerships (P2Ps) involve ERA-NET, or ERA-NET Plus or ERA-NET Cofund Actions, Art 185 Initiatives and Joint Programming Initiatives. They are partnerships among public agencies and/or ministries responsible for research and innovation policies and/or programmes across different countries with the overall aim to pool resources and capacities in pursuing jointly agreed targets for research and innovation.

Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) are partnerships formed by interested Member States (at the highest political level, i.e. Ministries) with the purpose of jointly implementing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), which is agreed among Member States to address major societal challenges. Member States commit to JPIs on a variable geometry basis.

Article 185 Initiatives engage interested Member States in a collaborative effort to implement a jointly developed research programme that is co-funded by national/regional budgets/programmes as well as the European Commission. The participating EU Member States integrate (in terms of scientific, managerial and financial aspects) rather than simply coordinate their research efforts by defining and committing themselves to this joint research programme.

The ERA-NET scheme aims at developing and strengthening the coordination of national and regional research programmes through the collaboration of national and regional authorities, represented by so-called 'programme owners' and/or 'programme managers'. ERA-NET actions have had different roles during the Framework Programmes: 'ERA-NET actions' in FP6 provided support to coordinate national/regional activities by developing joint calls for trans-national proposals. 'ERA-NET Plus actions' in FP7 provided - in a limited number of cases with high European added value - additional EU financial support to top-up the research funding of a single joint call for proposals between national and/or regional programmes. The ERA-NET Cofund instrument under Horizon 2020 merges the former ERA-NET and ERA-NET Plus into a single instrument with the central and compulsory element of implementing one substantial call with top-up funding from the Commission but also allowing for additional activities.

Despite the differences in technicalities and level of reference (ministry level, agency level, etc.) of the three different types of P2Ps, they are all structures that are formed for a specific time, and might be slightly or significantly changed over time in terms of membership and thus capacities and committed resources. In other words, they are networks of agencies and/or ministries that join forces to pursue commonly agreed targets. *A network is a decentralized member-driven platform of relationships that evolves its capabilities and underlying structure of connectivity.*¹

¹ Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation. 2014. Part 1 of a Guide to Network Evaluation Framing Paper: The State of Network Evaluation, July 2014.

As networks

- they have numerous players, some of whom may leave after a given period of time (e.g. after a Cofund Action ends) while others may join in when a follow-up action is planned;
- not all members need to join and commit resources to realise the planned, joint activities; thus there are diverse types and level of membership and engagement;
- their success depends on the degree to which the network establishes connections among its members building trust, and long-term commitment.

When evaluating a network and in order to manage expectations²

- we need to understand how decisions and activities occur in such a diffused decision-making model,
- we need to recognise that networks evolve through stages of development and that their shape and structure are important influences on their development,
- we need to acknowledge that it takes time to organize networks effectively and show results - however, it is possible to see what progress is being made,
- we need to consider that networks have a “chain of impact” that includes the network’s impact on its members, the members’ impacts on their local environments, and the members’ combined impact on their broader environment. Evaluations designed to examine impact must understand the relationship between these three and be clear about where their focus lies.

2. Why is evaluation/impact assessment of P2Ps useful?

Evaluation/impact assessment of policy measures is important as it generates data and information that can be used for accountability and control purposes.

Evaluations can be conducted before, during or after the intervention is implemented. The ex-ante evaluation brings together evidence and arguments concerning the likely consequences of the intervention’s activities and tests the assumptions underlying the design of the intervention and its anticipated results and outcomes against the rationale for its creation. Ex-ante evaluation provides a valuable input to later – real-time and ex post – evaluations. It should create a knowledge base (a “virtual benchmark”) against which these evaluations can be undertaken.

Interim’ or ‘intermediate’ evaluations are conducted at some point during the implementation of a programme/intervention, at a point where some early results should be apparent. In general, early interim evaluations can be used to provide management feedback on the uptake and administration of the intervention, whilst later interim evaluations may focus more on the initial outcomes from the various activities it supports. This type of evaluation can inform the implementation of later stages of the programme/intervention, the selection of activities and sub-activities, and so on. It can play an important political role in providing legitimacy for ongoing long-term funding. It can provide early warnings and timely

² Adjusted from Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation. 2014. Part 1 of a Guide to Network Evaluation Framing Paper: The State of Network Evaluation, July 2014.

information that can alert and inform programme managers of the need for action, for example where participants are experiencing difficulties, indicate where future underperformance might be expected, illuminate unexpected consequences of activities, identify where there are shortcomings in communication or challenges to morale, and so on.

In the ex post mode, evaluation information is produced on the achievement of objectives of the measure. This kind of information provides the policy-maker with an assessment of a programme's achievements compared to its objectives. It also helps policy-makers to decide when and if to act on their programmes (e.g. to continue, stop, extend, modify, etc.) or help them to test their initial assumption about the failure or problem that the programme is to remedy. Thus, the primary use of evaluations in this case is to provide policy feedback. In addition, it helps policy makers to revisit the rationale for the establishment of the programme and to assess its continued relevance in response to changes in the external context.

At the same time, evaluations produce information on the effectiveness of design, management and implementation of the measure and the evaluation or assessment exercise itself. In this case, evaluation is used as a management tool and by using this information the programme management can learn lessons as to how to improve their policy design and management skills and procedures. This is the use of evaluation for operational learning purposes.

Another major use of evaluation is to inform a system impact approach. This is when the information produced is about the broader impacts of the measure, i.e. insights as to how the programme in question complements a range of other programmes; how it fits into the broader research and innovation system at national or international level; how it affects actors other than its beneficiaries and how it creates wider social, environmental, economic and technological impacts.³

All these uses of evaluation are relevant for P2P networks as they can be paralleled to policy measures supporting certain research and innovation activities. Evaluations can produce information about the effectiveness of a network activity (e.g. research grants, summer schools, training, etc.). This can support policy-decisions in relation to the continuation of the specific activity. Evaluations can also produce information on the efficiency of management of certain activities (e.g. joint calls, exchange schemes, etc.). This information is relevant for improving and even harmonising the operational procedures of participating agencies/ministries in the P2P examined.

