Guideline for the ONLINE S3 toolbox Tool/application 5.1 Intervention Logic

ONLINE S3 – 710659 – Guidelines for the pilot experimentation phase

Content

Figures

HISTORY OF CHANGES

Version	Date	Contributing partner	Summary of changes
Version 0.1	2016-10-07	RIM	Structure of the document, elaboration of required information as a template for all tools
Version 1	2017-05-15	Intelspace SA	Filling of the template with information regarding the 5.1 Intervention Logic tool.

DISCLAIMER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This document has been elaborated within the framework of the ONLINE S3 project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 710659.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONAL

Intervention logic is a representation of clear and well-thought-out understanding how planned policy actions are expected to lead to desired outcomes. By identifying causal links among inputs, activities, outputs, and longer-term outcomes of a specific policy intervention, it allows to develop a more comprehensive theory of change. Essentially, the intervention logic clarifies how a change induced by policy action at the micro-level (e.g. firms, households) leads to a desired change at a higher-level (e.g. specific sectors, whole economy), and eventually how this change contributes to the achievement of strategic goals at regional or national level.

Smart specialisation represents a complex policy intervention with the aim to foster regional/national economic transformation. Hence it is important for the regions to carefully design their RIS3 intervention logic linking objectives, targets, inputs, actions, outputs, results and longer-term outcomes. The building of this logical model is particularly important to define further a tailored RIS3 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, which has been set as an ex-ante conditionality for receiving ESIF support. "Explicitly identifying expected changes is equivalent to setting specific objectives for the RIS3 and is hence a fundamental element of the monitoring system" (Kleibrink et.al., 2016). There is an inherent correlation between an intervention logic and the design of M&E framework. On one hand, intervention logic forms a skeleton for M&E system; on the other hand, findings from continuous monitoring and evaluation exercises feedback intelligence that may alter the initial assumptions about certain causal links and thus call for adjustments in the defined theory of change of RIS3.

Gianelle and Kleibrink (2015) have made the first effort to conceptualize the RIS3 logic of intervention by identifying the key building blocks and setting out their causal logical linkages. Based on their analysis we have highlighted four steps that constitute the minimum necessary steps of any strategic approach (Fig.1):

