

1 Appraisal of the socio-economic analysis and the relevance of the strategy to the needs identified

1.1 Socio-economic analysis

This first chapter relates to both the socio-economic analysis which has been included in the SOP HRD itself as well as the evaluations of pre-accession EU funded programmes and the ex ante evaluation of the NDP. By this way, it covers the whole of chapter 1 of the SOP HRD.

- 1.1. The main reason for this is that the SOP HRD itself includes the description of PHARE programmes in the field of HRD in the socio-economic analysis, showing that very often the combination of experiences with national policy and studies by national institutes at one hand and experiences from PHARE at the other hand will give a good picture of the starting point for the SOP HRD interventions.

Textual

- 1.2. Compared to the April draft of the SOP, the quality of the English language has decreased. Some sentences are quite difficult to understand, especially in the analysis part.
- 1.3. Not all footnotes relate to the tables or other footnotes, to which they should relate. This also counts for some references in the text, e.g. p.19: increase in the number of personnel per SME size; p 35: the text relating to Table 34 contains the wrong figures and p. 37: Table 37 of the Annex of the SOP does not compare Romania with EU figures for part-time work.
- 1.4. Most tables and graphs have been moved to the annexes of the SOP. As a result of this, there is a lot of quantitative information in the text.
- 1.5. Despite moving tables and graphs, the texts for the analysis are still quite extensive. It is possible to provide for the same level of analysis in a more comprehensive way.
- 1.6. The content page of the SOP seems to point at a separate paragraph for health. This is not the case however; there is no such paragraph. As a consequence of this, also the paragraph on previous experiences has another number.

1.1.1 Socio-economic analysis

The socio-economic analysis is in the first chapter of the SOP (Current situation analysis). Whereas the chapter contains a lot of statistics, our comments have two parts: first some remarks on statistics and then remarks on the analysis itself.

Statistics

- 1.7. The current analysis chapter contains a lot of useful statistical information on the situation in education, employment and social inclusion in Romania. All relevant information seems to be present.
- 1.8. The statistics have generally, when possible, been updated to the year 2005. In this way they will serve as good baseline indicators for the further monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
- 1.9. When possible, also, comparisons to EU figures (EU25, EU10) have been provided. In some cases, especially related to educational enrolment and attainment, there are no such comparisons (tables 4, 11, 13, 14 and also 26 on employment).
- 1.10. There are little statistics on the relation between education and employment. The text (p. 15) points out that the only way to measure the quality of initial education is to look at employment/unemployment figures of school leavers of several types of education. These figures are not included, however (the relevance of these figures is doubted in the text). Also the chapter on employment contains no figures about the employment of school leavers (general; by kind of occupation) or the employment by educational level and age group. Such statistics, however, are very crucial for the SOP strategy.
- 1.11. There is also no clear account of the mismatch between the types of occupation for which training is available and the demands of the labour market (over 70 percent of entrants to the Arts and Trades schools in 2004 were in processing or production occupations while less than 15 percent of them were trained in services).
- 1.12. The ex ante evaluator agrees with the Commission that some more recent statistics on CVT should be needed, but these are not available. There are several statistics in the texts. Those on p. 23, p. 25 and p.105 are different. All those figures also do not seem to very reliable, because employers sometimes do not seem to have counted e.g. induction programmes. It should be remarked that the figures on p. 105 also seem to indicate a 40% growth of CVT between 2001 and 2004. Romanian medium and large private companies and especially foreign companies are accounting for most of the growth, even if not so spectacular.
- 1.13. There is a lot of hidden unemployment in the countryside, which disturbs the picture of unemployment in these regions.¹ This phenomenon also hinders the analysis of the relation between economic growth and employment. It also seems the reason for giving specific attention to registering the unemployed in rural areas.
- 1.14. Employment statistics are disturbed by a change in definitions in 2001/2. This is the reason most statistics on employment in the Annex of the SOP start with 2002. However, the table with the main indicators on employment (Table 18 SOP) still contains figures from 1999-2002. There is a footnote with the table, but in fact the differences between 1999-2001 and 2002-2005 are not very well explained.
- 1.15. The European Commission has asked for literacy statistics. These could illustrate the amount of persons which will have extreme difficulty to get to the labour market. These are not included in the SOP, however.
- 1.16. There are several figures for the total amount of Roma with little explanation why these figures differ.

¹ An owner of a small piece of land can not be registered as unemployed.

- 1.17. The changes in the definitions of disability are not shown by the figures in the Tables 33 and 34 of the Annex of the SOP. Maybe, these tables already contain the changes in definition (has the NAPD adapted definitions for the figures from 2000-2003?).
- 1.18. The SOP contains almost no prognostics (except for a table on the development of school population – Table 3.2 of the Annex of the SOP) and a subparagraph (f) on p. 28) on trends in the labour market. The trends on the labour market are not illustrated by tables in the Annexes of the SOP. The SOP IEC contains on p. 138 (SOP IEC Annex 6) a table with the prognosis of the labour productivity based on employment figures. There is also a similar table in the NSRF (Table 7 on p. 17).

Analysis

- 1.19. Overall, the analysis provides an overview of the quantitative trends in the field of education, employment and social inclusion (with also providing some analysis on health).
- 1.20. The analysis could be more analytical, however. It does not really explain the causes of certain phenomena. The short analysis of the Commission in its position paper already contains the most important elements. Also the JIM (Joint Memorandum for Social Inclusion) contains an analysis which includes less figures, but, at the other hand, also a description of important trends, already starting in the nineties. This analysis seems still relevant for analyzing the present situation (compare the comments of the Commission on figures on poverty). It should be mentioned that the paragraph on education has developed further in the field of analysis than those on employment and social inclusion.
- 1.21. In the description of the rationale for the Priority Axes, there are some texts that provide for a better analysis of Romania's strengths and needs than the more statistics oriented description in the Analysis chapter. Also the explanation of the financial division of the programme (Chapter 4) contains some useful analyses. There are some small differences between the analyses in several parts of the SOP.
- 1.22. At some places the texts only contains figures and percentages, but hardly any analysis at all. An example are the texts on socially excluded children on p.31.
- 1.23. A, from the perspective of the Lisbon objectives quite important remarks concerns the passage on the employment rate of the 15-24 age group. This rate decreased, which is more or less presented as a regrettable fact. The reason for this decrease, however, seems to be the higher participation in (higher) education, which is of course a very positive fact. A similar remark can be made on the increase of youth unemployment. Not the absolute amount of youngsters unemployed is increasing but the total amount of young active people is decreasing (because more young people continue their education). As a consequence of this, a growing part of the young active people is unemployed (so the youth employment rate rises, while the absolute figures stays about the same). This seems also illustrated by comparing both censuses and the 2004 AMIGO survey (table 13 of the Annex of the SOP). The 15-24 active population seems small compared to the total 15-29 years age group.
- 1.24. There is also no sufficient analysis on the mismatch between the types of occupation for which training is available and the demands of the labour market including the demand for youth labour in new occupations (see also 1.10 above). One should in connection with this also point at the incentives for schools to replace the courses leading to the old occupations (and often those teaching these courses!).

- 1.25. Another point of attention, which is also mentioned in the EC comments on the SOP of December 2006, is the relation between the decrease of employment in agriculture in rural areas and the increase in services and industry. The analysis on p. 16 supposes a correlation, which in fact does not seem to exist until now when you look at the statistics. Employment in agriculture decreases, while employment (in absolute figures) in services and industries stays at about the same level.
- 1.26. A major source for employment in the coming years could be the jobs directly originating from the interventions in the framework of the other SOP's. There is only little information (related to the SOP IEC) in the analysis.
- 1.27. There is no analysis of the causes for withdrawal from the labour market by workers with a very low educational level. Possibly there is a connection with the fact that most of them were working in agriculture.
- 1.28. There is no real analysis of the position of the social partners in Romania. In accordance to the ESF Regulation, this is an important aspect of ESF programming. At the moment the only related aspect present in the analysis are the very crucial roles the Sectoral Committees could play in linking education, social partners and regional bodies.
- 1.29. Page 28 describes labour market trends, mainly tackling the ageing problem. It only looks at the trends till 2008. The real problems with an ageing population will become apparent later. This is illustrated e.g. by table 3.2. of the Annex of the SOP on participation in education: especially participation in higher education will drop significantly. For the rest the texts of this subparagraph are more strategy-oriented than analytical. It implies, that it is necessary to take measures already now. The comment has to be made, however, is, that there is no direct follow-up for this remark (preventing the consequences of ageing by e.g. active ageing, preparing for a job change in middle age, health checks, etc.) in the strategy of the SOP, e.g. in the way of a specific key area of intervention.
- 1.30. There is also no analysis on the consequences of the different figures for Roma, in several ways: is the position of people who are Roma but do not consider themselves as such different from the rest of the Roma? Or is it a problem that this group is much more difficult to reach than the registered Roma. Some of this information is in Annex 6 of this report.
- 1.31. The subparagraph on the disabled starts with a policy analysis from 1989. Then, however, there is a gap in the description about the period until 1999, when there came a possibility to hire personal assistants, and there is also no assessment of the success of this policy.
- 1.32. The information on job fairs for the disabled is interesting. It is not really informative about the general situation with employment for the disabled whereas they will also find jobs by other channels of recruitment.

1.1.2 Analysis of previous evaluation results

Next to assessing the description of experiences with pre-accession funds in the SOP HRD itself, the ex ante evaluator has also studied some of the PHARE evaluations (at least the ones available) and the ex ante evaluation of the NDP. We will start with the NDP, whereas the main message of the ex ante evaluation of the NDP is about the socio-economic analysis in the NDP.

The assessment of the description of HRD in the NDP

The ex ante evaluation of the NDP¹ contains the following criticism on the analysis of HRD in Romania in the NDP.

Main points of criticism on the HRD socio-economic analysis in the NDP:

(source: ex ante evaluation)

- No information on rates qualification attainment within the education and vocational training system and the extent of qualifications of different levels within the Romanian workforce.
- There is lacking an analysis of the resource and performance issues which might justify investment in quality assurance would have been appropriate.
- The material covering the fit of the educational system with the needs of the labour market is weak and the analysis has been pared down from the earlier draft.
- There is need for further analysis of the qualifications level among the unemployed, which may have provided justification for training interventions among the unemployed.
- The section on entrepreneurship which featured in an earlier draft of the NDP and which provides justification for action under the proposed adaptability and enterprise measures should have been in the NDP.
- The analysis of the structure of employment is based on a three sector model of the economy. The NDP 2004-06 presented a more detailed analysis of employment structure. As a minimum, it would be helpful to differentiate between the evolution of public and private sector services.
- There is no analysis of self-employment.
- There is analysis of unemployment among young people, but not a corresponding analysis relating to older workers, which is increasingly seen as a vulnerable group in the Member States.
- Vocational training. While useful, much of this material relies on assertions rather than justification through presentation and analysis of information.
- There should be information on underemployment, in particular in rural areas.
- An analysis is needed of emigration / working abroad, because this apparently affects a significant section of the population, which may have important implications for the domestic labour market.
- There is a need to set benefit payments and minimum wage payments in context, by reference to the actual cost of living.
- The analysis should be exploring the role of the black economy and of subsistence farming in underpinning some household incomes.
- The analysis should further develop the material on child protection and housing.
- It is important to consider the position of minorities and vulnerable groups other than the Roma and the disabled. There is very little information on the obstacles that disabled people face in trying to participate in the labour market or Romanian society more generally.
- There should be specific attention to educational attainment and qualifications among women.
- There should be more attention to gender aspects. An analysis is needed of female entrepreneurship and participation in management positions, barriers to female participation in the labour market and in business, which might include cultural attitudes to the roles of women and men; availability / affordability of childcare, attitudes among employers to work-life balance; the limited availability of part-time jobs.

¹ Fraser Associates, *Ex ante evaluation of the National Development Plan. 2007-2013* (February 2006).

- 1.33. The criticisms from the ex ante evaluation of the NDP are for the larger part also applicable to the SOP HRD. Some of these seem to be, at least partly, dealt with (information about entrepreneurship, more information about CVT and qualifications in educations, underemployment in rural areas, emigration). Some other points are already elaborated upon above (connection between education and labour market, more attention to ageing, further developing the material on child protection). For the rest, the following could be said of the points of criticism from the NDP ex ante evaluator:
- In some cases there are severe problems with statistics (the black economy, self employment);
 - At some other places more statistics would be useful, but would not add much to the analysis as such (information on other minorities, on minimum wages, more information on gender inequalities); there is already a load of statistics in this section of the SOP HRD.

Experiences with PHARE

Paragraph 1.4. of the report contains a description of previous experiences with PHARE. There are also some references to PHARE on other places in the SOP. The ex ante evaluator has studied the most recent¹ of the PHARE evaluations.

- 1.34. The analysis in the SOP HRD on experiences with PHARE interventions is still a little bit confusing. It is in need of an editorial hand. For the education sector it concentrates first on the main outcomes, while for the labour and social sector it mainly describes its main objectives of PHARE interventions, while analyzing only some of the outcomes by programme. PHARE experiences with CVT are analyzed within the employment section (maybe because it was with the MLSSF before), but is treated as belonging to education in the rest of the SOP.
- 1.35. For clarification, it might be useful to include the list of PHARE projects, which was within the April draft of the SOP, into the Annexes of the SOP.
- 1.36. There are already some important conclusions for ESF programming in the analysis of PHARE experiences: firstly of course because it informs about the points of departure for the SOP HRD, especially in the field of qualifications in education, capacity building in general and experiences with programming and project management; secondly about the chances for success, e.g. about training courses for entrepreneurs, employees and the unemployed (e.g. a relatively low drop out rate). Thirdly, there are also some warnings for the implementation of the SOP HRD: a poor perspective of employers about the importance of the competences and qualifications of the employees for competitiveness, the need of a pro-active approach in assisting project promoters, a better communication, a more careful project selection, monitoring while using indicators, better involvement of local authorities and about a higher participation of the unemployed and disadvantaged groups in HRD projects.
- 1.37. There are also some important conclusions from PHARE experiences at other places in the SOP, e.g. on p. 9 and 14 regarding VET (too little methodological training of teaching staff; difficulties because of a different economical development in rural

¹ See the list of literature in the annexes. In each case the most recent evaluation reports have been studied.

areas; lack of labour market forecasts; more attention to the transition from school to labour market, especially for graduates at the intermediate level) and on p. 90 regarding the role of the NGO's (increasing the absorption rate of the NGO's and the voluntary sector and their capacity to implement projects).

- 1.38. The study of PHARE evaluations by the ex ante evaluators for the larger part confirmed the picture arising from the paragraph on PHARE experiences within the SOP. There are, however, some additional messages to be included. Firstly, there were several projects in the fields of social inclusion, especially among Roma (other than about the enrolment in education)¹ and the disabled. In case of the Roma, there were e.g. experiences with shifting the responsibility for the projects to Roma officials, which not always seemed to work quite well. This shows the importance of selecting projects in which both the local authorities and the Roma themselves are involved. At the other hand, the response of local authorities to initiatives directed at the Roma seemed very low. An important suggestion was to include the modules of the teacher training course for teaching Roma in regular teacher training. The main message for the programmes directed at the disabled is that it is important to ensure the sustainability of the results. A more general problem in the field of social inclusion concern difficulties of NGO's to secure sustainable funding.
- 1.39. Secondly, there were some conclusions about CVT (regarded as an individual responsibility for employees, no certification for in-company trainings, problems with payments for authorisation of trainings, no funding for training equipments, need for train-the-trainers programmes, more flexible courses, selection paying too much attention to the cost factor, the importance of contracting ICT in time, etc.) and HRD schemes in general (most unemployed trained getting a job, low involvement of social partners, need for preparation for sustainability of trainers, better preparation for evaluation, problems getting advanced financing after finishing the project, etc.).

1.2 Appraisal of the SWOT

For the assessment of the SWOT analysis the ex ante evaluators have, next to their own assessment techniques, made use of the following methods:

- An analysis of the remarks of the Commission in its Position Paper (See List of Literature);
- A survey among some principal stakeholders.²

Textual

- 1.40. Just as with Chapter 1 of the SOP (socio-economic analysis), the English of Chapter 2 on the SWOT analysis is of a mediocre quality.
- 1.41. There is also one Threat which seems to be mentioned twice: "International competition for the workforce with high qualifications" seems about the same as "The ex-

¹ See also Annex 6 describing several PHARE projects targeting increased participation of Roma children in education.

