

1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The Management Authority of the Community Support Framework (MA CSF) has commissioned the ex ante evaluation of the Operational Programmes (O.P.s) and the Programme Complements (P.C.s) for Romania to be undertaken in accordance to Council Regulation 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006. According to Article 48 of this regulation *the "Ex-ante evaluation shall aim to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources under operational programmes and improve programming quality. It shall identify and appraise medium- and long-term needs, the goals to be achieved, the results expected, the quantified targets, the coherence, if necessary, of the strategy proposed for the region, the Community value-added, the extent to which the Community's priorities have been taken into account, the lessons drawn from previous programming and the quality of the procedures for implementation, monitoring, evaluation and financial management"*.

The ex-ante evaluation takes place at the beginning of the cycle before a programme has been adopted.

An ex-ante evaluation helps to ensure that the final programme is as relevant and coherent as possible. Its conclusions are intended to be integrated into the programme when decisions are made.

The Ex-ante evaluation should further:

- Focus primarily on an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and potential of the Member State, region or sector concerned.
- Provide the relevant authorities with a prior judgement on whether development issues have been diagnosed correctly, whether the strategy and objectives proposed are relevant, whether there is incoherence in relation to Community policies and guidelines, whether the expected impacts are realistic, and so on.
- Serve as a a-priori quality assurance of programming and a cost-efficient budgeting, thus optimization of the program effects with consideration of the limited resources available;
- Provide also the required foundations for monitoring and for future evaluations, by ensuring that there are explicit and, where possible, quantified objectives.
- Help to specify selection criteria for the selection of projects and to ensure that Community priorities are respected.
- Finally, help to ensure the transparency of decisions by allowing for a clear explanation of choices made and their expected effects.

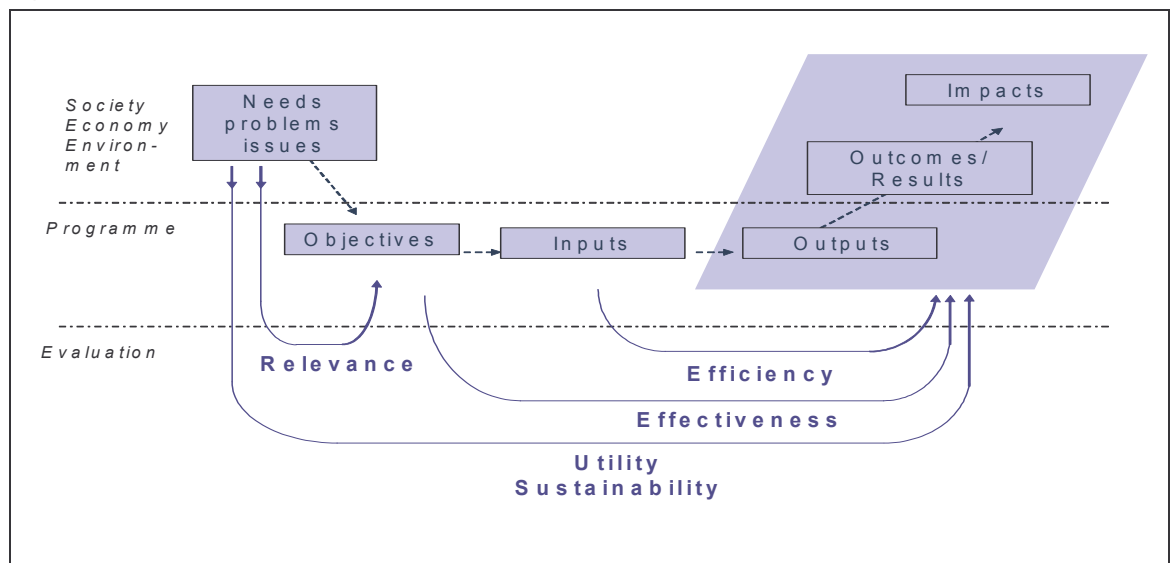
Ex-ante evaluations are performed at the time when public authorities are involved in discussions and negotiations on the future programme. They are therefore subjected to strong constraints: pressure of deadlines, vague formalisation of the proposed programme to be evaluated, amendments to this proposal while the work is underway, demands for confidentiality, etc. The evaluation team must therefore be able to intervene flexibly and rapidly, and be able to apply techniques for analysing needs and simulating socio-economic effects.

1.2 The key criteria

In general, evaluations must address a set of specific issues to enable the assistance to be assessed in detail. Those are:

- *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 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 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.

¹ Working Paper on Ex-ante Evaluation on the New Programming Period, 2007 – 2013.

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 evaluations

1.3 Main components of the ex-ante evaluation

As said before the ex-ante evaluation should be an *iterative and interactive process* with evaluators undertaking the different components of the evaluation at different times as the programme is prepared. At the end of the process, the evaluator pulls the components together into a final evaluation report which represents an evaluation of the programme as submitted to the European Commission and also reflects the changes and improvements to the programme which have been made through the evaluation process.

According to the draft working paper the ex-ante evaluation will contain the following five main components, which are further elaborated in chapter 2.

- A. Appraisal of the socio-economic analysis and the relevance of the strategy to the needs identified;
- B. Evaluation of the rationale of the strategy and its consistency
- C. Appraisal of the coherence of the strategy with regional and national policies and the Community Strategic Guidelines
- D. Evaluation of the expected Results and Impacts
- E. Appraisal of the proposed implementation systems

These components are the same as the tasks described in the Terms of Reference. In addition to that the ToR asks to execute as well an ex-ante evaluation of the Programme Complement (PC). According to the new EU regulation for the Structural Funds the PCs are not necessary anymore, but for internal purposes – to support the implementation process - the Romanian authorities still wish to receive a more detailed evaluation of the proposed measures, the quantification of the indicators proposed and the implementation and monitoring arrangements. This wish is taken into account during the further elaboration of the evaluation tasks in the next paragraphs.