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3 Approach and methodology

3.1 The methodology adopted for the second assessment

The second assessment of the administrative capacity of the authorities and beneficiaries followed the methodology used for the first one, performed in 2013, in order to provide a clear image on the current situation, to reveal the progress from the previous assessment and the necessary measures for further improvements.

The methodology described in detail in the first report is summarized below

Administrative capacity was defined as the ability and skill of central and local authorities to prepare suitable plans, programmes and projects in due time, to decide on programmes and projects, to arrange the co-ordination among principal partners, to cope with the administrative and reporting requirements, and to finance and supervise the implementation correctly, avoiding irregularities as far as possible. The definition is in line with the international experience (ECORYS/NEI, 2002).

For the first assessment the evaluators identified from the international literature and practice the **elements (also referred to as dimensions) of the administrative capacity** that were further detailed in criteria for assessment as follows.

For the authorities three areas or dimensions of the administrative capacity have been identified:

- **structures** – having in view the structural development of the institutions framework and organisations
- **people** – focused on the human resources management including recruitment, equipping individuals with information, knowledge, and training in order to enable them to effectively carry out their tasks
- **systems and tools** - refer to the development of instruments, methods, guidelines, manuals, systems, procedures, forms, etc., which enable organisations to achieve their objectives.

Contextual factors of the administrative capacity development measures have been considered as an additional dimension of the assessment.

For the beneficiaries' assessment three key dimensions of the administrative capacity of the beneficiaries have been used, coherent with previous studies (i.e. "Challenges associated to the capacity of SI Beneficiaries" (NSRF 2011) ensuring thus consistency of the methodology and comparability. The three key dimensions are capacity of the beneficiaries to manage projects, capacity to mobilise human resources, capacity to mobilise financial resources.

The methodology is extensively presented in the first assessment report and in Annex 1 of the current report.

3.2 Methods used for the update of the assessment

The approach adopted for this update of the assessment included the following methods for data and information collection



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- *Literature and documentary research.* The evaluation team has performed an inventory of the relevant studies and evaluations elaborated since the first assessment. The list of the documents analysed is included in Annex 2.
- *Online survey.* For the first assessment two online surveys – one for authorities and one for beneficiaries were designed in order to collect information and data from a large number of representatives of the authorities and beneficiaries; for the update the survey was applied only to authorities, in order to avoid the burden on beneficiaries as long as there were not expected significant changes since the previous assessment.
- *Checklist.* Two checklists were prepared for the first assessment – one for the authorities' capacity and one for the beneficiaries' capacity - aimed at structuring the analysis on dimensions and elements (variables that influence the administrative capacity); two different checklists were prepared, one for the administrative capacity of the authorities and one for the beneficiaries. The checklist for the administrative capacity of the authorities was applied during the update exercise, assessing for each criteria the progress/ change since the previous assessment, as reflected by the documents analysed or the online survey. Due to the limited information collected regarding the changes in the capacity of the beneficiaries, the checklist regarding the capacity of the beneficiaries was not updated in this exercise.
- *The administrative capacity data base.* This tool was created in order to structure the complex information regarding the administrative capacity of the authorities in a meaningful manner, coherently with the assessment criteria. The information and data included in the database are linked to the checklist' items.

The data base was updated with the data collected highlighting specific aspects for the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming period. The database include also quantitative indicators that have to be collected from administrative data produced by the authorities. The quantitative indicators complete the assessment and contribute mainly to the assessment of the effectiveness of the authorities and achievement of their objectives.

Based on these measurements it was applied a simple scoring system for the accomplishment of the expected level for each indicator (in total This represents a basis for further work in creating a composite indicator for the administrative capacity of authorities and beneficiaries which needs further refinements. e.g. normalization, weighting and aggregation, based on consultation with relevant stakeholders and testing – according to relevant methodologies - which were not possible in this update of the assessment

Due to the limited scope of the assessment update there were conducted a limited number of interviews with DGAP staff focused on identification of reports and studies that could provide relevant information and consultants involved in the ex-ante evaluations of the PA and the OPs.

Summary of the assessment methodology

The update of the assessment followed the structure of the three dimensions of the administrative capacity. For each dimension there have been identified the most relevant variables that influence the administrative capacity at present, at the time of the assessment.

The assessment establishes to what extent it is accomplished / achieved the desired level of each variable, which corresponds to an adequate level of the administrative capacity.

For each variable there have been identified one or several criteria that could cover the key aspects or multiple sources.



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The accomplishment was established on four levels and summarized in checks list (Annex 3), as follows:

- The criteria fully accomplished was assessed with “Yes”
- The criteria accomplished partially, not fully, but some improvements being necessary was assessed as “Yes*”
- The criteria accomplished partially, to a small extent and significant improvements being necessary, was assessed as (No*)
- The criteria is not accomplished, at all, there is no evidence of accomplishment, was assessed as “No”.

In order to provide a synthetic view current situation and progress for each dimension and variable, a scoring system was used which allowed presentation of the administrative capacity in graphical format, a radar format, showing how far is each variable from the desired level (fully accomplished).

Using a scoring system for each level of accomplishment and compounding the scores of the criteria for each variable and dimension, resulted an index of the authorities’ administrative capacity. The scoring system is explained in the database “qualitative indicators” spreadsheet and use the following scores:

- Fully accomplished: “yes” – 3 points
- Not fully accomplished, improvements are needed: “yes*”: 2 points
- Partially accomplished, significant improvements are needed: “ No*”: 1 point
- Not accomplished: “No” 0 points.

The scoring system and the index require further developments, because it is based on simple averages of the criteria composing a variable and dimensions. The development should consider relevant methodologies for composite indicators⁵, applying different weighting of the criteria, aggregation and normalization, which requires more extensive cooperation, consultation and validations with the relevant stakeholders, which were not feasible in the frame of the current assignment.

⁵ OECD, European Commission - Handbook on constructing composite indicators – methodology and user guide
<http://www.oecd.org/std/42495745.pdf>