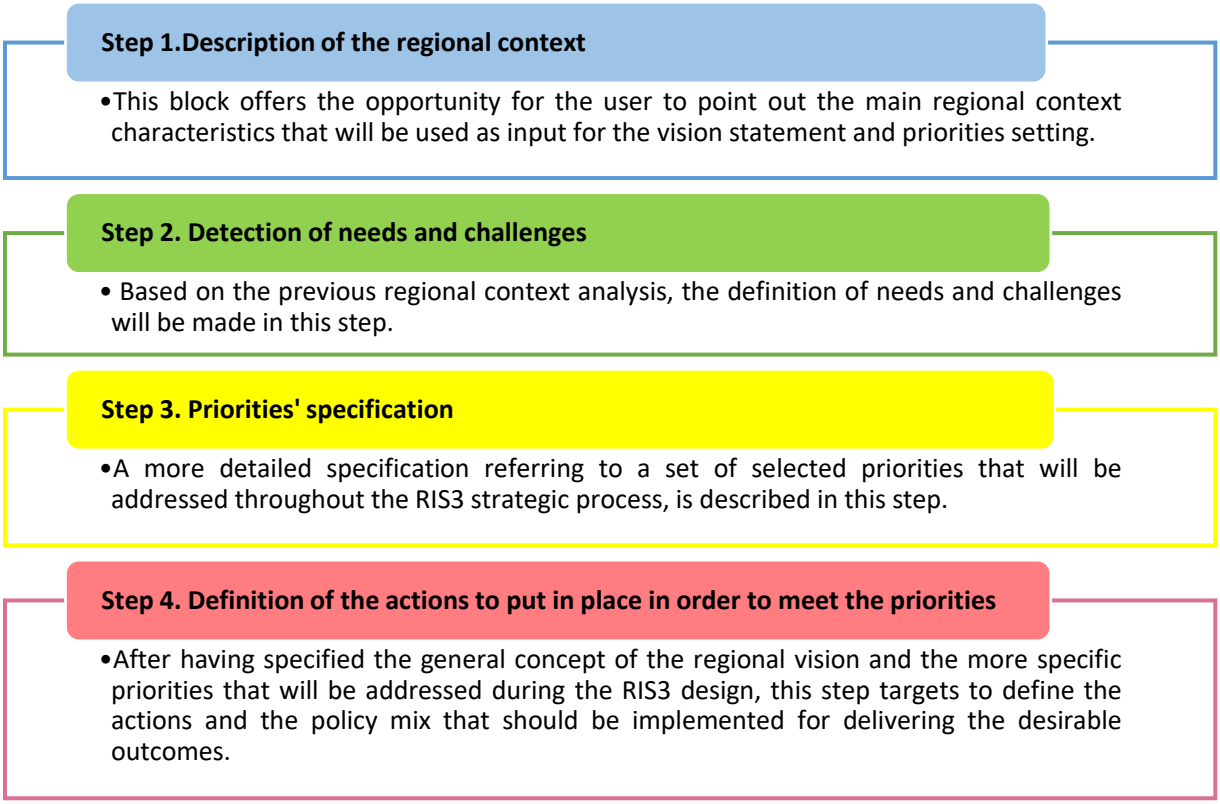

Figure 1 Key building blocks for the RIS3 Intervention logic application

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

The design of an *intervention logic* starts with understanding both the problem to be addressed and the desired outcomes to be achieved, specifying the program logic, and building stakeholder consensus related to this theory of change. The overall objective of this application is to provide an overall representation of the derived outcomes of the Phases 1 – 5, in order for the stakeholders to better understand the rationale behind the RIS3 strategy.

In order to communicate the logic of intervention, the visual representation of the intervention can take various forms. The design should help practitioners understand not only the intended outcomes of an intervention but also the inputs and activities needed to achieve them. We have chosen to design the intervention logic application as a series of blocks, describing the overall strategy flow. Each flowchart corresponds to a specific Investment Priority, and offers the user the opportunity to describe the links between the different building blocks of the intervention logic. These include: context, vision/priorities, policy mix and monitoring. The user can export the results in the form of figures, or print the final intervention logic report produced by this application.

The logical steps of the application, based on its methodological description are:

- *Step 1:* Description of the regional **context**.
- *Step 2:* Detection of needs and challenges that form the regional **vision**.
- *Step 3:* **Priorities'** specification.
- *Step 4:* Definition of the **actions** and **indicators** to put in place to meet the priorities.
- *Step 5:* **Describe the links** between the building blocks of the intervention logic diagram.
- *Step 6:* **Save** and **export** the final intervention logic report.

Following the application architecture described in previous steps, the information flows within the application are given in **Figure 2**, below. Figures including intervention logic diagrams, as well as the description corresponding to each one of them, can be extracted through the application. The main output of the application is the final report of *Intervention Logic*, which will give the user a comprehensive picture regarding his/her region's strategic framework.

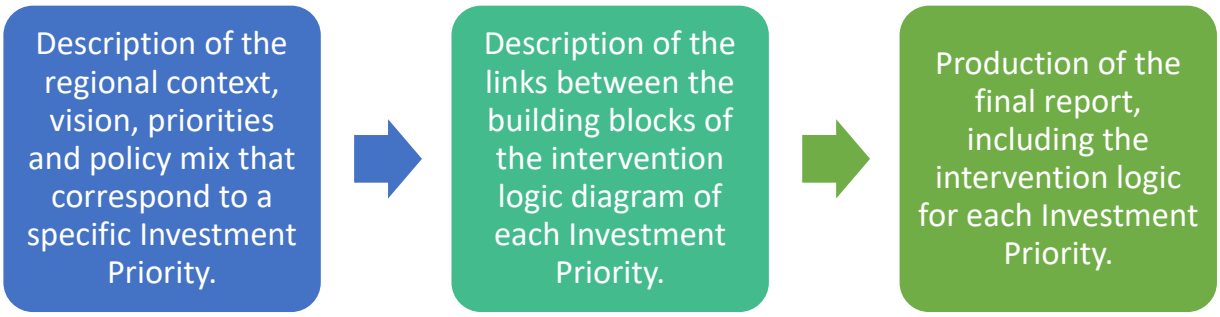

Figure 2 Overview of the information flows within the Intervention logic application.

