



Ministry Of Education of the SR
*Managing Authority for the Operational
Programme Education*



Annual Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programme Education for the Period January – December 2007

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INTRODUCTION

The Annual Report on the Implementation of the Operational Programme Education (the “OPE”) contains data on the implementation of the OPE achieved **on the level of priority axes** in the monitoring and financial indicators.

The Annual Report on the Implementation of the OPE (the “Annual Report”) is elaborated based on Article 67 of Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Annex XVIII of Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 and contains the information on:

1. progress in the OPE implementation;
2. financial implementation of the OPE;
3. distribution of allocated financial means according to individual categories defined by Annex II of Regulation EC 1828/2006;
4. progress in the quality and effectiveness of the OPE implementation;
5. measures for the provision of information about OPE and publicity;
6. problems and measures for their elimination;
7. the use of means released based on the financial corrections;
8. cases of distinct modifications to supported projects.

The information on the OPE management, which contains data from OPE monitoring related to calls for the submission of applications for non-returnable financial allowance, constitutes a section of the Annual Report.

The Report also contains information about OPE fulfillment allowance to the horizontal priorities defined in the National Strategic Referential Framework of the SR for 2007-2013.

All monitoring and program evaluation data in relation to the priority axis and measures are segmented according to the area of priority topic, form of financing, territorial area, sector categorization of economical activity and territorial location on the NUTS III level in compliance with the requirements defined in Annex II of Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006.

1. IDENTIFICATION

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME	Objective Convergence and Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment
	Territory of the SR
	2007-2013
	2007SK05UPO001
	Operational Programme Education
PROGRAM'S ANNUAL REPORT	2007
	June 4, 2008 (II Regular Session of the MC for the OPE)

2. OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

OPE Approval

The process of the OPE preparation and approval and the preparation of the implementation structures at the Managing Authority (the “MA”) and at the Intermediate Bodies under the Managing Authorities (the “IB/MA”) took place in the course of the monitored period from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007.

The Ministry of Education of the SR (the “MoEdu SR”) submitted the first draft of the Operational Programme Education for the interministerial comment procedure in May 2006 in connection with SR Government Resolution No. 457/2006 of May 17, 2006, which instructed the Minister of Education to elaborate the Operational Programme Education within the framework of the Objective Convergence and within the framework of the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment financed from the European Social Fund in cooperation with the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for the Roma Communities and submit it to the session of the Government of the SR by June 30, 2006.

Based on the results of the parliamentary elections which took place on June 17, 2006, a change in the governmental parties occurred and the new government of Robert Fico, the Prime Minister decided to modify the national Strategic Referential Framework of the SR for 2007-2013¹ (the “NSRF”) and the number of Operational Programmes². The change in the number of Operational Programmes was implemented based on SR Government Resolution No. 832 of October 8, 2006, to the Proposal for Updating the National Strategic Referential Framework of the Slovak Republic for 2007 – 2013.

On December 6, 2006 the Government of the SR approved the draft of the NSRF⁸ through SR Government Resolution No. 1005/2006 and the OPE draft through SR Government Resolution No. 1010/2006.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR was at the same time assigned to

- ensure the elaboration of internal procedure manuals (including detailed descriptions of assistance management and implementation from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund on the level of work positions for pertinent processes - audit trails) of Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies under the Managing Authority and the payment units and submit them to the Minister of Construction and Regional Development and the Minister of Finance by January 31, 2007;

¹ The National Strategic Referential Framework is a strategic document elaborated in compliance with new regulations of the European Union regarding the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund which allowed the Slovak Republic to use European Union Funds in the new program period 2007-2013. The NSRF was approved by SR Government Resolution No. 457/2006 of May 17, 2006.

² The original number of Operational Programmes approved by Government Resolution No.457/2006 was ten and the Ministry of Education was originally to be the Managing Authority for the OP Education and OP Infrastructure of Education.

⁸ The NSRF was approved by the EC on August 17, 2007.

- in connection with the program documents for the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the program period 2007 – 2013, to submit the state assistance scheme to the Minister by February 28, 2007
- and in connection with the program documents for the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for Objective Convergence and Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment ensure the elaboration of first draft of manuals for the translators of projects on the level of Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund management according to the methodological guidelines and to submit them to the Minister of Construction and Regional Development by February 28, 2007.

On February 23, 2007, based on the initiative of the European Commission representatives, unofficial negotiations between the representatives of the Managing Authorities for the Operational Programmes co-financed from the European Social Fund (the “ESF”) and the representatives of the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equality of Opportunities and the Directorate General Regional Policy took place.

The comments of the European Commission (the “EC”) representatives regarding the OPE were related especially to the mutual connection and continuation of individual sections of the text. The EC expressed dissatisfaction with the elaboration of the analytical and strategic section of the OPE and their connection to the proposed interventions. The selection of the assistance areas was insufficiently justified and the content of interventions was formulated only generally in the OPE. The EC requested the revision of the section related to the monitoring, evaluation and the indicator system, along with the consequent justification of the independent Priority Axis for the field of healthcare, clarification of the coordination of the Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities (the “MRC”) and a detailed justification of regional allocations, distribution of technical assistance and application of national projects in connection with the multi-target character of the Program. The EC had further reservations regarding the insufficient incorporation of the ex-ante evaluation results and experience from the program period 2004-2006 and the principles of partnership and equality of opportunities. The comments regarding complementariness and dividing lines with other Operational Programmes within the framework of the OPE and regarding the financial part as well constituted significant points of the program.