² The Inception Report suggested holding a workshop. Because of the range of possible stakeholders, active in the fields of education, employment and social inclusion, the ex ante evaluators decided it would be better to interview each stakeholder separately. A report on this survey is included in the Annexes.

ternal migration of skilled workers or/and workers with high educational levels". Would this not be the case, than the difference between these two Threats should be explained for.

Analytical strength

- 1.42. At first sight the SWOT seems unbalanced. It mentions a lot of Weaknesses and a lesser amount of Strengths, Opportunities and Threats. However, the reality is that the situation on HRD in Romania comprises a lot more weaknesses than strengths. From that perspective there is no real question of an unbalanced SWOT.
- 1.43. The SWOT-analysis is followed by an explanation. This should illustrate the relations between elements of the SWOT and also highlight the most important factors. One should expect a certain prioritization of elements of the SWOT: which are the most important strengths and weaknesses which are the best opportunities and the most dangerous threats?¹
- 1.44. Explaining the relative importance of the several SWOT elements, is a way to better link the SWOT to the socio-economic analysis. There is a lack of information on the underlying causes for (especially) Weaknesses as well as Strengths.
- 1.45. Some of the Opportunities are not as much chances for as well as elements of the programme. In fact Opportunities should be developments or policies in fields relevant for HR Development to which the HRD Programme could link its strategy (and not elements of the programme itself!). Maybe this is also meant by the programmers. Should this be the case, than it will be better to speak of: "The on going restructuring of the educational system", "the increasing participation in post-graduate education" , "The strong development of the NGO sector", "Experiences and good practice acquired in pre-accession programs".
- 1.46. Macroeconomic stability is mentioned as a strength. In fact, there has been economic growth during the last years. This seems a real strength, it is better than stability.
- 1.47. Some of the Strengths should be shifted to the Opportunities: County strategies for access to education of disadvantaged groups and Regional action plans for TVET, Employment and Social Inclusion.
- 1.48. A strong NGO sector is mentioned as an Opportunity. It is important to notice that, in the end, a country cannot rely upon a strong NGO sector. It has to develop its own potentials of public administration. Each NGO tends to approach things from its own perspective and with its own methods. This can lead to confusion and inequality of rights. Of course, NGO's can help developing the public sector.
- 1.49. Not only the development of the NGO sector could be an opportunity, but also in the field of the social partners there are some good examples (see Annex 3 of this report). It is especially important to build forth on the Sectoral Committees, which in the future could not only be partners for developing and implementing qualifications but maybe also for real activities in the fields of CVT and ALMM.
- 1.50. Some Opportunities for one sector are a Threat for the other and the other way around. So is e.g. the development of the knowledge based society a Threat to excluded groups, while the demographic trend may favour the excluded.

¹ A description of the most important phenomena for the strategy. however, turns up at p. 53, within the description of the strategy. Later on, again, three priorities for ESF interventions, different from the phenomena on p. 53, are being described in the framework of the financial plan (p. 105).

- 1.51. In the Opportunities section there are only pre-accession experiences within education mentioned as a basis for ESF programming. There have been also useful experiences in the fields of employment and social inclusion (and even with health).
- 1.52. Some stakeholders mentioned that legislation might be seen more as a Threat than as an Opportunity. The interesting thing is that they looked at this from two perspectives. Some stakeholders indicated the slow pace of change, while others regarded legal changes as frustrating project progress.
- 1.53. Stakeholders mentioned the lack of formal organization of the Sectoral Committees is an important Threat for involvement of social partners at the local and regional level.

SWOT-elements to add

- 1.54. The European Commission suggested in its position paper of August 2006 to add "the strong development of SME's as a possibility to absorb labour force" as an Opportunity. Whereas the rest of the suggestions of the EC have been included into the SWOT (except the on going restructuring of higher education being changed into the restructuring of the whole of education), there is, to the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, no clear reason not to adopt the suggestion of the EC about the growth of the SME sector. Also Priority Axis 3 of course will fit quite well to this Opportunity.
- 1.55. In its Comments to the November version of the SOP the Commission also suggested to add the following Strengths: the EU membership, the completion of privatization of state owned economy, the continuous increase of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the increasing attractiveness of the Romanian economy due to sustained economic growth and accession.
- 1.56. The stakeholders interviewed during the survey in the framework of this ex ante evaluation mentioned that there was agreement on adding some SWOT-elements during a meeting with the MA SOP HRD on the 2nd of November. Some of these elements really are in the SWOT (O: experiences in pre-ESF, T: non attractiveness of a teaching career, low managerial capacity at schools), while one is not (T: low competitiveness of economy in rural areas) and others are included in a somewhat distorted form (W: low access to education of children in rural areas; low participation of education of young persons aged 18-24).
- 1.57. The ex ante evaluator suggested that an important Strength in HRD will be the working mentality of many young professionals, of course at first wanting to earn more income, but also helping to catch up the economy with the rest of Europe. To the Threat of "The low management capacity of local administration" one might add the Threat that local administration might prefer to build roads, bridges, waste water installations and energy stations above investments in schools and social services, as also was the case in the EU10 countries. Of course, it should be mentioned that there are (in Romania, shown by PHARE evaluations) also good examples of local communities investing pre-accession funds in education infrastructure.
- 1.58. A last important Opportunity, linked to structural funding is the amount of job openings, especially in e.g. construction, which will come forth from the other SOP's.
- 1.59. The coherence of the SWOT will be highlighted with the next table.

Education	Employment	Social Inclusion
HR with high qualification in IT/engineering (s)	Macroeconomic stability (s)	Country strategies for access to education (s)
Country strategies for access to education (s)	Reduced labour costs (s)	Legal framework SI (s)
Regional Action Plans TVET (s)	Extension of ICT market (s)	NGO's SI (s)
High level drop out and ESL (w)	HR with high qualification in IT/engineering (s)	National programmes vulnerable groups (s)
Limited supply CVT (w)	NGO's labour market (s)	Regional plans/Pacts SI (s)
Limited development tools qualifications (w)	Regional plans/Pacts employment (s)	Insufficient integration vulnerable groups (w)
Low adaptation pre- and in service training (w)	Insufficient qualifications labour market (w)	Insufficient community services vulnerable (w)
Low involvement social partners in HRD (w)	Insufficient health and safety at work (w)	Remote areas (w)
Low participation CVT (w)	Low involvement social partners in HRD (w)	Low inclusion children from child protection (w)
Limited partnerships R&D (w)	Limited entrepreneurial culture (w)	Structural funds (o)
Poor quality services PES CVT (w)	Insufficient PES (w)	Decentralization (o/T)
Insufficient integration vulnerable groups (w)	High participation (subsistence) agriculture (w)	Strong NGO sector (o)
Remote areas (w)	Hog participation informal economy (w)	SF adjustment difficult (T)
Structural funds (o)	Low labour market mobility (w)	Increase in prices (T)
Acceptance Romanian qualifications EU (o)	Low temporary working (w)	Low management capacity local level and schools (T)
Knowledge based economy (o)	Youth and long-term unemployment (w)	Poor health status (T)
Restructured system (o)	Insufficient integration vulnerable groups (w)	
Growth post-graduate education (o)	Remote areas (w)	
Decentralization (o/T)	Structural funds (o)	
Partnerships education (o)	Increasing demands (o)	
PHARE-experiences (o)	Legal framework SME's (o)	
Demography (T)	Decentralization (o)	
SF adjustment difficult (T)	Partnerships education (o)	
Unattractiveness teaching career (T)	Strong NGO sector (o)	
Low management capacity local level and schools (T)	Demography (T)	
	International migration workers and sectors (T)	
	SF adjustment difficult (T)	
	Low competitiveness (T)	
	Restructuring of industries (T)	
	Poor health status (T)	

The table shows, that each of the elements of the socio-economic analysis are represented in the analysis and that there are not only coherent packages of elements for the three major themes, but that there are also interlinking elements. What it also shows is, that there are less SWOT-elements for social inclusion than for the other sectors.

1.3 Relevance of the strategy to the needs identified

1.3.1 The relation between the strategy and the needs identified

1.60. In general, the strategy seems to address the main weaknesses of and threats to the Romanian labour market and educational and social system, making use of its strengths and the opportunities at hand. It stresses the importance of strengthening initial education, of developing CVT/LLL, of improving labour market policies and of specific actions directed at socially excluded groups such as Roma, disabled persons and women, especially in rural areas.

1.61. There are however, a few (partial) exceptions:

- The strategy is addressing the health problems only very partial by supporting CVT in the health sector (Priority Axis 2) and entrepreneurial courses in health and safety at the work floor (Priority Axis 3). Next to this, of course, the ROP is supporting infrastructure in health. There is a considerable shortage of nurses and doctors in the countryside (see the ROP) already now and this shortage will grow in the future, while the demand for health care will grow with ageing. There are, however, no interventions in the field of regular education in health mentioned in the programme. One might also consider training R&D personnel in health.
- The supply for CVT is only targeted from the perspective of the infrastructure in IVET schools and the NAE. The private sector could also play an important role in CVT provision. The PHARE evaluations show the problems (especially the report on Supply in CVT; see the literature list) for private CVT providers in equipment purchase. The SOP HRD could find ways to support this too, because strengthening CVT is a very important part of the strategy.
- The social partners will be very important in VET (providing apprenticeships), CVT and ALMM. At the moment the strengthening of the contribution of social partners is mainly in Priority Axis 3 (but shared with the NGO's) while the importance of the Sectoral Committees is mentioned in the framework of Priority Axis 1. Just as in other countries, it seems logical, as is also shown by the short survey of the ex ante evaluators on the role of social partners in CVT (Annex 3 of this report) that they should also be involved in programming, preferably also training social partners at subsector level (such as the ship building, the aviation, health, transport and road building sectors, but many more could be addressed).
- It is not satisfactory only to direct interventions to the 55+-age group and the younger people. Romania needs to develop a strategy of active ageing and life-long learning, which especially directs itself at the 30-50 years-age group which will be obliged to work till a retirement age between 65 and 70. Some of these people may need to need a shift of occupation at middle age. The attention to ageing in the strategy does not have a real consequence in the strategy.
- There are also no mentioning in the strategy of increasing the possibilities for temporary work. Of course, this could belong to future strategies of the NAE.

1.62. Next to this, there is an important other point for consideration. That is that the SOP HRD should also provide for the human resources for the other SOP's. While there is no mentioning of this in the SWOT, it is also not directly targeted in the strategy. Some of the Priority Axes, however, and especially Priority Axis 2 (CVT) and Priority Axis 3 (entrepreneurship) do point at certain sectors or occupations which are relevant for the other programmes.

1.3.2 Assessment of partnership

An important prerequisite for the strategy of the SOP being relevant to the needs identified is that the most important stakeholders feel committed to the developed strategy.

For the elaboration of the SOP HRD a working group has been set-up composed by representatives from specialized directorates of the MoLSSF, MoER, NAE, NATB, NIS, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities, the National Agency for Family Protection, the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities, the National Authority for Protection of Children Rights, the National Agency for Roma and the National Institute for Research in the Field of Labour and Social Protection. In order to ensure the process of public consultation, both OP drafts (April and November) have been put on the MoLSSF website and all interested stakeholders were invited to send recommendations and comments to the MA e-mail address. During the consultation process the MA SOP HRD has collaborated with the CENTRAS NGOs Association. Moreover, the MA has organised meetings, trainings and conferences with the representatives of trade unions and employers organisations.

The way stakeholders were involved in the strategy for the SOP HRD has been a subject of a survey among stakeholders organized by the ex ante evaluators (see also Annex 2). The main conclusions are the following:

- 1.63. Most of the stakeholders state they were only involved very late in the process of drafting the SOP. Some of them received the April draft in July, others were only invited to discuss in October or November 2006. This is contrary to the consultations mentioned in Chapter 7 of the SOP. Maybe these consultations were not seen as having a direct relation with the content of the SOP, because they all took place before there was a first draft. Some of the social partners feel they have not been involved at all.
- 1.64. The stakeholders who were invited to comment did not really get an introduction about the SOP, but were asked for feedback on the document. This was done on an individual basis, not with a meeting with other actors.

As a whole, the picture of involvement of the stakeholders in the elaboration of the SOP seems confused. They were consulted in the very beginning, but did not appreciate this as a consultation and then were invited to comment at a very late stage. The MA SOP HRD attaches high importance to further involvement of relevant stakeholders. For that reason, the social partners and the civil society will be further involved in the implementation of the Operational Programme, the activities under Phare 2004 Technical Assistance ensuring training and partnership development measures with the social partners and civil society.

1.4 Overall conclusions and recommendations

1.4.1 Assessment of the socio-economic analysis

The quality of the socio-economic analysis might be assessed as follows:

Regarding the textual aspects:

- The English should be improved upon.
- There should be some more tables in graphs in the text.
- The texts are still not comprehensive enough.
- There are some problems with footnotes and the numbering of paragraphs.

Regarding the statistics:

- For all relevant fields of HR Development in Romania (education, employment, social inclusion) statistics have been provided for. Only for some minor themes statistics are lacking, mostly because these are not available. The most significant statistics missing are about the transition from school to working life: what kind of jobs do school leavers get? For the rest, all relevant statistics seem to be studied;
- In almost all cases, the statistics have been presented and explained in a sound way. Only a few of the explanations, as presented above, are not right;
- There is some confusion with using several statistics at the same time when there is no sound information available on a certain theme. The most important examples are the amount of Roma and the involvement of companies with CVT, for which several figures are given without explaining the differences
- The definitions are clear (except for the need to explain the changes in definitions on employment in 2001/2 a little bit better in the summary table on employment). When available, Romanian statistics have been presented according to EU standards and comparisons with the scores for EU25 or EU10 have been made. There are a few exceptions to this, especially in the field of educational attainments;
- All statistics have been updated, when possible to the year 2005 (or the school year 2005/6). This will make it possible to use these statistics as a baseline for the programme;
- There is a lack of prognostics. Whereas the programme will last until 2013, there is a need to look at developments in the economy, in employment, demography and educational enrolment for a longer period. At the instigation of the ex ante evaluators one table has been put in on developments within education (but without much explanation). At the same time, tables on the development of economy, labour productivity and employment, which are in the SOP IEC and in the NSRF, are lacking in the SOP HRD.

The overall assessment of the statistics is, that they might be considered satisfactory. After adapting the suggestions above, they would become highly satisfactory.

Regarding the analysis:

- There is still some lack of analysis in the Current Situation Analysis chapter. Most texts are statistics with some analytical explanation. The paragraph on education can be assessed better in this respect than the other ones.
- There is, however, a lot of useful analysis in the rest of the SOP. By transferring this as much as possible to the first chapter, it should also be possible to correct for some discrepancies between the analyses.
- What is still lacking in the whole of the SOP, is an analysis of the real needs on the labour market, stemming from: an analysis of possible jobs for school leavers, an analysis of jobs directly or indirectly created by the other SOP's and the consequences of ageing.
- As a consequence of the lack of analysis of the actual and future state of HRD in Romania, there is no real recognition of the main themes of the sector: the transition from an agricultural to a services oriented economy seems the most relevant for now, but is not really pointed out as such; for the future the ageing problem will be most important.
- Maybe as a consequence of these conclusions (which could also stem from PHARE experiences) about the most important challenges for the future are missing in the SWOT: really changing the structure of education and especially strengthening VET and R&D in higher education; introducing LLL concepts by involving social partners; building sufficient institutional capacity for addressing the unemployed and the socially excluded at

the local and regional level, not on the basis of the NGO's but with governmental bodies involved such as the NAE and local, regional and minority administrations. Of course it should be pointed out, again, some of these challenges are in the strategy, but without a sufficient analytical basis.

As a consequence of this, the analytical strength of the socio-economic analysis must be assessed as just about satisfactory at the moment. An important asset is, however, that by transferring analyses from other parts of the SOP, this level of assessment can be improved upon quite easily.

Overall conclusion is that the socio-economic analysis **needs some improvement still**, but that the main ingredients for this improvement seem to be present already.

