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GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI
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POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction

In compliance with Article 48 of Council Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006 and in compliance with the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (SOPHRD) provisions (Sub-chapter 5.2, Monitoring and Evaluation) as well as those of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) Multi-annual National Evaluation Plan 2007-2013, the Managing Authority (MA) SOPHRD developed the Multi-annual Evaluation Plan for SOPHRD 2007-2013 (MEP SOPHRD) under which evaluation activities of a strategic and/or operational nature are to be conducted over the life of the programme¹.

The First Interim Evaluation (IE) of the SOP HRD² is planned under the MEP SOPHRD 2007-2013. The IE was originally planned for completion during the second semester of 2009. However, the contract for this evaluation was ultimately signed on 21st December 2009 between the Contracting Authority (The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection – the Managing Authority for the SOP HRD) and a Consortium led by KPMG Romania. Due to various unforeseen circumstances as outlined in the Inception Report (InR) the evaluation did not gather momentum until March 2010.

¹ The general objective envisaged under the NSRF 2007-13 for the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds is that they will contribute to *Reducing the economic and social development disparities between Romania and the EU Member States, by generating an additional 15-20% growth in GDP by 2015. This objective is further elaborated by four specific thematic priorities one of which is 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.* The SOPHRD is the primary vehicle designed to realise this objective. It is the fourth largest of the seven OPs in terms of financial allocation (17% of the NSRF) with an ESF component of 3.5 BEUR. It supports a wide range of activities, including: improvement of training and education systems; development of lifelong 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 in the labour market.

² The Interim Evaluation exercise as a whole is comprised of three components, namely: (i) the Interim Evaluation of the SOP HRD; (ii) the development of the administrative capacity within the MA in respect of programme evaluation; and (iii) two ad hoc evaluations in respect of the National Employment Service (PA4) and certain active labour market measures in rural areas (PA5, KAI 5.2). This document is the Final Evaluation Report in respect of the first of those three components i.e., the Interim Evaluation of SOP HRD.



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Due to various unforeseen circumstances as outlined in the Inception Report (InR) the contract implementation did not start until March 2010.

1.2 Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Interim Evaluation of SOPHRD

The general purpose of the evaluation is to improve the ongoing relevance, quality, efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of SOPHRD implementation taking into account, as appropriate, changes in the overall socio-economic context and in the labour market in Romania as well as other changes within the implementing system that may impact on the operation of the programme. The ToR note that the client will use the recommendations that emerge from the interim exercise (that may include, for example, the evaluation and the training components) to influence its decision-making with a view to achieving the general and specific objectives of the programme. At the same time, the results of the evaluation will support the MA in responding to the strategic reporting requirements under art. 29 of Council Regulation (EC) no. 1083/2006. The project will also support the development of the programme evaluation function within the MA SOPHRD.

The ToR for the evaluation state that the evaluation must provide an objective and well justified opinion as to the SOPHRD management and implementation system over the period 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2009 (subsequently pushed out to 31st December 2009).

The ToR also state that the evaluation will be realised according to the four Key Principles included in the Council Regulation (EC) no.1083/2006 and detailed in Working Paper No. 5 of the European Commission (“Indicative guidelines regarding evaluation methods: interim evaluation during the programming period”) as follows:

- proportionality;
- independence;
- partnership; &
- transparency.



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1.2.1 Evaluation Questions and Associated Activities

The activities proposed and the questions posed in the ToR for the analysis of the implementation of the SOP HRD are structured with reference to the following three evaluation criteria: relevance; efficiency; & effectiveness.

In summary, the activities proposed to explore ongoing relevance include an analysis of the relevance of programme priorities and objectives given the changed socio-economic context (i.e., since the inception of the programme) as well as the ongoing relevance (and/or coherence) of indicative operations, eligible activities and established indicators when set, for example, against the overall aims and objectives of the programme. Finally, under the relevance criterion, the ToR also envisage an analysis of the extent to which the projects financed under the programme contribute to the achievement of the general and specific objectives of the SOP HRD / FDI SOP HRD for each related Key Area of Intervention (KAI).

The activities envisaged under the efficiency criterion involve an analysis of the efficiency of the SOP HRD delivery system at the level of MA SOP HRD and at the level of the Implementing Bodies (IB) SOP HRD taking into account project appraisal and selection processes, the contracting process, the SOP HRD monitoring system and the financial management system. It is also envisaged that an analysis will be conducted under the efficiency heading of the current and forecasted financial status of the programme in order to evaluate the level of fulfilment of the MA SOP HRD “n+3” and “n+2” rules and of the adequacy of the monitoring system in terms of its capacity to provide the necessary and relevant data to support evaluation at programme level.

Under the effectiveness heading, a range of issues are tabled for analysis including analysis of the effectiveness of:

- a range of information and publicity measures designed, *inter alia*, to support awareness raising and to provide guidance to prospective applicants;
- the process of evaluation and selection in respect of applications received as a result of the various calls for project proposals;



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- the way in which the internal monitoring system at project level provides the necessary information to support the effective monitoring of the programme as a whole;
- the way in which the monitoring of the programme answers to the specific reporting needs of SOP HRD;
- the extent to which the SOP HRD beneficiaries understand the indicators of the SOP HRD monitoring system;
- the way in which the beneficiaries took into account the SOP HRD themes and horizontal objectives when they prepared project applications and in their implementation of projects ultimately approved and implemented; and, finally,
- internal and/or external factors/characteristics that influenced/influence/will influence SOP HRD implementation.

1.3 Our Approach to the Interim Evaluation of SOPHRD

The approach to the interim evaluation of SOP HRD is outlined in detail in the InR. In that report we have described the manner in which we proposed to build the evaluation through the various deliverables i.e., draft reports.

In that regard we adopted an integrated, flexible and participative approach to the evaluation process. An integrated approach is clearly required. For example, the programme structure and programme level data provide a common basis upon which a significant amount of the required analysis is carried out across the various evaluation questions. These also provide a valuable source of information that was taken into account in structuring our engagement with stakeholders. As such, a number of critical, integrated tasks were undertaken with a view to responding to the ToR and upon which the development of the methodological tools and approach are based³.

³ It should also be noted that these critical tasks (for example, data management) also underpin aspects of the analysis that was necessary to respond to the ToR for the *ad hoc* evaluations of PA4 and PA5 (KAI 5.2).