P2Ps produce impacts at various levels: national, cross-national, or even international levels. They may also affect a diverse set of actors: researchers and organisations at the national level that are direct beneficiaries of the P2P networks' activities, as well as funding / management agencies that are P2Ps partners. They may also bring changes to national/regional research and innovation systems (including policy actors, and institutions). Another way of looking at the various levels where P2P impacts can occur is via the policy level, the research level, and the societal level (as the example of JPND shows). As such they produce systemic impacts and thus it is highly relevant to examine how the P2P network fits into the broader research and innovation system at national or international level and how it affects actors other than its beneficiaries and creates wider types of impacts.

³ The uses of evaluation were adjusted from Miles and Cunningham, 2006.

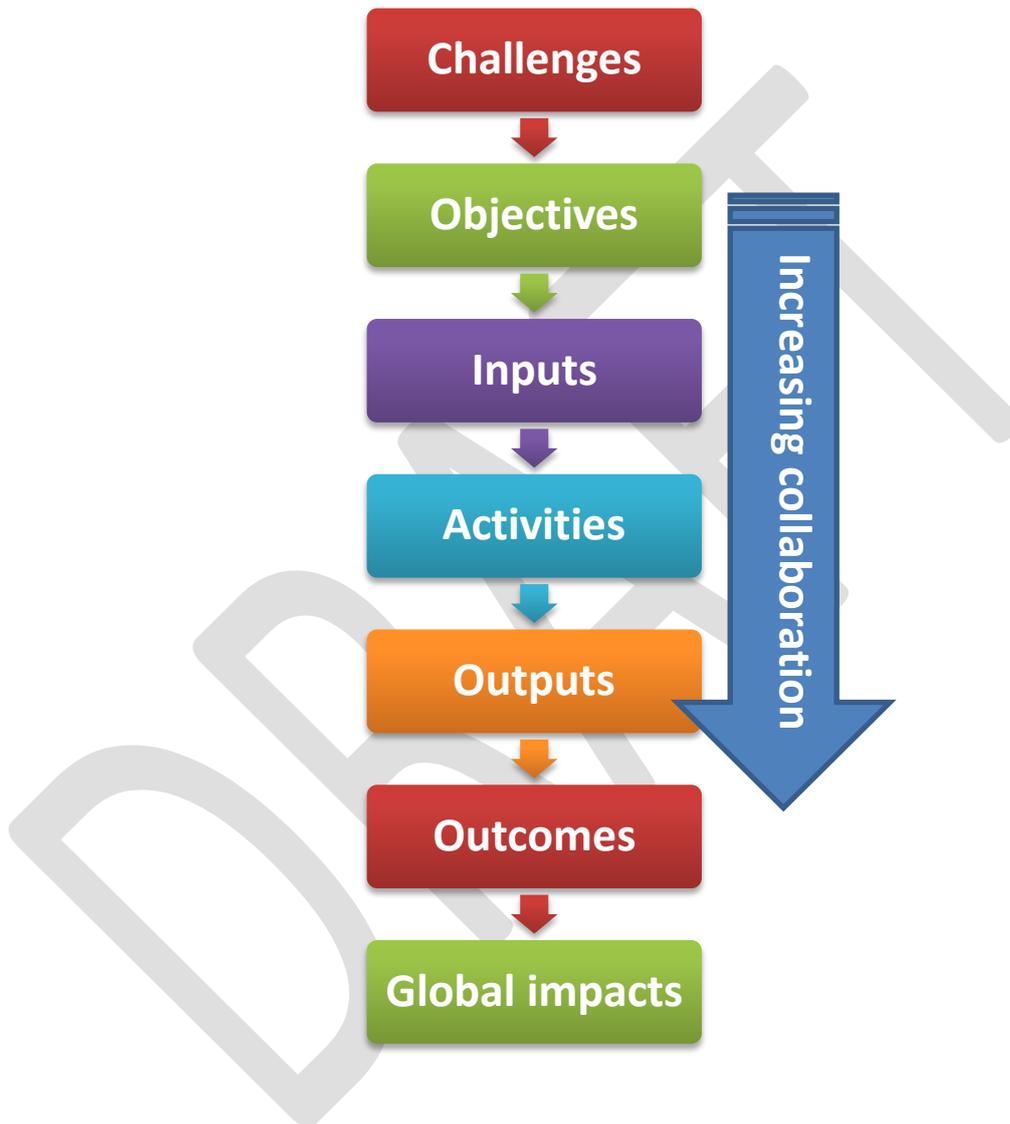
There are certain factors that affect the degree to which an evaluation/impact assessment study is useful:

- the clearer and more verifiable the objectives of a programme, the more useful its evaluation;
- the more the policy-makers are informed, the more useful the evaluation;
- when policy-makers and/or programme managers are more engaged during the course of an evaluation, the more useful evaluations become
- the greater extent to which wider stakeholders are involved in the evaluation, the more useful evaluations are and vice versa.
- Dissemination of the results widens the usefulness of an evaluation - utilisation and dissemination plans should be part of the evaluation design.

Notwithstanding, one needs to bear in mind that evaluation results are only one input to policy-making which is essentially a complex political process and depends on many other factors. (CIA4OPM, 2011)

3. Basic elements of an Impact Assessment Framework of P2Ps

When evaluating or assessing the impact of a P2P we first need to clearly identify the following.



In the following sections each of the framework components is presented in detail and discussed in the context of P2Ps.

a. The Challenges or problems or needs targeted by a P2P

The **challenge or problems or needs** that the P2P tries to deal with may be societal challenges that the Member States agree that are important to find solutions for based on research and innovation. Yet, they may also refer to other types of issues like increasing industrial competitiveness in certain sectors.

