

Table 3 – Main Evaluation Questions and Chapters

Question N°	Report Chapter/Section
Q1a	Chapter 2
Q1b	Section 4.2
Q2a	Chapter 3
Q2b	Chapter 4
Q3	Section 4.4
Q4	Section 3.2
Q5	Section 4.3

Answering the Evaluation Questions

Table 4 – Main Evaluation Questions, Tools and Techniques

Question N°	Tools & Techniques						
	Existent documents analysis	Data-bases	On-line Questionnaires	Check-lists	Interviews	Focus Groups	Workshops
Q1/a	✓	✓			✓		
Q1/b	✓				✓		
Q2a	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Q2b		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q3	✓	✓			✓		✓
Q4		✓	✓		✓		
Q5	✓	✓					

The Consortium has carried out extensive documentation review and database analysis to create a solid, evidence-based foundation for the assessment. By means of on-line questionnaires the Consortium collected primary data (e.g. opinions) from beneficiaries not obtainable through data analysis. Interviews were widely used for data collection and, more importantly, for verification of the assumptions deriving from document and data analysis. Focus groups were used to achieve better understanding of the internal factors affecting the performance of SI. The Consortium also conducted workshops to discuss its assumptions, findings and proposed recommendations, with regard to external factors, TA and Project selection and project portfolio [ref: **Table 4**].

1.3.2 Methodology

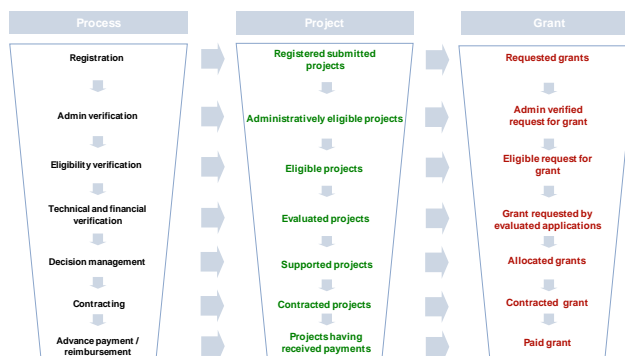
An evidence-based approach was used throughout; every effort has been made to give a factual basis to all statements by means of appropriate data collection and validation activities (e.g. beneficiary survey, interviews and focus group sessions).

The level at which the evaluation has been carried out was that of the NSRF overall. As a consequence, the analysis does not cover OP aspects below Priority Axis (PA) level. Our findings, conclusions and recommendations therefore mainly address NSRF-related strategic issues, and similar with regard to the PA level of each OP.

Amongst the major stages of the application process and the amounts involved in each of them (such as grants 'Requested', 'Approved', 'Contracted' and 'Paid'), the 'Approved Grants' stage provides the basic amounts for evaluation [ref: **Table 5**].

The underlying assumption is that, once a project has been found both eligible and supportable, it is a straightforward administrative matter to sign the contract and pay out the sum involved.

Figure 5 – Major Stages of the Application Process



This approach was necessary as the current figures on contracted projects are statistically much less significant than approved projects. This simplification serves the purpose of allowing meaningful evaluation of the status of implementation at the cut-off date.

1.3.3 Data Sources

General Considerations

The project's Inception Report identified 30 June 2009 as the data collection cut-off date for the evaluation. Hence, that date serves as the default date for quantitative information used as input for the evaluation. In a limited number of cases more recent data were used to assist the formulation of more viable recommendations.

Database of Applications

The main database used for evaluation purposes was created using data from a variety of sources. The main data set originated from the Single Management Information System (SMIS). Since this data set was not complete and in places lacking in accuracy and precision, more data sources (including MA and IB databases) had to be involved. The basic database thus created was cross-checked with figures from official monthly project progress reports.

As there was still considerable difference between the two datasets, (the one being the consolidated version of the Consortium data set and the other the data set originating from monthly progress reporting, which was used as a basis for validation) the Consortium convened a data validation meeting with the participation of the relevant MAs, which followed-up by providing additional data on the basis of a specific data completion request on the part of the evaluators.

The accuracy of data (calculated as the average difference between the totals based on the monthly progress reports at the evaluation cut-off date and the aggregated totals of the evaluation database (concerning, respectively, the number of applications and the sums involved in each) amounts to 98.5%. The likely impact of data availability on the accuracy of the findings of the evaluation may consequently be considered minimal. Some minor differences may occur in respect of project portfolio related analyses but only to a statistically insignificant extent (less than 10%)

All figures presented in the document (e.g. grants requested, approved, contracted or paid) by default include both the EU-financed and domestic contributions in order to facilitate the comparison between various stages of the application process. The instances where only EU contribution figures are used (as in the case of 'allocations') are marked with 'EU'.

