

Version 4

Unofficial translation from Bulgarian

Only Bulgarian text is authentic

**Ministry of Transport,
information technology and communications**

**Managing Authority
Operational Programme
on Transport**

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

Approved by:

Head of OP “Transport” 2007 – 2013 Managing authority

Sofia 2010

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN**CONTENTS****I. Introduction**

In line with the applicable EU regulations the Operational Programme on Transport (OPT) will be subject to evaluation. The regulations in force in the current programming period – Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 and Regulation (EC) 1828/2006 - expanded the scope of monitoring of programmes from purely financial control to evaluation of the implementation of programmes, for the purpose of a more efficient absorption and utilization of the resources from the funds. The changes introduce a more decentralized approach to monitoring and evaluation of programming and OP management, as well as a clearer specification of the responsibilities at Community, national and OP level. Regulation 1083/2006 refers to the option for Member States under the Convergence objective to draw up an evaluation plan and the Commission recommends the establishment of such a plan under all three objectives.

This plan for the evaluation of Operational Programme on Transport (OPT) has been developed by the Managing Authority. The purpose of this document is to establish a framework for OPT evaluation as a means of integrating evaluation into OPT management and implementation. The plan covers on-going evaluations to be conducted over the course of programme implementation. The Plan is subject to amendment or updating in line with developments under the OPT and specific evaluation requirements that emerge during programme implementation. To this end, annual evaluation programmes will be prepared by the Managing Authority to guide specific evaluation activity in each year. A proposed format for these annual evaluation programmes is set out at Annex II.

II. Objectives of the evaluations for the OP implementation period

For the 2007—2013 period the OPT has been allocated very significant financial resources. With funding of some €2003 million from the Structural and Cohesion Funds, the programme is the largest of all seven operational programmes in Bulgaria. The scale of the intervention and the strict normative requirements regarding planning, implementation and accountability necessitate the establishment of an efficient monitoring and evaluation system. According to Regulation (EC) 1083/2006, the purpose of conducting evaluations is to improve the quality, efficiency, impact, sustainability and compliance of the assistance provided from the funds and the implementation of the operational programme in particular.

Against this backdrop, the objectives of OPT evaluations for the period 2007-2013 are as follows:

- To build evaluation capacity within the Managing Authority and its partners;
- To improve the management and implementation of the OPT and the efficiency and value-added of the interventions funded by it;
- To assess the effectiveness of OPT activities in relation to achieving the goals of National Strategic Reference Framework; and
- To improve transparency and openness of the activities of the public institutions involved in the programme.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

III. Coordination and organization of the OPT evaluation system**1. Organization of the OPT evaluation system****1.1. General principles and European Commission requirements for evaluation**

The requirement to carry out on-going evaluations of the OPT implementation and the general rules governing this are set out in the following documents:

- Council Regulation No. 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund
- Regulation No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund
- Commission Regulation No. 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation No. 1083/2006
- National Strategic Reference Framework for Bulgaria, approved by the European Commission on 22 June 2007
- Operational Programme on Transport 2007-2013 – a document approved by the European Commission on 7 November 2007.

According to art.47(2) of Regulation 1083/2006 evaluations may be of a strategic nature in order to examine the evolution of a programme or group of programmes in relation to Community or national priorities, or of an operational nature in order to support the monitoring of an operational programme. Evaluations shall be carried out before, during and after the programming period.

In line with the additionality and proportionality principles (art. 13 of Regulation No. 1083/2006), the member states are responsible for monitoring the operational programmes, carrying out on-going evaluation and undertaking and applying corrective measures as necessary.

To this end, the Managing Authority of OPT will organise on-going evaluation through the framework of this indicative evaluation plan.

1.1.1 Suggestion for a model of OP evaluation

In accordance with articles 48-49 of Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 three stages in the evaluation process are envisaged:

➤ *Ex ante* evaluation

The *ex ante* evaluation of OPT 2007-2013 had been carried out before the programme was launched and before the indicative evaluation plan was developed. The *ex ante* evaluation was carried out in parallel with the OP development and negotiation process and as an integral part of that process. The environmental impact assessment of the OP activities was made and approved within the *ex ante* evaluation too. The *ex ante* evaluation contributed considerably to improving the OP content and quality through its analysis in detail of the results of previous evaluations, reviewing the analytical part of the programme including the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in particular, assessing the strategy compliance, qualitative measurement of OP indicators, assessment of the expected impact including environmental impact, implementation mechanisms, OP monitoring and control.

➤ *Ex post* evaluation

In accordance with art. 49 of Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 *ex post* evaluation shall be carried out by the European Commission in cooperation with the member state and the Managing Authority of

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

OPT, which are to ensure the accumulation and provision of necessary data. *Ex post* evaluation shall consider all evaluation activities carried out during the programming period.

