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4. OVERARCHING CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter we present overarching conclusions and recommendations arising from the research we have undertaken in respect of the Ad-hoc Evaluation of KAI 5.2. All of these overarch the individual criteria of Relevance & Effectiveness and are primarily located in the strategic rather than the operational realm and all refer to issues that must be prioritized and dealt with to ensure overall coherence in the implementation of the measures at stake.

A very brief indication of the findings that underpin the conclusions in question is also provided in each case:

Many of our detailed findings and related conclusions are relevant in the context of the overall implementation of SOP HRD and not simply in the context of KAI 5.2. The KAI as such has potential and the SOP HRD is generally considered to be a positive development that provides opportunity and, in theory or on paper, provides the necessary armoury and options to help improve the situation in rural areas. Even the current crises appear not to have generated a demand for significant changes in the existing strategies. Instead, people said: now the need to support rural areas in terms of HRD and other development has grown even more acute or as one stakeholder put it:

“In the present context the main challenge of the programme is its implementation, taking into consideration we are already half way through the programming period”.

Where gaps have been identified such as the need for a better infrastructure as a framework for start-ups; more flexibility in the coverage of start-up cost; to give up the strict fixation on re-orienting people away from agriculture; to allow the combination of measures for individual participants where these are complementary or building upon each other and these are not directly eligible under KAI 5.2 or SOP HRD in general more complex solutions should be taken into consideration by the MA as the body responsible for strategically managing the funds.



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Leaving aside general management of funds oriented recommendations – apart from reporting strategy - and overall policy recommendations in the field of HRD development that are covered in some detail in the Interim Evaluation of SOP HRD we can focus here on a small number of recommendations that more specifically relate to rural areas:



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Overview 3 Overarching Conclusions & Recommendations³⁸

Summary Findings	Overarching Conclusion	Overarching Recommendation	Targeted at	Timeframe (S, M, L)
The lack of up-to date monitoring information did not allow for a meaningful interpretation with a view to where the KAI 5.2 stands in terms of output or results. The sparse data we found suffered from a lack of substantial coverage of reported figures compared to projects under implementation; and moreover from a systematic lack of synchronisation of data and last but not least from miscalculations due to the overly complex definition of indicators at project level	The current model of monitoring progress of implementation is not underpinned by an adequate reporting strategy. Entangling progress reporting with financial flow and payment requests does not provide the coherent and up-to-date base for a strategic monitoring and an <u>active steering of the programme along indicators of output and result</u> . This applies not to KAI 5.2 alone but to the whole OP	Although some better coverage of projects by technical reports has been reported while discussing the final draft, the basic problem remains: lack of synchronicity of data. To provide a coherent view of the situation at KAI and OP level technical reports should cover standard calendar periods and should be delivered according to predefined deadlines and not be elaborated according to the need for claiming reimbursements by the beneficiaries.	MA	S
Lack of capacity to develop projects and		Developing country-wide strategies for	MA, IBs, ACIS	M

³⁸ S – short; M – medium; L- long; A time-frame (short/medium/long) within which recommended changes should be made is indicated for all recommendations made in the report. Generally speaking recommendations to be implemented in the short-term should be implemented within three months of finalisation of the report. Recommendations for the medium-term should be implemented within six-nine months of the finalisation of the report. Recommendations for the long-terms should be implemented within a year, although in certain instances the ‘long-term’ may reach into a two-three year time-frame (e.g. where recommendations are made that build towards the next SOPHRD programming period).



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Summary Findings	Overarching Conclusion	Overarching Recommendation	Targeted at	Timeframe (S, M, L)
<p>applications is reflected in the comparatively low level of applications submitted compared to funds launched under KAI 5.2.</p> <p>Such lack of capacity was evident throughout the fieldwork undertaken for this report</p> <p>Due to efforts towards public budget consolidation there is a view that local authorities would suffer more than the average from general budgetary cut-backs announced by the government impacting on staffing as well.</p> <p>Nonetheless, as far as applications were submitted, and regarding subsequent selection & contracting KAI 5.2 was successful over the average of SOP HRD</p>	<p>Lack of capacity and endangered capacity at local level is a very serious issue and has to be tackled as a priority. This is an issue of relevance not only for absorption purposes but also for covering the needs at a sufficient scale.</p>	<p>rural areas and locating them in specific areas would be a perfect task for <u>central strategic projects</u>.</p> <p>This should include regular compilation and provision of updated socio-economic data on rural and urban areas as a guidance to needs identification and matching, and as baseline figures for strategic monitoring.</p> <p>Developing strategies should go hand in hand with setting-up <u>decentralised support structures</u> providing guidance, training, and support to beneficiaries and stakeholders (trade unions, employers associations, other social partners /NGOs), and integrating existing structures like local branch offices of NAE and local town halls (mayors) – a clear link to <u>Local Partnerships</u> for Employment & Education alike is recommendable.</p> <p>A regional strategy should <u>integrate the use of different funds/OPs</u>. This would need to</p>		



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Summary Findings	Overarching Conclusion	Overarching Recommendation	Targeted at	Timeframe (S, M, L)
		be <u>actively coordinated</u> as a valid policy approach should not leave the responsibility for strategy design and implementation to beneficiaries' alone.		
Needs as such did not change throughout the crisis or as a consequence of it – they just got more acute in terms of the numbers of unemployed people, the increases in poverty that are evident and the limited employment opportunities available	Although the list of eligible activities is broad enough to cover needs the implementation seems not to be adequately targeted and should become more streamlined to ensure that proper projects for the target groups in need are actually implemented. Applicants apply to undertake what they consider to be manageable and profitable for them – and this has to be framed and shaped by incentives. The overall mixture of activities funded should not be left alone to the interest of applicants.	When launching calls the relevant authorities should with regard to the type of activities needed and specified in terms of output volume. Moreover, incentives should be given to those who are ready to address the more difficult tasks and target groups to prevent creaming strategies. One tool for that would be the definition of standard costs for specific activities and target groups. That would enable the allocation of a ‘bonus’ to those who better serve the objectives of the programme	MA	M
The KAI and its eligible activities were considered to be designed with sufficient breadth to match the needs of target groups by principle				
There is a danger that the most vulnerable groups will not be adequately covered by activities due to creaming strategies within the system.				