

2. Does the progress registered in the ROP implementation lead to the achievement of the programme objectives?
3. What are the major external and internal factors that can influence or have influenced the performance of MAROP and IBROP in the programme management and implementation?
4. Is the ROP implementation system appropriate for the selection, contracting and monitoring of the projects launched at the level of each development region and within each key area of intervention?
5. How are the performances of the ROP implementation system reflected at the level of reimbursement claims?
6. What is the ROP contribution during the evaluated period to the implementation and achievement of strategic objectives?

The evaluation questions are further divided into 17 specific areas of examination. The evaluation report is organised to address each of these areas.

### *Methodology*

11. The evaluation activities were divided between **core evaluation work** and the **customised activities** for the evaluation questions raised in this evaluation. The evaluation period was divided between an initial field work period up to 30 June 2009, when a first partial draft report was submitted, and a second field work period up to 31 August 2009, when the full draft report was submitted. A comprehensive consultation on the draft report was held in September and October 2009 and the final draft report was submitted to the MAROP on 15 October 2009. The final report was presented for consideration and for the debriefing of the key recommendations at the Steering Committee meeting on 26 October 2009.

12. **The core activities** for the initial period were: the review of documentation, analysis of data and information and interviews with key stakeholders. The evaluation started with interviews in Bucharest with the central actors in MAROP and was followed by a short first round of visits to the Intermediary Bodies (the eight Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the Directorate for Managing Community Funds for Tourism at the Ministry of Tourism). The key experts considered the evidence collected from the twin perspectives of the priority axes and the regional progress and have focused on three critical evaluation questions:

- The current position in terms of allocation, selected operations<sup>2</sup> and reimbursement of expenditure;
- The internal and external factors that are influencing performance; and
- The specific challenges that have been met in the project selection and contracting stages of the implementation cycle.

13. At the same time, the evaluation team separately enquired into the other main evaluation areas. These are (1) the effect on ROP performance of changes to the underlying socio economic factors that were relevant when the ROP was drafted, (2) the financial management and control system and the prospects for absorption of the ERDF allocation, and (3) the implementation of the Communications Strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> “Selected operations” is the term used by the EC to refer to operations for which a funding contract has been finalised. The equivalent term in Romania is “committed”. For this reason the report refers to “commitments”

14. An interim draft evaluation report, containing ROP related information as at the first quarter of 2009 and a partial analysis was produced at the end of June 2009 and circulated to the MAROP and the IBROP for comment. A workshop was convened in Bucharest on 15 July 2009 during which comments on the draft were received and discussed. Arising from this workshop, an activity list with 89 points was made to guide the second field work period of the evaluation.

15. Further analysis was made covering all the evaluation questions. This covered the remaining activities proposed in the evaluation workplan and confirmed by the project inception report. These activities included:

- Design and transmittal of an evaluation questionnaire to 128 beneficiaries (public authorities) for which 64 responses were received; The summary of the questionnaire responses is presented in full in **Annex 2**;
- A second round of regional visits (regional workshops) to consult the RDAs and Beneficiaries from both the public and private sectors on the evaluation issues; The key points emerging from the workshops are summarised in **Annex 3**;
- Interrogation of SMIS for information on all project applications that were entered there;
- Further analysis of the systems for project selection, the financial circuits and the preparation of the financial prognosis;
- Meetings with other relevant parties including internal auditors, the Audit Authority and ACIS.

16. The internal quality of the draft reports was managed by the Team Leader by compiling the comments received from stakeholders on the drafts and ensuring that they were appropriately considered. The final draft report, and the final version of the Evaluation Report (version of 26 October 2009) was externally quality assured by an evaluation expert (Mr Klaas Jan Reincke, Managing Director of CyclePlanDrive, Tallinn Estonia) with no prior involvement in the project. The Quality Reports issued by this external evaluation expert are attached to this final version of the Interim Evaluation Report.

### Format of the Evaluation Report

#### *Assessment terminology*

17. A fundamental part of any evaluation is to reach conclusions on the evaluation questions that are given to the evaluation team for consideration. For the purposes of this evaluation a formal quantitative rating scheme for the ROP performance criteria was not used but a standard assessment terminology has been applied in this report, in particular for the portfolio analysis of the Priority Axes and Key Areas of Intervention in Chapter 2. The assessment terminology uses a four point positive scale to summarise the evaluation conclusions, as follows:

Interpretation of scale point	Short interpretation	Consideration of performance up to the cut-off date (Point in time assessment)	Prospects for reaching the priority objectives (End of Programme assessment)
The objectives/target indicators are/will be exceeded by a wide margin	Exceeding expectations	Good	High
The objectives/target indicators are/will be achieved by a small margin	Meeting expectations	Satisfactory	Significant
The objectives/target indicators are/will not be fully met	Below expectations	Unsatisfactory	Moderate
The performance is/will be far short of the target	Implementation barely starting	Poor	Low

### *Structure of the report*

18. The report is organised to directly answer the evaluation questions. There is a separate chapter for each question and each chapter follows the general order of the areas of examination established in the Terms of Reference. Each chapter has a final section presenting conclusions and key recommendations. The executive summary of the report is based on the chapter conclusions. The key recommendations are assembled into a recommendations table which is shown after the executive summary.

19. **Chapter 1** investigates socio-economic changes and the effect of the financial and economic crisis on the ROP. It also considers the relevance of the ROP output and results indicators.

20. **Chapter 2** provides a detailed description of the current position of implementation in terms of allocations, selected operations, payment reimbursement and output and results indicators recorded up to the cut-off date. The information is viewed from both a priority axis and a regional perspective. This chapter is intended to provide the data necessary to support the areas of examination that were set for all the evaluation questions.

21. **Chapter 3** presents the external and internal factors that are affecting the performance of the implementation of the ROP. There is some overlap between internal and external factors and the areas of examination in chapters 1, 4 and 5. The treatment of internal and external factors is outlined at the start of chapter 3.

22. **Chapters 4 and 5** investigate the systems for project selection, contracting and monitoring and for the expenditure verification and the processing of claims for reimbursement.

23. **Chapter 6** identifies the main impact of the ROP to date, the prospects for impact and the challenges for the remaining implementation period.