Such evaluation shall examine the extent to which resources were used, the effectiveness and efficiency of fund programming, the socio-economic impact and the impact on the Community priorities. It shall aim to draw conclusions for the policy on economic, social and territorial cohesion. It shall identify the factors contributing to the success or failure of the implementation of operational programme, including as regards sustainability and defining good practice.

Ex post evaluation shall be completed by 31 December 2015.

➤ On-going evaluation

Over the course of the programming period the OP Managing Authority shall carry out on-going evaluation closely linked to the monitoring of OPT.

According to article 48(3) of Regulation (EC) 1083/2006 there are two specific instances where a member state has to carry out on-going evaluation:

1. *Where monitoring of the programme reveals a significant departure from the OP goals initially set*

In such cases financial and technical data shall be verified and evaluated in order to check whether the OP goals would be achieved. Within the OPT a departure of 20% from agreed goals will be regarded a significant departure and trigger an evaluation, taking into consideration the specifics of each indicator and/or the project(s) to which the indicator in question refers. Such a departure can be used as an early warning for identifying potential problems and the reasons thereof, thus facilitating timely corrective action.

2. *Where proposals are made for revision*

An OP revision shall be preceded by an evaluation. The Regulation (article 33) specifies that the OP may be revised in certain cases, particularly following significant socio-economic changes in the environment in which the programme is being implemented; major changes in Community, national or regional priorities; following implementation difficulties, or in cases where OP monitoring reveals a significant departure from the goals initially set. The Commission in its guidelines on ongoing evaluation has indicated that evaluations are only necessary where proposed revisions to operational programmes are major in nature, relating to financial reallocations, changes to OP content in terms of objectives at OP or priority axis level or implementation-related.¹

In addition to the above, the Commission encourages Member States to carry out other evaluations in line with internal requirements and on the basis of an evaluation plan. Evaluations could also be undertaken on foot of a specific request from the OP Monitoring Committee. In terms of the focus of such evaluations, the Commission envisages a demand for two main types of evaluation:

- *Strategic* evaluations which would focus on aspects such as the contribution of the OP to the achievement of the goals of the Lisbon process and on specific horizontal issues of importance to the OP (e.g., equal opportunities, environment);

¹ See Working Document No. 5 *Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods: Evaluation During the Programming Period*.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

- Evaluations with an *operational* focus, i.e., on the overall performance of the OP and on the functioning of administrative structures and implementation mechanisms. These evaluations should be closely linked to the ongoing monitoring of the programme.

The Commission also notes that some evaluations could combine both strategic and operational features.

The main evaluation criteria or questions which will be the focus of the on-going evaluations are as follows:

- The **relevance** of the assistance under the OP on Transport which relates to the objectives of the programme and their continuing appropriateness in the light of changes in the socio-economic environment;
- The **consistency** of the assistance under OPT which concerns an analysis of the relationships and complementarities between the different priority axes, and their contribution to achieving the programme's global objectives as well as the coherence of the assistance and synergies with national and EU policies;
- The **effectiveness** of the assistance under OPT which is concerned with whether programme outputs, results and impacts are in line with objectives and with explaining and understanding the factors that may have affected progress, including implementation processes and mechanisms.
- The **efficiency** of the assistance under OPT which involves an analysis of programme achievements and benefits in terms of the resources used and an assessment of the scope for efficiency improvements.

2 OPT evaluations coordination and management process

2.1 General coordination and management

2.1.1 Evaluation activities management structure

Evaluations on the strategic programming documents for the period 2007-2013 will be carried out in two levels: at National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) level, and at operational programme level. The structure responsible for evaluation at national level is the Central Coordination Unit in the Council of Ministers. Individual evaluation units shall be established in each managing authority to carry out evaluations for the particular operational programmes.

For OPT, the Unit responsible for evaluation is the "Monitoring of OPT implementation" Unit established within "Monitoring, information and communication" Department in the Managing Authority.

Basic structures at all levels are:

- The Central Coordination Unit (CCU) in CoM;
- Group for evaluation of operational programmes, co-financed by Structural and Cohesion fund;
- OP managing authorities (including the units responsible for carrying out the evaluations);
- OP monitoring committees;
- European Commission.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

The basic functions of those structures as regards carrying out of evaluations of individual strategic programming documents are described below.

➤ **Central Coordination Unit (CCU)**

In accordance with Council of Ministers decree (CMD) 70/14.04.2010 for Coordination of management of EU funds, functions of CCU are performed by the following directorates within the Council of Ministers: “Programming of EU funds”; “Monitoring of EU funds” and “Information and management systems of EU funds”. These functions are described in the Statute of Council of Ministers and its administration, adopted with CMD 29 from 2009.

CCU exercises its functions in cooperation with the European Commission and the managing authorities of the operational programmes, as well as with partners included in the implementation of programmes co-funded by EU.