For instance, the Joint Programming Initiative JPND wishes to deal with the following challenges:

- The ageing of the European population
- The number of European citizens suffering from neurodegenerative diseases
- The rising costs of healthcare
- The debilitating and largely untreatable character of disorders that are linked with age
- A need to improve understanding of neurodegenerative diseases and to provide new approaches for prevention, diagnoses and treatment
- A need to effectively provide healthcare, social care and support to optimise quality of life at all stages of the illness

Then there is the assumption that an effective response to these challenges calls for certain improvements in relation to policy:

- A more coordinated and harmonised approach for research efforts
- Reduction of unnecessary duplication and fragmentation of research activities
- A more holistic, multi-factoral and multi-disciplinary research approach

In relation to the specific scientific area addressed are the following requirements:

- Strengthening the linkages between basic, healthcare and clinical research
- Stimulating the interaction between different disease factors and research disciplines
- Development of a longitudinal approach in research

This line of argumentation forms the rationale for the existence and design of JPND.

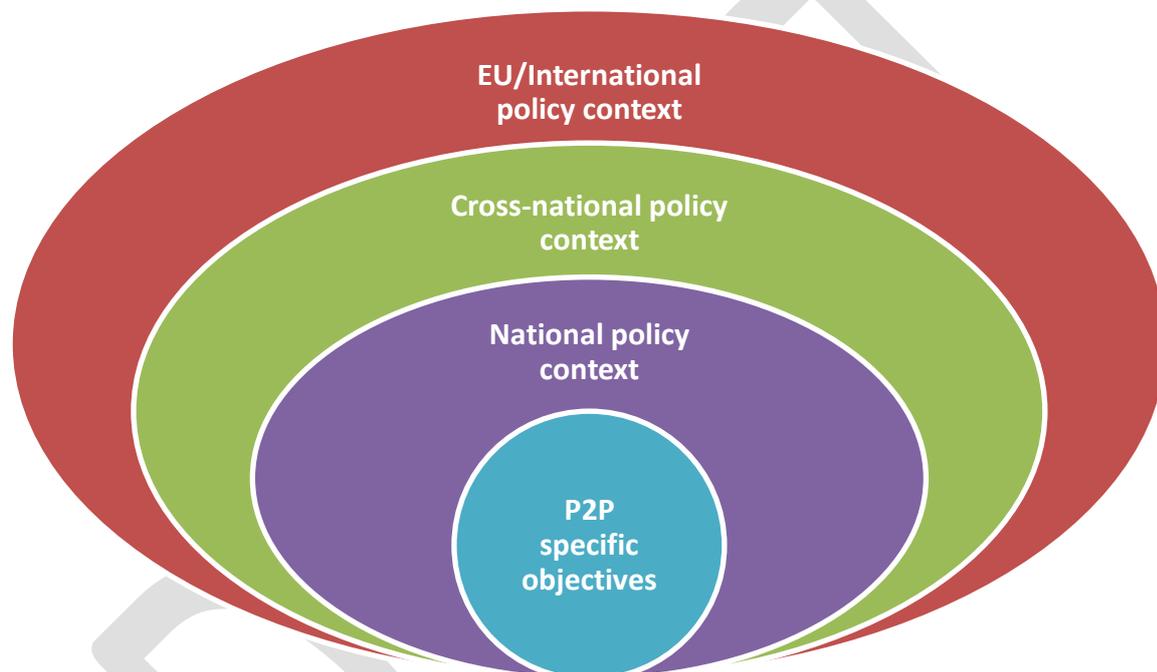
Source: Abida Durrani 2016 JPND Framework for JPND monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment. Presentation at the ERA-LEARN Workshop 18 May 2016, ZonMw.⁴

⁴ <https://www.era-learn.eu/events/era-learn-2020-workshop-on-evaluation-and-impact-assessment-of-p2ps>

b. The Objectives of P2Ps

The **objectives** a P2P was designed to achieve – these objectives are usually implied under a broader rationale for taking action as the example of JPND shows above. As the P2P is not isolated of the wider policy context at both national and European level (if not international), and in most cases it aims to contribute to achieving wider policy aims, its objectives need to be placed as part of an objectives’ hierarchy considering the broader policy context surrounding the intervention.

Figure 1: Positioning a P2P within the wider policy contexts



Naturally, not all policy contexts need to be addressed in an objectives’ hierarchy unless they are directly relevant to the nature and content of the P2P. The objectives’ hierarchy would then consist of the following types of objectives.

Definitions

Operational objectives provide a basis for assessing a P2P in relation to its outputs. The latter can be defined as what is directly produced / supplied through the activities and actions carried out during the implementation process.

Specific objectives provide a basis for assessing a P2P in relation to the short-term results that occur at the level of direct beneficiaries/recipients of assistance.

