

Evaluation Helpdesk

Review of evaluations on Cohesion policy
programmes in Romania

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Background

- Up to end-Feb 2021, Helpdesk has far reviewed 47 evaluations on Cohesion policy programmes in Romania published since 2015
- 25 on 2007-2013 – 17 ERDF/CF, 7 ESF, 1 both Funds – 21 assess impact
- 22 on 2014-2020 – 15 ERDF/CF, 6 ESF, 1 both Funds - only 5 on impact
- Other evaluations - wholly on implementation (procedures + progress)
- Impact evaluations on 2007-2013 cover most TOs
- Impact evaluation on 2014-2020 on Energy, R&D, Environmental infrastructure, Transport, Employment measures, TA
- Each evaluation summarised in terms of aims, findings + policy implications
- and assessed in terms of:
 - Suitability of design/approach
 - Appropriateness + correctness of methods applied
 - Suitability + quality of data
 - Validity of findings
 - Validity of policy implications drawn

Summary of assessment of impact evaluations

Design:

- Limited number of impact evaluations highlights lack of outcomes – reflects delays in implementation
- Most evaluations based on mixed methods with commendable triangulation of results
- A few evaluations cover too many measures + include too many methods – hard to assess effects in detail and to interpret results

Methods:

- Most evaluations of 2007-2013 and 4 of 5 of 2014-2020 use advanced methods, CIE or TBA, to estimate impact, though not always successfully
- For 2014-2020, 2 use CIE, 1 with TBA, 2 use TBA
- For TBA, need to spell out causal chain + mechanisms better
- For CIE, need to ensure control variables most appropriate and complete – and to take account of statistical significance of results
- For both, in many cases, insufficient detail given to understand how methods applied and so to assess robustness of findings

Summary of assessment of impact evaluations (cont.)

Data:

- Most evaluations use quantitative + qualitative data in intelligent way
- But many evaluations affected by data limitations:
 - limited use of administrative data – reflects access difficulties
 - low response rates to surveys
 - lack of data on indicators from monitoring system
 - limited data on outcomes – measures/projects still to produce results
- Illustrates need to ensure necessary data available when evaluation commissioned – long-term issue

Robustness of findings:

- Data improvements - in monitoring system indicators + ensuring availability of suitable data – would improve robustness of results
- As would more careful description and analysis of theory of change
- Given difficulties of distinguishing impact – need for caution when interpreting results