The implemented modifications in the OPE were related in particular to the completion of the OPE structure to ensure the logical subsequence and better comprehensiveness of the text. The missing information in terms of content was also supplied and the text was modified pursuant to the comments of the EC; the term “measure” was replaced by the expression “support area”.

Subsequently on March 5, 2007, the OPE was officially submitted through the SFC2007 System to the EC as it was modified based on the ex-ante evaluation results and the above mentioned comments of the EC. The Operational Programme education received the registration code CCI 2007SK05UPO001.

On March 8, 2007, the EC returned the OPE through the SFC2007 System due to shortcomings in the financial plan. Tables No. 34, 35 and 36 of the OPE Financial Plan for the entire program period were incorrectly elaborated. The tables related only to the OPE Financial Plan according to the Priority Axes and the financing resources for the Objective Convergence, the OPE Financial Plan according to the Priority Axes and financing resources for the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment and the OPE Financial Plan

according to the Priority Axes and financing resources together. After eliminating these shortcomings the OPE was re-sent to the EC through the SFC2007 on March 9, 2007.

On March 13, 2007 the EC confirmed by letter No. EMPL/B-2-EH-D (2007) 5133 that the OPE complied with the requirement of admissibility. The OPE draft was published on the internet page of the Ministry of Education in the section entitled, Structural Funds/Documents³.

On April 13, 2007, the OPE was officially returned by the European Commission for re-elaboration together with the EC position document. In order to facilitate the EC work and to accelerate further communication in the course of official negotiations, the English translation of the OPE into was prepared. The translation was sent to the EC on April 16, 2007.

After the ex-ante modification of the document on June 5, 2007, the official negotiations took place and on June 6, 2007 the technical consultation of the MA for the OPE representatives and the EC representatives regarding the submitted official comments took place. Based on the raised comments and negotiation outcomes, the OPE was completed in its final form.

The executed modifications of the OPE related to the use of the terms “measure”, “life-long education” and “further education”. Technical assistance was divided to regions of the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment and the Objective Convergence. The data in the analytical part of the OPE was updated according to the latest available data. The strategic section was revised with the goal of eliminating duplication and better addressing the issues identified in the analytical section through targeting of the intervention priority areas. Upon the EC’s request, the section related to the Priority Axis was supplemented by examples of actual activities and some framework activities were joined due to mutual overlapping. In connection with the negotiations regarding the NSRF, the sections pertaining to the horizontal priorities and some sections pertaining to complementariness were also updated. The modifications in the implementation section were related to the application of the state assistance schemes, data updating pursuant to the CCA guidelines and ensuring effective monitoring system through the design of a system of OPE indicators in particular.

After incorporating all comments, the text of the OPE was unofficially sent to the EC on July 4, 2007; on July 31, 2007 it was officially sent through SFC2007. Due to the failure to set the titles of the Priority Axes into the system, the EC returned the OPE draft for completion. The OPE draft was re-submitted to the EC. The comment procedure of the OPE within the framework of the EC took place from August 6, 2007 to September 7, 2007.

On September 10, 2007 the OPE was again returned for re-elaboration. The EC raised two technical comments related to the completion of references to relevant national and European regulations on public procurement and the completion of titles of individual priority Axes in the financial plan tables.

After the incorporation of the technical comments the text, the OPE was again sent to the EC on September 12, 2007 through SFC2007. The comment procedure regarding the OPE within the framework of the ESF Committee in Brussels took place until September 28, 2007. No comments were raised within the framework of the ESF Committee.

⁹ <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?rootId=162>

The approval procedure took place in the course of October 2007, and on November 7, 2007 the OPE was officially approved through European Commission Decision No. K(2007) 5476, through which the Operational Programme Education for Community Assistance from the European Social Fund within the Objective Convergence and the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment in the Slovak Republic was adopted.

Financial means from the European Social Fund in the overall amount of EUR 617,801,578 were approved for the implementation of the OPE. A total of EUR 600 million was allocated for the Objective Convergence and EUR 17,801,578 was allocated for the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment.

Subjects Involved in the OP Implementation

Pursuant to Article 59 (1a) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006 and based on SR Government Resolution No. 832 of October 8, 2006, the Ministry of Education of the SR⁴ is the Managing Authority for the OPE. The Ministry of Education also fulfills the role of the Payment Unit for the OPE. The Ministry of Health fulfills the role of the Payment Unit for Measure 2.2, Promotion of Further Education in Healthcare and for the aliquot part of Priority Axis 5, Technical Assistance for Objective Convergence based on SR Government Resolution No. 1010 of December 6, 2006

Pursuant to Article 59 (2) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006 and based on SR Government Resolution No. 1010 of December 6, 2006, the Agency of the Ministry of Education of the SR for EU Structural Funds and the Ministry of Health of the SR⁵ (only for Measure 2.2 related to the promotion of further education in healthcare and the aliquot part of Priority Axis 5, Technical Assistance for Objective Convergence) are the Intermediary Bodies under the Managing Authority for the OPE .