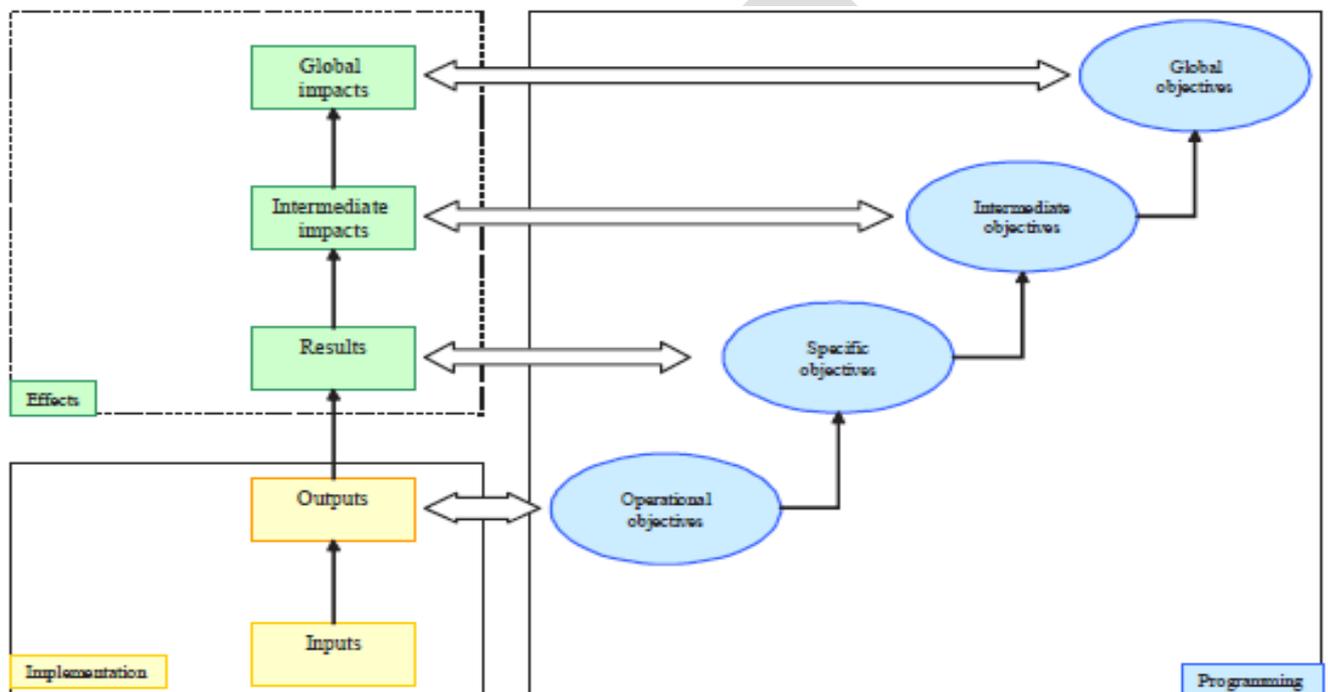
Intermediate objectives provide a basis for assessing a P2P in relation to its short to medium-term effects (or intermediate impacts) on both the direct and indirect beneficiaries/recipients of assistance.

Global objectives provide a basis for assessing a P2P in relation to longer term and more diffuse effects (or global impacts).⁵

Source: Adjusted from European Commission 2004

The correspondence of the objectives to the outputs, outcomes, and incomes can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 2: Correspondence of effects (outputs, outcomes/results and impacts) with objectives



Source: European Commission, 2004.

As an example the objectives hierarchy of the EMRP/EMPIR Art 185 Initiative is shown below. The EMRP/EMPIR’s specific objectives are reflecting the overall objectives of the whole intervention, i.e. the EMRP/EMPIR programme, while the operational objectives reflect the outputs of each activity planned and the global objectives are those of the wider policy within which EMRP/EMPIR is placed, i.e. H2020 and the ERA objectives.

⁵ Outputs, outcomes and impacts are further discussed in the relevant section below.

Figure 3: EMRP/EMPIR Objectives Hierarchy



Source: Paula Knee, 2016, Article 185 Impact Assessment EMRP /EMPIR. Presentation at the ERA-LEARN 2020 Workshop on evaluation and impact assessment of P2Ps, Brussels 18 May 2016⁶.

Another example of objectives’ hierarchy comes from the JPND case where the objectives are not grouped in terms of specificity and timing but in terms of their relation to policy, science and society. These objectives can also be translated into more specific, operational intermediate and global objectives.

Table 1: Translating JPND objectives into an Objectives’ Hierarchy

<i>Policy-related objectives</i>	<i>Type of objective</i>
Identification of common goals that would benefit from joint actions	Short-term, specific/operational
Alignment of national research programmes	Longer-term
Creation of critical mass of research capacity	Medium-term, intermediate
Implementation of experience into evidence-based policies and best practices	Longer-term, global
<i>Science-related objectives</i>	
SRA-related objectives	Short-, medium-, longer-term
Stimulation of education and training of research professionals	Medium-term, intermediate
<i>Society-related objectives</i>	
Destigmatisation of patients	Medium-term, intermediate
Raising awareness about the importance of neurodegenerative research	Short-term, specific/operational

⁶ <https://www.era-learn.eu/events/era-learn-2020-workshop-on-evaluation-and-impact-assessment-of-p2ps>

c. The inputs of P2Ps

Inputs are the means used to support activities and action and to produce outputs. Inputs include budgetary costs (financial, administrative and human resources), but also costs for the beneficiaries or target population (co-financing, compliance costs stemming from administrative burden) and costs for third parties (Member States, intermediary organisations, etc.). Inputs need to be documented and monitored as one of the main evaluation issues that is usually examined is efficiency, i.e. the extent to which the desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost.

At the same time, the management and governance structures, and processes governing the operation of the P2P, i.e. how the P2P is set to operate may also be regarded as inputs. These elements are of major importance when assessing another evaluation issue, that of network health and connectivity.⁷

d. The P2P activities

The **activities** through the implementation of which we expect the desired impacts to occur and the set objectives to be achieved. P2Ps broadly aim at the coordination of national/regional research and innovation activities and the collaboration between national/regional funding organisations. Apart from implementing transnational calls there is a range of other possible joint activities that have already been implemented by P2P networks⁸.

- Implementing transnational calls
- Additional joint calls
- Mapping national/trans-national activities
- Foresight and common vision
- Strategic Research Agenda / Implementation Plan
- Knowledge sharing amongst researchers
- Mobility and training of researchers / activities promoting early career scientists and young researchers
- Research infrastructures
- Stakeholder involvement
- Dissemination / Up-Take of research results
- Widening participation (activities related to extending cooperation with less active EU countries)
- Internationalisation (activities related to extending cooperation to third / non-EU countries)
- Monitoring and evaluation/assessment activities both in relation to the network itself or the co-funded projects
- Other activities that support the alignment of national programmes
- Other joint activities

⁷ Evaluation issues are presented in detail in section 4 below.

