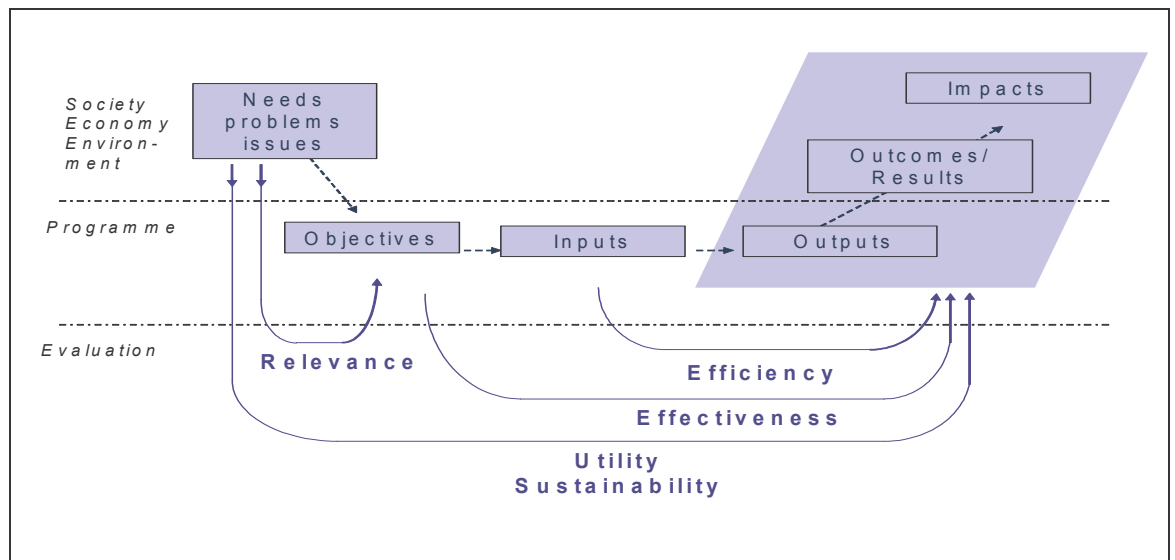


1.2 Methodology

In general, evaluations address a set of specific issues:

- **Relevance:** to what extent are the programme's objectives relevant in relation to the evolving needs and priorities at national and EU level?
- **Effectiveness:** how realistic is the programme in achieving its specific and global objectives by 2013 or earlier?
- **Efficiency:** how well are the resources (inputs) allocated with respect to outputs or results?
- **Consistence and Coherence:** are the proposed objectives and measures logically linked to the socio-economic analysis, are they mutually consistent (consistence) and are they well embedded in the regional, national and Community (e.g. Lisbon Objectives) policy objectives and interventions (Coherence)
- **Utility:** are the expected and unexpected effects realistic and globally satisfactory in the context of wider social, environmental and economic needs?
- **Sustainability:** will the effects obtained in the proposed programmes remain, even after the end of the programme without further public funding?
- **Management and monitoring arrangements:** how they may affect the achievement of programme objectives & contribute the chosen processes to positive results?

Figure 1.1 Evaluation criteria¹



Source: Commission documents on evaluation

Taking the above mentioned general and specific objectives into account, in this ex-ante evaluation we will mainly focus on **relevance**, **effectiveness** and **utility**. More specific issues at the ex-ante evaluation stage are *programme*

¹ Draft Working Paper on Ex-ante Evaluation on the New Programming Period, 2007 – 2013 (Draft October 2005)

consistency (intervention logic), *policy coherence* and the *quality of implementation systems*. Finally, the ex-ante evaluation should also examine the potential risks for the programme, both in relation to the policy choices made and the implementation system proposed.

For drawing up the programmes more detailed evaluation questions have to be answered in relation to the national, regional or sector strategies to be evaluated. According to the Commissions' Working Paper Ex-Ante Evaluations for the new programmes 2007 - 2013 outline, the evaluation should answer the following questions:

BOX I
Main questions to be answered by the ex-ante evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the programme represent an appropriate strategy to meet the challenges confronting the region or sector?• Is the strategy well defined with clear objectives and priorities and can those objectives be realistically achieved with the financial resources allocated to the different priorities?• Is the strategy coherent with policies at regional, national (including the National Strategic Reference Framework) and Community level? How will the strategy contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives?• Are appropriate indicators identified for the objectives and can these indicators and their targets form the basis for future monitoring and evaluation of performance?• What will be the impact of the strategy in quantified terms

Source: Draft Working Paper on Ex-ante Evaluation on the New Programming Period, 2007 - 2013 (Draft October 2005)

The standard procedure for ex-ante evaluation is laid down on the Commission's draft guidelines document (October 2005). Concerning the ex-ante evaluation of the S.O.P. Transport the following additional elements of the methodology and evaluation approach can be given:

The main sources of written material taking into account in the ex-ante evaluation are:

- Regulations on the Structural Funds (General and ERDF) for 2007 - 2013.
- Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007 - 2013² as well as the Lisbon Agenda.
- The National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 - 2013.
- Commission Draft Working Papers on ex-ante evaluation (October 2005) and on indicators (January 2006).
- The reference documents received from the Evaluation Central Unit during the informal kick off meeting.
- The results of previous evaluations executed for current PHARE programmes (e.g. ISPA).
- Additional information on Romanian Policy papers as they appear important during the execution of the evaluation activities.
- The Operational Programme and Programme Complement of the ACD OP and the other OPs.

² COUNCIL DECISION of 6 October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines on cohesion (2006/702/EC)

In addition to this meetings, interviews and surveys with and among stakeholders have been organised. For the evaluation of the Transport OP, the following fieldwork activities have been carried out:

1. Face-to-face interviews with officials (experts) of the Ministry of Transport.
2. Face-to-face interviews with other ministries and agencies which are linked to the proposed priority axes.