Agency of the Ministry of Education for the European Union Structural Funds

The Agency of the Ministry of Education for the European Union Structural Funds (the “Agency”) as the Intermediate Body under the Managing Authority was established with effect from January 1, 2007. The Agency is a state budget organization with legal subjectivity which is connected through its income and costs to the state budget through the Chapter of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

On November 30, 2007, the Authorization on the Delegation of Competencies from the Managing Authority to the Intermediate Body under the Managing Authority entered into validity and effect based on which the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic as the Managing Authority delegates competencies for implementing the Operational Programme Education to the Agency of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for the European Union Structural Funds as the Intermediate Body under the Managing Authority in

⁴ This role is fulfilled by the Department for Operational Programme Education of the European Affairs Division of the MoEdu SR, the Department for Legitimacy of the EU SF and the Department of Methodology, Technical Assistance and State Assistance and the Department of Economics for the EU SF.

⁵ The function of the IBMA is fulfilled by the Division of European Programs and Projects.

the area of demand-oriented projects⁶. Delegation within the framework of the Operational Programme Education is related to Priority Axis 1: Measure 1.1 and Measure 1.2; Priority Axis 2: Measure 2.1; Priority Axis 3: Measure 3.1 and Measure 3.2 and Priority Axis 4: Measure 4.1 and Measure 4.2. Implementation of demand-oriented projects will be carried out through calls for the submission of applications for non-returnable financial allowance.

The scope of delegated tasks for the Agency was constituted as follows:

- announcing calls for the submission of applications for non-returnable financial allowance (“NFA”);
- accepting and selection of applicant projects in compliance with the criteria for the evaluation and selection of projects approved by the Monitoring Committee;
- concluding of agreements on the provision of NFA with Recipients;
- verification of co-financing of projects from the resources of Recipients and other resources;
- verification of the supply of co-financed products and services and actually expended costs;
- maintaining the independent accounting system by the Recipients and other bodies involved in implementation;
- data collection and analysis on the level of projects and measures in the area of monitoring through the system of indicators;
- feeding the data on projects in the ITMS pursuant to CCA guidelines;
- accepting applications for payment from Recipients; and
- assessing the eligibility of claimed costs.

In 2007, the Agency targeted its activities on the preparation of internal practices of assistance implementation, preparation of administrative capacities, timetable of calls for the submission of applications for NFA for 2008 and the planning of strategies and activities in the field of information and publicity.

Ministry of Health of the SR

Pursuant to Article 59(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006 and based on SR Government Resolution No. 1010 of December 6, 2006, the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic was approved as the Intermediate Body under the Managing Authority for the Operational Programme Education (Measure 2.2: “Promotion of Further Education in Healthcare Sector”) and the payment unit for the OPE. The Ministry of Health of the SR also fulfills the task of the payment unit for Measure 2.2: Promotion of Further Education in Healthcare Sector and for the aliquot part of Priority Axis 5: Technical Assistance for Objective Convergence.

On December 12, 2007, the Ministry of Education of the SR as the MA for the OP Education and the Ministry of Health of the SR as the IB/MA for the OP Education, concluded the Authorization on Delegation Competencies. Delegation within the framework of the OP Education is related to Priority Axis 2, Measure 2.2: Promotion of Further Education in the

⁶ The overall responsibility of the Managing Authority for the management and implementation of the Operational Programme Education is not affected by the delegation of competencies to the Intermediate Body under the Managing Authority.

Healthcare Sector and the aliquot part of Priority Axis 5: Technical Assistance for the Objective Convergence.

The Scope of Delegated Tasks for the Ministry of Health will be constituted as follows:

- declaring calls for the submission of applications for NFA;
- accepting and selection of applicant projects in compliance with the criteria for the evaluation and selection of projects approved by the Monitoring Committee;
- concluding agreements on the provision of NFA with Recipients;
- verification of the co-financing of projects from the resources of Recipients and other resources;
- verification of the supply of co-financed products and services and actually expended costs;
- maintaining the independent accounting system by the Recipients and other bodies involved in implementation;
- data collection and analysis on level of projects and measures in area of monitoring through the system of indicators;
- entering the data on projects in the ITMS pursuant to CCA guidelines;
- accepting applications for payment from Recipients; and
- assessing the eligibility of claimed costs.

In 2007, the Ministry of Health targeted its activities on the preparation of documentation necessary for project implementing, defining the timetable of calls, filling the personal capacities and publicity within the framework of measure 2.2: Promotion of Further Education in the Healthcare Sector. The activities of the Agency and the MH SR in preparing individual documents are described in detail in the section dedicated to the preparation of managing documentation and publicity.

Within the framework of the cooperation of the MA and the IB/MA, working meetings of the MA and IB/MA - Agency representatives took place bi-weekly from May 2007. In July 2007 the representatives of the MH SR began to participate in these meetings. Current issues and problems are discussed at these meetings.

Based on SR Government Resolution No.832 of October 8, 2006, the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR (the “MCRD SR”) is the Central Coordination Authority (the “CCA”) for the Operational Programmes in the NSRF⁷.

Based on SR Government Resolution No. 832 of October 8, 2006, the Ministry of Finance of the SR (the “MF SR”) is the Certification Body⁸ for the Operational Programmes and at the same time the Audit Body⁹ for all Operational Programmes. The Division of Audit and Control of International Financial Resources of the MF SR ensured and fulfilled the following tasks in the course of the monitored period within the framework of the preparation of the program period 2007-2013:

- elaborated Practices for the Audit of Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund and the European Fisheries Fund for the Program Period 2007-2013, approved through SR Government Resolution No. 1035 of December 5, 2007;

⁷ The Division of Regional Development Strategy in specific terms.