⁸ Each of these is further described in <https://www.era-learn.eu/joint-activities>.

e. Outputs, outcomes and impacts of P2Ps

The activities supported by the inputs invested lead to certain outputs; these are usually tangible **outputs** such as projects supported under joint calls, joint strategy documents stemming from strategy building activities, training modules of students/researchers trained, databases with mapped national/regional programmes, new partners from different Member States brought together, etc.

The activities carried out cause interactions among individuals, and organisations, blending of minds, creation of links, etc. This does not stop with the production of the agreed outputs. In fact, delivery of outputs reinforces the relations and interactions among the partners or beneficiaries of a P2P; thus it increases collaboration. The growing collaboration among the P2P partners as well as the engagement of beneficiaries leads to **medium term impacts (or otherwise outcomes)** on the P2P target group(s). These impacts may be directly associated with the outputs such as improved skills and capacity building from training activities, research results from the projects supported, new collaborations among P2P beneficiaries, etc. They can however include impacts that are not directly associated with the outputs produced but have more to do with the interactions and increasing collaboration among P2P partners and beneficiaries, i.e. process impacts, for instance increased trust and improved collaboration among partners, increased awareness of a policy area at national or cross-national level, etc.

The emergence of short to medium-term impacts may be strengthened even further by a favourable wider context. They can translate, either intentionally or even unintentionally, to long-term impacts on target groups as well as society and economy at large. These are called **global impacts**. Given that it takes time for such type of impacts to occur, attribution of these to the specific policy intervention is rather difficult. In other words, the more time passes from the completion of the intervention the less it is possible to attribute any effects to the specific intervention.

Comparing the three types, outputs are items directly produced by certain activities (e.g. workshop reports, SRAs, databases of programmes, etc.) and they are produced within the short-term. Intermediate impacts are rather medium-term and may refer to both direct and indirect beneficiaries while global impacts are longer-term and refer to the wider environment surrounding the policy intervention.

Adding to this, there are different types of impacts depending on their content such as scientific impacts, innovation-related, societal, cultural, environmental, etc. While these impacts come from the conduct of research i.e. at the project level of P2Ps, there are others that relate to the networking element of a P2P. These refer to connectivity impacts of P2P members, structural impacts, etc. as shown below.

i. Impacts at project level of a P2P⁹

Science impacts: research results have an effect on the subsequent progress and contribution to the body of knowledge. They affect the formation and development of disciplines as well as training and can also affect the development of a research field itself, generating interdisciplinary and international projects.

Innovation impacts: product, process and service innovations as well as know-how partly result from research activities. There are few indicators for assessing this dimension, other than patents, which have generated some debate regarding their utility.

Economic impacts: these refer to the impact on an organisation's budgetary situation, operating costs, revenues, profits, the sale price of products; on the sources of finance, investments and production activities; and on the development of new markets. At the aggregate level, they can also refer to economic returns, either through growth or increased productivity, of a given geographical unit.

Cultural impacts: these relate to an individual's knowledge and understanding of ideas and reality, as well as intellectual and practical skills, attitudes, interests, values and beliefs.

Societal impacts: research affects the welfare, behaviour, practices and activities of people and groups, including their well-being and quality of life.

Policy impacts: research influences how policy makers and policies act. It can provide evidence that influences policy decisions and can enhance citizens' participation in scientific and technological decisions.

Organisational impacts: these refer to the effects on the activities of institutions and organisations: planning, organisation of work, administration, human resources, etc.

Health impacts: these relate to impacts on public health, e.g. life expectancy, prevention of illnesses, quality of life, and the health-care system.

Environmental impacts: these concern management of the environment, notably natural resources and environmental pollution, as well as the impacts of research on climate and meteorology.

Symbolic impacts: these are the gains in areas such as credibility due to undertaking R&D or linked to universities or research institutions that offer gains in terms of potential clients, etc.

Training impacts: these are impacts of research on curricula, pedagogical tools, qualifications, entry into the workforce, etc.

⁹ Source: adjusted from CIA4OPM, 2011

ii. Impacts at P2P network level¹⁰

Enduring connectivity relates to the on-going communication between the relevant actors and to the follow on collaborations that continue after the initial activity has been completed. This is connectivity that lasts beyond the first funded relationship. This type of impact refers to both P2P member organisations as well as their final beneficiaries. Retained collaboration through new projects or networks can be one example.

Capacity building refers to the development/improvement of capabilities and skills in the P2P member organisations. The areas of skill development may include international programme/programme management, strategic thinking, international collaboration, international team coordination, etc.

Attitudinal/cultural change relates to knowledge exchange and includes elements such as improved reciprocal understanding and willingness to work together among P2P current and potential partners. It may also refer to changes in research organisation such as adopting multidisciplinary approaches in research.

Conceptual impact refers to the impact on the knowledge, understanding and attitudes of policy-makers. In this category of impact we identify examples of changed thinking amongst policy makers, influences on policy issues and increased awareness in the policy world due to participation in a P2P. This type of impact at P2P network level can be paralleled to the policy impacts that may result from P2P funded projects. Policy impacts can influence national as well as European or international policies or strategies.

Structural impacts relate to changes in institutions and structures in the national or European research landscape due to changed thinking amongst policy makers and influences on policy issues stemming from the acquired knowledge from participating in a P2P. The set-up of specific formal or informal structures in order to improve coordination at national level is an example of this type.

Economic and symbolic impacts may also occur at the network level referring for instance to increased national investment in a specific area through P2Ps or reputation benefits due to increased international profiles of P2P partners

iii. Periodicity of impacts

Impacts can also vary in terms of when they manifest. For instance, at network level, capacity building impacts and connectivity were the first types of impacts that were appreciated by participants in P2P supported projects based on JPI interviews conducted under ERA-LEARN 2020 in 2015. There were also signs of certain policy/conceptual types of impacts and some cultural impacts. The latter would typically be of medium to long-term nature as it takes time to change mindsets or long-established policies or to develop new policies. Enduring connectivity would be the type of impact to examine in the long-term.

