

Executive Summary

This report has been prepared by Ernst & Young and presents the results of the third annual measurement of the diffusion of evaluation culture within the Romanian Structural Instrument System and the assessment of the impact of Key Area of Intervention 1.2 "Evaluation" of Operational Program Technical Assistance in supporting evaluation culture diffusion.

The current level of diffusion of the evaluation culture is measured through **indicators, criteria and sub criteria** that are aggregated in **4 dimensions** (*demand side, supply side, dissemination/utilization of evaluation results, institutionalization of the evaluation culture*).

The third annual measurement reveals a **good diffusion of evaluation culture** with an average achievement of the Evaluation Culture Measurement Index based on all indicators of 59% out of 100%.

More specifically, as regards the **demand side of evaluation**, the analysis shows that this dimension is generally performing well (57%) although a bit lower than the **supply side** (63%). Concerning criteria:

- ▶ The architecture of the evaluation system (**criteraion 1**) has an overall achievement above average, due to the good coordination of "evaluation responsibilities";
- ▶ The human resources allocated to evaluation are sufficient, but there is room for improvement concerning the allocated financial resources (**criteraion 2**); Operational Programmes allocated, on average, 0.12% of their budget to evaluation;
- ▶ The quality of the monitoring system is considered adequate and able to provide timely information (**criteraion 3**);
- ▶ There are evaluation plans and assignments effectively managed by Evaluation Steering Committees set-up at Programme level, together with evaluation standards aligned with the European Union Level and operational procedures for the design, implementation and use of evaluation evidence (**criteraion 4**);
- ▶ Socio-economic data are available in a timely manner, although micro-data at beneficiary level are only partially available (**criteraion 5**);
- ▶ National and international companies that provide evaluation services and are present on the Romanian market possess the required thematic and methodological expertise. Beneficiaries and Evaluation Steering Committees play an important role in improving the quality of evaluation reports through the use of quality assessment grids (**criteraion 6**).

Although these criteria generally perform well, the analysis shows that there are areas of improvement. Looking at the programming period 2014-2020, the following **Recommendations** apply:

How to improve the evaluation capacity	
R.1	Ensure availability of resources to support activities consistent with Evaluation Culture Measurement Index under future.
R.2	Ensure continuity in role of Evaluation central Unit.
R.3	Plan new measurement cycles with intervals adequate to capture the impact of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance actions.
R.4	Support an international benchmarking study on organizational aspects of evaluation function.
R.5	Identify 2007-2013 indicators to be used in 2014-2020 and assess reliability and consistency across Operational Programmes and improvement.
R.6	Support the structuring and animation of Evaluation Working Group subgroups focusing on specific themes and on regular update of evaluation related documents.
R.7	Support a project in collaboration with National Institute of Statistics to develop a statistical baseline for counterfactual analyses and review information needed to construct socio-economic indicators to be used to capture impacts.
R.8	Ensure complementarity with Operational Programme Human Capital to finance training and educational options in the field of evaluation for supply side.

The dimension of the evaluation system related to the **dissemination and utilization of evaluation results** is also performing adequately (65%). On the other hand, the **institutionalization of the evaluation culture** is the least performing dimension (49%). At criteria level:

- ▶ Evaluation reports are publicly available, public debates have been organized in order to present and discuss evaluation findings and there is a positive tendency in organizing wide dissemination events for presenting evaluation evidence (**critterion 7**);
- ▶ Effective procedures exist to foster use of evaluation results and for follow-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations (**critterion 8**);
- ▶ Evaluation is considered to be an important part for achieving success at institutional level, with a clear understanding and respect of the requirement of independency (**critterion 9**);
- ▶ The European Union Legal provisions have been transposed into the Romanian Legal Framework (**critterion 10**) which regulates evaluation activities and provides additional requirements for the preparation of multi-annual evaluation plans. However within the Romanian legal framework there are some elements that hamper evaluation (e.g. public procurement rules, national ordinances on staff hire and rules on expense eligibility);
- ▶ The quality/expertise of the human resources involved in evaluation activities (**critterion 11**) is above the Evaluation Culture Measurement Index average, with the presence of some evaluation champions (e.g. persons supporting the evaluation process) both at Operational Programme and National Strategic Reference Framework level;
- ▶ The number of evaluations triggered in response to a need of knowledge is lower than in other member states (**critterion 12**); there is room for improvement among policy makers, even if capacity building projects financed by Key Areas of Intervention 1.2 are already addressing this goal;
- ▶ The contribution of the national organization of evaluators to the dissemination of good practices (**critterion 13**), as well as the level of participation of the civil society in evaluation related activities and the number of public events organized per year (**critterion 14**) are considered rather limited;
- ▶ Romanian indicators of the World Bank Index position Romania above the average for most indicators on the **governance effectiveness** (**critterion 15**);
- ▶ The participation of civil servants (other than those dedicated to evaluation) in evaluation activities has room for improvement as well as the availability of training options on the market (especially as concerns those provided by academia) and the level of internalization of evaluation by institutional stakeholders (**critterion 16**).

Some areas of improvement have been identified and the following recommendations have been provided:

How to improve the evaluation culture	
R.6	Support a study aimed at identifying the most appropriate forms of communication towards Structural Instruments stakeholders.
R.7	Continue embedding in evaluation projects wide communication events and publishing evidences on evaluation library.
R.8	Regularly discuss within the Evaluation Working Group the follow-up on recommendations.
R.9	Continue performing communication activities especially targeted to policy makers and the civil society
R.10	Ensure complementarity with Operation Programme Human Capital to finance training and educational options in the field of evaluation for demand side and capacity development actions for academia.
R.11	Support the organization of an international conference aimed at exchanging experiences on "Impact of evaluation evidences on policy making process".
R.12	Support pilot on Regulatory Impact Assessment.