➤ **Steering group for evaluation of NSRF and the operational programmes**

In January 2010 was established a horizontal group of experts for evaluation of operational programmes, co-financed by Structural and Cohesion fund. It includes experts from each OP Managing Authority and representatives from the Central Coordination Unit. Experts from OPT Managing authority participate in the work of the Group and cooperate with it on horizontal evaluations.

➤ **OPT Managing Authority**

At the Managing Authority level the evaluation functions are performed by “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit within “Monitoring, information and communication” department. The Managing Authority shall specify the tasks, responsibilities, organization and the procedures for consulting as regards evaluation activities, carrying out evaluations and reporting on them and will make the necessary human and financial resources available. Evaluation will support the formulation of policies and programmes and also the management process. A full description of the functions and responsibilities of the section responsible for OP evaluation is provided in the functional characteristics of “Monitoring, information and communication” Department within “Coordination of Programmes and Projects” directorate, and in the experts’ job descriptions. These functions are outlined below.

➤ **OPT Monitoring Committee**

“Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit will function in close cooperation with the Monitoring Committee (MC) on issues in the field of programme evaluation. Some of the MC functions include the following:

- Approving an indicative plan for OP evaluation;
- Requesting specific additional evaluations and defining the specific evaluation subjects;
- Discussing the results and approving recommendations from evaluations carried out, where such recommendations refer to issues of MC competence;
- Follow-up of the implementation of recommendations from evaluations.

➤ **European Commission**

Representatives of the European Commission are involved in the evaluation process through their participation in the Monitoring Committee meetings and they may participate in the NSRF Steering group for evaluation. The Commission may carry out, by its own initiative and in partnership with

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

the respective member states, strategic evaluations or evaluations connected to the monitoring of operational programmes when such monitoring reveals considerable departure from the goals initially set. The results from such evaluations are sent to the OP Monitoring Committees. The Commission will develop a scheme, in close cooperation with the member states, regarding the exchange of information (including monitoring data) and correct implementation of the recommendations from evaluations. The Commission may, by its own decision, initiate a strategic evaluation of a certain operational programme (or parts thereof), of national strategies or strategic subjects of considerable importance – as for example about the achievement of the Lisbon strategy goals, or sustainable development. Beyond those obligations the Commission issues guidelines regarding the methods and techniques of evaluating and data analysis.

2.1.2 Functions of “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit in relation to ongoing evaluation of OPT

”Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit within “Monitoring, information and communication” department performs function of coordination, organisation and implementation of ongoing evaluation.

The Managing Authority will provide the funding through “Technical Assistance” priority axis for organizing and carrying out evaluations, data collection, making examinations and analyses.

“Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit’s functions will include the following:

- Drawing up and implementation of an indicative plan for on-going evaluation of OPT in line with the principles, approaches, methods and recommendations set forth in Working Document No.2 and Working Document No.5 of the European Commission;
- Determining the scope, objectives and frequency of ongoing evaluations of OPT;
- Drawing up a schedule and action plan for carrying out on-going evaluations;
- Approving and acceptance of the work carried out by independent evaluators of the programme;
- Preparing and dissemination of information on the independent on-going and thematic evaluations of OPT, and informing the MC of OPT and the Commission of their results;
- Ensuring linkage between the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities;
- Interpreting data on the OPT monitoring indicators and information received from programme beneficiaries;
- Coordination and cooperation in collecting statistical data on the evaluations;
- Analysis of the recommendations made by external evaluators and by the European Commission;
- Monitoring the external evaluators’ activities;
- Determining the minimum quality standards for evaluations;
- Analyzing data and results from the internal evaluations carried out, and preparing recommendations based on the results from evaluations;
- Cooperation in preparing amendments of programme documents based on the recommendations from evaluations;
- Follow-up of the implementation of recommendations from evaluations;

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

- Cooperation with the CCU in planning, preparation and conducting research within OP and on horizontal issues, conducted for the NSRF;
- Preparing and submitting to MC of OPT of information on planned evaluations, on monitoring the implementation of recommendations from OPT evaluations, and dissemination of information on evaluations in collaboration with CCU;
- Exchange of good practices and know-how with other member states; and
- Building the institutional capacity of the OPT National Evaluation Unit.

2.1.3 Institutional capacity of the section responsible for evaluating OPT

The human and financial resources available to “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit must be sufficient to ensure effective implementation of the multi-annual evaluation programme. In addition, adequate financial resources must be allocated to cover the costs of the planned evaluations and any other evaluations that may be necessary over the programme period.

➤ Institutional building and training courses envisaged

The Managing Authority is jointly responsible with the “Human Resources” Directorate of the Ministry of transport, information technology and communications for organizing the process of analyzing the need for training courses, developing of specific programmes and their implementation. A series of training courses is envisaged with resources from the general technical assistance for OPT, to be conducted for the MA employees and end beneficiaries, who will exercise functions of OPT monitoring and evaluation.

