

1. INTRODUCTION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND METHOD

1.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This Chapter introduces the Synthesis Report (SyR), explains its purpose and methodology, and describes how it is structured. The Chapter has five subsequent sections:

- Section 1.2 contains the Background to the Synthesis Report;
- Section 1.3 describes the Interim Evaluation (IE) Reports which it summarises;
- Section 1.4 presents the Synthesis Report Objectives and Requirements;
- Section 1.5 presents its Methodology and Work Programme;
- Section 1.6 describes its output.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE SYNTHESIS REPORT

1.2.1 OP Interim Evaluations

The contract for carrying out Evaluations of the Romanian National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and the Operational Programme for Technical Assistance (OPTA) (Contract No. 13/02.10.2009) has been performed for the Ministry of Public Finance, Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments (ACIS) by a consortium of KPMG Romania, GEA Strategy & Consulting and Pluriconsult.

Under the contract, a number of deliverables were to be provided. These include the 2009 Formative Evaluation of the NSRF as a whole, the Interim Evaluation (IE) of the Technical Assistance Operational Programme (OPTA), a series of Ad Hoc Evaluations on individual horizontal aspects of the NSRF, and the present Synthesis Report (Contract Activity 2.2).

The Report is therefore primarily designed to summarise the Final Reports⁷ of the individual OP Interim Evaluations.

In accordance with ACIS procedures, preparation of the Synthesis Report involved development and agreement of the Terms of Reference (ToR) by the ACIS Evaluation Central Unit (ECU) and its approval by the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC). Following this, a Methodology was developed by the consortium and approved by ACIS, in consultation with the Evaluation Working Group and the Evaluation Steering Committee. The ToR and Methodology are described further in Sections 1.2-1.4 below. A first draft of the SyR was presented at end-July 2010, based on the three IE Reports then available. The draft was circulated by ACIS to MAs and the European Commission. A second draft of the SyR was submitted to ACIS in November 2010, based on availability of five Interim Evaluation Reports, an Ad Hoc Review of Infrastructure Investment under the NSRF, and other relevant material. It also took account of comments received on the first draft. The present report is therefore the third draft of the SyR presented to ACIS. It takes account of all comments received on the November 2010 version.

² In a number of cases advanced draft reports have been used.

FIGURE 1.1 LIST OF OP INTERIM EVALUATION REPORTS USED IN THE SYNTHESIS REPORT			
Client	Contractor	Title	Report Date²
Regional OP Managing Authority	East West Consulting/ECO	Interim Evaluation of the Regional Operational Programme for period from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2009	October 2009
SOP-IEC Managing Authority	GEA Strategy & Consulting/Fitzpatrick Associates/KPMG Romania	Interim Evaluation of the Sectoral Operational Programme: Increasing Economic Competitiveness	July 2010
ACIS (as OPTA Managing Authority)	KPMG Romania/GEA Strategy & Consulting/Pluriconsult ¹	Interim Evaluation of the Operational Programme for Technical Assistance	September 2010
SOP-HRD Managing Authority	KPMG Romania/Kantor/Eurolink	Interim Evaluation of Operational Programme Human Resource Development ²	September 2010 ⁴
OP-ACD Managing Authority	East West Consulting/NTSN	Interim Evaluation of Operational Programme Administrative Capacity Development	October 2010
ACIS/ECU	KPMG Romania/GEA Strategy & Consulting/Pluriconsult ¹	Second Ad Hoc Evaluation: Review of Investment in Transport and Environment Infrastructure ³	February 2011
¹ Part of a single contract. ² Completion date of version used. ³ This is not a full Interim Evaluation. ⁴ Draft Report			

1.2.2 ECU Guidelines for OP Interim Evaluation Reports

The Evaluation Central Unit (ECU) supported the MA Evaluation Units (EU) in the design of their Interim Evaluations by organising training, commenting on draft Terms of Reference, and provision of guidance. The ECU Guidelines were issued in late 2008 and indicated two purposes for the OP Interim Evaluations, namely to:

- provide an informed judgement of the OP's progress to date and lessons learned;
- provide an input to the Strategic Report required under Article 29 of the Council Regulation EC1083/2006.⁸

In particular, the Guidelines proposed a series of common evaluation issues and questions shown in Figure 1.2 below.