BENEFITS TO KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Key benefits to users by using this application include issues such as the facilitation of the process in defining causal links and ensuring that policy measures are coherent with the vision and objectives of the region/country. This tool provides the ability for categorization of all possible types of policy actions relevant to RIS3 implementation, specifying respective beneficiary target groups and possible effects (outputs, results and longer term outcomes).

Charting the RIS3 intervention logic forms the backbone of policy approaches for steering smart specialisation. However, as the available evidence indicates, there is still an incomplete understanding or misinterpretation of the policy logic of RIS3 intervention. The application of the *intervention logic* information tool helps regional and national policy makers to define possible logical linkages among the identified priority sectors, key levers, main actor target groups, and eventually the specific policy instruments. This fact helps them to make RIS3 policy assumptions more explicit. Thus, clearer and more well-specified intervention logic models help RIS3 managers to 'plan with the end in mind', rather than just limiting their focus on inputs, implementation activities and immediate outputs.

By using the intervention logic model, policy-makers can more easily back cast the intended results and longer-term outcomes of a support programme (e.g. during a mid-term evaluation), as well as identify the necessary corrective actions to achieve all desired results. In other words, intervention logic together with a feedback loop from M&E system serves as a living management tool fostering consensus on planned activities, guiding corrective actions, facilitating the coordination of development efforts, charting the course for achieving strategic objectives, and ultimately serving as key accountability instrument to RIS3 stakeholders and wider society. The benefits to stakeholders when using the Intervention logic application are illustrated schematically in **Figure 3**.