Scientific and technological impacts are rather short- to medium term, being more directly associated with the results of the supported projects. The same goes for organisational impacts. Yet, in both cases some

¹⁰ Adjusted from Meaghar's impact framework
http://www.ruru.ac.uk/pdf/oct2014/Laura_Meagher_presentation.pdf.

initial impacts may emerge in the short-term and, depending on the conditions in place, they may evolve into further impacts in the medium to long-term. For instance, the scientific results of a project may lead to a specific development in the future if taken up after the end of a project. Participation in a P2P network may require an organisation to change some rules in programme management, which in the medium-term may lead to internal changes in the whole management practices applied in the organisation. In a similar way, economic, health and environmental impacts may exhibit both a short and long-term nature.

4. Evaluation issues in P2P evaluation

The above elements are the main components of an impact assessment framework. However, the framework is not complete yet. Whereas it shows which components of a policy intervention we need to identify and clarify in an evaluation exercise, it needs to be complemented with what exactly we will examine. This refers to the evaluation issues. **Evaluation issues** are essentially addressing the relations across the different elements of the framework and usually come from specific questions that we have in mind.

For instance the question ‘to what extent is an intervention relevant with respect to the needs, problems and issues identified in target groups?’ refers to the issue of Relevance. The question ‘to what extent do the effects induced by an intervention correspond with its objectives as they are outlined in the intervention strategy?’ refers to the issue of Effectiveness. The question ‘how economically have the resources used been converted into effects?’ refers to the issue of Efficiency. The question ‘how do the effects of an intervention compare with the wider needs of the target populations?’ refers to the issue of Utility. There are also other evaluation issues that can apply to P2Ps. A list of suggested issues to examine in a P2P evaluation is presented below.

Suggested evaluation issues for P2Ps and example questions

‘Relevance’ relates to the extent to which the P2P objectives are pertinent to the needs, problems and issues to be addressed.

Example question(s)

To what extent are the P2P objectives relevant with respect to the needs, problems and issues identified?

‘Coherence’ is the extent to which the intervention logic¹¹ of a P2P is non-contradictory/the intervention logic does not contradict other interventions with similar objectives.

Example question(s)

To what extent is the intervention logic of the P2P compatible or in synergy or complementing other interventions with similar objectives?

‘Effectiveness’: the extent to which the set objectives and the intended results and impacts are achieved.

Example question(s)

¹¹ The intervention logic is explained in the following section

To what extent do the effects induced by the P2P correspond with its objectives?

'Efficiency' refers to the extent to which the desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost (in terms of resources consumed, such as time, financial inputs, etc.).

Example question(s)

How economically have the resources used been converted into effects?

'Utility' refers to the extent to which outcomes corresponded with the needs, problems and issues to be addressed.

Example question(s)

How do the effects of a P2P compare with the wider needs of the target populations?

'Network health': a P2P's ability to engage its members, sustain their engagement, and adapt as needed. May involve issues of trust building and management effectiveness.

Example question(s)

Has the P2P secured the necessary resources (capacities, money, and infrastructure) to become self-sustained? What are the network's governance rules and are they effective? Do decision-making processes encourage members to contribute and collaborate? How are the network's internal systems and structures adapting over time? Do all members share a common purpose for the network? Are all members working together to achieve shared goals, including goals that emerge over time? Are members achieving more together than they could alone? Has a sense of trust developed amongst the network participants?

'Network connectivity': the extent to which the members' ties to each other are resulting in efficient and effective "pathways" for shared learning and action.

Example question(s)

Has the P2P assembled members with the capacities needed to meet network goals (experience, skills, connections, resources)? Who is connected to whom? Who is not connected but should be? Is membership adjusted to meet changing network needs? What are the number, quality, and configuration of network ties? How dependent is the network on a small number of individuals? Is the network structure adjusted to meet changing network needs and priorities?

'Added value': changes that can reasonably be argued to be due to the P2P operation, rather than any other factors.

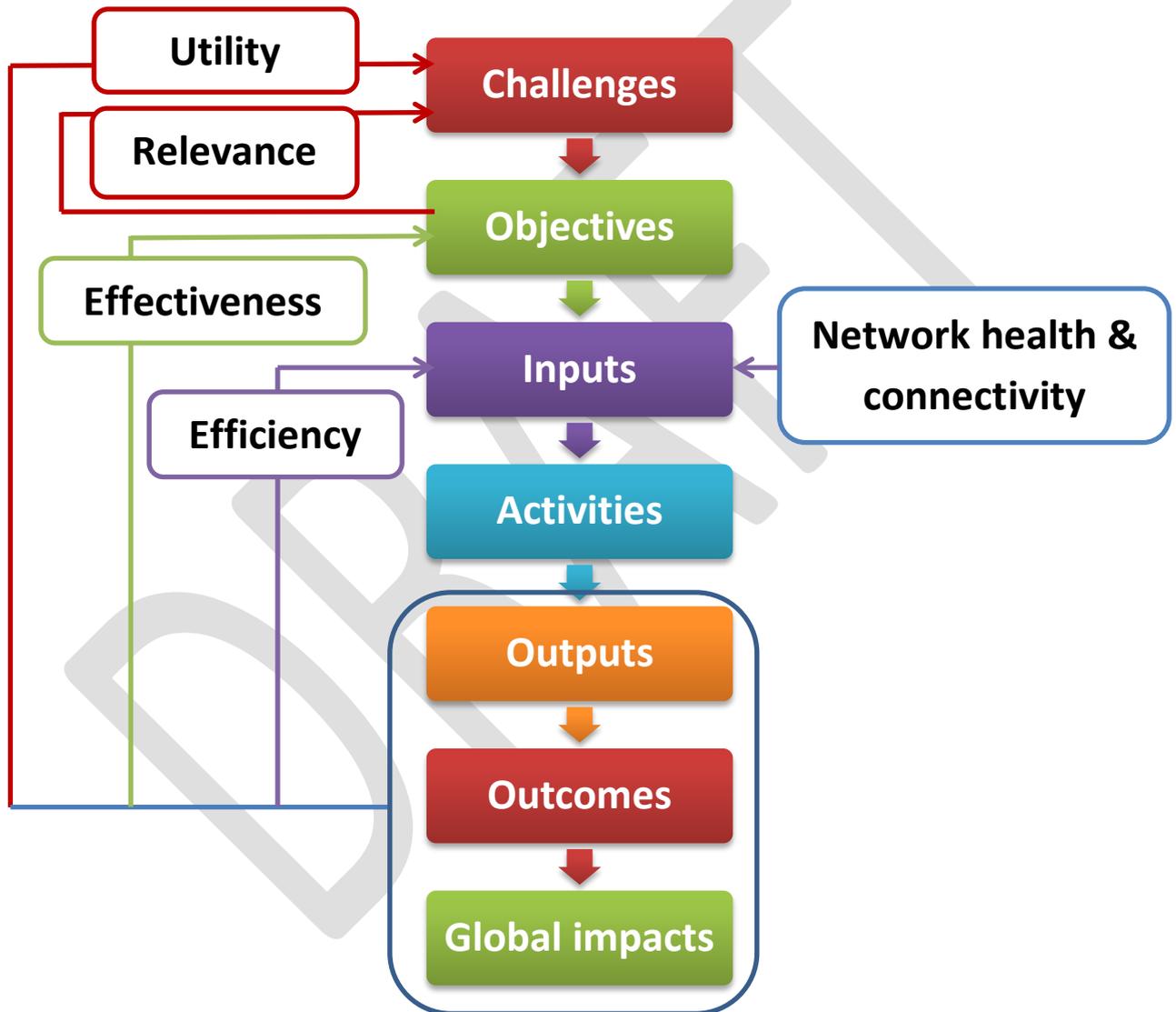
Example question(s)

