

PREAMBLE

The present document is the second draft of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA) Interim Evaluation (IE) Report, which is the deliverable of Component 2.1 of the technical assistance (TA) project Conducting Evaluations for the period 2009-2010, implemented under contract 13/02.10.2009 – Carrying out Evaluations during the Implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and the OPTA concluded between the Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments (ACIS) of the Ministry of Public Finance (the ‘Contracting Authority’) and a consortium composed of KPMG Romania SRL (leader), GEA Strategy & Consulting and Pluriconsult (the ‘Consortium’).

This Evaluation Report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations emanating from research and analysis designed to answer salient questions with regard to the relevance, coordination and coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of OPTA.

The cut-off date for the data used in the evaluation is 31 December 2009, unless otherwise indicated.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Evaluation Contract

1. The contract [ref: **Table 1**] operates within the context of Romania's NSRF for the period 2007-13, which provides medium-term planning for Romania's use of the resources provided under the Structural and Cohesion Funds, together referred to as Structural Instruments (SI).

Table 1: Contract Summary

Contract Title	Carrying out Evaluations during the Implementation of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and the Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA)
Contract Number	13/02.10.2009
Beneficiary	Evaluation Central Unit, Authority for the Coordination of Structural Instruments (ACIS)
Contracting Authority	ACIS, Ministry of Public Finance (MoPF), Romania
Contract Starting Date/Duration	13 October 2009/18 months

2. The contract's terms of reference (ToR) identify as the general aim of the project to contribute to strengthening the overall coordination capacity of SI implementation in Romania and to the development of an appropriate administrative system aiming at providing a mutual level of knowledge and experience among different actors involved. In this context, the ToR require the project to carry out evaluations in the course of the implementation of the NSRF, including an IE of OPTA.
3. The contract has two main components:
 - ❖ Component 1 – NSRF Evaluation
 - ❖ Component 2 – Other Evaluations, which encompasses:
 - Component 2.1: Interim evaluation of OPTA (the subject of the present report);
 - Component 2.2: Synthesis Report of all interim evaluation reports on the Operational Programmes (OPs) in Romania prepared in the period 2009-10; and
 - Component 2.3: Ad hoc evaluations on thematic or cross-cutting issues, required by the National Coordination Committee (NCC), the Monitoring Committee of OPTA (OPTA MC) or ACIS.

1.2 Terms of Reference

4. The ToR were established by ECU/ACIS in order to lay out the general guidelines for the evaluation process.
5. **Table 2** summarises the objectives, purpose and expected results of the Component 2.1 – *Interim Evaluation of OPTA*.

Table 2: Summary of the OPTA IE ToR

Overall Objective	The overall objective of the interim evaluation of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance is to contribute to the successful implementation of this OP.
Project Purpose	The purpose of the project's OPTA component is to provide policy and decision makers, and programme managers with reliable information and sound analyse on the progress to date of OPTA, drawing out the main lessons learned during the first period of implementation and highlighting the best practice observed during this process at the level of the participants involved. The second purpose of this component is to offer an input to the strategic reporting under Article 29 of Regulation EC N° 1083/2006.
Expected Results	The expected results of this evaluation are to build conclusions and recommendations, which should address the evaluation questions at the level of OPTA, presented in Table 3.

6. The expected results of the evaluation exercise consist of conclusions and recommendations on the following main evaluation questions:

Table 3: Evaluation Questions set in the ToR

N°	Evaluation Question	Tag
Relevance		
Q1	Analysis in the OP is based on indicators related to 2004-2007 period. What are the important changes that have occurred between the programming phase and what are the expected ones?	Important changes
Q2	To what extent do the changes in the context affect OPTA relevance?	Context
Q3	Are the operations under the Priority Axes and subsequent KAIs still relevant?	Relevance of PA/KAI
Consistency and coherence		
Q4	To what extent there is coherence between the other Operational Programmes' technical assistance priority axes and OPTA?	Coherence
Q5	Are the operations under the Priority Axes and subsequent KAIs consistent with the European and national developments in the field?	Consistency
Efficiency		
Q6	Are the mechanisms and structures established for OPTA operating efficiently?	Mechanisms & structures
Q7	Are the Priority Axes and subsequent KAIs implemented efficiently?	Efficiency of PA/KAI
Effectiveness		
Q8	What is the actual implementation progress?	Progress
Q9	What is the difference between the planned and actual performance?	Performance gap
Q10	Which are the factors contributing to the difference between the planned and real performance?	Factors
Q11	To what extend each Priority Axis and subsequent KAI is implemented effectively (is contributing to reaching OPTA objectives)?	Effectiveness of PA/KAI
Impact (Strategic Questions under Article 29 of Regulation EC 1083/2006):		
Q12	What contribution has OPTA made to date towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ implementing the objectives of cohesion policy as established by the Treaty; ❖ fulfilling the tasks of the funds as set out in the Council Regulation 	Strategic contribution

	(EC) N° 1083/2006 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ implementing the priorities detailed in the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion and specified in the priorities set by the National Strategic Reference Framework ❖ achieving the objective of promoting competitiveness and job creation and working towards meeting the objectives of the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005 to 2008) 	
Q13	What are the achievements, challenges and future prospects in relation to implementation of the OPTA strategy?	Achievements & challenges
Q14	Could examples of good practice be identified? Which are they and their added value?	Good practice
Specific questions		
Q15	To what extent OPTA ensures common standards, instruments and the necessary information?	Common standards
Q16	To what extent OPTA contributes to develop a common evaluation culture within the administrative system for SI?	Evaluation culture
Q17	To what extent training supported by OPTA is contributing to ensuring highly qualified personnel in the relevant structures?	Training
Q18	How good is the functioning of the relevant structures being ensured through OPTA support?	Supporting relevant structures
Q19	Which are the long-term needs that must be addressed through OPTA in terms of SMIS development and functioning?	SMIS long term needs
Q20	To what extent training, communication and support activities provided through OPTA are contributing to a better use of the SMIS?	SMIS support
Q21	How well are the general messages regarding the Structural Instruments disseminated at national level with OPTA support? Are there alternatives for reaching the objectives of PA3?	SI Communication

1.3 Methodology and approach

7. The evaluation of OPTA is part of a series of evaluation exercises undertaken since 2009 by ECU/ACIS. It is the first assessment of the implementation of the programme since its launch.
8. The evaluation activity is closely linked to the overall management of the OP and the implementation arrangements, serving as a tool for assessing the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the financial assistance deployed, as well as the impact and sustainability of the achieved results. The requirement to conduct systematic evaluation activities of the OPs and the general rules for those activities are provided for in the European Commission (EC) Regulations⁴.
9. According to the provisions of the Multi-annual Evaluation Plan for OPTA⁵, the evaluations pursue to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the given assistance, as well as the strategy and implementation of OPTA.
10. The first IE mainly addresses the progress of the OP, including assessment of the project proposals prepared.

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) N° 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006, laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (articles 37, 47 – 49).

⁵ The Multi-annual Evaluation Plan for the Operational Programme Technical Assistance, pg 13.