

## 1. Overview of the evaluation activity

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This report summarises the findings of the mid-term evaluations of 2014-2020 POCU (Operational Programme Human Capital) interventions in the 4 sectors covered by the operational programme: employment, social inclusion, education and technical assistance. The evaluation of the 4 sectors was carried out in 4 different technical assistance contracts, targeting interventions of 2014-2020 period, up to a specific reference date - 31.12.2020 (for priority axes 4, 5 and 7), 30.06.2020 (for priority axis 6) and 08.09.2020 (for priority axes 2 and 3). Each evaluation exercise took place over a period of 6-8 months from June 2020 to November 2021 and was carried out with independent experts.

The cumulative budget of the 4 interim evaluations covered by the Synthesis Report was approx. 3.837.393 lei (approx. 767.478 Eur).

The summary table of POCU evaluations, including information on the purpose of the evaluation, the reference date of the evaluation and the link to the evaluation report can be found in **Annex 01**.

In order to answer the evaluation questions, the methodological approach was built on a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and tools, which included: literature review, documentary research, interviews, workshops, expert panel, focus group, case studies, opinion surveys, etc. Theory-based evaluation was combined with counterfactual evaluation to identify the impact and immediate effects of the interventions, mechanisms and factors contributing to the success or failure of implementation, as well as to the sustainability of funded actions.

The main challenges faced by the evaluations relate to:

- the timing of the evaluations, when the implementation of POCU interventions was not at an advanced stage and some interventions had not been launched. The limited progress in project implementation prevented, in some cases, the application of the foreseen methodology, requiring adaptation of the methodology and application of additional evaluation methods/tools.
- low stakeholder involvement, particularly reflected in surveys, but also in other evaluation tools such as interviews, workshops or focus groups. The conditions imposed by COVID 19 pandemic also led to restrictions on direct interaction with respondents in interviews and focus group meetings.
- low availability, accessibility, quality and accuracy of data needed for the evaluations - unjustified differences between data from different sources, e.g. RAI and aggregated project level data extracted from SMIS. Also, data on the target group showed gaps and errors that reduced the size of the population considered for the application of the data collection methods, creating the risk of affecting the rigour of the statistical processing.

All of these challenges reduced the evaluability assessment of the targeted interventions, but through exhaustive collection of existing data and triangulation of findings through additional evaluation methods, rigorous findings and conclusions were formulated on the extent and manner in which programme actions contributed to the observed effects.

In order to disseminate the results and lessons learned from the evaluations, they were discussed in the Evaluation Steering Committees and published on the Ministry of European Investments and Projects website <https://mfe.gov.ro/programe/autoritati-de-management/am-pocu/>, and on the Evaluation Library at <https://www.evaluare-structurale.ro>. An executive summary of each evaluation report was also made, translated into English, Hungarian, Romani and Braille.