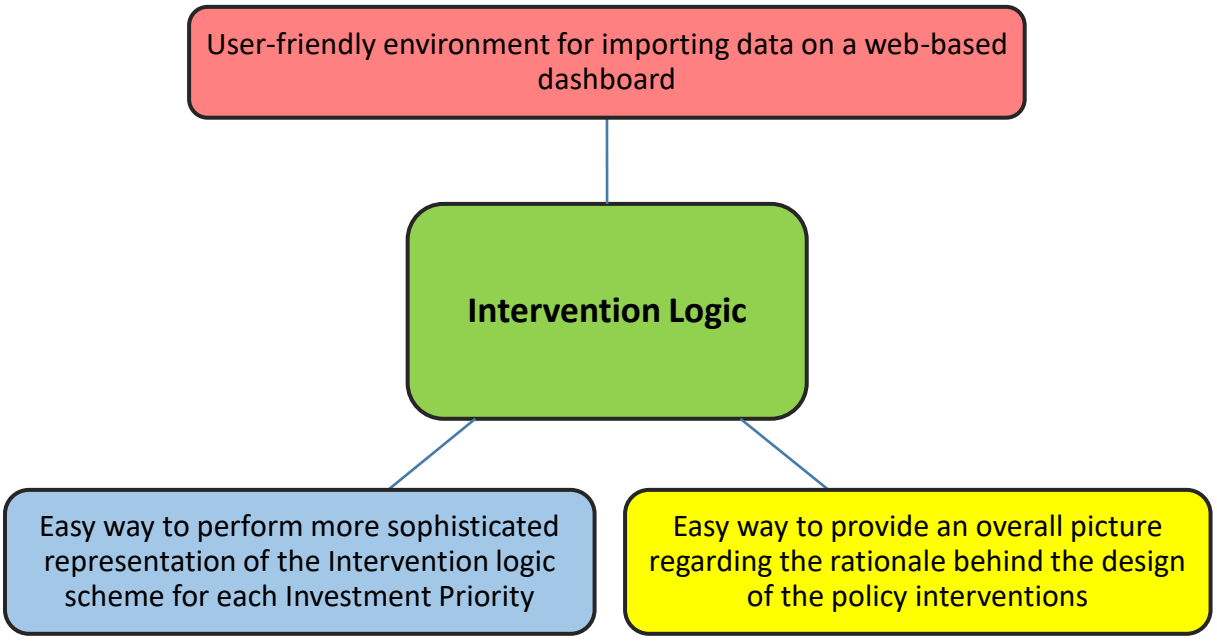

Figure 3 Benefits to stakeholders when using the Intervention logic application.

KEY ISSUES AND REQUIREMENTS

In general, the *Intervention logic* tool provides a set of static results, with respect to the information and the description for the links completed by the user. There are no key issues or additional requirements regarding this application. An outline illustrating the overall process of the *Benchmarking* tool is given in **Figure 4**, in order to present more clearly the steps that are included in this application.

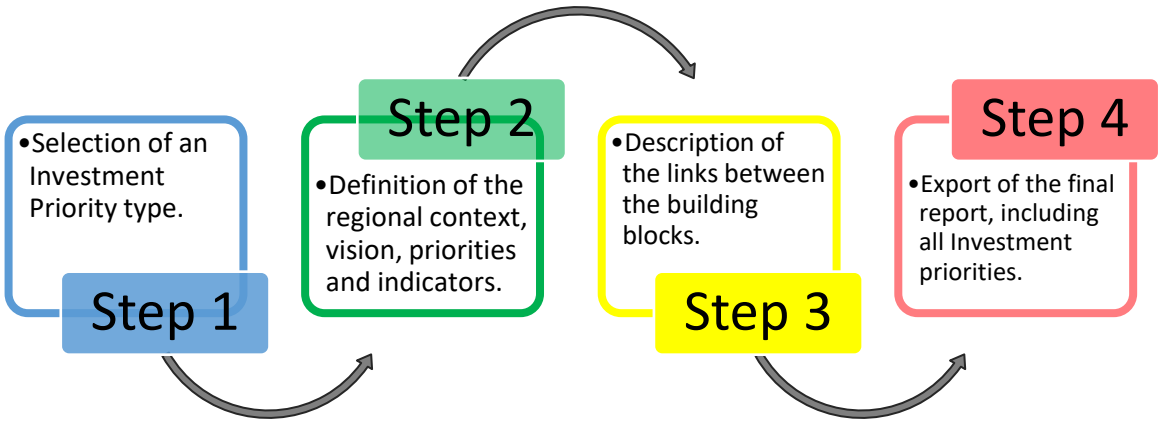

Figure 4 Key steps when using the Intervention logic application.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

How to use this application step-by-step?

The application gives the user the opportunity to select a specific Investment Priority and construct the corresponding intervention logic diagram. This will include information coming from different parts of the RIS3 strategic planning process, in order to present an overview regarding the results that have been obtained throughout the overall process. The steps below, illustrate some useful information regarding the proposed way in which all the needed information could be included in the final intervention logic diagram.

Step 1 - Selection of an Investment Priority type

During the first step of the application, the user will have to choose a specific Investment Priority for his analysis. The filters in this part of the application includes the selection of a specific Thematic Objective and Investment Priority (**Fig. 5**). Moreover, the Thematic Objectives are grouped based on the more general thematic priorities of the European Union including: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Investment Priorities Index includes the complete list of available Investment Priorities, in the form of a dendrogram, indicating also the Thematic Objectives to which they are connected to.