1.4.2 Assessment of the SWOT and the relevance of the strategy

The inception report provides for a series of criteria to assess the SWOT:

- **No wishful thinking:** the SWOT-analysis does not show any kind of wishful thinking;
- **Good execution and conclusions:** the SWOT as such seems to be well executed and most of the elements (see above for some exceptions) are at the right place. There are, however, no clear conclusions from the SWOT;
- **Consistency:** the SWOT-analysis as a whole is consistent;
- **Coherency:** keeping in mind that HRD applies to three thematic fields (education, employment, social inclusion) the set of elements is coherent, elements belonging to the several categories implicitly linked with each other. There are sets of elements belonging to education, employment and social inclusion;
- **Balanced:** as explained above, there is, for obvious reasons, no quantitative balance (the amount of Weaknesses exceeding the other categories). For the rest the SWOT seems well balanced;
- **Focus on impressionable factors:** of course this is most interesting for the Weaknesses, all of them can be influenced by interventions;
- **Measurable and operational factors:** almost all factors are measurable and operational. The exceptions are some elements expressing partnerships;
- **Redundancy:** while some of the elements of the SWOT are interlinked, there is no real redundancy;
- **No contradictions:** there are no contradictions (except as, explained above, one or two elements might be explained as a Threat for one sector, and an Opportunity for another);
- Link between intervention areas and weaknesses: as will be shown below, this is the case.
- **Killer-Annahmen:** there are no real "killers".

The only thing which is missing, is a certain prioritization of SWOT-elements. In this way, it does not become clear that supporting the problems in the rural areas (caused by the transition from a rural to a services oriented economy) and preventing the dangers of ageing (by LLL/CVT, keeping up the health status of the population, including excluded groups, etc.) are the most important tasks for this SOP. These messages turn up later, within the description of the strategy. For these reasons the SWOT can be assessed as **satisfactory**.

1.4.3 Recommendations on the socio-economic and SWOT analysis and the strategy

Main recommendations

- Regarding the socio-economic analysis: By transferring analytical parts of the description of the strategy, the priorities and the key areas of interventions as much as possible to the first chapter, it should also be possible to correct for some discrepancies between the analyses in the several chapters. The analysis could also be strengthened by including some more conclusions from experiences with PHARE;
- Regarding the SWOT analysis: the analysis should be strengthened when it should inform about a certain prioritization of SWOT-elements which should be the basis for making certain choices in the strategy;
- Regarding the relevance of the strategy: the social partners should in time, especially near the end of the programming period, be able to play a much more important role in HR policies in Romania (e.g. in IVET, CVT, ALMM, etc.). The programme should pay attention to providing the tools to the social partners to take up this role.

Other recommendations: socio-economic analysis¹

- A first recommendation concerns the quality of texts (1.2.). Some sentences are difficult to understand. The ex ante evaluator has asked the MA SOP HRD to clarify.² Also it is necessary to check footnotes and references and the content page of the SOP.
- It is recommendable to check the texts on possibilities to shorten it, while providing the same depth of analysis (1.5).
- There is a lot of quantitative information in the texts (1.3.). It may be advisable to highlight each of the paragraphs of Chapter 1 (respectively on education, employment and social inclusion) with a kind of summary table (this is already available for the paragraph on employment – table 18). Next to that table, each paragraph could contain one or two extra tables showing other important figures (such as the Table on early school leavers in the paragraph on education), e.g. enrolments in VET (Table 8 of the Annex of the SOP), educational attainment (Table 13 Annex), ILO unemployment rate by areas (Chart 11 Annex SOP), poverty risk by ethnic communities (Chart 19 Annex SOP) and Distribution of persons with disabilities by level of disability (Table 34 Annex SOP). A chart or table might also highlight the rather confusing texts on self-employment, unpaid family workers, subsistence employment and underemployment at page 16/17. At the other hand, the table on NAE staff structure could be moved to the Annexes.
- When possible, figures should be compared with the same type of figures for EU25 (1.9).
- For details on the relation between education and employment one might consider for example the study Skills Audit Survey.³ It is also recommendable to include some figures on the employability of school leavers (1.10).
- It is important to point out the existence of a lot of hidden unemployment in the countryside, because this phenomenon disturbs the picture of unemployment in the countryside and also makes it difficult to analyse the relation between growth and employment (1.13).

¹ Between brackets one can find the number of the reference in the text, to which each of the recommendations refers.

² The ex ante evaluator has also presented a lot of small textual suggestions to the MA SOP HRD.

³ Jigău et alii, *Skills Audit Survey*, Romanian National Observatory, Bucharest, 2004.

- The statistics on CVT (1.12) and the Roma (1.16) should be explained better; for the last , see Annex 6 on the Roma. This recommendation also relates to the analysis of the situation of the Roma (2.30).
- Some parts of the socio-economic analysis only contain figures but no analysis. It is recommended that some analytical text should be added (1.22).
- The analysis should comprise a description of the job possibilities the interventions in the framework of the other SOP's will offer (1.26). A first start with this analysis has been made already: the sectors of industry which will be fields of interventions for the SOP IEC and the ROP are being addressed in the strategy.
- An analysis is lacking of the position of the social partners in HR Development in Romania. It should be included in the SOP. The analysis at present is only pointing at the Sectoral Committees (1.28).
- As also the EC points out, some more information on the situation (1.31) and job possibilities (1.32) of the disabled would be useful.
- The analysis of PHARE experiences should be adapted. It is in need of an editorial hand (1.34) and should include (in the annex) a list of PHARE projects (1.35), while also PHARE evaluations provide for interesting information about the current situation, potential successes and implementation (1.36 to 1.39), especially concerning CVT and the Roma.

Other recommendations: SWOT-analysis

- If there is a difference between "external competition for workers" and "migration of workers" this has to be explained for (1.41). Otherwise, one of these two Threats might be skipped.
- The SWOT should be better linked to the socio-economic analysis. There should be more information about the underlying causes for (especially) weaknesses (1.44).
- Some of the Opportunities are better described as external facts/developments instead of parts of the SOP itself (1.45).
- Pre-accession experiences could also be a basis for programming in other fields as education (1.51).
- The additional SWOT-elements have been suggested:
 - Slow pace of additional regulation (T) (1.52)
 - Formal organization of Sectoral Committees is frustrating project progress (T) (1.53)
 - The strong development of SME's as a possibility to absorb labour force (O) (1.54)
 - The EU membership (S) (1.55)
 - The completion of privatization of state owned economy (S) (1.55)
 - The continuous increase of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (S) (1.55)
 - The increasing attractiveness of the Romanian economy due to sustained economic growth and accession (S) (1.55)
 - Low competitiveness of economy in rural areas (T) (1.56)
 - Good working mentality of young professionals (S) (1.57)
 - Job openings as a result of the other Operational Programmes (O) (1.58).

Other recommendations regarding the relevance of the strategy

- It could also be imagined that the HRD SOP should support VET, higher education and the training of R&D personnel in health, because of the supply of personnel in the health sector will be far from sufficient (1.61).

- The SOP HRD and/or the ROP should pay attention to the problems with equipment with private sector CVT providers (1.61).¹
- The possibilities for temporary work should be further explored. Of course, the SOP HRD can only partly contribute to this development (1.61).
- There should be paid more attention to the role of the SOP HRD in providing the personnel for the interventions in the framework of the other SOP's (1.62).

Observations of the MA SOP HRD on the recommendations

The MA SOP HRD in its "Observations on the ex ante evaluation final draft report" indicates that it will incorporate most of the recommendations above in the next version of the SOP.

The only possible exceptions is:

- The challenges of an ageing society do get a certain position in the SOP. The ex ante evaluators want to stress, however, that coping with the problems of ageing will be the most important task of Romanian government in the field of HRD in the future. Especially near the end of the programming period there is a need to direct interventions specifically at active ageing.

¹ In its "Observations on the ex ante evaluation final draft report" the MA SOP HRD already points at the possibilities for private CVT providers to use the existing public infrastructure.

2 Evaluation of the rationale of the strategy and its consistency

2.1 Assessment of the rationale of the strategy

Textual

- 2.1. The quality of the English texts is, in case of the description of the strategy, much better than those within the socio-economic analysis. Still, there are some passages which are in need of additional explanation.
- 2.2. There are also some examples where the same message has been brought forward twice in the same paragraph.¹

Analysis

- 2.3. The strategy is described in Chapter 3 of the SOP HRD (entitled: "Strategy"). Looking at the main questions for evaluations, however, this chapter not really explains the rationale for the strategy as a whole. Its main topics are respectively:
 - The coherence of the strategy with the CSG and other EU policies (which is in fact the subject of the next chapter of this ex ante evaluation report);
 - The objectives of the strategy, which, after summing up the main weaknesses and threats (with a relevancy for the former chapter on the relevance of the strategy), are mainly explained in the sense of quantified objectives (relevant for Chapter 5 of this report on the quantification of the expected results and impacts);
 - After this, the main objective is translated in a series of specific objectives and these into priority axes (all this information is relevant for the analysis of the consistency of the strategy, which follows in the next paragraph of this Chapter).

The strange thing is that Chapter 4 of the SOP HRD ("Financial Plan") does contain an analysis of the rationale of the strategy (its priorities and financial allocations).
- 2.4. The general objective of the SOP HRD is the development of human capital and increasing competitiveness, by linking education and life long learning with the labour market and ensuring increased participation in a modern, flexible and inclusive labour market. This general objective very well summarizes the strategy.
- 2.5. The introduction to the SOP also introduces as an objective "Developing a modern, flexible, inclusive labour market". The objective of flexibility seems to be mainly translated into increasing the adaptability of companies and employees and developing social dialogue. However, modernization and flexibilization of the labour market also relate very strongly to changes in labour law, developing temporary work agencies, etc.
- 2.6. The explanation of the rationale of the strategy in Chapter 4 starts explaining that there are three main priorities within the programme, which are motivated by the socio-economic analysis and the SWOT:

¹ The ex ante evaluators have already provided a document to the MA highlighting some proposals for textual changes.

- Promoting LLL and the adaptability of the labour force (it might be recalled that LLL itself is an important factor of promoting adaptability)
- Promoting ALMM and the integration on the labour market of excluded groups
- Education and training in support of the knowledge based society.

These seem the logical priorities to originate from the socio-economic analysis. Not only do they tackle both the Lisbon objectives and the objectives of regional cohesion, but also both the most important trends for HR development in Romania: the transition from an agriculture-dominated economy to a services-oriented economy and the rapid ageing of the working population. Last but not least, these priorities also will meet the work force need originating directly and indirectly from the other SOP's.

- 2.7. The financial allocation for each of these main priorities (each covering several different priority axes of the programme), is one of 40% for promoting LLL and promoting adaptability of the work force (Priority Axes 2 and 3), 33% for ALMM and integration on the labour market (Priority Axes 4 to 6) and 22% for education and training in support for growth and development of knowledge (Priority Axis 1). The explanation of this allocation is starting with the conclusion, that the participation in CVT is at the lowest level in Romania and that it is very important to assist the competitiveness of the economy, especially the SME sector, by upgrading the labour force. It also helps reaching the Lisbon targets and will prolong the active life of workers, by that way partly solving the future ageing problems. Moreover, the activities under PA3 will enlarge the effectiveness of the SOP IEC.
- 2.8. One third of the financial allocation goes to ALMM and integration of excluded groups. As the interventions under ALMM are closely linked to the rural areas this will in all ways promote regional cohesion and social inclusion. At the same time upgrading the working population in this way helps reaching the Lisbon targets. In the regions, it can also provide for human resources needed for the other programmes. Last but not least, it is necessary mobilizing all possible resources for countering the threat of ageing. Accustoming the Roma population to working life is from this perspective quite important because they are the only part of the population still producing many children.¹
- 2.9. The modernisation of education and training is also very important. Partly this is a question of school infrastructure (to be covered by the ROP) and partly of R&D and ICT (SOP IEC). In addition to this, the SOP HRD must upgrade the skills of teachers and trainers and promote higher education. As the MA SOP HRD points out in its observations on the draft ex ante report there will also be future reforms in education as a part of national education policy.
- 2.10. In the description of the financial allocation of the programme there is lacking a description of additionality to national policy funding as well as the possibilities for synergies with these national policies and the NSRF. This would put the amount of financial allocation in a better perspective, especially when, next to growing budgets for initial and higher education and activities of the NAE in the field of ALMM, the means available for CVT from national, regional and sectoral funds are quite small.

¹ The European Commission in its Position Paper on the April draft of the programme also points at the importance countering the generation through generation lasting culture of unemployment and non-attainment to education with especially Roma.

- 2.11. The description of the various interventions has a very flexible character. There seems to be no case for concentration. There are several reasons for not concentrating the funds in very specific areas. A first reason is that the problems with HRD, as has been shown in the SWOT, are manifold and are covering all the relevant policy fields. A second reason is that Romania has to absorb quite a lot of ESF funding in the coming years. In the survey with stakeholders it became clear that these also favour a more flexible approach, so as to have the possibilities to formulate projects which fit the selection criteria for one of the key areas of intervention of the programme.
- 2.12. There will be several forms of complementarities between the priorities and the key areas of intervention:
- The most obvious example is Priority Axis 4, the modernisation of the PES. A modernised PES can support the objectives for the Priority Axes 5 (by being an ALMM provider), 6 (by assisting vulnerable groups to the labour market and registering unregistered Roma and women in rural areas), 2 (by providing for CVT) and 3 (by training the unemployed in entrepreneurial skills).¹
 - Priority Axis 4 (strengthening the NAE) has a smaller brother in the key area of intervention 3 of Priority Axis 3, directed at capacity building with social partners and the civil society. Improving their capacities can also have synergetic effects on the just mentioned priority axes. There are a lot of activities in the SOP HRD directed on staff of NGO's:
 - under key area of intervention 3.2.3.3.
 - developing tools for social economy under 3.2.6.1
 - as training activities under intervention 3.2.6.2
 - as part of transnational cooperation under 3.2.6.4.

At the same time maybe NGO staff might also be trained under the administrative capacity SOP.

To my opinion, this will cost a lot of time, NGO staff could also use for the target groups. More in general, they should be the ones to train others, not to be trained themselves. Moreover, in the end, it is better to strengthen local public (or maybe even private) actors in the field of social services than NGO's (because there are chances NGO's using other methodologies, not tuning in approaches with other, etc.).

- There will also be synergies between Priority Axis 1 at one hand, especially improving HR in education, and e.g. Priority Axes 2 and 3 at the other, because teachers can also be trainers for CVT and entrepreneurial trainings (and can even be involved in training activities in the framework of Priority Axes 5 and 6).

Synergies and complementarities between the SOP HRD and other operational programmes will be addressed in the next chapter.

¹ During the survey with stakeholders the question was raised why especially the NAE should be modernized, whereas there are also other providers for the same kind of activities, e.g. NGO's and private providers. Whereas one could discuss whether it is good to rely too much on NGOs for social services, one may also ask himself whether public or private organizations should be responsible for re-integration of the unemployed. This question was also raised in the recent dissertation of Ludo Struyven of HIVA Leuven, Belgium: *Hervormingen tussen drang en dwang. Marktwerking op het terrain van arbeidsbemiddeling* (2006).

- 2.13. There do not seem to be any possible conflicts between the proposed objectives of the SOP HRD. All are directed to the improvement of the Romanian labour market.

2.2 The consistency of the strategy

The consistency of the strategy is the subject of the most of Chapter 3, which describes, next to the coherence with EU policies (to be assessed in the following chapter), the objectives of the strategy and the several priority axes.