A number of actions designed to enhance the capacity of the OPT MA will be undertaken over the period of this Plan. Examples of such actions might include:

- Participation of MA personnel in evaluation courses organised by training providers outside of Bulgaria;
- Participation of MA personnel in evaluation conferences such as those organised by the European Commission and the European Evaluation Society;
- Study visits of MA personnel to evaluation units attached to managing authorities in other Member States;
- Organisation of specific training activities for the MA in Bulgaria involving international evaluation experts.

Resources for the above-mentioned activities will be provided under OPT technical assistance.

2.2 Process of the indicative OP evaluation plan approval and implementation**2.2.1 Connection with the monitoring system**

The actual monitoring and control of the programme implementation will be exercised through the Unified Management Information System – UMIS. It is a web-based solution administered by CCU within CoM, which the Ministry of transport, information technology and communications will use for the efficient management and control of OPT and for preparing formal reports on the funds management as required by the European Commission. UMIS is structured in separate modules based on the project cycle management and on the management structure of institutions which are the main users of the system. A report shall be drawn up on each project, indicating the project’s objective, expenditures planned by years and components, launching and closing dates,

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

achievement of physical indicators. UMIS will provide follow-up of different project implementation phases, registration of documents and correspondence, management and control of all financial procedures, providing of updated information, reports and statistical data to the management authorities. The system will support project management throughout project cycle in accordance with the requirements of national and European legislation.

2.2.2 Mechanism for approval and possibilities for revising the indicative evaluation plan

The indicative evaluation plan shall be approved by the Monitoring Committee. It covers the whole programming period, comprising also annual sections which may be complemented depending on the OPT progress and/or when conducting of specific evaluations is necessary, in conformity with art. 48(3) of Regulation 1083/2006.

The evaluation plan has been prepared by experts working in “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit. The document shall be approved consecutively by the head of “Monitoring, information and communication” department (and by the Head of the Managing Authority. Then the document shall be made available to the OPT Monitoring Committee members for comments. The relevant comments by the MC members shall be duly reflected in the final version of the indicative evaluation plan before it is finally adopted.

The “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit prepares annual programmes (separate sub-sections of the plan) which will describe planned internal and external evaluations for the respective year. To ensure the efficient conduct of the evaluations, the unit shall take decisions on the manner and methods for carrying out particular ongoing evaluations (in terms of whether these are to be undertaken internally or externally) and on other issues in an annual programme to be approved by the Head of MA not later than the end of the preceding year.

All amendments of the indicative evaluation plan shall be made according to the following procedure: “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit shall draft a project of the necessary amendments/ updates and justification of the need for introducing them. The proposals for revisions shall be approved by the Head of OPT Managing Authority and will be published on OPT website.

Each evaluation will take the form of an evaluation report, which shall be sent to the European Commission. The results and recommendations shall be presented at meetings of the Monitoring Committee. The report shall be presented also at other appropriate forums as necessary when that is required by the content of reports and evaluation subject. “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit shall prepare, jointly with stakeholder institutions, an action plan for implementing the recommendations from the evaluation reports, and shall follow up their implementation.

2.2.3 Relation and Additionality with the evaluation plan on national level

Possible relations with National evaluation plan shall be realized at the following two levels:

- At programming level – CCU representatives participate in the MC of OPT thus ensuring coordination of the approval of OPT indicative evaluation plan. In addition, representatives of the unit responsible for OPT evaluation participate in the OP monitoring group.
- At implementation level – bilateral coordination may be provided by involvement of CCU experts in the OPT Monitoring Committee.

The experts from “Monitoring of OPT implementation” unit will participate in planning (identifying the fields of examination), preparation and conducting examinations for the general

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

evaluation of the operational programmes and on horizontal issues envisaged within the NSRF (joint evaluations).

IV. Management of OP evaluation**1. Evaluation planning**

The process of OP evaluation comprises a number of basic evaluation management phases which contribute to the quality and usefulness of the evaluations carried out as follows:

- *Planning* – the needs and initial scope of evaluation shall be analyzed, as well as the necessary resources in terms of data, time and funding.
- *Preparation of the terms of reference* – the objectives and key evaluation questions are drawn up.
- *Data collection and analysis* – carrying out data examination, collection and processing.
- *Drawing up a report* – the analyses and evaluation results are prepared and presented in the form of a report for discussion and consultation. The scope of that activity may be limited only to the bodies commissioning the evaluation, but may also include partner organizations, including those that implement the programme subject to evaluation.
- *Utilization of the results from evaluation* – the information from the report on evaluation results is used to make decisions for improving both the implementation of evaluated projects and the programme as a whole.

Both parties – the principal ordering the evaluation (by ensuring appropriate planning, provision and use of necessary resources such as time, access to information sources, etc) and the evaluator (by providing and use of appropriate human and physical resources for fulfilling the terms of reference) are responsible for carrying out an evaluation in accordance with minimum quality standards.

