

EVALUATION OF THE INDICATOR SYSTEM AS PART OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project "Evaluation of the Indicator System as part of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance" was implemented by the consortium of RegioPartner, s.r.o. and AQE advisors, a.s. in the period from December 2010, when the preliminary work began, to March 2011. The aim was to evaluate the indicator system used within the Operational Programme Technical Assistance, both as a unit and as individual monitoring indicators. The evaluation focused, primarily, on the mutual connection between the individual types of indicators and the OP TA objectives, on the evaluation of demands required in connection with the indicator system, its administration with regard to the implementation staff, applicants and recipients, and on the evaluation of its explanatory ability, explicitness, relevance, validity, sensitivity and the data availability of individual indicators. In order to determine the objectives, the evaluator used several evaluation methods; in particular data and document analysis, comparative analysis and semi-structured interviews with representatives of the recipients and subjects of the implementation structure. The database was formed using the IS MONIT7+ data provided by the contracting authority. During the implementation of the project the contractor was in contact with the contracting authority, and individual evaluation outputs were discussed by them.

1. Main general findings

Ø The coverage of OP TA objectives using monitoring indicators is limited

The OP TA indicator system was characterised by the evaluator as very sparse (in comparison with other operational programmes it includes the least indicators), which results, to a certain extent, from the general focus of the programme and its projects. The specific, pragmatic focus of the programme results in the fact that many indicators, which are suitable for most of the other operational programmes (production indicators), cannot be used. The small number of indicators also affects the ability to evaluate the progress achieved by the programme, the benefit of implemented projects and the delivery of targets. Furthermore, the evaluator also identified an unequal coverage of individual priority axes by the monitoring output and result indicators. In particular, the priority axes 1 and 4 were not covered sufficiently.

Recommendation: The evaluator recommends including new output and result indicators in the priority axes 1, 3. In particular, indicators which will allow coverage of activities for which the applicants have no suitable indicators at the moment and which will have a direct link to the determined objectives, both with regard to the priority axis and the operational programme.

Ø Unclear definitions of some indicators may cause problems with their showing

As part of evaluating the accuracy and clarity of indicator definitions, the evaluator has identified several problems, such as insufficient explanation of the indicators, issues with indicators showing in connection with training activities and salary projects, and non-reflection of projects focused on some "soft" activities. On the other hand, it is important to add that issues with definitions, that had occurred in practice, were removed after a short period of time.

Recommendation: The evaluator recommends including new indicators and broadening the definition of the indicators, so that the indicators can include the outputs and results of activities that have not been covered by the indicators so far (for example indicator 48.07.00 - Number of issued methodical and technical and information papers and documents). New definitions should be proposed in close cooperation with PO administrators, or the recipients.

2. Specific findings

Ø The validity of values is satisfactory apart from one impact indicator

The evaluation of the indicator system in terms of the construction of indicators and validity of their values showed a relatively high level of compactness of the indicators that are being fulfilled. One impact indicator, 48.27.00 – Rate of shortening the administrative procedure at administration of projects, was identified as problematic. The indicator showed not only an insufficient definition, but in particular its connection with some of the priority axes is indirect and very weak. It would be advisable to analyse these factors in detail; the first steps in this direction might be the activities of the National Coordination Authority, where the operational manuals of individual Managing Authorities have been evaluated and the delivery of selected deadlines within the project administration process have also been evaluated.

Ø Target values of monitoring indicators are undervalued

The set target values are undervalued for most of the indicators. They do not correspond either with the programme objectives, or with the current level of compliance, as some of the target values of some of the indicators are currently being exceeded several times. The fact, that some of the target values are set at the level of the priority axis and not at the level of intervention areas (in particular in terms of intervention area 3.2), represents a certain limitation for the evaluation of the adequacy of target values in terms of the programme objectives and target delivery. In view of the OP TA specifics, however, this set-up is sufficient, which is also confirmed by the findings of the panel of experts. What's more, important external influences were shown for the impact indicator 48.27.00 - Rate of shortening the administrative procedure at administration of projects. The difference in the set-up and implementation of the current programme period, compared to the past period, can be identified as the main external impact and it is used as the starting value for the indicator mentioned. The significant increase in the volume of available means, the increase in the number of operational programmes and the administered projects represent a higher burden on administrative capacities. In particular, some operational programmes are exposed to a high level of interest from applicants and there is an excess demand of envisaged projects, which leads to delays in the administration process. The fluctuating nature of the staff at

individual Managing Authorities represents a problem, as well as the changing implementation system, and the possibility of the OP TA contributing to the solution of this problem is still very restricted.

Ø The connection between monitoring indicators and selection criteria is insufficient

The monitoring indicators are reflected in the project selection process in the criterion "Does the project fulfil the monitoring indicators of the priority axis?" which ensures that projects, that do not fulfil the determined monitoring indicators, are not selected for support. However, the evaluator is missing assessment of the planned indicator values in relation to the project budget (i.e. the criterion of efficiency) and detection if the project states all indicators which are being actually fulfilled. However, the possibility to further develop the connection between the monitoring indicators and the selection criteria is, in view of the binary character of the selection criteria, quite restricted.