- 2.14. Before doing this, it is necessary to make a short digression towards Chapter 4. Chapter 4 (Financial Plan) also presents the priorities for the development of HR. While the same main objective is mentioned here, these priorities for development differ from the specific objectives in Chapter 3. While both sets of objectives/priorities are translated into the same Priority Axes, this seems to be a strange kind of inconsistency. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, the priorities of Chapter 4 are better linked to the main objective, the priority axes and the several EU policy objectives.
- 2.15. The problem with the specific objectives is that all of them cover several priority axes, while all the priority axes are covered by at least two specific objectives.
- 2.16. The explanation with the table on the specific objectives and the priority axes on p. 55 also highlights the several interventions that will be directed at rural areas. Of course this is important. At the other hand, one has to realize, that almost all of the country (except for the Bucharest/Ilfov region) might be considered rural. The labour market situation in the main towns in the countryside is sometimes even worse than in the surrounding areas, while the only solution for labour market problems in regions – as has also been pointed out by the ROP – is the linking of the labour markets of cities and towns in the countryside with their surroundings.
- 2.17. The explanation with the priority axes themselves on p. 55/56 is treating the question which of the priorities will be tackled from a central perspective and which ones will be approached regionally. For the Priority Axes 1 and 4 a central approach seems logical, while it seems also consistent to approach the Priority Axes 5 and 6 from the regional perspective. One may doubt however the approaches to Priority Axes 2 and 3. Both have a strong sectoral component. In many countries sectoral parties are responsible for CVT, training of entrepreneurs and also play an important role in the transition from school to active life. While the social partners,¹ especially at the regional level and also at the sectoral level in the form of the sectoral committees do not have enough institutional strength to carry these interventions, it would be a good thing to approach them centrally now, but to keep open the possibilities to transfer some responsibilities to the social partners in the future. The way of organizing Priority Axis 2 is already a good practice by granting part of the responsibility to the Centre for Development of Vocational and Technical Education. Interesting from this perspective is also, that the SOP points at p. 59 at EU recommendations about involving partners.

¹ See also Annex 2.

Priority Axes

The rest of this paragraph deals with the analysis of the several priority axes. For each of the priority axes there are some remarks. It is, however, important to state first that:

- 2.18. As a whole, the Priority Axes present a consistent set of interventions, which apply to the most (general/specific/priority) objectives of the strategy. Some remarks on details in the explanation of the characteristics are given below. Some of them will be important considerations when selecting projects for the several interventions, but as such they have no direct relation to the general strategy.
- 2.19. The only more general remark, already made above in relation to the SWOT and the general strategy, is that overall more involvement of the social partners will be needed.
- 2.20. One might doubt whether it should have been necessary to define a separate Priority Axis for the modernization of the NAE, which also could be considered as part of ALMM. Whereas the NAE could also be an active parent in most other Priority (Axes (all but Priority Axis 1), it is, however, logical to treat the modernization of the PES separately from the rest of the interventions.
- 2.21. A next general remark is about the cross-financing option for ERDF-type interventions (Article 34 of the general regulation). Of course it can be very useful not having define a separate project under one of the ERDF funded Operational Programmes once there are small investments in equipment involved with ESF-type interventions. Moreover, as has become clear from PHARE-evaluations (especially in the field of CVT) there are some difficulties with funding equipment with labour market oriented measures. At the other hand, the ERDF-type interventions will be funded with ESF, but will regarding eligibility have to follow ERDF-regulation. This might cause administrative problems, especially at the regional level, where intermediate bodies and beneficiaries already will have problems to adapt to the regulations of one fund (ESF).
- 2.22. In addition to the last point, it one also needs to consider, which amount of cross-financing from other programmes will relate to training interventions which also could have been financed under the SOP HRD. At the moment, a large part of CVT consists of trainings in managerial qualifications and competences as well as ICT trainings. When these kinds of trainings will also be part of the SOP IEC and the ROP (summing up to the 15% maximum for cross-financing from ERDF), there might arise problems with absorption for the SOP HRD. The MA SOP HRD and the other MA's have already started up discussing this topic.¹ It seems that all real training activities will be part of the SOP HRD.

The following observations on the several Priority Axes can be made:

Priority Axis 1

- 2.23. There is no analysis/evaluation of the extension of compulsory education from eight to ten years. This might have impact on the soundness of the analysis of existing challenges (Priority Axes 1 and 2). For example: the inclusion of the first two years

¹ The MA is already planning to complement Priority Axis 3 with information regarding the complementarity with the SOP IEC and the ROP in the case of entrepreneurship.

of TVET schools in the compulsory level of education entailed an important number of schools in rural areas, to provide for vocational education and training in order to ensure the schooling of students from this area. However, these schools were lacking basic human and material resources for this task. The European Commission asked in its Position Paper for some attention to the transition from compulsory to non-compulsory education.

- 2.24. Apart from teaching teachers and trainers in modern pedagogical methods, the issue of linking teachers with the companies' environment is also an important issue. Partnership in training with companies is not seen as a priority in Priority Axis 1.
- 2.25. The issue of lack of professional qualifications allocated to the levels 4 and 5 (higher technical, managerial and senior professional competences) in TVET is not specifically analyzed in the SOP even if it is extremely important for understanding the context of the programme interventions in the near future. Currently, there is a reluctance to include these levels in the curricula for post high schools. This is due to the fact that at the one hand, including the university sector in the system of vocational qualifications would put a pressure on the issues of central validation and autonomy, while at the other hand, letting them aside would imply that VET pathways exclude universities.
- 2.26. The ex ante evaluators agree that it is important to improve the accessibility of students from rural areas into higher education, as also the European Commission has pointed out. At the other hand, one should start with improving the accessibility of TVET (Priority Axis 2) as a first objective. According to the SOP, some progress in this field has been made, increasing the amount of TVET institutions in the countryside. This progress, however, has not been reflected in a strong increase of the amount of pupils.

Priority Axis 2

- 2.27. Priority Axis 2 does not consider alternative and flexible training systems for early school leaving students – next to apprenticeships e.g. it could have concerned distance learning and modular curricula. A comparison between the front-runners of the TVET system (schools funded within first PHARE program and PHARE TVET program) and the rest of the schools, especially those from economically disadvantaged regions, and those from rural areas, would help to strengthen the analysis. Also an analysis from the companies' perspective (what do they expect from apprentices?) would help. It is also useful to know that there will be new legislation in this field.
- 2.28. Developing the Sectoral Committees and raising awareness for LLL is an important first task in the framework of the key area of intervention regarding CVT. Of course, there are some "frontrunners" which are already now interesting partners for projects in the field of LLL, but even more important is it to reach the big group of companies which shows no interest in CVT for their employees now and to use trade unions as a vehicle to stimulate the employees themselves to be trained.
- 2.29. Not only the sectoral aspect could be elaborated. Also the regional perspective could get some more attention. There are already some experiences with the Regional and Local Education Action Plans, as one of the most important initiatives to link the provision of IVET programmes to trends in local and regional economic development.

Priority Axis 3

- 2.30. There is not only a case of complementarity with the SOP IEC, but also with the ROP, which is supporting micro-enterprises. Because start-ups (by persons trained from the SOP HRD) will almost always be micro-enterprises the complementarity with the ROP may even be stronger than that with the SOP IEC. On p. 85 of the ROP it is stated, that once businesses will become legal entities, further support will be given by the SOP IEC.
- 2.31. Regarding the activities under the key area of intervention 3.2.3.1 ("Promoting entrepreneurial culture") it is important not only to check complementarity to the SOP IEC and the ROP, but also to develop a way to organize projects that will profit from both funds. As the Commission also seems to indicate in its Position Paper (by giving this subject the heading "Coordination") it is important not only to consider the complementarity of the Operational Programmes, but also their co-ordination (this also relates to other Priority Axes regarding infrastructure from the ROP).
- 2.32. The indicative operations for key area of intervention 3.2.3.3 do not fit exactly to the texts on the same intervention. There is in the indicative operations little attention to the regional pacts for employment and to the sectoral committees, while at the same time there are operation in the field of informal and undeclared work which have not been explained before.
- 2.33. The ex ante evaluator agrees with the Commission that the development of partnerships at the sectoral and regional/local level should be directed at sectors a the development of skills (apprenticeships in TVET, CVT) in sectors with growth potential. It is also important to build forth on experiences within PHARE within certain sectors. There is no information in the SOP about the indications from PHARE which sectors might provide chances for LLL.
- 2.34. The interventions under key area of intervention 3.2.3.3. will be very important in developing partnerships for developing HR in Romania. These partnerships, comprising the public sector at the national, regional and local level, NGO's, social partners and the civic society, form the clue for developing activities in the field of education/LLL, employment measures and social inclusion. Indicative operations under 3.2.3.3 also include e.g. capacity building in the field of promoting joint social inclusion initiatives including development of voluntary services and charities and the support of initiatives for shaping civic responsibility, through participation in public debates and by facilitating access to public information. As long as these activities do not relate to activities directed at getting people a job they do not fit into an HRD programme.

Priority Axis 4

- 2.35. The main problem of the NAE seems to be a staffing problem. Compared to PES organizations in other countries the amount of staff seems to be rather small. It has, e.g., only one official available or statistical analysis, which in fact should not only help the NAE itself to provide for marketing plans how to approach the labour market in certain regions and counties, but should also be essential for the total HRD OP to identify sectors with vacancies which could be fulfilled with qualified unemployed. From this perspective, further training NAE staff (which has already undergone several training activities in the framework of PHARE and twinning projects) might even have a contra-productive effect, whereas it keeps them from doing their job.

- 2.36. The NAE has developed Mobile Centres to connect to the countryside. It seems very important that the NAE can go on with and even increase these activities, especially trying to connect with the Roma on a more regular basis. From this perspective, it is at one hand necessary that the ROP will provide for the basic infrastructure for these activities, but that also staff problems within in the NAE will be no obstacle to using the Mobile Centres.

Priority Axis 5

- 2.37. The ex ante evaluator supports the point of view of the Commission that especially training the unemployed should be an important focus of Active Labour Market Measures. On p. 87, for instance, training is one (although the first) in a long row of indicative operations. It might be good to point out that, following the importance of upgrading the working population, training will always be considered as a part of trajectory activities (pathways to the labour market). This observation is also relevant for some interventions in the framework of Priority Axis 6.
- 2.38. The explanation of what will be the difference between the interventions in the framework of the National Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development and those within the SOP HRD is not very clear. It is a little confusing that Priority Axis 1 and CVT are also introduced here. It seems logical that the SOP HRD will support ALMM directed at jobs outside agriculture. The next question is whether this shall only relate to "people in subsistence agriculture" or also to "people in agriculture". An important point to consider is of course, that it will be not very obvious to set up different programmes in remote areas for different target groups, which are both organizing ALMM oriented at getting people jobs in e.g. construction or the services sector.

Priority Axis 6

- 2.39. The description of the key area of intervention 3.2.6.1., social economy still is not very clear about its operations: how will it directly support the social economy?
- 2.40. In comparison with the earlier draft, interventions in the field of social inclusion are more directly targeted to the labour market. Because of the large still (hidden) unemployed labour force in the country, however, it will be extremely difficult to convince employers to hire somebody "with a spot". This asks for subsidies or for training in very specialist areas. There seems to a great risk of providing people with jobs in social economy without many chances to turn these jobs into regular employment.
- 2.41. It will also be extremely difficult to find a job for women in rural areas, as women usually will not travel far for a job (preferring to stay in the neighbourhood of their children). In the countryside, alas, most possible jobs are in the towns and travel is not always easy.
- 2.42. In the near future, there probably will be one exception to this rule that it will be difficult to find a regular job for target groups. This relates to young Roma (e.g. early school leavers). As in an ageing society young Roma will become increasingly interesting for employers, projects should target at combining jobs for this target groups with some kinds of training. The problem will not be the jobs, but to convince the Roma to accept regular employment.
- 2.43. It is not very well explained why transnational activities are specifically defined as a key area of intervention the field of social inclusion and not for the other Priority

Axes. Of course it is also interesting to share views with other member states on e.g. the development of LLL. It has been explained by the MA SOP HRD that such kind of transnational activities will be possible under the other Priority Axes. Maybe the programme point at exchanging experiences with other new member states on Roma and Sinti (Hungary, Slovakia), or on the transition from a rural to a services oriented economy in relation to social inclusion of women (Poland).

- 2.44. Encouraging systems of sharing practices and experiences between different actors at the local and regional level would be a great value, not only through transnational activities.
- 2.45. It will be difficult to remove poverty and inactivity traps only by SOP HRD interventions. To do this, also national policy measures, e.g. in the field of legislation, are needed for.

2.3 Assessment of the rationale of the strategy and its consistency

2.3.1 Overall conclusions

As a whole, the strategy and its translation into objectives and priority axes seems rationalistic and consistent (the above mentioned differences between Chapter 3 and 4 of course being an inconsistency).

- It is demonstrated why particular priorities have been chosen and why the budget was divided the way it has been allocated.
- The shares and weights of the proposed priority axes can be explained by the socio-economic analysis, whereas they are also in line with EU policy objectives.
- There is no real concentration of funding, but this can be explained by the many weaknesses the programme has to face.
- There are complementarities between the priority axes and the key areas of intervention, which will support the synergy of the programme.
- There are no conflicts between the proposed objectives.
- The consistency between the strategic and specific objectives and the available resources can be assessed (also from the perspective that other programmes, such as the ROP and the SOP IEC, will also contribute to the interventions in certain fields, such as education and social services infrastructure, ICT, business start-ups, ALMM for agricultural workers, etc.).
- The proposed policy mix seems, except for some remarks on the individual priority axes, and the need for a bigger involvement of the social partners, optimal. There do not seem to be conflicts between the several key areas of intervention.

The above will lead to the conclusion that the rationale and consistency of the strategy may be assessed satisfactory.

2.3.2 Recommendations

General recommendations

- The rationale of the strategy should be explained in Chapter 3 instead of Chapter 4. Moreover, there should be one, consistent, description of the strategy (2.3).
- The rationale of the strategy should not only point at the interventions in the framework of ESF itself, but should also link, when available, with other relevant policies (such as educational policy, changes in labour law, development of temporary work agencies, etc.). There should also be an explanation of the additionality of the SOP HRD strategy to national policies (2.10).
- The strategy should pay some attention to the amount of time it will consume to train staff (especially within NGO's and the NAE; this recommendation in a lesser way relates to the educational sector, where one only has to pay attention to providing for replacements when teaching personnel will be trained). (2.12).
- As has already been pointed out above, it is important to direct the strategy at capacity building with the social partners role in HR policies (2.12). While it is good also to improve the competences of the NGO's at first, their actions should be directed at transferring responsibilities to the social partners, the natural partners for HR Development. The SOP should support this transferal.¹
- The priorities for HR development in Chapter 4 better fit to the main objective, the priority axes and the several EU policy objectives than the specific objectives of Chapter 3. The ex ante evaluators recommend to introduce these priorities also in Chapter 4 (2.14).
- The Priority Axes 2 and 3 will need (after some time) a sectoral instead of a central and/or regional perspective (2.17).
- The ex ante evaluator understands that it may be necessary to apply the flexibility role to fund ERDF-type interventions aimed at infrastructure, especially when it will cover small expenses. This might cause, however, a relatively heavy administrative burden on intermediate bodies at the regional level. It will be preferable to finance small equipment from other, e.g. national, sources, while large infrastructure should be purchased from the ERDF funded ROP and SOP IEC (and the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development) (2.21).

Recommendations related to the several Priority Axes

- It is recommended to pay some more attention to the transition phase from compulsory to non-compulsory education (2.23; Priority Axes 1 and 2).
- Attention should be paid to partnership in training with companies and the linking of teachers with the companies' environment (2.24; Priority Axis 1).
- Also some attention should be paid to the lack of professional qualifications at the levels 4 and 5 (2.25; Priority Axis 1).
- There is still a need for interventions directed at improving the accessibility for TVET in rural areas (2.26; Priority Axis 1).

¹ In its "Observations on the ex ante final draft report the MA SOP HRD states that it will introduce some measures in this field in the key area of intervention 3.2.33.