2. Assigning an evaluation

Whenever an external evaluator will be used the provisions of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) will be observed. The basic criteria for selecting a contractor will be developed by “Monitoring OPT implementation” unit and additional consultations will be made as necessary, avoiding conflict of interests and observing the confidentiality rules. The procedure applied according to PPA will depend on the evaluation scope and scale as well as on its specifics.

3. Maintaining evaluators’ independence

The independence of the team carrying out an evaluation is a complex issue. The best guarantee for the independence of evaluators is the application of a scientific and professional approach by the team in the exercise of their duties.

All OP evaluation activities require total independence of the evaluator from the subject of evaluation thereby improving confidence in the evaluation results.

4. Partnership in the evaluation process

The partners in the evaluation process are not only the users of the evaluation results but also those organisations which provide information necessary for the conduct of an evaluation. The institutions/bodies directly or indirectly involved in OPT evaluations may be grouped in general into the following categories:

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

- *Structures authorized to make decisions* – the European Commission, the MA of NSRF, the Minister of Transport, information technology and communications, etc., fall under this group. Evaluation provides to them information on the programme (its preparation, implementation and the results thereof);
- *OPT implementation authorities* – this group comprises experts from the Monitoring Committee and MA, whose duties include managing of different OPT aspects; for them the evaluation results provide information on the effectiveness of the duties exercised by them, on potential difficulties, and on what would have positive impact on the outputs of implemented projects;
- *Target groups* – the final beneficiaries of OPT. The evaluation results would give them an idea both on what should be expected from the programme implementation and on the actual outputs of its implementation (in the case of follow-up evaluation). Evaluation may provide also information about the projects co-financed by the programme, and especially on the good practices applied in its implementation; and
- *Other stakeholders* – a summary of the results from an evaluation may be provided at the disposal of the civil society structures and the general public on request. Summary of evaluations will be published on OPT website and will be presented at relevant forums.

V. Specific OP evaluation activities**1. Organization and coordination of evaluations for the 2007-2013 programming period****1.1 Indicative list of evaluations planned for the programming period**

This section sets out a schedule list of evaluations which it is intended to carry out over the programming period. It includes both strategic and operational evaluations in line with the Commission's guidelines discussed above. The schedule of evaluation should be seen as indicative in nature at this stage as other, more pressing evaluation requirements may emerge over the course of the OPT programming period. As discussed above, this could arise if progress under the OPT was not in line with the objectives set down or where OP revisions are required. The OPT Monitoring Committee may also recommend carrying out a particular evaluation. As outlined above, an evaluation work programme will be prepared annually setting out the evaluations to be undertaken in the year in question. This indicative list may be supplemented, amended and updated, and that would not require an explicit modification of the OPT evaluation plan.

Notwithstanding the above, the indicative list presented here constitutes a comprehensive programme of ongoing evaluation of the OPT. It includes evaluation relating to a wide range of important themes and topics including:

- Evaluations with an operational focus on issues around programme implementation including the examination of possible bottlenecks that could hinder progress;
- Evaluations concerned with the rate of overall OP progress and impact;
- Evaluations with a strategic, policy-oriented focus; and
- Evaluations designed to assess and improve the functioning of OPT monitoring and evaluation systems.

In the listing below, the broad scope that is envisaged for each evaluation is described together with an outline of the main evaluation issues and questions to be addressed and a preliminary timeframe

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

for each evaluation. These will be incorporated into the terms of reference (ToR) in a tender for the appointment of an independent external evaluator to the OPT. Tenderers will be expected to propose additional evaluation questions and to propose appropriate methodologies to address the evaluation issues and questions.

As this is the first programming period for Bulgaria, the first on-going evaluations will be carried out in 2010 when the first outputs from OPT implementation are available.

Taking into account the factors listed above the indicative list of on-going evaluations shall include the following:

EVALUATION TOPIC: “Examination of Project Implementation Process at Final Beneficiary Level”

Type of evaluation

External evaluation with an operational focus.

Scope

The proposed evaluation will include an examination of the effectiveness of project implementation and the capacity of the final beneficiaries and propose recommendations for improvements as necessary.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|---|---|
| Effectiveness of Implementation Procedures | <p>Is the division of responsibility between Managing Authority and Final Beneficiary level appropriate?</p> <p>Adequacy of reporting procedures between Managing Authority and Final Beneficiary</p> |
| Capacity of Final Beneficiaries | <p>Do the final beneficiaries have the necessary capacity and expertise to design and manage the projects effectively?</p> <p>To what extend are effective the management and control systems set up within beneficiaries?</p> <p>To what extend the distribution of functions at Final Beneficiary level are functional and efficient?</p> <p>To what extend the quality of particular implementation/project management phases (preparation, tender procedure, management, reporting and control) carried out by beneficiaries?</p> |
| Identification of Good Practice and Analysis of Scope for Transferability | <p>Are there particular good practices in project management and implementation at individual final beneficiary level?</p> <p>Are these good practices transferable to other final beneficiaries and how could such a transfer be</p> |

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

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Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

In the second half of 2010

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| EVALUATION TOPIC: “Interim evaluation of progress and programme performance” |
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Type of evaluation

External evaluation with a focus on both operational and strategic issues.