Interviews

In the course of the evaluation, the evaluators conducted interview with the Heads of all MAs, as well as MA experts. The interviews can be divided into two groups:

- **Progress interviews:** These interviews served the purpose of gathering, together with the Heads for the MAs, more information and sharing first impressions and preliminary findings. All these used a standardised presentation with the first results of the data analysis, the decomposition analysis (DCA) and portfolio analysis.
- **Capacity and capability interviews:** These interviews took place within the framework of a specific data collection activity. A data request sheet was issued to each MA and IB for the purpose of assessing the capacities and capabilities of their respective institutional systems. Upon receipt of the response, the interviews served to discuss pertinent issues in detail.

Workshops

Two workshops were designed to facilitate data collection, share the evaluators' findings and receive feedback on preliminary conclusions. Each of the workshops concerned a specific focus area of the evaluation:

- external factors (held on 17 February 2010); and
- technical assistance (15 March 2010).

Focus Group

A focus group with the participation of relevant MA and IB representatives was organised on 01 March 2010, for the purpose of gathering additional information on the issue of institutional capacities and capabilities.

On-line Questionnaire to Beneficiaries

An on-line questionnaire was addressed at all beneficiaries, i.e. public and private sector recipients of support under the NSRF OPs. The questionnaire was launched on 03 February 2010 and was closed on 01/03/2010. The response amounted to a total of 608 entries, 449 of which were fully completed. The response represented 16% of the entire beneficiary population. Unfortunately there were no evaluable responses from the beneficiaries of SOP T and ETC RO-BG; therefore, we did not take these two OPs into consideration in the evaluation.

In the current report we incorporated the results of the processing and analysis of the questionnaire.

Table 6 shows the split of answers by OP.

Table 6 – Overview of Beneficiary Questionnaires

	N° of Returned Questionnaires	Total N° of Beneficiaries	% of Total
ROP	129	579	22%
SOP ENV	18	42	43%
SOP T	1	13	8%
SOP IEC	117	853	14%
SOP HRD	150	826	18%
OP DAC	30	50	60%
OPTA	4	12	33%
ETC RO-BG	0	47	0%
Not specified	160	n.a	n.a
Total	609	2 422	25%

1.3.4 Assumptions

Given the fact there were no structured, comparable data, the project initiated additional data collection, along with data validation and clarification. In spite of the project's continuous efforts to arrive at a complete integrated data set, there was still information missing at the end of the data

validation phase. To fill in the gaps, the team had to make a number of assumptions and do some estimates:

- region and county information are based on locality data (i.e. the address of the beneficiary), rather than locality of project implementation⁶;
- the analysis of the split rural/urban was based on locality data provided by ACIS;
- if the database included the financial agreement date for a project, that project was regarded as having been ‘contracted’, regardless of other status information;
- projects without a financial agreement date and proper status information were considered as having passed technical and financial verification but not yet ‘approved’;
- where data on an entity’s legal status was only partly completed, that legal status was deducted from available call for proposal information (e.g. in the case of an SME or a named Ministry).

1.3.5 Technical Issues










Order of Appearance of the OPs

To enhance the readability of this report, the tables and charts included in it use a standardised order of appearance of OPs throughout. That order can be found in the first row of the following table.

Colour Coding

For the same purpose, all charts, figures and tables in the document have a strict colour coding. The NSRF at large and each of the OPs (except for those that had not achieved progress in the course of the reporting period⁷) have a colour assigned to it, as in the table below [ref: **Table 7**].

Table 7 – Colour coding of OPs in the Report

OP	ROP	SOP ENV	SOP T	SOP IEC	SOP HRD	OP DAC	OP TA	ETC RO-BG	NSRF
Rank of appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Colour									

Internal Structure of the Document

The report consists of five main chapters and the annexes:

- Chapter 2: **Performance of the Structural Instruments** presents the current status of progress of the NSRF, its OPs and PAs;
- Chapter 3: **External Factors** provides an overview of external factors potentially influencing the current performance of the SI;
- Chapter 4: **Advertisement and Awareness** presents to assessment of the Information and publicity measures;
- Chapter 5: **Internal Factors** summarises the internal reasons affecting the progress and performance of the NSRF;

⁶ The reason for this is that the evaluators could avail of data referring to project implementation locality for roughly one third of the applicants (also given the fact that SMIS contains this data for selected projects only. Using this – statistically significant – sample, the evaluators tested the correlation of beneficiary address and project implementation location. The correlation was found to be close to 98%. Taking this finding into account, the analysis based on beneficiary address may be considered adequate for evaluation.

