



Strategic evaluation of Operational programme Employment – relevance

Management summary

Aims and Scope of Evaluation

This strategic evaluation is primarily dedicated to relevance verification of the Operational Programme Employment (OPE). The aim of the current evaluation (further referred as “Evaluation”) is to verify validity of the OPE strategy settings (accuracy/relevance verification of the identified problems and needs, accuracy/relevance of setting goals and implementing the territorial dimension, integrated tools and complementarities). Relevance of the intervention logic is also verified (activities, beneficiaries, target groups and indicators). The evaluation findings will be used in Progress Report 2017, according to Article 52 of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) no. 1303/2013 and in other evaluations of MRD-NCA.

The Evaluation is divided into three evaluation tasks (which are then subdivided into evaluation questions):

- Task 1: Verify the validity and relevance of problems and needs originally identified in the OPE
- Task 2: Verify the relevance of intervention logic settings, for investment priorities/specific objectives of the OPE (needs of the target groups and the corresponding activities, relevance of the beneficiaries and indicators including their target values and relevance of external factors and assumptions)
- Task 3: Evaluate the settings of the territorial dimension, integrated tools and complementarities of the OPE

The Evaluation was launched on 11th July 2016 by execution of a contract between the OPE Management Authority, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and an expert evaluator – HOPE GROUP s.r.o. company. The Interim Report was submitted on 11th January 2017, followed by the Final Report submitted on 13th February 2017. The final version of the report was submitted on 30th March 2017, after a detailed and thorough discussion. The report contains full outcomes and findings for the evaluation tasks 1, 2 and 3, and also findings, conclusions and recommendations for each partial evaluation question.

Findings and Conclusions

Evaluation of Changes in External Environment and Relevance of Problems and Needs Identified in the OPE

The most important changes in the external environment of the OPE were identified in the employment and the labour market, where there has been a significant reduction in unemployment. In November 2016, the unemployment rate fell even below the threshold of 5 % and the number of available jobs reached 140,000. Also the structure of unemployment changed; there



was a significant reduction in the share of the young unemployed people. Therefore, a significant change in needs occurred in this context. **In other thematic fields included in the OPE, the changes of external environment are of low significance.** For the topic of equality of men and women, there is an increase in the employment rate of women, but the difference in comparison to male employment still persists. In the topic of social inclusion, a relatively large increase of socially excluded localities and numbers of people living there may be highlighted as a significant change. Social inclusion is therefore still very much required. In the topic of social innovation and international cooperation, new challenges have appeared, arising from the context of the overall societal changes (Society 4.0, emphasis on efficiency). The new challenges emphasize even more the necessity of new/innovative solutions and only increase the relevance of identified needs. In the topic of public administration, it is primarily the implementation of the Civil Service Act into common practice of the authorities, which has however only brought partial alleviation of problems in professionalization.

Most of the strategic documents relevant for the OPE were set and approved for programming period 2014-2020, and no significant changes have been made. In several cases subsequent strategies were produced, but even here the strategic objectives did not show any significant changes. Also, several new strategies were implemented (e.g. Industry 4.0 or the Conception of Social Housing), leading to an update of measures in the National Reform Programme. None of these changes affected the OPE, though.

Verification of Interventional Logic Settings

The set intervention logic is still valid in most of investments priorities of the OPE. The analysis did not identify any major impulse for either extension or restriction of the target groups, beneficiaries and activities, or for a significant modification of the indicator system. **Significant changes, however, were identified by evaluation in the area of employment and the labour market,** where the intervention setting was based on a significantly different situation and the structure of the target groups has notably changed. The evaluator further identified a risk of non-fulfilment of the target values of some indicators.

Employment and labour market (IP 1.1, 1.4, 1.5)

The intervention logic setting of investment priority 1.1 was based on a significantly different situation on the labour market at the time of the OPE preparation. Therefore, the OPE document contains problems and causes, which are currently no longer relevant. The structure of the target group has changed as well (the problem of the high rate of unemployment and unemployment of young people up to 25 years of age has disappeared, the share of the long-term unemployed in the reduced unemployment rate has increased, problems persist for jobseekers 55+ and those who cumulate different handicaps). Due to the change of the target group structure the need for change in the intervention structure for the target group has arisen. In this regard, we recommend to focus on and prioritize the activities of IP 1.1 for the most problematic target groups and to search more intensively for members of target groups in the activities of SO 1.1.2 and 1.5.1 (support for the young people). Further, with regard to the changes in the target group structure of people at risk on the labour market it is probable that the target values of some indicators may not be fulfilled (especially SO 1.1.2). Due to the current situation on the labour market the general, support for young people



up to the age of 30 is not expected to continue, unless they have other disadvantages on the job market at the same time. Fulfilment of the value of this indicator is therefore not expected.