The following steps for the evaluation have been undertaken:

- 1) *The first step in the standard approach has been the appraisal of the socio-economic analysis and the relevance of the strategy to the needs identified.*

This was mainly based on desk research in which the social-economic analysis and the SWOT analysis have been checked on their consistency and an assessment has been made of the relevancy of the proposed strategy taken these analyses into account.

Results of this assessment have been discussed with the planners of MTCT to discuss our feedback for consequences of the draft OP.

- 2) *The second step was an evaluation of the rationale of the strategy and its consistency and policy mix.*

Mainly on basis of the desk research an assessment of the rationale of the strategy has been made and an opinion of the evaluators on the internal consistency was prepared. In this phase also local short terms experts have been involved in the evaluation.

Results of this assessment have been discussed with the planners of MTCT to discuss our feedback for consequences of the draft OP.

- 3) *The third step was an appraisal of the coherence of the strategy with regional and National Policies and the Community Strategic Guidelines.*

Mainly on basis of the desk research an assessment of the external coherence has been made.

Results of this have been discussed with the planners of MTCT to discuss our feedback for consequences of the draft OP.

- 4) *The fourth step was an evaluation of the expected results and impacts.*

The indicators proposed in the draft OP. have been checked on the basis of the SMART principles and also their quantification and their possible aggregation from project to priority and programme level have been proved.

During this phase of the evaluation local as well as international short term experts have been asked to support our evaluation activities through analyses and interviews with stakeholders involved.

Results of this have been discussed with the planners of MTCT to discuss our feedback for consequences of the draft OP.

- 5) *The final step was the appraisal of the proposed implementation system for managing, monitoring and evaluating the Programme.*

This phase has been mainly executed through interviews with officials of MA from the Programme Management and Payments and Certification Directorates.

Main issues identified as possible problems needing further detailed attention:

1. Institutional capacity to implement the programme.
2. Sustainability of the interventions by guaranteeing sufficient funds for maintenance of transport infrastructure projects.
3. Structural integration of Project Implementation Unit in overall planning process.
4. Use of public consultation.
5. Use of impact indicators as well as output and result indicators.

1.3 The process of the ex-ante evaluation of the SOP Transport

The process of the ex-ante evaluation of the SOP Transport has been interactive and reiterative. This process has started in the beginning of August 2006 and extends itself until to-day. In Annex 1 a list of the most relevant institutions contacted during this process can be found. Most of the institutions are related to the Managing Authority and the Implementing Agencies, but also other stakeholders have been consulted.

First contacts were established with the Managing Authorities after a first informal meeting of the ex-ante evaluation team with the Romanian authorities, which took place in Bucharest on August 8, 2006. On August 22, 2006 the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee took place. During this meeting the Managing Authority presented its Operational Programme and the evaluator made its first appraisal.

The official kick-off seminar was organized on September 25, 2006. The main objectives of this seminar were:

- To facilitate the enhancement of the partnership for ex-ante evaluation of the structural and cohesion funds.
- To raise the awareness on the utility of evaluation for improving the formulation of the operational programmes.
- To provide information on the ex-ante evaluation design and preliminary findings on each OP.
- To collect opinions of relevant stakeholders on various aspects of evaluation.

The seminar was successful and counted with the participation of 60 delegates including staff from DG Regio from the European Commission.

In October 2006 two interim meetings with the Managing Authority were organized where the ex-ante evaluator discussed its findings of the Operational Programme in detail by using detailed follow-up tables. In these follow-up

tables observations were made, questions were raised and recommendations proposed by the ex-ante evaluator to the Managing Authority for improving the quality of the SOPT. These follow-up tables basically form provide the framework and for a large part also the contents for the ex-ante evaluation report of the SOPT. Also a start was made to carry out some ad hoc analyses aiming at further improving the quality of the Operational Programme and to contribute to the enrichment of the Programme Complement.

In December 2006 the evaluator presented its draft ex-ante evaluation report to the Managing Authority. Further comments were received from various stakeholders including the Programming Unit and the Evaluation and Coordination Unit of the CSF of the of the Ministry of Finance. These comments have been taken into account in the drafting of this report.

During the ex-ante evaluation process of the SOPT, the evaluator has put the main emphasis on discussing with the Managing Authority and the Implementing Agencies issues related with the sustainability of the proposed and planned interventions; with capacity development of staff to improve the overall management of the SOPT; increasing planning capacity at the Managing Authority and Implementing Agencies; and last but not least involvement of stakeholders through public consultation in order to institutionalize the setting, adjustment and reformulation of the correct priorities.

The main reason herefore is that the SOPT as such is considered being of relatively high quality: the main problems are well identified; the strategy to address these problems is clearly defined; priority axes and key areas of interventions are in compliance with the formulated policy and objectives. The Managing Authority even has an ambitious pipeline of concrete projects and is in the stage of prioritization of projects as the needs are much larger than the available funds. The ex-ante evaluator has carried out several ad hoc analyses: to assess the capacity of the two major Implementing Agencies, the Romanian Railways and the National Company of Highways and National Roads, and a training needs assessment. Another ad hoc analysis/training is focused on the use of Cost Benefit Analysis. This is an important tool in programme management and project prioritization.

The process of the elaboration of the SOPT started well before the ex-ante evaluator did start its work and several earlier drafts had already been commented by several institutions, including the European Commission. These early comments have been incorporated in the later versions. The Managing Authority also received Technical Assistance from foreign consultants to improve the quality of the SOPT in its various stages. Apparently, lessons have been learnt from the implementation of the ISPA programme in the design of the SOPT.