⁸ Division of European and International Affairs.

⁹ Division of Audit and Control of International Financial Resources.

- elaborated the Annual Plan of Audit and Control Events of the International Financial Resources for 2008;

carried out preparatory work in connection with the performance of conformity audits pursuant to Article 71, Section 2 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Article 71, Section 2 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1198/2006 for bodies and organizations involved in the system of management, implementation and control of Structural Funds and the European Fisheries Fund in the program period 2007-2013 for the purpose of providing assurance to the European Commission on the conformity of the Managing and Control System with the valid requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Council Regulation (EC) No. 1198/2006.

2.1. Results and Progress Analysis

Preparation of Managing Documentation and Other Support Materials for OPE Implementation

Within the monitored period, the MA and IB/MA targeted its activities on the preparation of documentation necessary for Operational Programme implementation.

Internal Manual of Procedures

Based on SR Government Resolution No. 1005/2006 of December 6, 2006, the text of the Internal Manual of the Managing Authority for the OPE was processed and sent by January 31, 2007 (the designated deadline) to the MCRD SR and the MF SR. Based on SR Government Resolution No. 217/2007 of March 7, 2007, the Internal Manual was completed by April 30, 2007 and re-sent to the MCRD SR and the MF SR. Another version was updated according to the methodological guidelines of the CCA pursuant to SR Government Resolution No. 407/2007 of May 2, 2007 and re-sent to the MCRD SR and the MF SR on June 15, 2007. Subsequently the form of the Internal Manual was completed pursuant to the task from SR Government Resolution No. 763/2007 of September 12, 2007 in connection with the updated CCA guidelines and the shortcomings detected by the system audit and re-sent to the MCRD SR and the MF SR on October 15, 2007. On December 18, 2007, the draft of version 2.0 of the SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013 was sent to the MA for the comment procedure. The deadline for the submission of comments on the draft of the SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013 by the Managing Authorities was sent on January 7, 2008. The updated version 2.0 of the SF and CF Management System for the program Period 2007-2013 required additional modification of the Internal Manual¹⁰. A detailed description of the management and implementing assistance from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund on the level of work positions for the pertinent processes - the so called audit trail, constitutes part of the Internal Manual.

In April 2007 the Internal Manual of the Ministry of Health as the Intermediate Body under the Managing Authority was consulted with the Managing Authority and these comments were subsequently incorporated into it. Further modifications and completion followed pursuant to the KPMG Slovensko spol. s r.o. system audit of October 15, 2007¹¹.

¹⁰ The new version 2.0 of the system of SF and CF management for the program period 2007-2013, entered into validity on January 21, 2008. In connection with this, the Internal Manual was again updated on February 21, 2008.

¹¹ The IM IB/MA MH SR will be amended pursuant to the updating of version 2.0 of the System of SF and Cohesion Fund Management for the Program Period 2007-2013, valid and effective from January 21, 2008.

In the course of 2007, the Agency Internal Manual of Procedures was prepared in compliance with valid SR and EU legislation, the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013, the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund Financial Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013 and pertinent CCA guidelines, especially considering the CCA Guideline No. 4/2007 – Preparation of Internal Manuals of Procedures of the MA and the IB/MA.

Program Manual

Based on SR Government Resolution No. 832/2006 of October 8, 2006, the text of the Program Manual for the OPE was elaborated and sent to the MCRD SR and the MF SR by December 31, 2006, the designated deadline. The ex-ante version of the Program Manual was submitted on September 7, 2007 for the comments procedure to the members of the Working Group for the OPE. Their comments were incorporated and the modified version of the Program Manual was approved by the Ministry of Education of the SR in October 2007.

The MA for the OPE ensured the submission of the Program Manual for the first session of the Monitoring Committee for the OPE, which took place on November 14, 2007. At its first session, the Monitoring Committee noted the Program Manual. Thus the MA for the OPE fulfilled the task from SR Government Resolution No. 407/2007 of May 2, 2007: to elaborate the updated version of the Program Manual within 1 month of the approval of the OPE.

The Program Manual for the Operational Programme Education was updated according to CCA methodological guidelines and submitted to the Minister of Construction and Regional Development of the SR on December 7, 2007 and published on the internet page of the ME SR in the section entitled, Structural Funds/Documents.¹²

Manual for Applicants for NFA

The Manual for Applicants for NFA provides instructions on how to proceed correctly in the process of acquiring NFA and the basic information regarding the possibilities and methods of its acquiring.

Based on SR Government Resolution No. 146/2007 of February 21, 2007, the text of the manual for Applicants for NFA was elaborated and sent to the MCRD SR by April 30, 2007, the designated deadline. The updated Manual was sent on December 21, 2007 to the MCRD SR. Thus the MA for the OPE fulfilled the task from SR Government Resolution No. 407/2007 of May 2, 2007: to elaborate the updated version of the Manual within 2 months of the approval of the OPE.

On December 18, 2007, version 2.0 of the SF and CF Management System for the program Period 2007-2013 was submitted for the comments procedure to the Managing Authorities which ultimately required the modification of the Manual for Applicants. The deadline for the submission of comments on the draft of the SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013 from the party of Managing Authorities was set at January 7, 2008¹³.

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

¹² <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=957>

¹³ Version 2.0 of the new SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013 entered into validity on January 21, 2008. In connection to this, the methodological principles and standard procedures as finalized in version 2.0 were incorporated into the Manual for Applicants for NFA in the course of February.