- Some more attention could be paid to the introduction of modern teaching concepts (distance learning, modular curricula) (2.27; Priority Axis 2).
- The strategy should adapt the experiences of the Regional and Local Action Plans for Education (strong and weak points) (2.29; Priority Axis 2).¹
- Especially in the framework of key area of intervention 3.2.3.1 ("Promoting entrepreneurial culture") it is important to look at the co-ordination of the several interventions of the SOP HRD, the ROP and the IEC (2.31).
- It is recommended to look at the relation between the main text and the indicative operations for key area of intervention 3.2.3.2. (2.32).
- The development of partnerships at the sectoral and regional/local level should be directed at sectors with growth potential. PHARE experiences might highlight which are these sectors (2.33).
- It is recommended to very strictly restrict the eligibility criteria for the key area of intervention 3.2.3.3. to projects aiming at capacity building with social partners and NGO's to improve their capabilities to deal with HRD projects (2.24).
- In the framework of Priority Axis 4 it is very important to consider carefully the availability of staff for newly developed tools and mechanisms (2.35 and 2.36).
- The ex ante evaluators recommend to further stress the importance of training in the framework of ALMM (2.37; Priority Axis 5 and 6).
- The operations under the key area of intervention 3.2.6.1. should be explained. There should also be some information about which should be the position of the target groups (and how many participants will be the subject of operations). (2.39).
- It is recommendable to explain better in which way employers will be persuaded to hire persons from vulnerable groups and which way women with children will be supported to accept jobs for which they will have to travel (2.40 and 2.41).
- The several activities in the field of the SOP should also reflect the encouragement of systems to exchange experiences between actors at the local and regional level, next to trans-national co-operation. Stimulating and creating communities of practice might be also a good measure to be added (2.44).

Observations of the MA SOP HRD on the recommendations

The MA SOP HRD in its "Observations on the ex ante evaluation final draft report" indicates that it will incorporate most of the recommendations above in the next version of the SOP.

The only possible exceptions are the following:

- The MA SOP HRD plans to pay more attention to the position of the social partners in the programme, e.g. by making the Sectoral Committees eligible for funding. This will, however, not result in a strategy which aims at replacing the NGO's as leading cooperation partners by the social partners till the end of the programming period. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, this should be part of the strategy. to direct interventions specifically at active ageing.
- Health will be one of the sectors in which the Programme will promote CVT activities. There will also be some interventions in the field of health and safety on the work floor. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, in addition to the strengthening of health infrastructure in the framework of the ROP, it will be necessary to strongly support (initial) education and HR development in the health sector.

¹ The MA SOP HRD has already started reanalyzing these plans.

3 Appraisal of the coherence of the strategy with regional and national policies and Community Strategic Guidelines

The SOP HRD concerns itself with the coherence with regional and national policies and with the CSG at several places:

- In the first part of Chapter 3 "Strategy", discussing mainly the coherence with the CSG, the Lisbon strategy, the Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005-2008), the NSRF, the JAP (Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Priorities), the Joint Inclusion Memorandum, a range of national strategy documents on education, employment and social policies as well as considering the four main EQUAL principles which should be integrated into ESF;
- Again paragraph 3.3. titled "Coherence and compliance with Community and national policies" directs itself at the same subject, but mainly looking at the EU cross-cutting objectives, formal compliances in the field of competition/state aid and public procurement.
- Paragraph 3.4. reflects on the complementarity of the SOP HRD with the other Operational Programmes and operations financed under the EAFRD and EFF.
- The introduction of the Financial Plan (Chapter 4) also pays some attention to the coherence with EU policy objectives.

Textual

- 3.1. A first conclusion, stemming from the above is that there are some duplications in the text, especially in Chapter 3.
- 3.2. Moreover, the terminology used in the several texts on national and EU policies, is not always the same.
- 3.3. The English of the texts on coherence with other policies is generally speaking sufficient.
- 3.4. In the beginning and the end of paragraph 3.3, there is a list of EU policy documents studied, which slightly differs from the documents, mentioned at the start of the Chapter (also some different terminology is used). Partly, this may be explained by the fact that there are some specific documents relevant for the cross-cutting objectives (The European Strategy for Sustainable Development and the Strategic Framework on Equal Opportunities), but for the rest it is better to list only these documents at the start of the Chapter.

Regional and spatial aspects

- 3.5. Whereas there are no concrete regional policies in the field of education, employment and social inclusion, there are no references to regional policies in the SOP HRD. The SOP HRD does mention the importance of connecting to local administrations and also several initiatives at the regional level such as regional and local action plans for TVET development, regional and local action plans and pacts for employment and social inclusion.
- 3.6. The topic of territorial cohesion is not touched in the SOP HRD. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluators this may seem logical, because HRD policy does not have a spatial dimension, except for the one linked to human resources in Research and Development (R&D). The whole of the country, whether it concerns mountainous, border or other regions can be identified with the same Strengths, Weaknesses,

Opportunities and Threats. The only exception is the Bucharest/Ilfov region, a real urban region characterized by a very fast economical expansion. Looking at factors of competitiveness for territorial cohesion this same region is joining the highest rate of R&D intensity with the highest availability of R&D personnel and the highest availability of higher education institutes. To improve territorial cohesion the infrastructure for R&D in the other regions should be strengthened. This, however, is one of the tasks of the SOP IEC. The indicative operations within Priority 1 aiming at getting more young persons from the countryside into higher education, may support this activity, while at the same time investments in R&D infrastructure in the rest of the country may increase accessibility of higher education for potential students from the countryside.

3.1 Coherence with regional, national and EU policy objectives

This paragraph focuses on the contribution to EU strategies, national policies, the NDP/NSRF and the other operational programmes (including the operations under the EAFRD and EFF) respectively.

3.1.1 Contribution to EU strategies

- 3.7. The ex ante evaluator agrees with the Commission that the strategy is consistent with the Community Strategic Guidelines. It will strengthen economic cohesion, it recognizes the modernisation of the social model of Romania, it is coherent with the European Employment Strategy, it applies to the regional competitiveness and employment and convergence objectives in so far as it improves the adaptability of workers and enterprises, it enhances human capital and access to employment and participation in the labour market, reinforces the social inclusion of disadvantaged people, combating discrimination and encouraging economically inactive persons. It also aims at enhancing employment opportunities for both women and men (see also the following paragraph) and quality and productivity at work. At the same time, it also aims at improving institutional and administrative capacity, e.g. in VET, higher education, CVT, employment services and social inclusion by both strengthening public actors (especially teaching staff within Priority Axis 1 and the NAE within Priority Axis 4), social partners and NGO's (see above).
- 3.8. On p. 47 of the SOP the relation between the Priority Axes of the SOP and the CSG 2007-2013 is illustrated in a table, showing that the Priority Axes is indeed addressing the objectives mentioned within 4.6. The ex ante evaluator wants to make two observations on this table:
- Priority Axis 4 (modernizing the Public Employment Service) also relates to the CSG on Attracting and retaining more people in employment and modernizing social protection systems;
 - The CSG "Helping to main a health labour force" is not as much related to training as well as to health and safety at the work floor. This is not a main subject of the SOP. On p. 63 there is a mentioning of hygiene training, on p. 74 of training health and safety at work officers in companies and of training of employees in health and safety at work.
- The table on p. 49 is very well showing the relation between the SOP HRD and the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs.
- 3.9. Maybe some more attention could be paid to developing the knowledge economy (following the Lisbon Agenda). It should be pointed out, however, that this is, in policy fields connected to HRD, also the strategy of some of the other SOP's.
- 3.10. There might be some more attention to territorial cohesion, but, as we already stated above, except for the Bucharest-Ilfov region, most of the regions are comparable.
- 3.11. From the last two points one could derive a certain inconsistency: addressing the knowledge economy should mean investing in the Bucharest/Ilfov region, while the territorial cohesion objective implies interventions in the rest of the country.
- 3.12. There is also some implicit inconsistency between concentration of support and the fact, that most of the country is really backward and the problems are multiple. As

stated above, the choices made in the SOP seems logical from the point of view that there are a lot of weaknesses to be combated.

- 3.13. The CSG also asks for taken aboard the lessons from EQUAL. Although the Romanian officials have been trained in EQUAL, there are of course no actual experiences with this Community Initiative. One of its main principles, transnational co-operation, is addressed specifically in the programme (by key area of intervention 3.2.6.4. and also – in a lesser sense - within key area of intervention 3.2.1.5.). This seems to suggest that transnational cooperation is mainly related to social inclusion, but the MA SOP HRD has pointed out that there is opportunity for transnational co-operation also in the framework of other interventions, as is stated on p. 52, in a section which also addresses the other EQUAL principles partnership, innovation and mainstreaming:
- It claims mainstreaming is specifically addressed by Priority Axis 6 “Promoting Social Inclusion, while ensuring equal opportunities for all excluded groups”. This statement seems to illustrate that there is maybe a little bit misunderstanding of the mainstreaming concept, which includes the disseminating and adaptation of lessons learned from the SOP interventions into general policy (vertical mainstreaming) and other organizations (horizontal mainstreaming).¹
 - Innovation is, according to the SOP, specifically tackled by Priority Axis 3. The ex ante evaluator can not find much proof of this. At the other hand, in a country which still has to develop many elements of its HRD institutional, administrative and juridical framework, it is maybe wise not to look too much for possibilities for innovation, already at the start of Structural Funds programming.
 - Regarding partnership, the SOP also points at Priority Axis 3, probably referring to the key area of intervention 3.2.3.3. It has already been mentioned above, that it is important to address this intervention more explicitly to the objective of involving the social partners into the programme and HRD strategy in general.
- 3.14. According to EU guidelines, the SOP HRD should also tackle the relevant dimensions and consequences of demographic changes in the active population. As has been shown above, the ageing threat has been mentioned in the analysis, but there are no really specific interventions targeting the 30-50 years age group, which will have to deal the most with the problems of ageing.

3.1.2 National policies

- 3.15. On p. 51, it is stated, that the HRD strategy (of the SOP) took into account the national strategies in the field of education, employment and social inclusion. The most important documents are mentioned on p. 51 (and also again on p. 101). The ex ante evaluator agrees that the SOP HRD strategy fits to the policies described in the documents mentioned. This could be made more explicitly in the SOP text. This comment relates e.g. to the already developed system of qualifications in TVET, the policies of the NAE in the fields of training and mediating the unemployed and to already existing policies promoting social inclusion of the Roma. At the moment, the

¹ Research voor Beleid is involved in a Dutch study on the successes of mainstreaming Equal 2000-2006 in Holland.

SOP only relates to a list of documents on these policies, not to its results and lessons learned.

3.16. The Strategy for decentralization of education is no longer under debate.

3.1.3 Other Sectoral Operational Programmes and the EAFRD and EFF financed operations

3.17. Paragraph 3.4. (pp 101-104) addresses the complementarities of the SOP HRD with the other OP's and the interventions under the EAFRD and EFF. An important remark, also reflected by the heading "co-ordination" within the Position Paper of the European Commission on the SOP HRD, is that not as much complementarity as much as synergy between the several programmes is needed for. At least the MA CSF is recognizing this by setting up regional coordination committees. It should be preferable, although, when all SOP's also pay attention to co-ordination issues.

Some examples:

- The ROP will take care of the infrastructure (buildings and organization) in which the SOP HRD will train future entrepreneurs, while the SOP IEC will support these entrepreneurs with management consultancy. It is very important that the ROP starts its building activities first, where after the other two SOP's activities follow.
- The SOP HRD will support the training of people living from subsistence agriculture, while the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development will train the agricultural workers. When there will be project activities in this field in a certain county (e.g. training people in other occupations), it is not only important to look at the job chances for the total group of persons (supported by each of both programmes), but it is also good to look whether there is enough capacity with suppliers of training and, when both programmes will select the same provider of training, there are no activities which are being paid twice.

3.18. The description of complementarity in the SOP HRD describes most possible relations between the other operational programmes at one hand and the SOP HRD at the other. As mentioned above, there are some other complementarities between the HRD SOP and the ROP:

- The HRD SOP will support the unemployed, the inactive and employees to start up a business by training them, the ROP will support micro-enterprises in the regions.
- The ROP will support health and social services infrastructure. The SOP HRD will support this through training of the employed and unemployed in the framework of CVT. It is not clear whether the SOP HRD will also support initial health education and/or R&D personnel in health.

3.19. As has already been noticed before, complementarities can also be analyzed from the viewpoint of absorption. Especially, when the SOP IEC will make use of its cross-financing possibilities in the field of management and ICT training and it will also support management courses¹, it will trouble absorption within the SOP HRD.

¹ As has been stated above, on this last subject there is discussion between both MA's.

- 3.20. It has also been pointed out above, that the SOP HRD is assumed to provide the human resources (when not available at the moment) for the other Operational Programmes. This could especially relate to construction, e.g. under the ROP as well as the SOP Transport there are going to be a lot of activities in road building.
- 3.21. A description of the complementarity with the TA OP is lacking.
- 3.22. The same is the case with the Administrative Capacity Development OP. This is particularly relevant to the SOP HRD because Education is one of the three priority fields for reform in the ACD OP.

3.2 NDP and National Strategic Reference Framework

- 3.23. On p. 49 of the SOP HRD it is stated that it supports the HRD strategy promoted in the NSRF (which in its turn depends upon the NDP) within the Thematic Priority "Development and More Efficient Use of Romania's Human Capital". This is illustrated by a table on p. 50 which shows the relation between the NSRF interventions and the Priority Axes of the SOP HRD. The ex ante evaluators agree to this assessment.
- 3.24. Whereas above is already pointed out the SOP HRD especially in the field of health the NSRF Thematic Priority on Human Capital is not supported as much by the SOP HRD as well by the ROP. At the other hand, the remark on p. 5 of the ROP: "Improved health care and related services will assist economic regeneration by reducing costs and the lost days from work" could also be addressed by the SOP HRD: in which way will the work force profit from interventions in the fields of health services within the ROP?

3.3 Tackling the EU horizontal objectives

The ex ante evaluation should assess if the proposed strategy, the priorities and the operational objectives coincide with the so-called cross-cutting themes of the EU on:

- employment
- equal opportunities
- environment.

While the whole of the SOP HRD is about employment, it is only necessary to analyze the last two objectives. At the same time, because of the lack of coincidences with the environmental issues, it is also not necessary to carry out a strategic environmental assessment.

The description of the two relevant cross-cutting themes is on p. 98-99 of the text of the SOP HRD.

Equal opportunities

- 3.25. The SOP HRD points out that it will support not only combating inequalities between men and women, but also combating those for other vulnerable groups. It could have been illustrated that in particular Priority Axis 6 will support a better position on the labour market for all those groups while key area of intervention 3.2.6.3. is specifically directed at the position of women.

- 3.26. While the SOP highlights the fact that it will also take into account the equal opportunities dimension with the selection, monitoring, control and evaluation of projects. At the other hand, there is hardly any specific attention for the position of women in the other interventions.
- 3.27. The section on Equal Opportunities ends with introducing the concept of gender mainstreaming as the overall integrated perspective of equal opportunities. In fact, it should be observed that gender mainstreaming also harbors the opposite concept of strengthening the position of men in sectors where women are overrepresented and strives to introduce also possibilities for men to care for their children.

Environment

- 3.28. "Sustainable development" is a little bit differently defined than the cross-cutting objectives in the field of environment of the EU. The EU defines this in relation to environmental issues, which is only dealt with in the last part of the paragraph on sustainable development.
- 3.29. For the rest it should be assessed that there are very little possibilities for the SOP HRD to support environmental objectives of the EU, except for some educational measures.

3.4 Appraisal of the coherence with other policies

3.4.1 Overall conclusions

The assessment of the coherence of the strategy with national/regional and EU policy objectives is as follows:

- The proposed strategy is fine-tuned with national and EU policy objectives. Also future opportunities for regional strategies are included.
- The priorities and measures are consistent with the NSRF, the CSG, the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs and will also adopt by several interventions the main principles of the (former) EQUAL Community Initiative. Some more attention might be paid to the foreseen ageing problems in the future.
- The added value of the SOP HRD is that it will help develop Human Capital in Romania. It will attract and retain more people in employment, improve adaptability of workers and enterprises and the flexibility of the labour market, it will increase investment in human capital through better education and skills and will also strengthen administrative capacity (public sector, NGOs and also partly with social partners). There are also some measures included to help to maintain a healthy labour force.
- There is complementarity, but no real co-ordination with other Operational Programmes. Especially with the ROP (micro-enterprises and health) there could be some more fine tuning.
- The SOP does heavily contribute to the employment objectives of the EU and will also pay much attention to objectives in the field of equal opportunities. There are only a few references to environmental objectives, but the ex ante evaluator agrees that it is very difficult to link this objective with the SOP HRD.

The above leads to the assessment that the coherence of the strategy with national policies, the CSG and other Operational Programmes might be assessed **satisfactory**.