⁸ While the Strategic Report deadline had passed, IE Terms of Reference continued to retain this requirement.

FIGURE 1.2 COMMON EVALUATION ISSUES AND QUESTIONS**Issue 1 Relevance**

- 1.1 *The Socio-economic analysis for the OP is based on indicators up to 2004/05.*
- 1.2 *What important changes have occurred since then and are expected in the future?*
- 1.3 *How do the changes in the socio-economic context since then affect the Priority Axes of the OP?*

Issue 2 Consistency

- 2.1 *Is the implementation to date for the various Priority Axes complementary?*
- 2.2 *Are the Priority Axes coherent with the latest relevant Romanian policy/strategies (at the cut-off date)?*
- 2.3 *Are there overlaps between the operations in the Priority Axes?*
- 2.4 *Is the implementation to date adequately addressing the horizontal objectives (equal opportunity, sustainable development)?*

Issue 3 Effectiveness

- 3.1 *What is the actual implementation progress to the cut-off date?*
- 3.2 *What is the gap between actual and planned progress?*
- 3.3 *Will the progress to date (and the rate of progress) lead to the achievement of the objectives of the Priority Axes?*
- 3.4 *What are the factors that are contributing to the gap between actual and planned performance?*

Issue 4 Efficiency

- 4.1 *How has the implementation of the OP to date affected the relevance of the OP?*
- 4.2 *Is the management system⁹ (managing authority, intermediary bodies, beneficiaries) functional and operating efficiently?*

Though not specifically stated in the Guidelines, it was also expected that each individual Interim Evaluation would:

- (a) pay attention to the effects of the economic crisis on the implementation of the OP's priorities (this requirement is of course also implicitly part of "relevance");
- (b) take into account the distinct implementation stages (i.e. submitted projects, selected projects, contracted projects and payments to the contractors) when judging the implementation process and provide an analysis of the factors delaying the evolution from one step to the other, and the causes of rejected projects.

While the style of IE ToRs differed significantly in practice, they were all heavily influenced by these four issues and evaluation questions. Hence, the ECU guidelines provide a ready-made template against which IE coverage and content can be summarised. Alongside the expected results of the SyR Terms of Reference, the Guideline structure has therefore provided an appropriate framework for the Synthesis Report output. The relationship between the Guidelines and the individual OP content is described more fully in Appendix 1.

⁹ "Management system" means planning, launching the call, quality of the project applications (and reasons for rejection), timeliness of the selection procedures, timeliness of contracting, timeliness of processing applications for reimbursement.

1.3 SYNTHESIS REPORT OBJECTIVES, REQUIREMENTS AND WORK PROGRAMME

1.3.1 Objectives and Expected Results

The overall objective of the SyR, as described in its ToR, is to contribute to improvement of the national absorption capacity and of the general implementation of the Romanian National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013.¹⁰

As set out in the contract Terms of Reference, the specific objective is to “draft a Synthesis of the outputs of the Interim Evaluations conducted at OP level.”¹¹

The ToR specify that the expected result of the assignment is to reach conclusions and make recommendations addressing the following four strategic issues:

- “(1) consequences for the strategy and its implementation of the financial and economic crisis;
- (2) relevance, efficiency¹² and effectiveness of the existing (OP) strategies. Best practices and failures explaining the asymmetry of implementation between OPs and within each OP should also be provided;
- (3) relevance of the implementation mechanisms;
- (4) potential for upgrading the impact of investments, including the increase of the synergies and complementarities between programmes and priorities, and judgement on the quality of the investment.”

These strategic issues form the basis for the Report’s conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 4.

1.3.2 Information Sources Used

The primary basis for the Synthesis Report is by definition the final (or advanced) versions of the individual Evaluation Reports for the OPs.