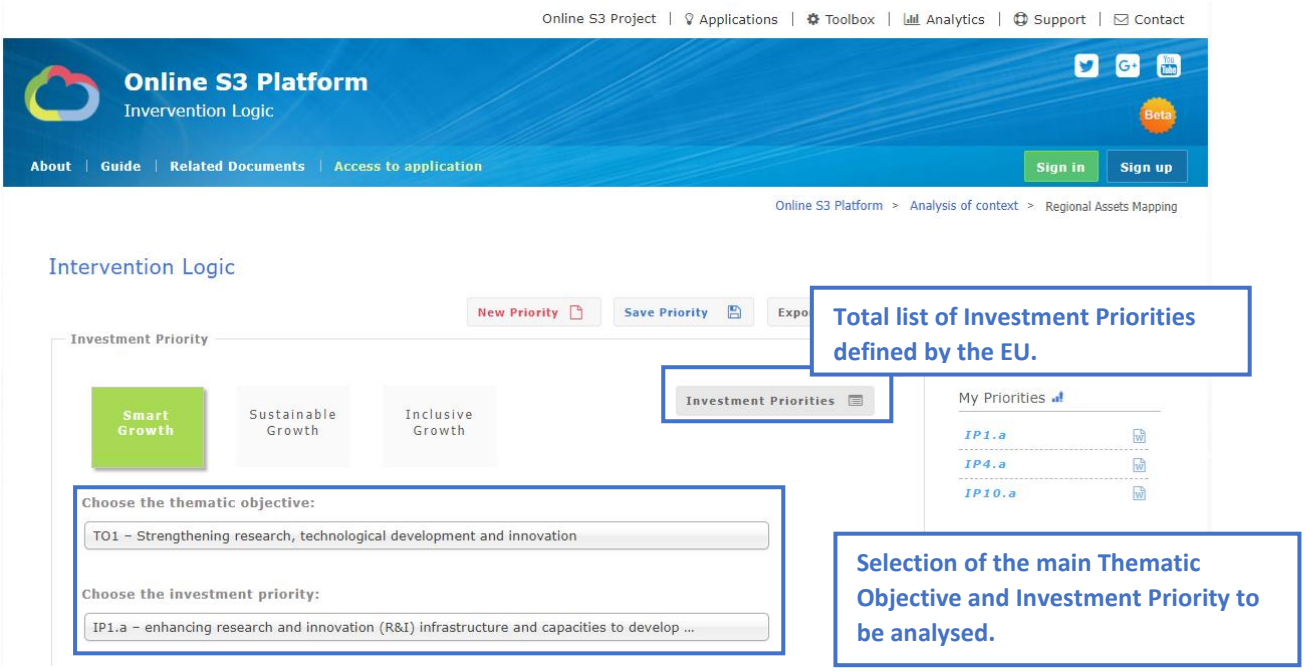

Figure 5: Step 1 – Selection of an Investment Priority type.

Step 2 - Definition of the regional context, vision, priorities and indicators.

In the second step of the application, the user will be able to complete all relevant information that he wants to include to the specific intervention logic diagram (**Fig.6**). The information will be based on the outcomes of methodologies that have been implemented during previous phases, and will be grouped into four main categories:

1) *Context*: this part includes information coming from the analysis of the regional context, related to the specific Investment Priority.
2) *Vision / Priorities*: this part included information related to the vision and priorities' setting phases. In order to better organise the input four sub-categories have been included, related to specific methodologies that are being used in these phases. These include: EDP, extroversion analysis, related variety and foresight. Not all of them should be completed during an intervention logic design process.
3) *Policy mix*: Definition of actions and action plan implementation are the two main sub-groups of the policy mix part. Both of them focus on the definition of the groups of categories of actions and regulatory instruments of intervention that could be used to support the specific Investment Priority.
4) *Monitoring*: the last part of the intervention logic diagram includes the presentation of the selected output and result indicators related to the specific Investment Priority. As it can be seen, output indicators should be related to the definition of actions, as input for them will be gathered through the implemented actions. Moreover, result indicators are related to Vision and Priorities, trying to capture the more general targets of the region, through the reinforcement of the specific Investment Priority.