Scope

This evaluation will review overall OPT progress and performance to the end of 2010 with a focus on the level of absorption of financial resources and physical progress. It will also review developments in the wider external environment and the implications for the Programme. Programme adjustments, including financial reallocations, may be recommended on the basis of the analysis.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|---|---|
| Overall financial progress | Analysis of financial progress as against target at OP and priority axis level |
| Identification of barriers and problems in the absorption of funds. | Main problems that the beneficiaries face in absorption of OPT funding. Main problems in the implementation stage and in providing co-funding of project activities. |
| Physical progress | Rate of overall physical progress by reference to output and result indicators at priority axis level Analysis of factors affecting progress. Defining the weight of each factor. |
| Analysis of external developments | Main developments in transport sector and in traffic volumes across key transport modes Developments in transport and other policies at national and EU level Implications of above developments for OPT implementation |
| Progress towards achievement of OPT goals and wider impacts | What extent of integration has been achieved of the national transport network into the European transport network? What progress has been made as regards reducing the load on the road infrastructure? |

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

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| | Is a better balance between different types of transport being achieved? Contribution of the OPT to sustainable development policy What progress has been achieved towards developing a sustainable transport system? |
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Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

Forth quarter of 2010

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

EVALUATION TOPIC: "Evaluation of the OPT Monitoring System"**Type of evaluation**

External evaluation with an operational focus.

Scope

The proposed evaluation will include an examination of the effectiveness of the overall monitoring framework for the OPT and the capacity of the Managing Authority and propose recommendations for improvements as necessary.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|--|--|
| Effectiveness of overall monitoring system | <p>Is the monitoring system covering the entire project cycle and how efficient and functional is it?</p> <p>Is the monitoring system providing reliable information on a timely basis?</p> |
| Adequacy and quality of monitoring indicators? | <p>Is the OPT indicator system appropriately designed?</p> <p>Do the indicators meet recognised good practice standards and provide relevant and useful information about programme implementation?</p> <p>The organisation within beneficiaries to report on indicators</p> <p>Are the sources of information reliable when reporting on indicators?</p> |
| Organisation, capacity and effectiveness of Monitoring, information and communication Department of the OPT Managing Authority | <p>Is the distribution of functions within the Department appropriate and functional?</p> <p>Do the staff of the Department have the necessary expertise to carry out their responsibilities?</p> <p>Do plans for investment in staff training correspond to the needs and what are the effects of investment in administrative capacity</p> <p>To what extent relations between OPT Monitoring, information and communication Department and beneficiaries, other managing authorities and the NSRF Managing Authority are adequate and meet the needs and what is the organisation of information exchange between them.</p> |

Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

In the first half of 2011

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

EVALUATION TOPIC: “Evaluation of integration of horizontal principles in OP management, monitoring and implementation”

Type of evaluation

External evaluation with a thematic focus

Scope

This evaluation will assess the extent to which key horizontal policies and priorities are integrated in the management, monitoring and implementation of the OPT.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Project Identification and Appraisal | How are key horizontal priorities, including sustainable development, are captured in project evaluations? To what extent are horizontal principles taken into account in the identification and implementation of projects? |
| Monitoring and Indicators | Quality of reporting on horizontal principles Do the OPT monitoring indicators adequately measure or capture impacts on sustainable development and other horizontal priorities? |
| OP Management and Implementation | How EU horizontal policies are reflected in relevant OPT documents and implementation manuals? |
| Analysis of external developments | Analysis of developments in horizontal policies at national and EU level and consideration of implications for OPT |

Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

Third quarter of 2011

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

EVALUATION TOPIC:**“Examination of OPT evaluation system and OPT MA evaluation capacity”****Type of evaluation**

External evaluation with a thematic focus.