It was anticipated that in practice there would be some limitations in the Reports as an information base due to a number of factors: *non-availability of reports*: in practice two OPs did not carry out Interim Evaluations, but this is partially substituted for by the Ad Hoc Evaluation: Review of Investment in Transport and Environment Infrastructure (HORAD); IE reports have various cut-off dates for data analysis, ranging from mid-2009 to late 2010, see Figure 1.3. IE reports all have content relevant to most ECU Guideline themes and sub-themes, but the nature and detail of these vary; a number of the issues raised in the SyR ToR results section go somewhat beyond the focus of the Interim Evaluation Reports.

¹⁰ Ministry of Public Finance, Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments, *Carrying out Evaluations during the implementation of the NSRF and the OPTA, Synthesis Report Methodology*, April 2010.

¹¹ The original NSRF Evaluation Plan envisaged that the Synthesis Report would also contribute to preparation of the Romania Strategic Report 2009. However, because of different timelines of the Strategic and Synthesis Reports, that has not proven possible in practice. As a result, some contributions to the Strategic Report have been provided separately on an ad hoc basis by the Consortium under Contract Activity 2.2.

¹² Including the efficiency of the management, financial and certifying systems.

FIGURE 1.3 INTERIM EVALUATION DATA CUT-OFF DATES										
	2007	2008	2009				2010			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
ROP										
IEC										
OPTA										
HRD										
ACD										
HORAD										1

¹ End August/September data used.

To address such information gaps it was decided to also draw on a number of additional specific information sources over and above the Interim Evaluation Reports. These sources were: the NSRF Formative Evaluation; the Ad Hoc evaluation of Beneficiary Capacity (Ad Hoc No. 1); Annual Implementation Reports; and the Romanian Strategic Report 2009.

1.3.3 Timing of the Interim Evaluations

The Interim Evaluations at NSRF and OP-level were planned before the crisis, being part of the agreed OP Multi-annual Evaluation Plans. However, the new challenges that have been experienced have given the Interim Evaluations an added significance. They have been an opportunity to examine progress to date, and the unanticipated factors impacting on this, in a structured way and as a supplement to the knowledge and experience of the MCs, MAs, IBs and other stakeholders.

While it was not originally planned that Interim Evaluations would be spread over such a long time-period, this has some accidental advantages. In particular, it means that there is also now a body of interim evaluation analysis undertaken at different stages of the economic crisis, at the outset in the case of ROP, arguably at its height in the case of SOP-IEC and OPTA, and as prospects of its end emerge in the case of HRD, ACD and HORAD. This timing difference also has some influence on the IE assessments of the implications of the crisis.

1.3.4 Formulating the Conclusions and Recommendations

SyR conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 4) are based around the “Expected Results” in the Synthesis Report ToR.

Given the nature of a Synthesis Report, it should be emphasised that, in contrast to the Findings and Conclusions of Interim Evaluations, the SyR Conclusions and Recommendations represent the views of the Report author based on study of the IE Reports. They are not intended to simply repeat or summarise the content of the IE Reports. These Reports’ own Summary Reports are also provided in Appendix 2 of this report.

1.4 SYNTHESIS OUTPUT

The output of this activity is the present Synthesis Report. This is to be elaborated in the English and Romanian languages. The report shall have maximum 50 pages of text, tables and charts,

without annexes. The report should contain an Executive Summary of 8-10 pages, summarising the evaluation's objectives and scope and the main conclusions and recommendations of the Report.

The Report should also include the Summary Reports of the individual OP Interim Evaluations as an Appendix. This is done in Appendix 2.

In practice, the report structure used (see Table of Contents) involves one alteration as against the Methodology, namely inclusion of an Overview of NSRF progress to June 2010 as Chapter 2. This is done to improve general readability for the user, and to give the report an up-to-date basis of underlying factual information on financial progress, given the varying cut-off dates used in the individual Interim Evaluations (see Figure 1.3 above).