3.4.2 Recommendations

- A first conclusion, stemming from the above, might be, that there could be some restructuring of especially Chapter 3, to avoid duplications in the text (3.1.).
- EU guidelines also (this topic was already raised above) request more attention to the consequences of demographic changes (3.14).
- The SOP should not only contain a list of national policy documents, but also information about results and the lessons learned (3.15).
- Some attention might be given to the temporal aspects of complementary interventions of the several SOP's: which activities should be first (e.g. training of teachers and trainers, strengthening the NAE, awareness campaigns with social partners and regional actors, further developing the qualification system for TVET, etc.) and which activities should follow? From this perspective, it is also relevant considering progress already made in the framework of PHARE programmes (3.17).
- As already mentioned above, some more attention should be paid to the complementarity and coordination between the SOP HRD and the ROP (3.18).
- There should be description of the complementarity with the TA OP (3.21) and the ACD OP (3.22)
- The SOP HRD should reflect on the contribution of the ROP to health care, especially on the effects which improved health care and related services will have by reducing costs and lost days from work (3.24).
- There could be some more attention to the position of women in other key areas of intervention than 3.2.5.3, directing also some of the interventions in the other Priority Axes more specific at women (women researchers, nurses in CVT, women entrepreneurs, etc.) or highlighting also that the interventions under 3.2.5.2. will probably be directed for a larger part at women in subsistence agriculture. This does also imply that the SOP must contain indicators for the results of women in these areas (3.26).
- When the SOP wants to adopt the concept of gender mainstreaming, then there should also some operations in the field of strengthening the position of men in sectors where women are represented and introducing possibilities of men to take care of their children (3.27).
- There could have been also some specific interventions in the field of R&D, supporting researchers in environmental studies and training them for jobs in the environmental services sector (3.29). As the European Commission has observed in its comments to the 6 November version of the SOP, it is proposed that a justification of not including a SEA is provided by the Member State in the preamble of the OP.

Observations of the MA SOP HRD on the recommendations

The MA SOP HRD in its "Observations on the ex ante evaluation final draft report" indicates that it will incorporate the recommendations above in the next version of the SOP.

4 Evaluation of expected results and impact

This chapter is about the way the results and impacts of the strategy of the SOP HRD have been quantified. The objectives at the programme and priority level should have been translated into indicators, while for each of these indicators the expected results and impacts should be provided.

It is important to notice that to support this process the ex ante evaluator has provided the programmers of the SOP HRD (by the second interim report) with a lot of specific information on indicators and quantification of indicators in the context of ESF and has also suggested a set of possible indicators. This contribution is included in Annex 5 of this report.

4.1 Quantification of objectives at programme and priority level

The SOP should include a set of indicators on the programme and priority level, which are the basis for quantification of the results and impacts. These indicators should reflect a certain hierarchy. As is already observed in Annex 5 of this report, there are indicators possible on the output, results and impact level, while on the impact level one might also distinguish specific and global impacts.

At the output, result and impact level also the so-called coverage rates may be identified. These reflect the part of a certain target group which will be targeted by the programme.

Annex 5 of this report also contains a further explanation of the set of SMART criteria to which the indicators should abide. Because these criteria are very important for the assessment of the indicators, they are also showed in the box below.

Specific

- Relevant: They must measure what they should measure
- Well defined: The contents of the indicator must be clear

Measurable:

- Well to gather: it must be possible collect the dates (by surveys, from secondary sources)
- Quantifiable: Indicators must be quantifiable
- Baseline: preferably the value of the indicator is acceptably at start of the programme

Available:

- For stakeholders: the link between indicators and project/route must be logical and not ideologically determined
- For suppliers of information: data suppliers must understand the importance to provide information

Realistic

- Attributable: Changes in the indicator must mainly or substantially be caused by the interventions
- Causal link: there must be a causal link between input -> output -> result -> impact indicators

Timely

- Frequent: The dates must come available with a certain frequency
- Periodical: The dates must be related at a time or period which is appropriate to the programme

4.1.1 Assessment of the structure and construction of the objectives and the indicators: programme level

- 4.1. The SOP HRD comprises indicators both on the programme level and on the priority level. At the programme level there is one indicator concerning the amount of people to be covered by the programme. By this way, this indicator is of the "coverage rate" type (which is also being described in Annex 5 of this report).
- 4.2. The denominator for the coverage rate is the total employment population for 2005. This denominator can not be assessed as the correct one. Also unemployed and inactive persons will be subjects of interventions while the total target group will also exist of persons who will enter the labour market from now till 2013. It will be very difficult, however, to calculate this total group of persons who will become available on the labour market.¹ Because there will also persons retreat from the labour market, it will probably be best to use the total number of active people (instead of total employment) as a denominator.
- 4.3. There could also be a problem with the numerator, although the SOP is not totally clear about which should be considered as such (see below on the quantification of the results). When the denominator should be all active persons on the labour market (in the 2007-2013 period), then the numerator should not include teachers, trainers, counselors and other persons who are not supported to get a job themselves but to support others in getting a job or holding on to the job they have.
- 4.4. The resulting coverage rate indicator (displacing the employed population with the active population as a denominator and only considering the unemployed in the numerator) as such can be assessed SMART. It is specific (relevant and well defined), measurable (counting the amount of people participating in the programme, which could be gathered by monitoring), available (not ideologically determined and considered important by stakeholders), realistic (attributable to the programme) and timely.
- 4.5. The proposed programme indicator is of the output type: the total amount of people who will be touched by the programme. The question is whether such an indicator should not be at least of the result, and maybe even of the impact type. The European Commission, in its guidelines and working papers, is not totally clear which level of indicators it will expect from the member states. For such a big programme, one should expect one or two indicators at the level of at least specific, and maybe even global impacts.
- 4.6. There are various problems, however, concerning such an impact indicator. The most fitting indicator seems to be "the total amount of jobs persons targeted by the programme would get or hold on to". There are, however, several problems with developing such an indicator:
 - Whereas there are only limited experiences with similar programmes in the past in Romania, it is nearly impossible to draw on them to figure out average costs and results/impacts in the sense of (sustainable) jobs. There is an explanation

¹ Problem is that there are no real prognostics for dynamics on the labour market. The SOP HRD does not even have statistics for the employment situation till 2013. As stated above, the SOP IEC contains on p. 138 (Annex 6) a table with the prognosis of the labour productivity based on employment figures. There is also a similar table in the NSRF (Table 7 on p. 17).

of the problem to come up with indicators on p. 106 of the SOP itself too. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, not as much the problem of comparing different methods to achieve the objectives as well as the lack of information about (actual) prizes and effects is the real difficulty.

- Even when there should have been similar programmes in the past, there still would be problems measuring the *net* results of the programmes, i.e. correcting for deadweight, substitution, displacement and multiplier effects. There have been only a few studies (in the whole of the EU) in which ex post the net results and impacts of ESF interventions have been calculated. To translate these results to an ex ante situation in Romania is fairly impossible.
- Last but not least, there will be a risk that the European Commission will in the end will assess the success of the Romanian SOP HRD mainly on the score on an indicator which could not be estimated ex ante in any way.

4.7. When, however, it should not be possible to define such an indicator at the impact level, it should be at least be considered to translate the existing output level coverage rate onto the result level. This could be translated into an indicator which amount of persons will finish the training or other trajectory activity which is supported by the SOP.

4.1.2 Assessment of the structure and construction of the objectives and the indicators: priority level

4.8. An overall comment is that the SOP HRD comprises as indicators the indicators suggested by the ex ante evaluators. Only in a few cases, the ex ante evaluators themselves had already mentioned some difficulties with some of these indicators. These will be highlighted below.

4.9. As stated above, the SOP does not contain any indicator on the (specific or global) impact level nor any context indicator. Even some of the result indicators related to the (gross) amount of jobs found have been skipped from the programme. From the perspective of monitoring and evaluation, one needs to identify some job result, impact and context indicators already now.

Priority Axis 1

4.10. The output indicators chosen for Priority 1 are identical to the earlier suggestions of the ex ante evaluator. All can be derived from the monitoring reports and may be considered SMART.

4.11. This also counts for the result indicators. The ex ante evaluator has suggested, in addition, two other result indicators: "Students per counselor" which was adapted from the April draft of the SOP, and might be dropped, and "Qualifications applied" which only relates to the real inclusion of the qualifications in the system and is very related to the fact that qualifications have been developed. A suggestion might to include the inclusion of qualifications into the NQF as a result indicator in the SOP. This, however, should imply that it is more or less the same time investment is needed to develop the several qualifications, which is not the case. All this information can also be derived from the monitoring reports. The indicators may be considered as SMART.

Priority Axis 2

- 4.12. The output indicators chosen for Priority 2 are for the most part identical to the earlier suggestions of the ex ante evaluator. Within the SOP an indicator on second chance education has been added. All can be derived from the monitoring reports and may be considered SMART.
- 4.13. The same counts for the result indicators, but again the ex ante evaluator originally suggested some more indicators. These are all about job results: "Number and share of students getting a job after the active life programmes", "Number of beneficiaries of career counseling services getting a job", "Number of participants in CVT programmes holding on to their jobs" and "Number of participants in CVT programmes getting promotion or moving to another job". It is understandable the SOP left out these indicators, because all of them imply serious problems gathering the data. At the same time, all the interventions under Priority Axis 2 are directed at the labour market. It is difficult to understand why not to incorporate some of these indicators into the indicator system.
- 4.14. Almost all the indicators in the programme may be considered SMART, whereas they may be derived from monitoring reports. There is one exception, already pointed at above. There is a problem gathering data on participation in CVT. The last survey on the share of enterprises supporting CVT was in 1999. This survey is repeated this year. The new results may become available next year. After that, it is advisable to repeat this survey more often, whereas not only to get available this indicator ex post, but also several times during the period of the programme.

Priority Axis 3

- 4.15. Three of four output indicators were also suggested by the ex ante evaluators before. The only exception is the "Number of partnerships, initiative[s] of social partner associations and NGOs financed". The problem with this indicator is that the meaning of this indicator is a little bit unclear, whereas the one partnership or initiative will differ from the other in content and scope. Moreover, some partnerships or initiatives might be funded twice or more for different types of activities. This will give problems with quantification.
- 4.16. The ex ante evaluator has also suggested to introduce a same kind of indicator with this Priority Axis 3 as with Priority Axis 2 on the rate of enterprises participating in training. Whereas this only relates to some specific types of training, the data will probably not be easy to gather by surveys from the NIS. This might be the reason for leaving out this indicator. The same counts for the parallel result indicator.
- 4.17. One suggestion of the ex ante evaluator for a result indicator has been dropped. Again, gathering the data might be the problem. To assess which business start-ups have been successful, it is necessary to approach the trainees some time after the trainings. Maybe it will be difficult to locate them. Moreover, in the meantime they could be involved in interventions of the SOP IEC or the ROP, which will make it more difficult to attribute successes to the SOP HRD. For this reason the ex ante evaluator understands the fact, that this indicator is considered as a quantitative indicator for the SOP HRD. At the other hand, it may be an indicator for evaluation.

Priority Axis 4

- 4.18. Both the output and results indicators are identical to the ones suggested by the ex ante evaluator before. These indicators can be derived from the monitoring reports and might be considered SMART.

Priority Axis 5

- 4.19. Two of three output and results indicators are identical to the ones suggested by the ex ante evaluator before. These indicators can be derived from the monitoring reports and might be considered SMART.
- 4.20. The SOP also has included an indicator on "The (successful) formerly inactive persons activated on the formal labour market". As such, this is a useful indicator to add to the other two. The activation of formerly inactive persons is seen as an important objective of this Priority Axis.
- 4.21. The ex ante evaluator had also added a *coverage rate* indicator which comprises the successful participants from rural areas as compared to the total target group. Identifying this indicator originates from the remark of the European Commission in its Position Paper on the April draft of the SOP that the transition of the rural population to other sectors of industry is one of the most important tasks of the SOP HRD. At the other hand, this target group will also be supported by the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development. Moreover, there will be a problem defining the total target group. For that reason it is understandable that this indicator has been left out of the SOP.

Priority Axis 6

- 4.22. Two of the three output and result indicators for Priority Axis 6 are also in the SOP. Both the output and result indicators can be derived from the monitoring reports and might be considered SMART. It is advisable, especially within an evaluation to include figures on the several vulnerable groups under the programme.
- 4.23. The other indicator "Number of participants in training/retraining programmes for vulnerable groups" seems to target only on specific kind of product of ALMM for vulnerable groups".
- 4.24. A suggestion from the ex ante evaluator was on the amount of transnational activities. While it may be considered (just as with the indicator on partnership which is in the SOP for Priority Axis 3), that the content and size of activities will differ, it might be interesting to see how the inheritance of EQUAL will be treated in Romania.
- 4.25. There was also a suggestion for including an indicator on the amount of integrated social services provided. Whereas the position of these services inside the programme has become less significant, it is possible to drop this indicator.
- 4.26. Another (result) indicator suggested was again on the amount of jobs that will be created for vulnerable groups (for both the key areas of interventions 3.2.6.1 and 3.2.6.2). The same count for the job results of social economy interventions. Whereas the real activities under this key area of intervention are still rather vague (see above), it is important to introduce a very concrete type of indicator.

4.2 Evaluation of expected results

4.2.1 Quantification of the indicators

On the basis of the indicators the expected results (but no impacts) of the SOP HRD have been quantified.

- 4.27. Because all indicators are about the interventions in the programme themselves (and the interventions only be started up from 2007 on), there are almost no base-lines figures, except for the one on CVT discussed above.

The quantified indicators for the several priorities are shown in the next table.

Table 1 Quantified indicators for the several priorities

Indicator	Target (2015)
PRIORITY 1	
Output	
Number of teachers and trainers trained	20,000
Number of PhD students supported	15,000
Number of staff trained for quality assurance and management	16,000
Number of persons trained in guidance and counseling	10,000
TOTAL P1 Output	61,000
Result	
Teachers and trainers certified	17,000
Successful PhD graduates	13,500
Certified staff trained for quality assurance and management	13,600
TOTAL P1 Result	44,100

PRIORITY 2	
Output	
Number of students assisted in transition from school to active life programs	25,000
Number of participants in CVT programmes	260,000
Number of beneficiaries of career counseling services	30,000
No. of students assisted in second chance education	14,000
TOTAL P2 Output	329,000
Result	
Students graduating second chance education	10,500
TOTAL P2 Result	10,550

PRIORITY 3	
Output	
Number of trainees in management and organization of work	5,000
Number of trainees in specific training	30,000
Number of trainees in business start-up	2,500
TOTAL P3 OUTPUT	38,000
Result	
Successful trainees in management and organization of work	4,000
Successful trainees in specific training	24,000
TOTAL P3 Result	28,000

PRIORITY 4	
Output	
Number of staff trained	2,500
TOTAL P4 Output	2,500
Result	
Trained staff achieving certificate	2,000
TOTAL P4 Result	2,000

PRIORITY 5	
Output	
Number of participants in active employment measures	50,000
Number of participants from rural areas in the integrated programmes	160,000
Number of formerly inactive persons activated on the formal labour market	10,000
TOTAL P5 Output	220,000
Result	
Successful participants in active employment measures under the programme	30,000
Successful participants from rural areas in the integrated programmes	80,000
Successful inactive persons activated on the formal labour market	4,500
TOTAL P5 Result	114,500

PRIORITY 6	
Output	
Number of participants in training/retraining programmes for vulnerable groups	38,000
Number of participants in training programmes for professionals in the field of social inclusion	10,000
TOTAL P6 Output	48,000
Result	
Successful participants in training/retraining programmes for vulnerable groups	19,000
Successful participants in training programmes for professionals from the field	7,000
TOTAL P6 Result	26,000
TOTAL OUTPUT	698,500
TOTAL RESULT	215,650

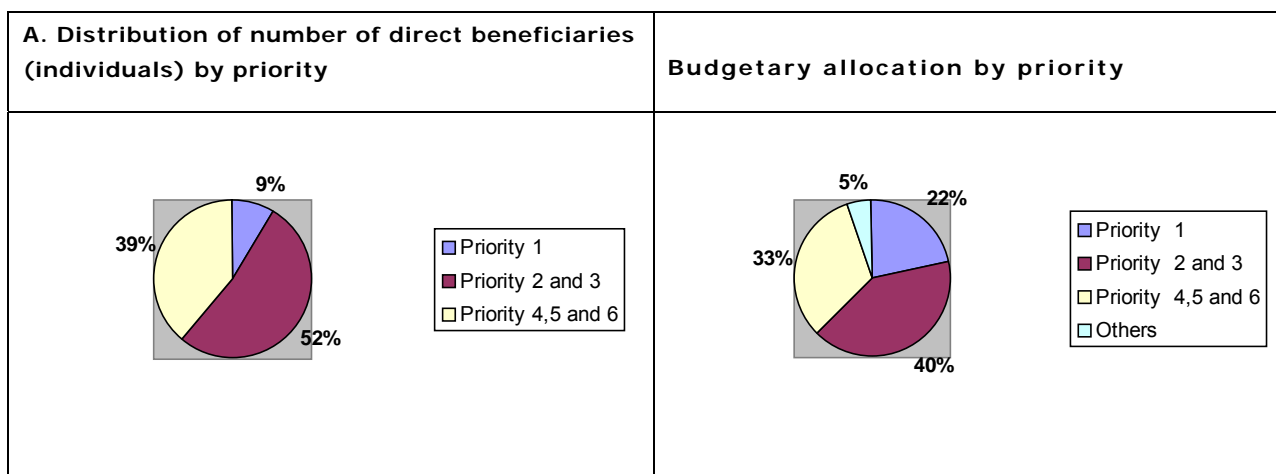
- 4.28. As this table shows, the count of the total amount of persons to be covered by the SOP sums up to almost 700,000 persons instead of the 600,000 mentioned by the SOP.
- 4.29. Even distracting the professionals getting a training (58,500 persons), the figure still exceeds 600,000.
- 4.30. A possible explanation might be double counts: some people might be targeted by several interventions inside the programme. When this should be the case, this should be explained in the SOP.
- 4.31. Dividing the total amount of funding available for the programme (while leaving out some 20% for infrastructural and organizational interventions and activities) will mean that for each person to be targeted by the programme about 4,500 euro will be available. This seems to be pretty much. On p. 106 it is stated it is difficult to calculate the costs by operation. There should, however, be some kind of consideration behind the figure of 600,000 persons.