Scope

The evaluation will review the overall evaluation system in place in the Managing Authority, to include an analysis of its contribution to OPT management. It will assess the evaluation capacity of the Managing Authority and make recommendations for further capacity enhancement and on the organisation of evaluation activities in the next programming period.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|---|---|
| Organisation and effectiveness of the National Unit for Evaluation of OPT | <p>What are the established relations and interactions between the national OPT evaluation unit and other administrative structures in MA?</p> <p>Is the national OPT evaluation unit sufficiently independent in the exercise of its functions?</p> <p>Does the Unit have sufficient staff with the required level of expertise to carry out its responsibilities?</p> |
| Relations with similar structures within other institutions | <p>Are there any similar structures for OP evaluation established in the other MAs or the institutional beneficiaries?</p> <p>What are the relations with such institutions in particular with those at NSRF level?</p> |
| Capacity building activities | <p>What capacity building actions have been undertaken and how effective have they been?</p> <p>What other capacity building activities should be considered?</p> |
| Systems for utilisation and follow-up of evaluation recommendations | <p>Are the procedures for consideration of evaluation recommendations adequate?</p> <p>Have action plans been developed for implementing the recommendations and are follow-up procedures in place?</p> |
| Overall functioning of evaluation system | <p>Is the ongoing evaluation function linked appropriately with the monitoring function?</p> <p>Does evaluation contribute to the management and implementation of the OPT?</p> |

Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

First half of 2012

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

EVALUATION TOPIC: Contribution of OPT to the achievement of the Lisbon strategy goals**Type of evaluation**

External evaluation with thematic and strategic focus.

Scope

This evaluation will assess the contribution of the OPT to the attainment of the Lisbon Strategy goals. It will serve as an input to the strategic report to be submitted to the Commission by first half of 2012.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|---|---|
| Review of developments in Lisbon strategy | Implications of new policy orientations for OPT |
| Assessment of the degree of achievement of Lisbon strategy goals resulting from development of transport sector | Extent of development of trans-European transport corridors. Level of integration with the trans-European transport system |
| Influence on the protection of environment | Contribution to environmental protection |
| Social policy impacts | Number and quality of created jobs |
| Economic impacts | Contribution to economic development at national and regional levels |

Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

Second half of 2012

EVALUATION TOPIC: Overall Evaluation of OP Effectiveness and Impact**Type of evaluation**

External evaluation with a focus on both operational and strategic issues

Scope

This comprehensive OP-wide evaluation will review overall progress and performance with a focus on the level of absorption of financial resources and physical progress. It will also review developments in the wider external environment and the implications for the Programme. The arrangements for OPT implementation will also be reviewed with a view towards identifying and addressing any administrative bottlenecks affecting performance. The impacts of the OPT and its potential impact will also be assessed. Programme adjustments, including financial reallocations,

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

may be recommended on the basis of the analysis. Lessons for the next programming period will also be drawn out.

Main Evaluation Issues and Questions

| Main Issues | Key Evaluation Questions |
|---|---|
| Overall financial progress | Analysis of financial progress as against target at OP and priority axis level Identification of barriers and problems in the absorption of funds |
| Analysis of external developments | Main developments in transport sector and in traffic volumes across key transport modes Developments in transport and other policies at national and EU level Implications of above developments for OPT implementation and strategy |
| Physical progress | Rate of overall physical progress by reference to output and result indicators at priority axis level Analysis of factors affecting progress |
| Implementation Arrangements | Adequacy of existing arrangements for OP implementation Capacity of Final Beneficiary level |
| OP Management and Monitoring | Is the monitoring system providing reliable information on a timely basis? Performance of Managing Authority |
| Progress towards achievement of OPT goals and wider impacts | What extent of integration has been achieved of the national transport network into the European transport network? What progress has been made as regards reducing the load on the road infrastructure? Is a better balance between different types of transport being achieved? What progress has been achieved towards developing a sustainable transport system? |
| Progress towards achievement of NSRF Priorities | What is the programmes contribution to sustainable development policy? Contribution towards achievement of stable economic growth Contribution of OPT to employment Impact of programme on regional development |

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| | and the business environment |
|--|------------------------------|

Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

First half of 2013

EVALUATION TOPIC: “Evaluation of OPT Impacts on horizontal policies”**Type of evaluation**

External evaluation with thematic, strategic focus

Scope

This evaluation will assess the contribution of the OPT to key EU horizontal policies and in particular those which are directly related to the principles of OPT – environmental protection, equal opportunities and competitiveness.

Basic issues in the course of evaluation

| Subject fields of evaluation | Basic evaluation issues |
|--|---|
| Integration of European horizontal policies into OPT | How are the issues of EU horizontal policies integrated in the system of OPT management and implementation? Does the level of knowledge on such policies in the teams involved in OPT implementation enable them to adequately apply those policies? |
| Impact of horizontal policies integrated into OPT | What is the effect of applying horizontal policies through OPT? What impacts can be observed or expected at programme level or national level resulting from the application of OPT instruments? |

Preliminary schedule for carrying out the evaluation

Second half of 2013

A summary list of the evaluations together with the planned schedule is provided in Annex I.