In the monitored period, the MA for the OPE completed the draft of the evaluation and selection criteria for the OPE. The evaluation criteria are designated for expert project evaluators; the selection criteria constitute the guidelines for the members of the Selection Commission. The evaluation and selection criteria designated for the evaluation and selection of applications for NFA within the framework of the OPE were elaborated externally pursuant to CCA methodological guidelines and the MA guidelines for the OPE. The evaluation and selection criteria designated for the evaluation and selection of applications for NFA and the Manual for Evaluators, the draft of the detailed project description, the budget, and the application for NFA were subsequently sent to the IB/MA representatives on August 31, 2007. The final version was consulted with the IB/MA representatives in the course of September 2007. In October, the Evaluation and Selection Criteria were again modified due to the updating of the CCA guidelines. The MA for the OPE ensured submission of the evaluation and selection criteria for the first session of the Monitoring Committee for the OPE (the "MC for OPE"). The MC for OPE discussed the Evaluation Criteria for the OPE and the Selection Criteria for the OPE and approved them with comments on November 14, 2007. Thus the preparation of the evaluation and selection criteria was completed.

At the same time, the MA for the OPE, in cooperation with external workers and the IB/MA, elaborated the Manual for Evaluators designated for the evaluators involved in the expert evaluation of applications for NFA.

In the course of October, both IB/MA received the Statute and the Rules of Procedure of the Selection Commission of the MoEdu SR for the Approval of Applications for Non-returnable Financial Allowance for the comments procedure. As of December 31, 2007, the Statute and the Rules of Procedure of the Selection Commission of the MoEdu SR for the Approval of Applications for Non-returnable Financial Allowance had not been approved¹⁴.

On November 21, 2007, an advertisement for external evaluators of applications was placed in papers. The deadline for the submission of applications was set for January 31, 2008¹⁵.

Measurable Indicators on the Project Level

In order to monitor the implementation of the OPE in the Program Period 2007-2013 and to evaluate its performance towards the established goals, it was necessary to design a system of suitable indicators on the project level and to ensure data collection for the future ongoing and subsequent evaluations of the implemented projects. As a result, in the course of October 2007, the MA addressed both IB/MA with a request for cooperation in compiling measurable indicators on the project level, since it was required that these indicators be elaborated regarding each call, connected with the indicators of the Priority Axes and measures and cover all types of activities. The working group established for the purpose of designing the set of project indicators incorporated representatives of the MA, IB/MA and experts from other organizations within the competency of the MoEdu SR.

¹⁴ The establishment and activities of the Selection Commission of the Ministry of Education of the SR for the selection and approval of applications for NFA for the OP Education is regulated by the Order of the Minister No. 7/2008-I of February 15, 2008. The Statute and the Rules of Procedure of the Selection Committee of the Ministry of Education of the SR for the selection and approval of applications for NFA for the OP Education constitutes the annex to the Order.

¹⁵ [As of March 31, 2008, the database includes 202 external evaluators.](#)

The design of project indicators within Measure 2.2 was the result of the cooperation of the expert units of the IB/MA of the MH SR – Department of Healthcare Education, the Department of EU Programs, the Department of Project Assessment, the Department of Project Implementation and the Payment Unit of the MH SR in the period from June 2007 to November 2007. On November 29, 2007, the final version of the project indicators for Measure 2.2 within the framework of the OPE was sent to the Managing Authority. The output, outcome and impact indicators for each framework activity were defined within the framework of two specific objectives; one output, outcome and impact indicators for framework activities 2.2.1 and 2.2.3 each; two output, outcome and impact indicators for framework activity 2.2.5 and three output, outcome and impact indicators for framework activities 2.2.2 and 2.2.4 each¹⁶.

De Minimis Assistance Scheme

In connection with SR Government Resolution No. 407 of May 2, 2007, regarding the proposal for the modification of the draft of the National Strategic Referential Framework of the SR for 2007-2013 in connection with the comments of and negotiations with the EC, the Ministry of Education elaborated the schemes for the promotion of the development of modern education for the knowledge society (the de minimis assistance scheme). The above mentioned draft scheme was sent to the MF SR on December 6, 2007¹⁷.

Timetable of Direct Assignments and Calls

The MA, in cooperation with the IB/MA, also targeted its activities on defining the timetable of calls in the given period.

On September 17, 2007, the working meeting of the representatives of the MA, IB/MA – Agency, the expert divisions of the MoEdu SR, directly managed organizations of the MoEdu SR and the minister's advisors took place regarding the establishment of the priority topics for the demand-oriented and national projects which may be financed from the European Social Fund and regarding the preparation of the plan of calls for the submission of applications for NFA from the ESF for 2008. The goal was to present the priorities of individual expert units of the MoEdu SR and directly managed organizations of the MoEdu SR for 2008 in connection with the need to design the plan of calls for the submission of the applications for NFA from the ESF by the end of October 2007.

In connection with this working meeting, the preparation of the national projects topics was initiated. In October 2007, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR approved the framework-wide preparation of direct assignments for four national projects and the preparation of one call for demand-oriented projects. More detailed information on the targeting of individual national and demand-oriented projects are incorporated in part 3 of the Annual Report – Implementation according to Priority Axes.

¹⁶ In connection to issuance of the draft of the SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007-2013 the project indicators were re-modified again at the beginning of 2008.

