



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation of the Competitiveness Operational Programme 2014-2020 (POC) covers the implementation of funded interventions in the fields of research, development and innovation - RDI and information and communication technology - ICT. The evaluation framework is based on the intervention logic of the programme and its specific objectives. The evaluation process covers eight evaluation themes related to the two main domains - ICT and RDI - and related to the following specific objectives:

1. RDI capabilities in the areas of smart specialisation and health
2. Participation of Romanian research organisations and companies in Horizon 2020
3. Private investment in RDI
4. The transfer of knowledge, technology and staff with RDI skills between the public and private research environment
5. High-speed broadband infrastructure
6. The ICT sector from a growth perspective
7. E-government systems
8. Internet Usage

From the perspective of each evaluation theme, the effectiveness of the interventions, the progress observed in relation to the specific programme objectives (gross effect) and the extent to which it is attributed to the programme (expected effect or net effect), unintended effects, the sustainability of the two types of effects, the mechanisms that generated them and the good practices observed were analyzed.

The evaluation methodology included multiple methods of data collection and analysis: analysis of available programme and project documents, descriptive statistics of monitoring data, interviews with relevant actors, case studies, counterfactual analysis, surveys among various target groups and focus groups to validate results. Despite progress from 2014 to date on key statistical indicators relevant to the programme objectives, Romania continues to be below the average of EU Member States. The pandemic affected the implementation of the funded interventions, with a significant percentage of projects still under implementation at the end of 2021, which affected the very evaluation of the programme, as the effects of the interventions, especially the long-term ones, did not have time to materialize. The evaluation therefore focused on studying the immediate effects of the implemented and planned project activities, as well as the progress of programme and project indicators.

In terms of the effectiveness of the programme, there is progress under all the specific objectives, but at different rates. Overall, R&D and innovation projects have achieved their short-term objectives. Although many projects are still not finalised, by and large, the indicator targets and direct results foreseen in the funding applications are being met. The programme has supported the growth of CDI capacity in the fields of smart specialization and health by increasing the number of researchers in the supported entities, upgrading or creating new laboratories and increasing the number of scientific publications. Romania's participation in EU research has increased thanks to the support of the POC through the submission of applications to Horizon 2020, the attraction of foreign researchers and the creation of support centres for the development of new research applications under Horizon 2020. Although modest, private investment in RDI is almost exclusively due to POC interventions. Moreover, the programme has also increased the number of private companies collaborating with public research institutions. On the other hand, as far as could be assessed, for the time being, interventions on the development of ICT products and services, e-commerce and ICT demand have had an impact rather on the number of employees of supported firms, but not on turnover or net profits. The unplanned and spill-over effects identified in the exercises already carried out are isolated, observable at the level of specific interventions, and cannot be aggregated at programme level. The evaluation exercises carried out so far have been able to identify issues that can contribute to the sustainability of the programme's impact, but it depends on how they will be further exploited. Analyses indicate that new jobs have been created in both areas, the infrastructure created or upgraded represents changes that were needed and will continue to be exploited, and the supported firms feel more competitive as a result of the programme's support and more confident in dealing with economic crises or shocks. From the perspective of ensuring sustainability, it is necessary not only to continue funding these types of interventions, but also to make complementary investments in human resources and in the maintenance and development of the infrastructures created.



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Phenomena with a wider socio-economic impact, such as inflation, the energy crisis or the migration of highly skilled labour, may strongly affect the results achieved so far, suggesting that there is also a need to reprioritize these areas, in particular RDI, in national public policies.