What is the additional value resulting from the P2P, compared to what could be achieved by Member States alone at national and/or regional levels? To what extent do the problems/challenges addressed by the intervention require action at EU level? What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the existing policy intervention?

Source: amended from EC Better Regulation Toolbox, CIA4OPM (2011) and Network Impact and Centre for Evaluation Innovation (2014).

It is not unusual that evaluations focus only on some of the evaluation issues rather than trying to address all of them at the same time. In fact the most common issues that are usually addressed are effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and utility and added value. An example of how certain evaluation issues relate to the P2P elements is provided below.

Figure 4: Basic elements of an Impact Assessment Framework including some evaluation issues



5. The assumptions underlying the design of a P2P

In designing an intervention we usually make implicit or explicit **assumptions** about how the intervention would operate and how impacts would materialise. These assumptions essentially describe how we believe the different elements of the intervention (inputs, activities, outputs, etc.) would link together in reality in pursuing the set objectives. In other words, these are the assumptions that explain how the anticipated results and impacts are to be delivered by the intervention's inputs and activities. For instance, when we design a training activity and link it with increased capacity skills within an organisation as an expected impact we assume that the person that will be trained will then share their knowledge with other colleagues, i.e. that there are procedures promoting knowledge transfer/sharing within the particular organisation, or that the person would be willing to do so on their own initiative.

These assumptions need to be clearly spelled out in a P2P evaluation framework. What is usually overseen, however, is the importance of examining why something was achieved apart from what has been achieved. This would enable lessons to be learnt for improving the design of future interventions. It is in the assumptions made that the reasons for success or failure of an intervention are usually hidden. The main assumptions that are made on how (by what activities, outcomes and impacts and by which interplays among them) the desired objectives are envisaged to be achieved comprise the **intervention logic** of the P2P.

Examples of assumptions that are relevant to P2Ps are provided below. Needless to say these need to be adjusted / revised in the case of a specific P2P evaluation or impact assessment exercise.

Assumptions in relation to inputs

- The governance structures and processes established are appropriate and adequate to build trust and trigger interest for participation at both the political and institution/organisation levels.
- There are sufficient resources (capacities, money, and infrastructure) secured to implement the planned activities.
- All members share a common purpose for the P2P and perceive its overall aims in the same way.
- The P2P members understand in a similar way the benefits of working together and jointly pursuing the set objectives. There is adequate political and financial commitment.

Assumptions in relation to activities and outputs

- There is shared understanding among the P2P members who are participating in the same activity.
- There are sufficient resources to ensure smooth implementation of all planned activities.
- The activities are designed in a way that will lead to the expected outputs.
- There is adequate interest and trust among P2P members to identify common areas of collaboration and implement coordination/collaboration work-plans effectively.

Assumptions in relation to activities and outputs vis-à-vis impacts

- If implemented successfully, the planned activities and outputs will lead to the envisaged intermediate and long-term impacts.

- The outputs will be of sufficiently high-quality to achieve the envisaged impacts
- Monitoring and evaluation will provide useful feedback to improve the design and operation of the P2P network at key points in time.
- There is adequate research capacity in the participating countries to respond to the joint call(s).
- Adequate efforts have been made to promote the joint call(s) within the participating countries.

Assumptions in relation to impacts vis-à-vis objectives

- The joint programming process enables effective coordination and cooperation among P2P members and contributes to (strategic and operational) alignment among P2P members.
- The necessary conditions are in place for the medium and long-term impacts to occur.
- The P2P impacts do not 'contradict' each other.

An example of assumptions comes from the evaluation framework developed by JPI AMR where the main assumption is that Joint Programming is about:

- a) Getting research decision makers to interact and collaborate towards a common goal – the societal challenge
- b) Getting researchers and resources to interact and collaborate towards a common goal – performing the best possible research in Europe to find better ways of addressing the societal challenge
- c) Facilitating the uptake of research outputs by those facing the challenge

Thus, it is argued that the performance and results of JPI AMR need to be assessed along these three dimensions: a) Governance of research policy making, b) Guiding research performance, and c) Addressing societal needs and innovation. This resembles the separation of the main objectives into policy-related, science-related and society-related as in the case of JPND.

