

0 Methodology

0.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The purpose of the ex-ante evaluation is to ensure the quality of the programming process and the final programme document. The ex-ante evaluation is not only a programme evaluation in a strict sense, it goes beyond that as the evaluators are part of an interactive and iterative consultation process. Their role is not restricted to assessment and evaluation, but relates also to coaching and guidance.

0.2 Methodology

The methodological approach comprises the following aspects. These are based on the methodological guidelines from DG Regions (Working paper on the ex-ante evaluation) as well as on specific ad-hoc requirements:

- assessment of the socio-economic analysis (plausibility, focus, analytic depth of focus);
- assessment of the logic and consistency of the SWOT analysis (including methodological support);
- assessment of the strategy relevance and coherence;
- assessment of the policy coherence;
- assessment of the reliability and applicability of the indicator system;
- assessment of the quantification of objectives;
- assessment of the viability and feasibility of the administrative implementation system.

Process

The process of the ex ante evaluation has the following landmarks:

- The activities of the ex ante evaluation started in the second half of August, 2006.
- The official kick-off seminar was on the 25th of September.
- The ex ante evaluation team elaborated two interim reports which were discussed during debriefing meetings with the MA CSF, the MA SOP HRD and representatives of intermediate bodies on respectively October 4 and November 1, 2006.
- There has also been a workshop on indicators on November 13, 2006, which included a discussion on a set of indicators for the SOP HRD proposed by the key expert on indicators between the MA SOP HRD, the MA ROP, the MA SOP IEC and the key ex ante evaluator.
- The draft final evaluation report was presented and discussed during a meeting with the MA CSF, the MA SOP HRD and representatives of intermediate bodies on December 13, 2006.
- There will a presentation of this final report in February, 2007.
- The Programme Complement will be evaluated separately in March, 2007.

Evaluation instruments

For the main part, the ex ante evaluation has been carried out by the study of relevant documents (especially the April and November drafts of the SOP; see the list of literature attached) and interviews with the programmers and other relevant experts.

Next to the SOP HRD (April and November drafts) itself, the ex ante evaluation team studied a lot of documents relevant for this evaluation (see the List of literature in the Annexes of this report). For the assessment of the principle of partnership in the elaboration of the SOP, especially in the field of the SWOT analysis and the proposed strategy and interventions, a group of 12 stakeholders was approached for an interview, of which 8 responded (Annex 2 of this report).

Next to the above named kick-off seminar official debriefing sessions, there have been several informal several meetings with the Managing Authority and meetings with the two main intermediate bodies for the SOP (the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Agency for Employment). Research voor Beleid was also present at a meeting between the Managing Authorities of the SOP HRD and the SOP IEC and has also visited DG Employment (two times) and DG Regions with the European Commission.

In the framework of the study, additional analyses have been carried out on the following subjects:

- the state of education in Romania – interviews with the MoER, secondary analysis of data and literature analysis (remarks included in the first interim report and in the main section of this report);
- the position of the social partners in CVT in Romania – interviews with social partners and literature analysis (Annex 3);
- indicators for ESF monitoring and evaluation – interviews with the EC and literature analysis - (Annex 5);
- the situation with the Roma in Romania – one interview and literature analysis (Annex 6).

The indicator system and the quantification of the objectives have also been supported centrally for all operational programmes.

0.3 Conceptual remarks

The writer's approach of that evaluation has been predominantly based on dialogue with the Managing Authority. It was not regarded necessary at this stage to have specific discussions with regional authorities. As the programme intervenes at the national level, the thrust has no deliberate regional dimension (although there will be regional impacts as in any such programmes).

It was seen as the paramount objective of the evaluation to coach the Managing Authority via the required iterative and interactive approach. Coaching has involved active support to the Managing Authority. This support consisted of active contribution to the elaboration of the programme.

The following inputs were provided in terms of coaching:

- five informal meetings with the Managing Authority on the socio-economic and SWOT-analyses, the strategy, the indicators and implementation;
- participation (in the company of the key expert on the evaluation of the SOP IEC) within a meeting between the MA SOP HRD and the MA SOP IEC about complementarities and state aid problems;
- discussions with the two intermediate bodies at the MoER and the NAE;
- many recommendations in the first interim report on texts and contents of the SOP;
- recommendations on quantification of results and impacts and implementation and also a list of suggestions for indicators at the various levels in the second interim report;
- an annotated version of the November draft of the SOP with textual suggestions has been sent to the MA SOP HRD.

The inter-active approach was ensured by a permanent dialogue on analysis results and recommendations and the discussion on their acceptance (or rejection) or possible issues of clarity and comprehensiveness.