¹⁷ On January 18, 2008 the MF SR sent under the registration No. DM - 1/2008 the commented scheme. Until March 26, 2008 the final comments procedure took place where the relevant persons of the MA and the IM/MA were addressed. In course of April the scheme will be sent to be published in the Commercial Gazette and within the five working days from the date of publishing in the Gazette it is necessary to announce the date of publishing of the scheme including its final version to the MF SR.

The national projects are implemented on the national level as education system reform implementation instruments. These are large, complex, system projects arising directly from legislation or conceptual documents. The national projects may be assigned through the so-called direct assignment of the Minister of Education of the SR to directly managed organizations of the MoEdu SR or institutions authorized by the MoEdu SR. The direct link to legislation constitutes the condition of the direct assignment. National projects may also be implemented through so called closed calls for the submission of applications for NFA where the circle of applicants is narrowed and the content of activities is precisely specified.

Considering the multi-target character¹⁸ of the OPE and the fact that the national projects cover the entire territory of Slovak Republic, the elaboration of two independent mirror projects is expected – 1 project for the Objective Convergence (covering the entire territory of the Slovakia except for the Bratislava Region) and the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment (covering the territory of the Bratislava Region). The size of the target group on which the national project is targeted (for example, according to the number of pedagogical employees of ES in the Objective Convergence regions and according to the number of pedagogical employees of ES in the Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment region) will be used as the key for the distribution of financial allocations within the framework of the national project financed as a mirror project – from both Objectives.

Pursuant to Article 22 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, the intransferability of resources between the both Objectives will be ensured as follows:

- the declaration of individual calls for the submission of applications for the provision of NFA declared separately for individual Priority Axes
- the submission of individual applications for NFA, including separate budgets
- the exclusive targeting of projects on target groups and the site of implementation eligible within the framework of the pertinent Objective
- the signing of agreements on the independent provision of NFA for both Objectives
- the drawing of financial means allocated exclusively from the pertinent Objective budget during the project implementation phase
- the monitoring of progress in implementation through annual reports and the final report on implementation on the level of Priority Axes which are structured in compliance with the EU goals;
- the targeting of the on-site control of the non-overlapping of financial resources between the Objectives in the course of project implementation;
- strengthening of the control for the correct use of financial means from the ESF allocated for each of the Objectives within the framework of competencies of the Monitoring Committee for OPE

Pursuant to the updated CCA guidelines¹⁹ and in connection with the obligation of the MA to send the CCA the approved timetable of calls for the designated calendar year not later than December 15th of the previous year, the MA requested that both IB/MA submit the timetable of calls for 2008 by November 15, 2007.

The preparation of the timetable of calls for Measure 2.2 of the OPE for 2008 took place in course of November and December 2007. On November 23, 2007, the 1st version of the

¹⁸ From the geographical aspect, the OP Education covers 2 objectives of the EU cohesion policy - Objective Convergence (the entire territory of the SR except for the Bratislava Region) and Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment (the territory of the Bratislava Region)

¹⁹ CCA Guideline No.6/2007, update No.1/2007 "Methodological Guidelines regarding the Application for the NFA Submission Process".

timetable of calls was sent to the MA. The final version was sent to the MA after the incorporation of comments on December 5, 2007.

On December 4, 2007 the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education of the SR approved the Planned Timetable of Calls for 2008 for the OPE. The timetable of calls was related to the calls declared by the MA and IBMA – the Agency. The timetable was sent by letter to the Minister of Construction and Regional Development of the SR. The indicative timetable of calls for 2008 was published on the internet pages of the MA and the IB/MA www.minedu.sk and www.asfeu.sk and on the internet portal www.nsrr.sk²⁰.

The preparation of the timetable of calls for Measure 2.2. OPE for 2008 took place in November and December 2007. On November 23, 2007, the first version of the timetable of calls was sent to the MA. A copy of the final version was sent to the MA after incorporating comments on December 5, 2007. The indicative timetable of calls for Measure 2.2 OPE was publicized on the MA and IBMA internet pages www.minedu.sk a www.health-sf.sk and at the internet portal www.nsrr.sk

Neither the call for the submission of applications for the NFA nor the direct assignment, nor closed call for the national projects were declared in the monitored period within the framework of the OPE.

In cooperation with the IB/MA, the MA prepared the list of call annexes to the OPE, the list of obligatory annexes to the application for the NFA and other requirements necessary for declaring the call for the submission of applications for the NFA or direct assignment (for example the control list for the control of formal correctness, affidavit form, CV, agreement of the affected person with the management, processing and preserving of personal data, detailed project description, project budget). The instructions for applicants regarding the completion of forms (detailed project description, project budget) were incorporated into the manual for Applicant at the same time.

2.2. Information Regarding Compliance with Community Legal Regulations

The validity of all Regulations for the field of SF and CF based on which the assistance was drawn from the EU in the period 2004-2006 expired for the new program period 2007 – 2013 and new Regulations determining the drawing of assistance for years 2007 – 2013 entered into validity. The OPE approved on November 7, 2007 was elaborated in compliance with the following Regulations and the NSRF.

The basic UC Regulation for the program period 2007-2013, based on which the OPE was elaborated:

- Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, which establishes the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund and through which Regulation (EC) No.1260/1999 is abrogated (the “General Regulation”);
- European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No.1081/2006 of July 5, 2006 on the European Social Fund and through which Regulation (EC) No.1784/1999 is abrogated;

²⁰ CCA information portal.