⁷ ETC Black Sea, ETC RO-UK-MO and ETC RO-SRB Programmes.

- Chapter 6: **Conclusions** sums up our findings and conclusions with regard to each of the Main Evaluation Questions.
- Chapter 7: **Recommendations** summarises the consortium’s recommendations by the Main Evaluation Questions.

1.4 The National Strategic Framework

1.4.1 NSRF Function

Its NSRF for the period 2007-13 represents the firm commitment of the Government of Romania to the *Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion (2007-2013)*, which set out the principles and priorities on cohesion policy throughout the European Union. In addition, the NSRF reflects the *Integrated Guidelines on Growth and Jobs (the renewed Lisbon Agenda)*. In line with these European guidelines, Romania’s NSRF not only promotes innovation, development of the business environment and improvement of ICT accessibility, but also supports economic growth and employment by increasing the level of skills and adaptability of employees and businesses, as well as enhancing social inclusion.

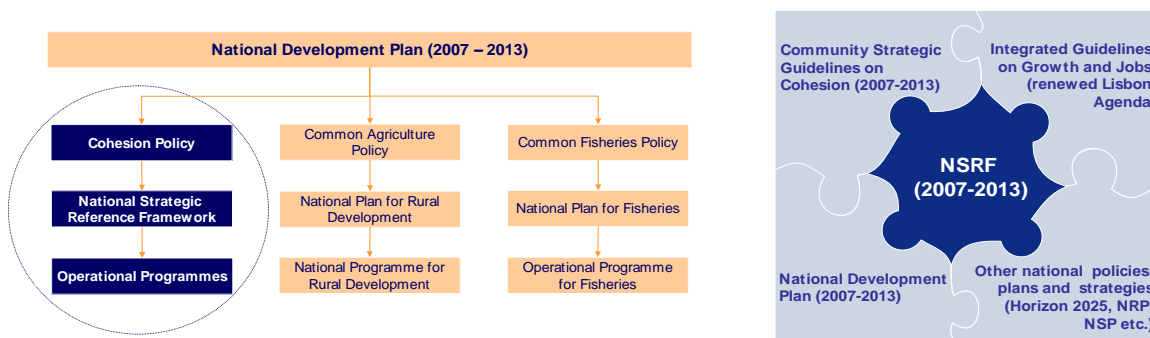
The NSRF originates from the Government’s *National Development Plan (NDP)*, which sets out the roadmap for Romania for the period 2007-13. Thus, the NSRF takes account of the national priorities by synthesizing the key elements of the NDP. The main differences between Romania’s NSRF and its NDP consist of the following:

- the NSRF 2007-2013 is the Romanian global strategy for using the Structural and Cohesion Funds, being financed exclusively by the SI and the corresponding national co-financing;
- the NDP 2007-2013 is the national strategic planning document supported by all public financial resources (State budget, local budgets, EU financing, loans and other funding sources available to Romania);
- unlike the NSRF, the NDP also encompasses the strategic development frameworks for agriculture, rural communities and fisheries as laid down in the National Strategic Plans for, respectively, Rural Development and Fisheries.

The NSRF is consistent with other national policies, plans and strategies, including the National Strategy on Sustainable Development (*Horizon 2025*), the *National Spatial Plan*, the *National Reform Programme*, as well as the national strategies for the energy, SMEs, RDI and ITC (sub-) sectors.

The inter-relations between the NDP, the NSRF and the European Instruments are presented in **Figure 8**.

Figure 8 – Position of NSRF



1.4.2 NSRF Structure

The NSRF 2007-13 envisages that EU Structural and Cohesion Funds will contribute to achieving the following global objective:

Reducing the economic and social development disparities between Romania and the EU Member States, by generating a 15-20% additional growth of GDP by 2015