4.2.2 Quantified results compared to budget allocation; SOP

According to the SOP, the **financial allocation according to the SOP** (p.108) is as follows:

1. **Promoting lifelong learning and the adaptability of labour force and enterprises** (Priority Axis 2 and 3), with a weight in the financial allocation of 40%;
2. **Promoting active employment measures** for the inactive population, especially for people living in subsistence agriculture, youths unemployed and long-term unemployed, as well as the **integration on the labour market** and the social inclusion of vulnerable groups (Priority Axis 4, 5 and 6): 33%;
3. **Education and training in support for growth and development of knowledge based society**, aiming at modernizing the initial and continuous education and training systems, including supporting the university education and research (Priority Axis 1): 22%.

The next charts compare the number of individuals directly benefiting from the programme by priority to the level of funding by priority.



For Figure A we have calculated the percentages using the data below:

TOTAL OUTPUT	P1	%	P2 and 3	% P 4, 5 and 6	%
698500	61000	8,732999	367000	52,54116	270500 38,72584

- 4.32. The charts show that especially the budgetary allocation to Priority Axis 1 seems rather big compared to the amount of participants. This can partly be explained by the fact that most of the funding of this Priority Axis is allocated to developing systems, tools and mechanisms. The larger part of infrastructural investment is within this Priority Axis.
- 4.33. For the other two groups of Priority Axes there is less investment in infrastructure, systems, tools and mechanisms. The total picture seems to point out that all investment in participants seem to be around the average amount of funding available (4,500 euro per participant).

4.2.3 Quantified results compared to budget allocation; intervention level

Priority Axis 1

- 4.34. For the key area of intervention 3.2.1.1. (Access to quality education and initial VET there is a budget available of 160 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:
- 26,000 persons (mainly teachers and school managers) will be trained of which almost all successful.
 - There is also expenditure on the development and implementation of tools, mechanisms, quality systems, educational offers, innovation, etc.
 - This leads to the observation that it is very difficult to compare expenditure and indicators, because there are many other activities (not directly related to these participants) in the framework of this key area of intervention.
- 4.35. For the key area of intervention 3.2.1.2. (Quality of higher education) there is a budget available of 122 Million euro, for there are no quantified indicators in the SOP:
- There is expenditure on systems, tools, mechanisms, networks, etc.
- This leads to the observation that it is not possible to analyze the quantified results of these activities.
- 4.36. For the key area of intervention 3.2.1.3. (HRD in education and training) there is a budget available of 189 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:
- 20,000 persons (teachers) will be trained of which almost all successful.
 - There is also expenditure on programs for teacher's mobility and career start of teachers.
- This leads to the observation that, while most of the spending will be on the trainings, there is a budget of some 8,000 euro available for each teacher being trained. This seems a rather high amount of money.
- 4.37. For the key area of intervention 3.2.1.4. (Quality in CVT) there is a budget available of 174 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:
- 2,500 additional qualifications will be developed.

- There is also expenditure on development and implementation of (quality) systems, exchange of information, networking, CVT provision, etc.

This leads to the observation that it is not possible to do a quantitative analysis.

4.38. For the key area of intervention 3.2.1.5. (Doctoral and post-doctoral programmes) there is a budget available of 335 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 15,000 persons (PhD students and postdoctoral students) will be supported of which almost all successful.
- There is also expenditure on the development of studies, innovative actions to increase participation and international co-operation.

This leads to the observation that most of the spending will be on the PhDs and postdoctoral students. The mean cost per activity will be about 20,000 euro, which seems quite realistic.

Priority Axis 2

4.39. For the key area of intervention 3.2.2.1. (Transition from school to active life) there is a budget available of 201 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 25,000 persons (students) will be supported of which a not specified amount successful
- There is also expenditure on development of schemes and programmes, support of partnerships between schools and enterprises, monitoring and innovative actions.

This leads to the observation that most of the expenditure seems to be directed at the students assisted. The average cost per student will be about 6,000 to 7,000 euro which seems pretty much.

4.40. For the key area of intervention 3.2.2.2. (Preventing and correcting Early School Leaving) there is a budget available of 215 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 14,000 persons (students) will be assisted in second chance education (10,500 of which will be successful) and 30,000 persons will benefit from career counselling services (with no indication of success).
- There is also expenditure on programs with Early School Leaving (with special attention for vulnerable groups), access to preschool education and school after school type activities.

This leads to the observation that the activities which are subject of indicators do not represent all activities directed at individuals. As a consequence, it is difficult to assess the average costs.

4.41. For the key area of intervention 3.2.2.3. (Access and participation in CVT) there is a budget available of 621 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 260,000 persons will be supported in CVT programmes of which almost all will finish their training.
- There is also expenditure on awareness campaigns and innovation.

This leads to the observation that almost all expenditure seems to be directed at CVT participants. The average cost is 2,000 to 2,500 euro, which seems quite high (because most CVT concerns rather short training activities).

Priority Axis 3

4.42. For the key area of intervention 3.2.3.1. (Promoting entrepreneurial culture) there is a budget available of 248 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 2,500 persons will be trained in business start-up (with no indication of success) and 5,000 persons will be trained in management and organization of work (4,000 of which will be successful).
- There is also expenditure on awareness campaigns, programs and support services, developing and providing managerial skills and knowledge transfer support.

This leads to the observation that it is not possible to compare expenditure and output/results with the amount of budget available because of the seemingly large expenditure on developing methods, campaigns, etc. Should most of the expenditure be on the trainings themselves, then the average budget allocation is very high.

4.43. For the key area of intervention 3.2.3.2. (Training and support of enterprises/employees to promote adaptability) there is a budget available of 201 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 30,000 persons will be trained of which 24,000 successful
- There is also expenditure on developing innovative methods for work organization, support of labour conditions as well as information and awareness campaigns.

This leads to the observation that it is not possible to compare expenditure and output/results with the amount of budget available because of the seemingly large expenditure on developing methods, campaigns, etc. Should most of the expenditure be on the trainings themselves, then the average budget allocation is rather high.

4.44. For the key area of intervention 3.2.3.3. (Development of social partners and the civil society) there is a budget available of 80 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 500 partnerships, pacts and initiatives will be supported.

This leads to the observation that about 160,000 euro will be available for each activity. This seems a rather large amount of money, but of course each will consist of whole set of specific actions.

Priority Axis 4

4.45. For the key area of intervention 3.2.4.1 (Strengthening PES capacity providing employment services) there is a budget available of 134 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 56 labour market studies (seven years and eight regions) will be carried out.
- There is also expenditure on research projects, development of services, partnerships and networks, development of databases, developing a quality management system and improving the vocational training of adults.

This leads to the observation that it is not possible to compare expenditure and quantified results.

4.46. For the key area of intervention 3.2.4.2. (Training of the PES staff) there is a budget available of 74 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 2,500 staff will be trained of which almost all successful.¹
- There is also expenditure on improvement of the staff vocational training system.

This leads to the observation that there will be something like 20,000 to 25,000 euro available for each member of PES staff who will be trained. Of course, this might include several different trainings, but still the amount of expenditure per person seems very high.

Priority Axis 5

4.47. For the key area of intervention 3.2.5.1. (Developing and implementing Active Labour Market Measures) there is a budget available of 197 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 60,000 persons will be supported of which 34,500 will be successful
- There is also expenditure on accompanying measures and the development of programmes to create new jobs and forms of employment.

This leads to the observation, most of expenditure being directly related to the participants, that the average cost per participant will be about 3,000 euro, which seems quite realistic.

4.48. For the key area of intervention 3.2.5.2 (Promoting long term sustainability of rural areas in terms of human resources) there is a budget available of 361 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 160,000 persons will be the subject of integrated programmes of which 80,000 will be successful.
- There is also expenditure on development of programmes (to create new jobs and forms of employment) and accompanying measures.

This leads to the observation, that, most of expenditure being directly related to the participants, that the average cost per participant will be about 2,250 euro, which seems quite realistic (the trajectory activities and the occupations at which trainings will be directed will be different from 3.2.5.1.).

Priority Axis 6

4.49. For the key area of intervention 3.2.6.1. (Developing social economy) there is a budget available of 429 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 10,000 persons (professionals) will be trained of which 7,000 successful.
- There is also expenditure on development of tools, methods, services and mechanisms, promoting employability of persons, partnerships as well as awareness raising activities.

This leads to the observation that it is necessary to know more about the amount of participants in the projects, before an assessment can be made of the amount of expenditure needed.

4.50. For the key area of intervention 3.2.6.2. (Improving participation of vulnerable groups) there is a budget available of 101 Million euro, for which according to the indicators in the SOP:

- 38,000 persons from these groups will be trained of which 19,000 successful.

¹ In the meantime this figure has increased to 3,000.

- There is also expenditure on the development of programmes, including training programmes for NGO staff and support for development of protected jobs in companies.

This leads to the observation that, most of expenditure being directly related to the participants, that the average cost per participant will be about 2,250 euro, which seems quite realistic.

- 4.51. For the key area of intervention 3.2.6.3. (Promoting equal opportunities) there is a budget available of 75 Million euro, for which there are no quantitative indicators in the SOP.

- There is expenditure on increasing qualifications, promotion of employability, support of women, support of specific programmes and on awareness raising.

This leads to the observation that it is necessary to know more about the amount of participants in the projects, before an assessment can be made of the amount of expenditure needed.

- 4.52. For the key area of intervention 3.2.6.4. there is a budget available of 31 Million euro, for which there are no quantitative indicators in the SOP:

- There is expenditure on EU partnerships, joint development of programmes, guidelines and methods, exchange of good practice, transfer of expertise and on studies.

This leads to the observation that there is about 4 to 5 Million euro available for transnational cooperation each year. This may seem a rather high amount of money compared to e.g. the former Community Initiative EQUAL. At the other hand, Romania could profit from international exchange quite a lot.

4.2.4 Other remarks on quantification

- 4.53. The Commission mentions a target of 10% participation in CVT in 2010. However, in the Romanian situation (Romania also only being part of the EU from 2007 on), this seems no realistic target. The ex ante evaluator considers it better to adapt a more realistic strategy of at first setting up the preconditions for developing CVT (sectoral committees and funds, a qualification system for CVT also including competences, raising awareness among employers and employees) and then to try to reach the Lisbon targets, instead of trying to do everything at the same time.

- 4.54. According to the EU regulations, there do not have to be quantified targets for Priority Axis 7 Technical Assistance.

4.3 Justification of the proposed policy mix

4.55. When analyzing the strategy above, it has already been made clear that the mix of priorities seems good. The ex ante evaluators agree with the European Commission in its comments on the several drafts of the SOP, that some more attention could be paid to health-related activities (both to the health sector, the conditions at the working place and to the labour market position of the disabled and handicapped), but that can also happen in the framework of the several priorities.

Looking at the allocation of budget for the several key areas of intervention, however, it becomes clear, that there seems to be some imbalance between them:

- Within Priority Axis 3 the allocation to key area of intervention 3.2.3.1 seems rather high as compared to 3.2.3.2.
- Within Priority Axis 4 the allocation for training of staff (3.2.4.2) seems rather high as compared to the allocation for the other key area of intervention (3.2.4.1).
- Within Priority Axis 6 it is necessary to know more about the amounts of participants for the key areas of interventions 3.2.6.1. and 3.2.6.3 to learn whether allocation is realistic. It seems, however, that (also considering that the SOP should pay more attention to the position of Roma, women and the disabled) that 3.2.6.2. and 3.2.6.3 are under-funded in comparison with 3.2.6.1.

4.4 Assessment of the indicators and the quantification of results

4.4.1 Overall conclusions

The structure and hierarchy of objectives and indicators might be assessed as good. The formulated indicators meet the SMART criteria well (except for the indicator on CVTR, which has only a baseline for 1999, but for which a recent survey and the regular repetition of this survey might solve the problems) . The indicators can be aggregated. However, because of the nature of the interventions, it is difficult to identify core indicators, except for two: a coverage rate indicator on the total amount of persons touched by the programme (which is in fact the core indicator of the SOP HRD) and a (result/impact) indicator in the amount of participants who will get or hold on to a job. The problem with the last indicator is that data will be very hard to gather except in case of a survey. This is the case with every kind of impact indicator. Whether it will be necessary to provide for this type of indicator relies upon the European Commission. Anyway will it be wise to use this type of indicator for evaluation (also looking at context indicators).

Considering the above, the set of indicators might be assessed as **satisfactory**.

There are, however, problems with quantification:

- The total of persons covered by the programme for the several Priority Axes does not sum up to the general objective of covering 600,000 persons.
- When the total budget minus some allocations for systems, organizations and infrastructure is divided by the amount of persons, then it seems for each person a budget of 4,500 euro will be available, This seems a rather large amount of money available for each activity in the framework of the programme.

- The quantification of the amount of participants with the key areas of interventions with the second largest allocation of funding is lacking.
- Especially with some key areas with a large allocation of funding, it must be possible, to the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, to support a much larger group of participants as mentioned in the SOP now. This will mean that the effects and impact of the SOP will be much greater than described in the programme.

From the above perspective, the quantification of the objectives is **in need of revision**.

As a consequence of this, while assessing the general policy mix justified, there is need for more explanation about the background for certain budget allocations for some key areas of intervention to justify the mix of interventions within the several Priority Axes.

4.4.2 Recommendations

The main recommendation for this chapter is to revise the quantification of the objectives and to explain the relation between the allocation of budgets and the quantified output, results and impact.

Next to this, there are several other recommendations:

- It is recommended to use the total number of active people (instead of total employment) as a denominator for the coverage rate of the amount of persons to be touched by the SOP interventions (4.2.).
- The numerator for the main programme coverage rate indicator should only include persons who are supported to get a job or hold on to a job, but should exclude trainers, teachers, PES staff and other types of professionals (4.3.).
- The main indicator for the SOP should be (at least) on the result level rather than the output level (4.7.).
- The SOP should contain a list of output, result, impact and context indicators, which can be used for monitoring and evaluation. This also makes it possible to define baseline figures (4.9.).
- For Priority Axis 2 one can identify several indicators related to the job results of the interventions, which may be subject of (on going and ex post) evaluation (4.13).
- It is recommended to repeat the survey on CVT participation more often, because of the importance of this intervention (4.14.).
- The amount of successful business start-ups may be a n indicator for evaluation with Priority Axis 3 (and also with the ROP and the SOP IEC) (4.17).
- It needs to be explained whether the group of formerly inactive persons activated on the labour market which is the subject of an indicator for Priority Axis 5 is a sub-group of the persons considered in the other two indicators (participants in ALMM and/or participants from rural areas). It is also important to instruct project promoters well how to define "formerly inactive" (4.20).
- It is recommendable, especially within an evaluation to include figures on the several vulnerable groups under the programme (4.21.).
- The indicator "Number of participants in training/retraining programmes for vulnerable groups" should be joined by an indicator on the number of participants from vulnerable groups in 3.2.6.2. interventions in general (4.23).