2. Minimum evaluation standards and evaluation reports**a. Methodology, format and submission of the evaluation reports**

Completed evaluation reports should include a self-contained executive summary together with the full text of the evaluation report. This should outline the main methodologies used to address the evaluation questions and set out the key findings from the analysis. The evaluation conclusions should follow clearly from the findings, and, in turn, the evaluation recommendations should be supported by the conclusions.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

Evaluation reports shall be submitted to both the OPT Managing Authority and to the European Commission. In terms of dissemination, a summary of each evaluation report shall be published on the OPT website. The Central Coordination Unit and the Monitoring Committee of OPT shall also be acquainted with the evaluation results and recommendations.

b. Quality of reports

According to Working Document No.5 of the European Commission evaluation reports shall meet the following criteria:

- *Meeting Needs*: The evaluation report shall adequately address the information needs and correspond to the terms of reference.
- *Relevance of scope*: The rationale, outputs, results, impacts, interactions with other policies, and unexpected effects shall be carefully studied (depending on the evaluation scope and formulated questions).
- *Openness of process*: The interested parties (e.g. the stakeholders) shall be involved in the design of the evaluation and in the discussion on the results, in order to take into account all points of view.
- *Defensible design*: The design (concept) of the evaluation shall be appropriate and adequate for obtaining the results needed to answer the main evaluation questions.
- *Reliability of data*: The primary and secondary data shall be collected or selected in a manner suitable and reliable in terms of their expected use.
- *Sound analysis*: Quantitative and qualitative data shall be analysed in accordance with established practices, and in ways appropriate to answer the main evaluation questions correctly.
- *Credibility of results*: The results shall be logical and justified by the analysis of data and by suitable interpretations and hypotheses.
- *Impartial conclusions*: The conclusions shall be justified and unbiased.
- *Clear report*: The report shall describe the context and goals, as well as the organisation and results of the OP in such a way that the information provided is easily understood. A comprehensive summary in one of the main working languages of the Community shall summarize the results from evaluation and promote exchange of good practices and lessons learnt between the Member States.
- *Useful recommendations*: The report shall provide recommendations that are useful to decision-makers and stakeholders and are detailed enough to enable launching of their implementation.

The quality of the evaluation reports will be assessed by the National OPT Evaluation Unit on the basis of the above checklist.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN**3. Dissemination of evaluations and follow-up****3.1 Purpose of information dissemination**

The purpose of dissemination of evaluation results is to promote transparency and to provide access to evaluation findings to all interested parties. That is an important factor in promoting the utilisation of evaluation work in the planning and implementation processes.

3.2 Channels for information dissemination

For the needs of OPT, it is envisaged that the finalised evaluation reports will be disseminated through the following channels:

- Mail or e-mail;
- The OPT website;
- Unified Management Information System – UMIS
- Newsletters, press-releases and other publications
- Seminars and working meetings

3.3 Verification and follow-up activities for applying the results from evaluations

The OPT Monitoring Department shall follow-up the implementation of evaluation recommendations. The purpose of such follow-up activity is to promote the use of evaluation conclusions and recommendations in the decision-making process. The establishment of such an appropriate system is essential so that the Monitoring department is aware of how the evaluation recommendations have been observed.

After an evaluation report is published the “Monitoring and Evaluation of OPT” unit will maintain constant contacts with all stakeholders for the purpose of controlling and coordinating follow-up activities.

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN

VI. Annex I

Summary Listing of Proposed OPT On-going Evaluations and Capacity-Building Activity

| Evaluation Title | Timeframe |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Evaluation of project implementation process at Final Beneficiary level | H2 2010 |
| Overall interim evaluation of progress and programme effectiveness | Q4 2010 |
| Evaluation of OPT Monitoring System | Q1 2011 |
| Evaluation of integration of horizontal principles in OP management, monitoring and implementation | Q3 2011 |
| Study of evaluation capacity of OPT Managing Authority | H1 2012 |
| Contribution of OPT to Lisbon Strategy goals | H2 2012 |
| 2 ND overall evaluation of OP effectiveness and impact | H1 2013 |
| Evaluation of OPT impacts on horizontal policies | H2 2013 |
| Evaluations required where OPT monitoring reveals a significant departure from goals initially set | As required |
| Evaluations required where OPT revisions proposed | As required |
| Provision for capacity-building activities for OPT National Evaluation Unit | As required throughout period of plan |

INDICATIVE EVALUATION PLAN**VII. Annex II****Proposed Format of Annual Evaluation Programmes**

The annual evaluation programme will be structured as follows:

1. Update on evaluations carried out in previous year to include summary of main evaluation findings and recommendations and progress in implementation of agreed recommendations (from 2010 onwards).
2. Brief review of any developments in programme implementation which would require an ongoing evaluation to be undertaken (in line with article 48 [3] of Council Regulation 1083/2006)
3. List of evaluations to be carried out in year in question
4. Scope of each evaluation
5. Main evaluation issues and questions
6. Evaluation timetable, including agreed deadlines for key deliverables (inception, interim, draft final and final reports)
7. Summary of main methodologies to be utilised
8. Other issues including composition of evaluation steering committee