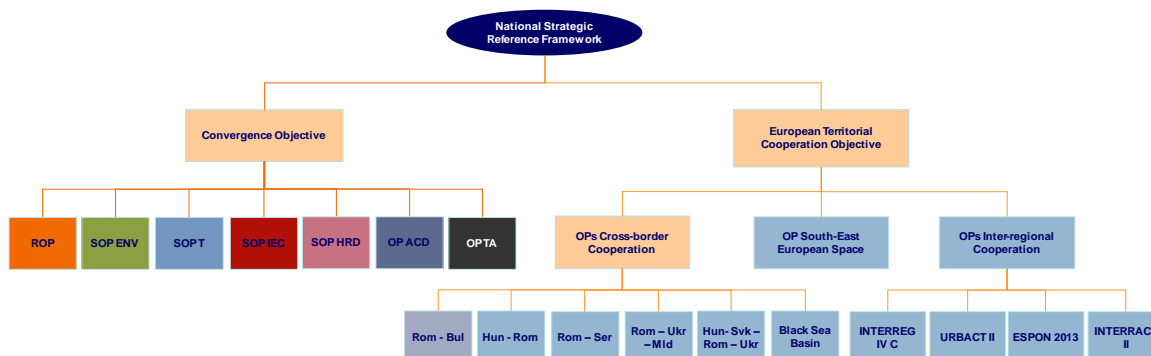
This general NSRF objective is further detailed by four specific **thematic priorities**:

- **Development of basic infrastructure to European standards**, which is focused on supporting the provision of infrastructure of fundamental importance for long-term growth of Romania (in the areas of transport, environment, energy efficiency and renewable energy);
- **Increase of long-term competitiveness of the Romanian economy**, which addresses the low productivity and innovativeness of the national economy and consists of supporting SMEs, as well as promoting research, innovation and the information society;
- **Development and more efficient use of Romania’s human capital**, which provides support to the education and training systems, improves the adaptability of workers and enterprises, and increases the level of education, vocational skills and entrepreneurial spirit;
- **Development of an effective administrative capacity**, which aims at improving the capacity of the public administration by increasing the quality of decision-making processes and the efficiency standards in public services delivery.

Flanking these thematic priorities, Romanian NSRF contains a territorial priority, which addresses regional problem areas in order to prevent widening regional disparities.

Romania has translated the general priorities in the NSRF into 7 OPs. The structure of the Romanian NSRF and the OPs covered by the *Convergence* and the *European Territorial Cooperation* objectives are outlined in the following diagram [ref: **Figure 9**].

Figure 9 – Internal Structure of the NSRF



The **Regional Operational Programme (ROP)** envisages boosting local development potential with ERDF support of around 3.7 billion Euros (BEUR) and focuses on the development of urban growth poles, the improvement of regional transport and social infrastructure, the development of business environment and the promotion of tourist activities.

The largest programme in terms of budget allocation (EU contribution: around 4.6 BEUR) is the national programme for transport infrastructure: **SOP Transport (SOP T)**, which includes ERDF and CF investments targeted at developing and upgrading TEN-T and national infrastructure, as well as promoting inter-modal transport.

SOP Environment (SOP ENV) has a Community participation of almost 4.5 BEUR (from the ERDF and the CF) and is aimed at supporting access to adequate public utilities and improving environmental conditions through investment in drinking water and wastewater systems, solid waste facilities and district heating systems.

SOP Increase of Economic Competitiveness (SOP IEC) benefits of EU support (ERDF) of around 2.6 BEUR. It envisages increasing the productivity of Romanian companies operating in the productive sector (especially SMEs), setting-up of new enterprises and developing the entrepreneurship, promoting research and innovation activities in enterprises and state-owned research institutions, development of ICT infrastructure and increasing energy efficiency.

SOP Human Resources Development (SOP HRD) is the fourth-largest OP in terms of financial allocation (the Community participation, from the ESF, amounting to 3.5 BEUR). It supports a wide range of activities, including: improvement of training and education systems, development of life long learning, improvement of adaptability of employees and businesses, promotion of active employment measures in order to decrease unemployment and improvement of vulnerable groups' access and participation to the labour market.

OP Administrative Capacity Development (OP DAC) has a total ESF contribution of about 0.21 BEUR, targeted at promoting good governance, improving decision making processes and enhancing decentralisation.

OP Technical Assistance (OPTA) aims at improving the implementation of the SI, strengthening the operation of SMIS and promoting the Structural Funds (ERDF contribution of 0.17 BEUR).

A total of 19.2 BEUR has been made available to Romania under the *Convergence* objective for which the entire Romanian territory is eligible [ref: **Table 10**].