- It is recommended to introduce an indicator form evaluation for both the key areas of intervention 3.2.61. and 3.2.62. on the job results of the interventions (4.23).
- When the same persons could be the subject of several interventions under the SOP (which could explain for the difference between the sum of all individual interventions and the overall target for the whole of the SOP), this should be explained (4.30).

Observations of the MA SOP HRD on the recommendations

The MA SOP HRD in its "Observations on the ex ante evaluation final draft report" indicates that it will fully reconsider the indicators and the quantification in the next version of the SOP. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluators, the indicators will only need some small adaptations. The real problem lies with quantification.

Furthermore, the MA SOP HRD states that precise estimation of the cost per participant for various types of projects is difficult. Some operations will have higher costs than others. This should be the explanation for the high average costs. This is partly true. The ex ante evaluators, at the other hand, like to observe that it is still difficult to explain the differences in costs for similar kinds of activities (comparing e.g. the Priority Axes 2 and 5) and would also like to stress that there is a need to at least reconsider the key areas of intervention 3.2.2.3 (CVT), for which the mean costs seem rather high and 3.2.6.1 (social economy) for which every information about participants is lacking.

The MA SOP HRD also stresses that a target of 10% participation in CVT in 2010 is not realistic and that 8% participation in 2015 is a much better target from the perspective of 1.6% participation in 2005. The ex ante evaluators agree, but would like to stress that a good consideration could only be made after reliable figures will become available.

5 Appraisal of the proposed implementation system

The success - effectiveness and efficiency - of Community support is largely dependent on the delivery capacity and management performance of the implementing organizations. Guaranteeing an effective use of the EU support is a regulatory requirement. Assessing the quality thereof is especially important for the ex ante evaluation of Plans and Programmes submitted by acceding countries, as they have no previous experience in implementing Structural Funds.

In order to extend the scope of the evaluation beyond theoretical considerations, when addressing the implementation and monitoring provisions of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme, the ex ante evaluation team has not only tried to assess the appropriateness of the organisational make-up and processes as indicated in the draft OP, but also queried the current state of preparations of the Managing Authority and the Intermediate Bodies, and their overall delivery capacity, and suggested possible improvements to the implementation and monitoring system.

The implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the HRD SOP are extensively described in its chapter 5. This chapter comprises descriptions and information on management, monitoring, evaluation, financial management and control and information and publicity. In this assessment these issues are each separately discussed. Besides this, there are some provisions in the field of competition, State Aid, public procurement and ex ante control in paragraph 3.3.

This chapter does not elaborate extensively on the information and publicity paragraph. The paragraph inside the SOP HRD is in line with the ESF regulation and the information and publicity strategy of the MA CSF. The communication plan itself will be in the Programme Complement. This will be assessed in the framework of the ex ante evaluation of the PC.

Textual

- 5.1. To the opinion of the ex ante evaluator, the texts in paragraph 3.3. on competition, State Aid, public procurement and ex ante control fit better to Chapter 5. Although it relates to EU regulation, it is not about strategic but about implementation related aspects.
- 5.2. For the rest, the texts on implementation are clear (and good English).

5.1 Management

- 5.3. The management structure is as such well described. The position of the several intermediate bodies still remains a little bit confusing, especially, since this structure changed since earlier drafts of the SOP. As a whole, a system with 13 intermediate bodies seems to be rather complex.

- 5.4. A next remark should be that it seems a little bit strange that the intermediate body of the MoER still has such a structure with regional offices when a large part of the interventions will be supervised by the DG of Higher Education and the NCDVTE, where no similar regional structures are described in the SOP.
- 5.5. It is a good thing, that an experienced organization (the NCDTVE) is involved as an intermediate body for developing LLL in companies. Still, the responsibilities of the NCDVTE will grow extensively.
- 5.6. The SOP stresses (on p. 108) the importance of a clear separation of functions. This should address both the MA and the intermediate bodies. When the same person is responsible for project promotion (talking to – potential – applicants) and the help desk function at one hand and for the selection, financial management and control at the other the chances for corruption are apparent. Especially within a small regional unit, the chances are that responsibilities will be unclear. At the other hand, it would be good that, when a person who is responsible for attracting possible promoters to apply for funding, he or she also knows something about the financial side of ESF.
- 5.7. There has not been a feasibility study of the operation of the several layers of the management structure (and also no SWOT-analysis for TA). At the other hand, the MA has been making a workload analysis, taking into account also budget allocations, the average budget, the average amount of time needed for invoices and the amount of persons needed for monitoring activities.
- 5.8. The management of projects which are related to several OP's or Priority Axes at the same time is a specific issue. This is not only a question of complementarity, but also of coordination. Although it is a good initiative of the MA CSF to set up Regional Coordination Committees, this does not seem sufficient to really manage the coordination. The MA and the several intermediate bodies and regional offices should attention to coordination issues.
- 5.9. The SOP contains a description of the PHARE units of the MA SOP HRD. This seems not very relevant for the interventions under the SOP. At the other hand, it could be worth mentioning, that the mixing of experienced PHARE personnel with new recruits for the HRD SOP is foreseen. The MA plans to shift half of the PHARE-personnel to the HRD SOP intermediate bodies, while some new recruits will work with the PHARE departments.
- 5.10. An important aspect of the human resources for delivery is also the training of all persons (from the level of the MA till final beneficiaries) for their role in the framework of delivery. Part of this is under the Technical Assistance OP and (as regards some of the final beneficiaries) under the Administrative Capacity OP. There are, however, also some specific training activities under the Technical Assistance of the HRD OP itself, which are not being described in the OP.
- 5.11. A communication plan is needed, especially directed at social partners in sectors of industry and at actors in rural areas (not only informing about information materials, guides and electronic visibility, but also describing the strategy to raise awareness among these targets groups for communication).

5.2 Monitoring

- 5.12. Beginning in 2008, the MA will have to submit to the EC annual implementation reports as well as a final report at the end of the programming period. The ESF regulation states which information on the (financial) progress must be in these reports. The texts in the HRD SOP are in agreement with the regulation.
- 5.13. The experiences from other MS learn that it is always important to check whether the monitoring system (SMIS in this case) also provides the necessary information about ESF, as ESF is linked with individuals, and other funds direct themselves at infrastructural investments. There have already been some initiatives of the Managing Authority in this field (concerning e.g. background indicators about target groups). An important subject of monitoring in the field of HRD programmes is always the individual impact (getting a sustainable job). The MA should consider how to monitor specific impacts (after defining indicators for monitoring).
- 5.14. It is remarkable, that –different from other member states – there are no regional representatives in the Monitoring Committee.
- 5.15. An important aspect of implementation which should be monitored well is the absorption of funding by the programme. Of course, the implementation report should inform about the absorption but it is much more important to take some preventive measures. An important measure has already been taken by the programmers by gradually starting up the spending of the funds. The first years of the programme spending will start up slowly. This makes it possible to get acquainted to ESF and to inform possible applicants about the possibilities of the ESF. Another reason for not speeding up spending is that during the first years there will also still be PHARE funded programmes.
- 5.16. At least in the field of social inclusion (Priority Axis 6) there seems to be any trust about absorption, whereas project proposals for PHARE by far exceeded the amount of funding available. For the other Priority Axes, there is less assurance about absorption.
- 5.17. Another important measure to strengthen possibilities for absorption is the fact that already 2,000 possible potential beneficiaries have been identified by NGO's. There will also be several possibilities (from the Administrative Capacity SOP, but also in the framework of the HRD SOP itself) for training (potential) beneficiaries.
- 5.18. The Single Management Information System is a nation web-based information system that supports all Romanian organizations implementing the NSRF and the SOP's. The system is addressing the needs not only of the MA and the intermediate bodies in the sense of monitoring but also all the needs for the financial control of the programme. Important functions of the SMIS not only relate to data availability but also to data confidentiality and data integrity. It is also fit for electronic data exchange with the EC. It also provides for all the data mentioned in section 1.1.2 of this report which the MA HRD SOP should send to the EC. Otherwise than in other member states, this information is part of the database and is not put into an information field which can not be used for electronic data processing.
This makes it also possible for evaluators or for the MA to process additional data on the progress of the programme. During the discussion about the first interim report the question was raised whether the monitoring system should also contain information about the specific impact (participants getting a steady job) of the SOP. This is

not the case. Information about the specific impact of the programme may be gathered by means of surveys in the framework of evaluation.

- 5.19. Another discussion related to the gathering of information was on the frequency of reporting by beneficiaries and intermediate bodies to the MA. Of course, it is necessary that these organizations provide for the relevant information rather frequently. It is, at the other hand, important to keep the administrative burden as low as possible. Not only should the attention of promoters be directed at participants and not at administration, but also may a too heavy burden on administration deter possible promoters from applying; the main reason that innovators in the field of project development do have other characteristics than administrators. The MA plans to ask project promoters for monthly reports. The ex ante evaluator wonders whether this is necessary. These doubts were already expressed during the begin October session on the first interim report.
- 5.20. Of course, monitoring can also be assisted by regular site visits to the projects, which the intermediary bodies plan to carry out. These visits could be mentioned in the implementation chapter.

5.3 Evaluation

- 5.21. The text on evaluation is the same for all the sectoral OP's. There is a new text on evaluation from the MA CSF with some additional activities which cover up for some earlier remarks of the ex ante evaluators concerning problems when a first on going evaluation will be in time in 2009/2010. Before a new strategy will be developed on the basis of the recommendations from the mid term evaluators, there should have been very little time to implement this strategy. The ex ante evaluator calls for a first interim evaluation till the end of 2008. The MA CSF covered up for this problem by planning a thematic on going evaluation on implementation and delivery in 2008.
- 5.22. A point of attention is the individual character of ESF funding. Various interventions ask for evaluation of the individual outputs, results and specific impacts. Especially the labour market position after the project will be difficult to monitor, because after some time the participant may loose contact with the project. Sometimes he might even move to another town. There are various alternatives for solving this problem:
- The Italian system of obliging the promoter to call all the participants and ask them if they found a job.
 - Registration of participants at e.g. the National Agency for Employment (also when this is not necessary for getting an Employment Benefit)
 - Specific attention for this problem during evaluation, e.g. by promising project participants that participation in evaluation will also mean participation in a lottery with some attractive prizes.

5.4 Financial management and control

- 5.24. The financial management and control system for all the SOP's will in principle be the same. It is not necessary to repeat here the structure of the financial system

and the financial flow model. As far as the ex ante evaluator can see, there is a strict separation of responsibilities between the several authorities in this field. Above it was already discussed that this separation of responsibilities should also count inside the MA and the intermediate bodies.

- 5.25. Paragraph 3.3. (from p. 99 on) of the SOP addresses the provisions of the EU regulations for competition, state aid, public procurement and ex ante control. All these provisions do agree with EU regulations.
- 5.26. In the framework of this evaluation, it is maybe useful to point at some specific characteristics of ESF which relate to the financial management of the programme. A first point is that – ESF being individual based - the chances are greater that something goes astray in the field of financial administration than with the ERDF. Some individual might forget to provide for a certain document. It is important that the system (SMIS or on paper) includes some checks, e.g. on the fact whether somebody really is unemployed at the start of a project (when this will be a selection criterion).
- 5.27. At the other hand, when some paperwork is missing, it most of the time will concern only a small irregularity (less than 4,000 Euro), which will only have consequences for the project promoter at first.
- 5.28. Another important aspect with ESF that project promoters are most of the time not big companies but small institutes or training firms, who do not have a big financial buffer. For that reason it is important that payments are in time. The Ministry of Public Finance seems to have figured out that to pass all the stages of payment might last something like 90-120 days. From that perspective, it is very important to inform the beneficiaries to ask for advance payments in time and to check requests for payment as quick as possible.
- 5.29. A last observation is not as much on the financial control model as well as on the financial plan. For reasons of absorption (for the first years of the OP there are also still PHARE funds available) it is decided to build up the amount of funding under the SOP slowly. The SOP, however, does not highlight the amount of PHARE funds still available.

5.5 Assessment of the implementation system

5.5.1 Overall conclusions

The proposed implementation system can be assessed as follows:

- The proposed delivery system will (at the least) contribute to a sound and efficient management and monitoring of the interventions.
- The division of the work between the Monitoring Committee, the Management Authority and the intermediate bodies seems transparent. It must be observed that the management structure seems a little bit complex, and that the MA and the Monitoring Committee (each from its own responsibility) should clearly supervise the intermediate bodies in the field of absorption, separation of responsibilities as well as the coordination with other operational programmes.
- It is difficult to assess the competitiveness and transparency of the selection procedures already now. The selection criteria as such are in the Programme Complement, which

will be evaluated separately. It is clear that all procedures will follow the provisions within the EU regulations.

- Control and audit measures, as much as can be learned from the SOP, are also in line with national and community regulations.
- The systems for monitoring and evaluation seem to be all right, especially when there will be an evaluation on delivery in 2008. Attention should be paid to the ways of gathering data on the impacts (amount of participants getting a job, or – when already employed – holding on to a job) of the programme.
- All relevant institutions will be involved in the implementation. It is important to involve the social partners as beneficiaries, especially for CVT.

It may be concluded that the quality of the description of the implementation of the SOP is **satisfactory**.

5.5.2 Recommendations

It should first be pointed out that there are already some recommendations about implementation in former PHARE evaluations (1.36):, the need of a pro-active approach in assisting project promoters, a better communication, a more careful project selection, monitoring while using indicators, better involvement of local authorities and about a higher participation of the unemployed and disadvantaged groups in HRD projects.

For the rest the following recommendations should follow from this chapter's findings and conclusions:

- The texts in paragraph 3.3. on competition, State Aid, public procurement and ex ante control fit better to Chapter 5 (5.2.).
- The MA should reconsider the rather complex structure of intermediate bodies and regional offices (5.3.).
- It is also important that the management of the programme carefully supervises interventions in which there is very little experience until now, such as development of LLL in companies. The MA will have to follow closely whether the NCDTVE can trigger companies and sectors to apply for funding (5.5.).
- The MA should define some kind of balance between the clarity of separation of responsibilities within the intermediate bodies at one hand, and the need to know something about the activities of the colleagues within the same bodies at the other hand (5.6.).
- The MA HRD SOP should define responsibilities within its own structure for the coordination of activities between the several Priority Axes and between the SOP HRD and other SOP's (5.8.).
- Absorption should be watched carefully, especially concerning LLL in companies, especially when other SOP's plan to cross-finance training activities within their own interventions (5.15.).
- The MA should carefully consider the administrative burden for project promoters (5.19.).
- At the other hand, there should be paid much attention to gathering all relevant documents in the project administration. It might be e.g. important to check carefully whether some person is really unemployed (5.26.).
- The new text on evaluation of the MA CSF should be incorporated in the SOP text (5.21.).

- As has been mentioned in Chapter 4, the MA SOP HRD should develop a set of result, impact and context indicators for monitoring.¹ Specific attention should be paid to the monitoring of job results (the unemployed getting a job and the employed holding on o a job) (5.22.).
- It will be useful when the financial table should contain a footnote on the relation between PHARE funding in the field of HRD (in 2007) and ESF (5.29.).

Observations of the MA SOP HRD on the recommendations

The only observation the MA has made on the recommendations in this Chapter is that it has explained again the position of the regional offices of the MoER intermediate body. The recommendation of the ex ante evaluator on the complex structure of intermediate bodies not only relates to the MoER, but also to the rest of the structure.

¹ In which they will be assisted by the member of the ex ante evaluation team responsible for developing indicators.

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