- Council Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of December 8, 2006, through which the execution rules of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 are established, through which the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund are established.
- Council Regulation (EC) No. 1605/2002 on fiscal regulation pertaining to the general budget of the European Communities;
- European Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2342/2002 establishing the detailed rules for implementing Council Regulation (EC) No. 1605/2002 on fiscal regulation pertaining to the general budget of the European Communities;
- Council Regulation (EC) No. 2185/96 on controls and on-the-spot inspections carried out by the European Commission for the purpose of the protection of the fiscal interests of the European Communities from embezzlement and other fraud;
- Council Decision No. 702/2006 of October 6, 2006 on strategic Community guidelines for cohesion.

The MoEdu SR, as the MA for the OPE, and the Agency and the MH SR, as the IB/MA, did not record any problems related to compliance with the Communities Regulations in implementing the OPE.

In connection with Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, through which the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund are established, and in compliance with the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund Management System for the Program Period 2007–2013 and in connection with the Authorization on the Delegation Competencies, the Agency and the MH SR, correspond on their level for OPE management effectiveness pursuant to EU regulations and institutional and financial systems of the SR.

In the event of any variance between the actual norm of the national law of the SR and the actual norm of the EC, Community law based on the application of the direct effect principle shall prevail.

2.3. Substantial Problems and Measures Adopted in Order to Overcome Them

2.3.1 Political Situation

Based on the result of the parliamentary elections which took place in the course of 2006, a change of political parties occurred and the new government decided to modify the NSRF and the number of Operational Programmes.

Through Point B.1 of Resolution No. 687/2006, the Minister of Construction and Regional Development was instructed to submit the updated version of the NSRF of the Slovak Republic for 2007 -2013 to the session of the Government by the August 31, 2006.

On December 6, 2006, the Government of the SR approved the proposal for updating the NSRF through Government Resolution No.1005/2006. The European Commission submitted its comments to the modified NSRF on February 27, 2007. In the course of May 2007, the MCRD SR, in cooperation with the Managing Authorities of the Operational Programmes and other involved subjects, incorporated the EC comments into the draft NSRF. The draft NSRF was re-elaborated pursuant to the proposals of the Commission of the MCRD SR and was unofficially sent to the EC on June 8, 2007 (additional parts were sent on June 13, 2007). The

EC sent its unofficial comments on the submitted working version of the document on June 15, 2007; the key comments related to issues connected with the Horizontal Priorities and the method of their implementing and the content of some Operational Programmes. On June 29, 2007, the MCRD SR officially submitted the re-elaborated Draft of the NSRF to the European Commission through the SFC 2007 information system. In the course of July the document underwent the process of internal assessment by the EC Directorates General. In August, the EC announced that the assessment was considered to be complete. The NSRF was approved by the European Commission on August 17, 2007.

The change of the political situation in the course of 2006 prolonged the entire preparation and approval process of not only the NSRF²¹, but especially the OPE²².

2.3.2. System Audit of the Preparedness of Subjects Involved in the EU Funds Implementing System for the Program Period 2007 -2013

Through Government Resolution No.1005 of December 6, 2006, the Minister of Finance of the SR was assigned the task of ensuring the execution of the external system audit on all MA, IBMA, CA, PU, OA levels and units cooperating with the audit body in connection with their preparedness for the management, implementing and audit of Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the program period 2007 – 2013. This consisted of three phases: the status assessment and recommendation for shortcomings elimination (Phase I); the provision of active assistance and consulting services in the elimination of shortcomings (Phase II); and the final assessment of the preparedness of the SR for the drawing of Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund (Phase III).

Deadlines for individual phases were set up as follows:

Phase I by April 30, 2007;

Phase II by June 30, 2007; and

Phase III by August 31, 2007.

Furthermore, task B.13 was assigned through SR Government Resolution No. 1005/2006, which instructs the Minister of Finance of the SR in cooperation with the Minister of Construction and Regional Development of the SR to coordinate the elimination of the shortcomings identified by the system audit in connection with the preparedness for the management, implementation and audit of Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the program period 2007–2013 by June 30, 2007.

The deadlines for individual phases of the system audit were modified through Government Resolution No. 407 of May 2, 2007 as follows:

Phase I by August 15, 2007;

Phase II by October 15, 2007; and

Phase III by December 15, 2007

In connection with the modifications in dates, the deadline for the elimination of shortcomings identified by the system audit as also moved to October 15, 2007.

²¹ The original National Strategic Referential Framework of the Slovak Republic for 2007 – 2013 was approved through Governmental Resolution No. 457/2006 of May 17, 2006.

²² More detailed information regarding the OPE approval process is included in part 2 of the Annual Report – the OPE Implementation Overview.

The system audit of preparedness of subjects involved into the EU Funds implementation system for the program period 2007-2013 (the “System Audit”) was carried out by KPMG Slovensko spol. s r.o. (“KPMG”) based on the agreement on the provision of services for the execution of the first and the third phases of the System Audit in the period June 15 – August 15, 2007. The System Audit for the OPE was carried out at the Managing Authority (MoEdu SR), two Intermediary Bodies under the Managing Authority (Agency and the MH SR) and two Payment Units (MoEdu SR and MH SR).

The System Audit was carried out in three phases:

Phase I – execution of the System Audit on the level of all organization units of institutions and organizations which will be involved in the management and control, implementing and audit of the SF and CF in the program period 2007-2013 and the elaboration of the report on audit outcomes with recommendations for rectification of identified shortcomings. Phase I was divided into Sub-phases 1A and 1B due to the gradual elaboration of CCA guidelines.