Table 10 – Annual Allocations by OP under the Convergence Objective (EU contributions; in EUR)

OP	Fund Type	Total	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
ROP	ERDF	3,726,021,762	330,168,339	404,126,047	441,135,485	523,721,833	556,767,943	663,832,914	806,269,201
SOP ENV	ERDF/CF	4,512,470,138	272,372,736	437,302,592	578,507,217	683,350,731	761,146,030	848,813,721	930,977,111
SOP T	ERDF/CF	4,565,937,295	251,957,363	441,348,842	614,332,066	729,632,669	785,525,000	841,697,425	901,443,930
SOP IEC	ERDF	2,554,222,109	170,464,211	194,837,789	364,964,902	485,640,935	507,263,253	435,815,005	395,236,014
SOP HRD	ESF	3,476,144,996	212,973,834	330,141,809	452,584,803	538,429,514	595,593,519	666,545,305	679,876,212
OP DAC	ESF	208,002,622	20,162,952	28,143,236	40,850,990	41,668,010	29,865,828	24,604,847	22,706,759
OPTA	ERDF	170,237,790	16,979,328	18,401,347	20,977,535	24,775,573	27,568,456	30,463,144	31,072,407
	Total	19,213,036,712	1,275,078,763	1,854,301,662	2,513,352,998	3,027,219,265	3,263,730,029	3,511,772,361	3,767,581,634

Under the *European Territorial Cooperation* objective, Romania benefits from Community support through 11 OPs, prepared in cooperation with the EU and non-EU countries: Hungary-Romania CBC Programme, Romania-Bulgaria CBC Programme, Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA CBC Programme, Romania-Ukraine-Moldova JOP, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI CBC Programme, Black Sea Basin JOP, South-East Europe Transnational Programme, INTERREG IVC Programme, URBACT II Programme, ESPON 2013 Programme and INTERRACT II Programme. The total allocation for Romania under the *European Territorial Cooperation* objective is around 0.46 BEUR.

Out of the aforementioned programmes, 4 ETC OPs are coordinated by the Romanian authorities (Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism): Romania-Bulgaria CBC Programme, Romania-Republic of Serbia IPA CBC Programme, Romania-Ukraine-Moldova JOP and Black Sea Basin JOP. The Programmes have an overall EU contribution (ERDF, IPA and ENPI) of 381.4 MEUR⁸ in support of infrastructure (mainly transport), ICT and environmental interventions with cross-border impact, other joint activities and cooperation networks in the fields of cross-border economic exchange, tourism, R&D, education and culture, as well as exchanges of 'best practice' and trainings in fields of common interest for the communities on both sides of the border.

⁸ In case of the Romania-Republic of Serbia CBC Programme, the IPA budget is not available for the entire programming period (2007-2013), covering only the 2007-2009 period.

1.4.3 NSRF Institutional System

The institutional framework for the coordination and management of SI in Romania was set-up by Government Decision (GD) N° 497/2004 (amended and supplemented by GD N° 1179/2004 and GD N° 128/2006). GD N° 457/2008 has since replaced the original decision.

In line with the stipulations of Council Regulation (EC) N° 1083/2006, which lays down the general regulations on the ERDF, the ESF and the CF, Romania has established the national institutional system involved in the management of SI. Thus, the entities involved in the management and implementation of SI are the following: ACIS, Managing Authorities (MAs), Intermediate Bodies (IBs), the Certifying and Paying Authority, as well as the Audit Authority (AA).

ACIS (within the Ministry of Public Finance) acts as the national coordinator of SI, being responsible for the development of the institutional and legal frameworks for ensuring coordination and coherence between the OPs and between these and the NRDP and the OP for Fisheries.

A **Managing Authority** (MA) has been designated for each OP under the *Convergence* objective. The MAs are responsible for ensuring the efficient and correct management and implementation of their respective OPs. MAs may delegate certain tasks to IBs, but they retain overall responsibility for the appropriate execution of delegated tasks.

In respect of the *European Territorial Cooperation* objective, four MAs, all within the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, have been designated for each OP coordinated by the Romanian side (i.e. the CBC OPs Romania-Bulgaria, CBC Romania-Serbia, CBC Romania-Ukraine-Moldavia, and CBC Black Sea). In case of the OPs coordinated by entities outside Romania's borders, National Authorities (NAs) are responsible for the coordination of the programming process within Romania, support of the programme implementation, financial management of the funds, as well as recovery of any unduly spent amounts. All NAs form part of the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism.

The scope of the NSRF Evaluation concerns all seven *Convergence* OPs, as well as the 4 ETC OPs under the responsibility of Romanian MAs. With regard to the latter, only one, Romania-Bulgaria has started.