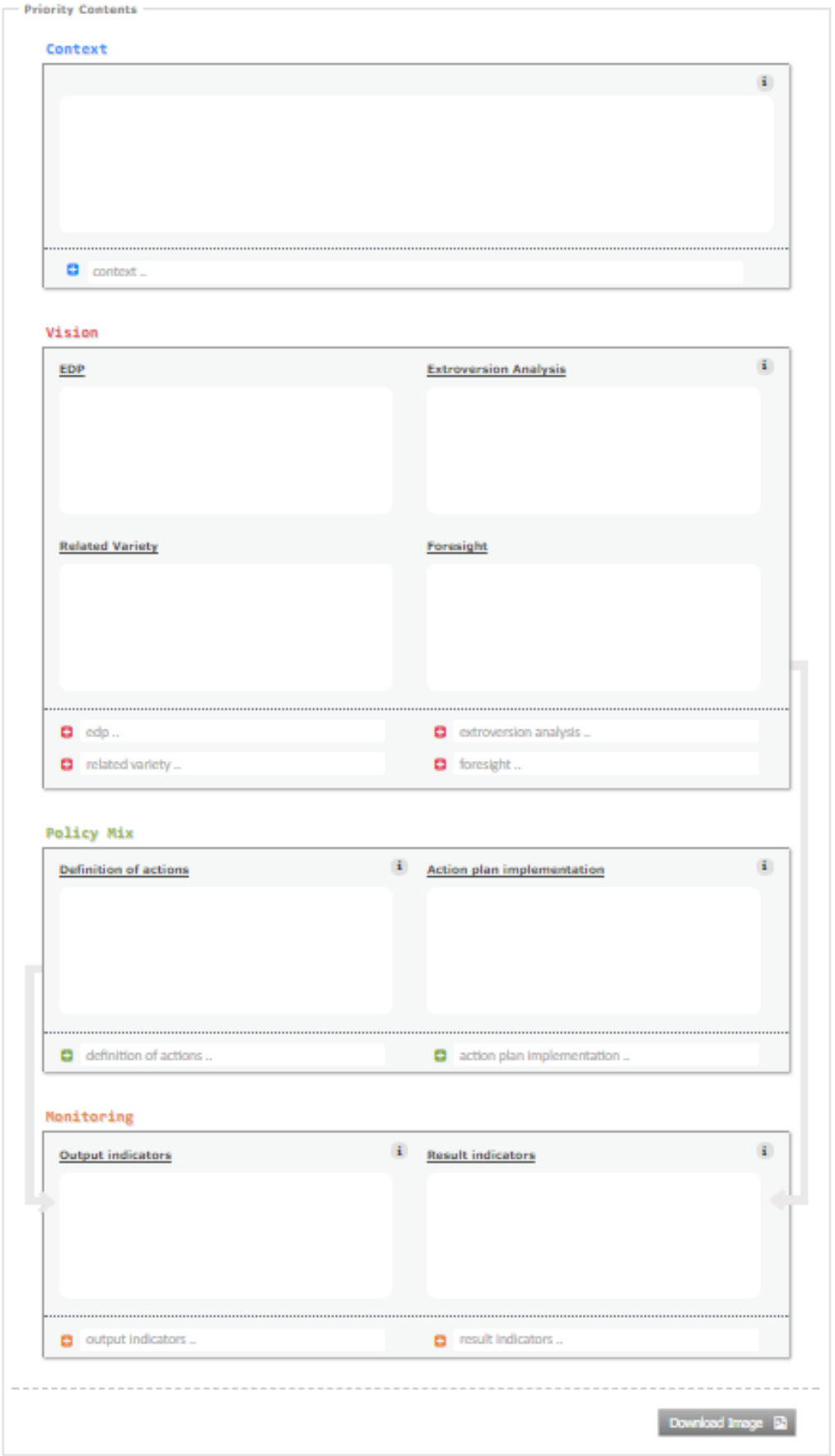

Figure 6: Step 2 - Definition of the regional context, vision, priorities and indicators.