6. The Logical Framework (or Logic Model/Frame) of P2Ps

Taken together the total of the above elements comprise the Logical Framework of a P2P. A Logical Framework or Logic Model/Frame is “a management tool used to improve the design of interventions, most often at the project level. It involves identifying strategic elements (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their causal relationships, indicators, and the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure.”¹²

The Logic Model / Frame

Generally, a logic model will identify the following elements of a policy intervention:

- the issues being addressed and the context within which the policy takes place;
- the inputs, i.e. the resources (money, time, people, skills) being invested;
- the activities which need to be undertaken to achieve the policy objectives;
- the initial outputs of the policy;
- the outcomes (i.e. short and medium-term results);
- the anticipated impacts (i.e. long-term results); and
- the assumptions made about how these elements link together which will enable the programme to successfully progress from one element to the next

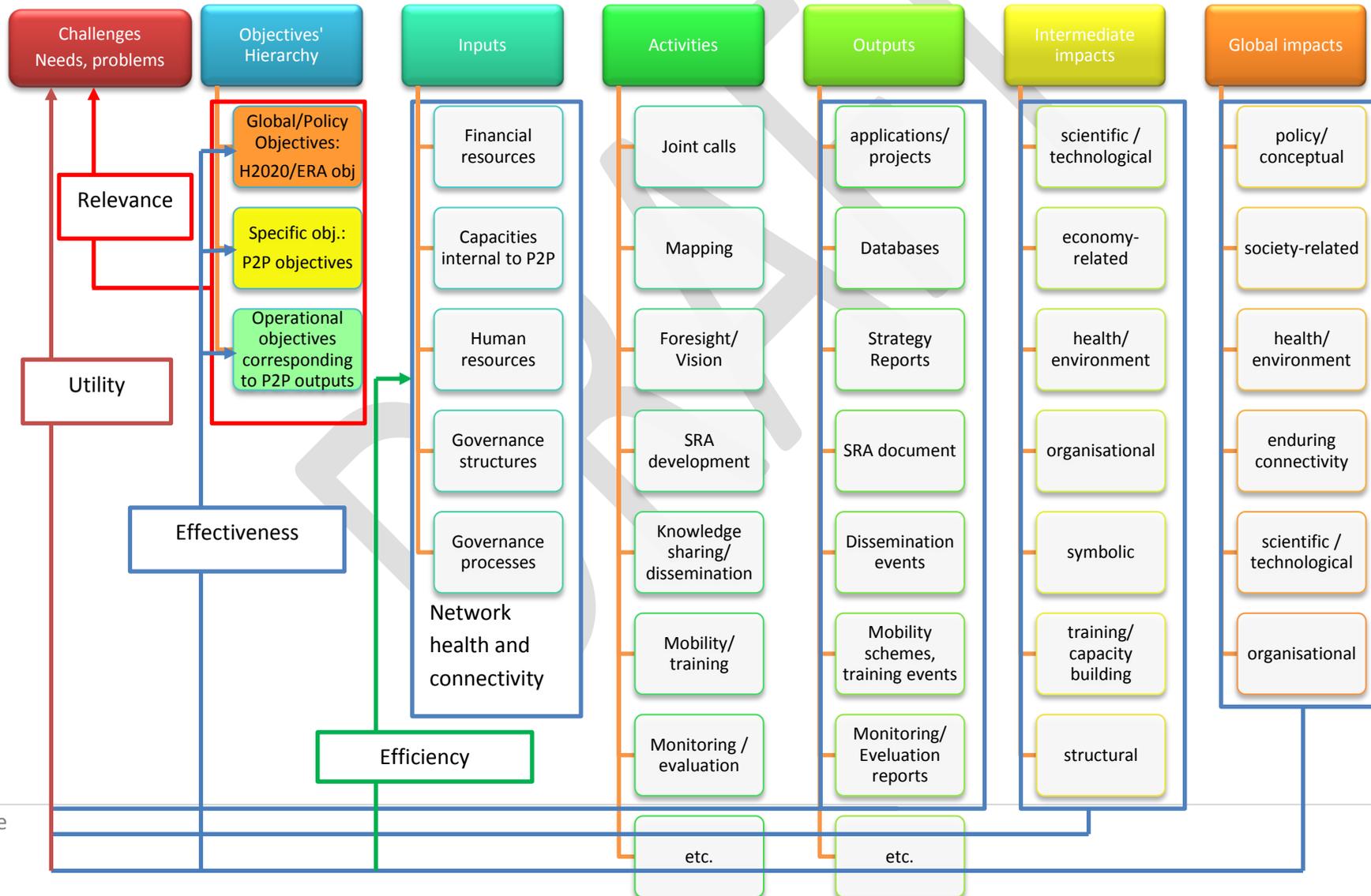
Source: The Magenta Book

The above are valid when developing the logic frame of a policy intervention such as a research programme, for instance. However P2Ps are not totally similar to research programmes. As already noted they are networks with certain structures and processes that may affect the overall performance of the network. This is why issues such as the network’s health and connectivity were added in the usual list of evaluation issues. In addition, the logic frame of P2Ps should also include the network structures and processes as elements for evaluation. These should be considered as inputs to the whole P2P system to be evaluated when examining the issues of network health and network connectivity. This was also noted in the first attempt to develop a common evaluation framework for JPIs where it was highlighted that any evaluation dimension should also consider structures and processes in addition to outcomes. (JPIs to Co Work, Deliverable 3.3, 2013)

Based on the above, an illustrative Logic Frame for evaluation and impact assessment of P2Ps would look like this (Figure 5).

¹² OECD (2009) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.
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Figure 5: An illustrative Logic Frame for evaluation and impact assessment of P2Ps



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A collection of evaluation studies can be found at http://www.fteval.at/en/evaluation_studies/