The intervention logic setting of investment priority 1.4 focused on public services to employment and the system of further education is still relevant. However, the problem in staffing of the prepared projects and therefore the feasibility of the proposed measures still exists.

The intervention logic setting of investment priority 1.5 corresponded to the time of formulation of the OPE. At present the problem of growing young unemployment rates is not relevant, this TG no longer belonging to the most endangered groups on the labour market. For this IP no new calls for proposals will be published and no new projects will be initiated any more.

Equality of men and women (IP 1.2)

The intervention logic setting of investment priority 1.2, respectively the specific objective 1.2.1, was verified and the current setup was confirmed to be still relevant and valid. Despite some changes in the external environment in the area of the labour market and employment of women it is currently not necessary to change the set intervention logic. The target values of the indicators are fulfilled to higher extent than what would match the current phase of the programme, the overperformance amounting to hundreds of percent. For the significant part of the indicators a revision of the target values has been recommended. Due to the existing support of activities in the area of building child care services from other sources, we recommend to perform an assessment of demographic trends development and fulfilment of needs in this area before announcement new calls for proposals.

Adaptability and further education (IP 1.3)

The intervention logic of investment priority 1.3 is set in a way that leads to the achievement of the specific objectives. A recommendation emerges from the results of the evaluation concerning better accessibility for SMEs and the self-employed due to the limited capacity factor on the SMEs/self-employed side and further concerning increased targeting of older workers. Those are the main target groups of SO 1.3.2, whose needs have to-date been addressed by the joint calls of SO 1.3.1 and SO 1.3.2.

Social inclusion and fighting poverty (IP 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)

The set intervention logic of investment priorities is still relevant and necessary. Following the analytical part, the target group identified as the most relevant is the group of socially excluded persons and persons at risk of social exclusion, whose numbers have increased significantly with the need for the problem solution having grown. Among the most important activities of IP 2.2 are those which aim at increasing the quality and accessibility of social services for the socially excluded along with the activities aimed at development and introducing of new and innovative methods of social work. Problems identified in the priority axis 2 include the risk of non-fulfilment of target values of some indicators. The number of projects aimed at supporting establishment of new social enterprises is currently low, and another problem can emerge in fulfilment of indicators relating to SO 2.2.2 (accessibility and efficiency of health services), where only 6 projects have been prepared by the factual guarantor, the Ministry of Health. The managing authority should focus on more intense communication with potential beneficiaries in this area.



Social innovations and international cooperation (IP 3.1)

The situation in the area of linking actors and information transmission about innovation supply and demand improves step by step. However, there is still some reluctance in allocating capacities/resources to search for new solutions. Providers and donors of services lack sufficient capacities and skills both for evaluation of benefits of the implemented measures and for assessment of the real causes of problems.

What has already been evident and can still be expected in future is increasingly manifested significant social changes in the area of employability on the labour market associated with the rise of Industry 4.0. New approaches and solutions will need to be sought due to these changes and that is why one of the recommendations following from the evaluation is adaptation to the new challenges in the area and support for application of verified innovative solutions.

Due to the uneven fulfilment of the target values of indicators (overperformance of some indicators and non-performance of others – such as the Number of supported SMEs) modifications of target values of the indicators are also recommended.

Public administration (IP 4.1)

In the area of public administration development the evaluation identified no major extension or narrowing of the target groups, beneficiaries or activities. The current programme setting of the OPE in this area is satisfactory and allows the relevant beneficiaries to implement projects, with the potential of leading to solutions of the identified problems. In assessment of relevance of the target values of indicators a problem was detected in the area of insufficient fulfilment of indicators for certain participants, hence a revision is recommended here.

Territorial Dimension and Integrated Tools

The identification of the territorial dimension and integrated tools is still considered relevant and required. No proposals for changes in the National Document of Territorial Dimension follow from the evaluation. Emphasis should be placed on acceleration of the process of strategies approvals, their quality improvement and stabilization of the methodological environment for their submission.

Complementarities

Setting up of complementary linkages in the OPE is still relevant. Just minor formal reformulations of two linkages have been recommended. New complementary linkages on ESIF programmes or EU tools have not been identified. It is recommended to strengthen a communication with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (the administrator of the national fund for development of preschool and elementary school capacities) with regard to complementarities of the Fund with the activities of SO 1.2.1 within the OPE.