The "Save Priority" button can help the user to save his/her progress throughout the intervention design process, in order to include additional Investment Priority diagrams to his/her overall final report. The "Export as an image" button enables the user to save the block diagram in a .png format.

Step 3 - Description of the links between the building blocks

The third step of the application offers the opportunity to describe in detail the links between the different parts of the intervention logic (**Fig. 7**). A set of 7 questions guide the user in order to thoroughly describe the connections between the main building blocks of the application, in order to provide a more precise description of the rationale behind the selection of the specific priorities, policy mix and monitoring indicators for the corresponding Investment Priority. All text included in the description part of the application can be extracted in a .docx format in the overall report that can be derived through this application.

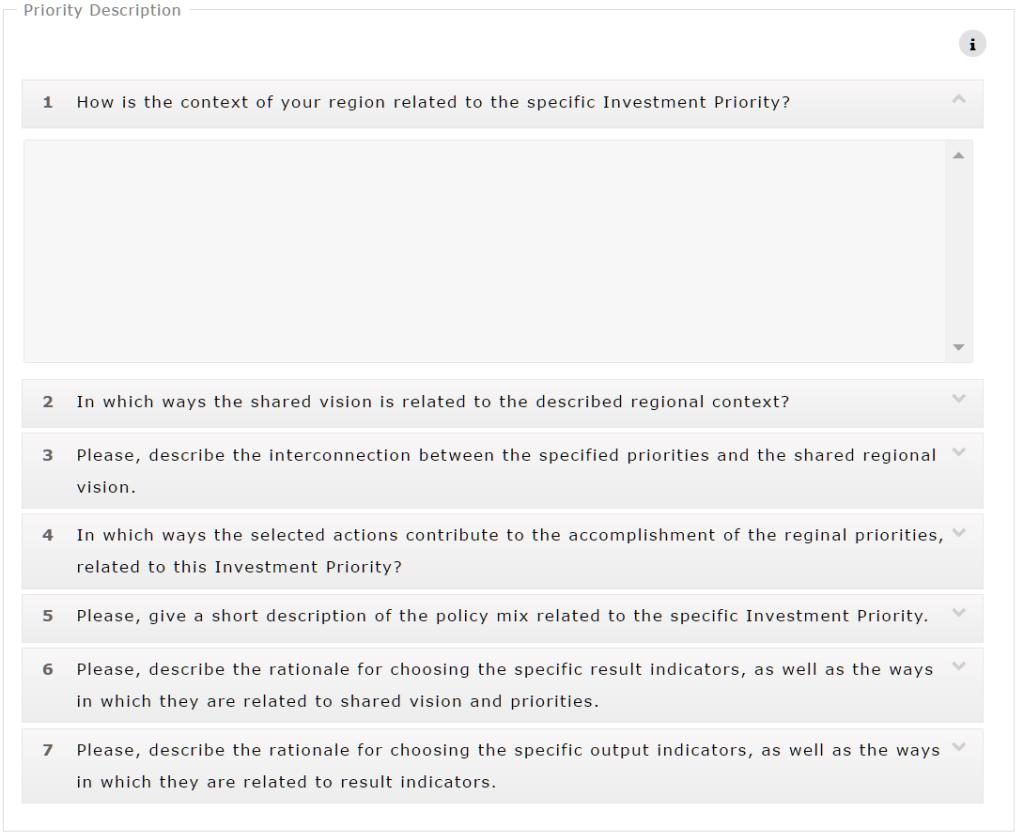

Figure 7: Step 3 - Description of the links between the building blocks

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information regarding the description of the method can be found on the site of the Online-S3 project (www.onlines3.eu).

REFERENCES

Gianelle, C. and Kleibrink, A. (2015). Monitoring mechanisms for smart specialisation strategies, S3 policy brief series, 13/2015. Spain: European Commission, Joint Research Centre.

Kleibrink, A., Gianelle, C. and Doussineau0, M. (2016) Monitoring innovation and territorial development in Europe: emergent strategic management, European Planning Studies, 24:8, 1438-1458.