Phase II – elimination of identified shortcomings

Phase III – execution of the follow-up verification of the elimination of identified shortcomings in the form of a follow-up audit.

The Internal Manuals constituted the material for the performance of System Audit. On June 15, 2007, the Internal Manuals for MA OPE, for the IB/MA OPE – Agency and for the PU OPE were submitted to KPMG. The MH SR, as the IB/MA OPE, submitted its Internal Manual on June 18, 2007 together with the Internal Manual of the PU MH SR.

Based on the assessment of the individual audit areas, the ex-ante findings were elaborated and were subsequently discussed at meetings with the participation of the representative of the MF SR as an observer. The draft findings were elaborated after incorporating the comments.

The key findings related to the following areas:

- clear defining of positions, competencies and responsibility;
- project selection, tender and contractual procedures;
- system of selection and requirements for the project evaluators;
- announcing calls;
- provision of the verification of the correctness and eligibility of costs within the framework of the OP;
- monitoring and evaluation of the assistance effectiveness;
- provision of information and publicity;
- financial management;
- audit trails;
- status of information systems;
- existence of managing acts; and
- existence of internal manuals.

At the same time it was stated that as of June 15, 2007, when the Internal Manuals were submitted for audit, not all annexes to CCA guidelines had been issued. As a result, the conformity of the management and control system of audited subjects with CCA requirements for setting up the managing and control system (the “MCS”) could not be assessed.

The report for Sub-phase 1B was submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education on August 27, 2007. Based on the assessment of the management and control system areas, the area of information systems and the area of the selection of the project

evaluators, KPMG issued a negative evaluation of the MA OPE, IB/MA OPE – Agency and IB/MA OPE – MH SR. A conditional evaluation was awarded to the PU MoEdu SR and PU MH SR.

Within the framework of Phase II, the Report of the Status of Preparedness of the Slovak Republic for the Drawing of Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the Program Period 2007 – 2013 (as of August 15, 2007) was approved through SR Government Resolution No.763 of September 12, 2007.

At the same time, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR was assigned task B.3: to ensure the completion of the Internal Manuals of procedures (including a detailed description of the management and implementation of assistance from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund on the level of job positions for pertinent processes – audit trails) of Managing Authorities, Intermediary Bodies under the Managing Authority, Payment Units and coordinators of Horizontal Priorities in connection with elaborated and updated Central Coordination Authority guidelines and shortcomings identified by the System Audit and submit them to the Minister of Construction and Regional Development and the Minister of Finance by October 15, 2007.

The shortcomings identified in Phase I of the System Audit were eliminated in Phase II.

The beginning of Phase III of the System Audit was set for October 15, 2007. The performance of the audit again began with the receipt of the internal manuals. On October 16, 2007, the modified Internal Manuals for the MA OPE, IB/MA OPE – Agency, IB/MA OPE – MH SR, PU MoEdu SR, PU MH SR were submitted.

The conclusions of Phase III of the System Audit regarding the management and control system of individual bodies included the following findings:

The Management and Control System introduced by the MA for the OPE failed to comply with the valid requirements of Articles 58 up to 62 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Section 3 of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006. This negative opinion is based on the assessment of the following areas:

- a) the de minimis assistance scheme had not been submitted to the MF SR;
- b) the Communication Plan had not been approved;
- c) the Manual for Applicants had not been approved;
- d) the Manual for Evaluators had not been elaborated, the principles of the elaboration and approval of the evaluation criteria had not been incorporated;
- e) the form of the Agreement on the Provision of NFA had not been designed;
- f) the procedure for the selection of the on-the-spot verification operations sample had not been elaborated; and
- g) the ITMS had been incompletely set in the audit trail.

Discrepancies were also recorded in the case of the IBMA - Agency – in the following areas:

- a) the risk analysis methodology for demand projects had not been elaborated;
- b) the evaluation sheet for the expert evaluation of Applications for NFA with the elaboration of individual criteria groups into partial sub-criteria classifying the importance and maximum point values had not been designed;
- c) the form of the Agreement for the Provision of NFA had not been designed;
- d) the ITMS had been incompletely set in the audit trail;

- e) the processes pertaining to the ITMS II information system, especially the awarding of access rights and the changing of access rights on the level of job positions and used documents had not been incorporated in the IM IB/MA; and
- f) the access rights for employees of the IB/MA to the ITMS had not been established.

In the case of the IBMA – MH SR – the discrepancy with the requirements of Articles 58 up to 62 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Section 3 of Commission Order (EC) No. 1828/2006 was identified in the following areas:

- a) the form of the Agreement for the Provision of NFA had not been sufficiently designed; and
- b) the evaluation sheet for the expert evaluation of Applications for NFA with the elaboration of individual criteria groups into partial sub-criteria classifying the importance and maximum point values had not been designed.

In the case of the Payment Unit for OPE – MoEdu SR, KPMG Slovensko spol. s r. o. stated that the managing and control system introduced by the Payment Unit was in compliance with the valid requirements of Articles 58 up to 62 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Section 3 of Commission Order (EC) No. 1828/2006.

In the case of the Payment Unit for OPE – MH SR – KPMG stated that the managing and control system introduced by the Payment Unit was in compliance with the valid requirements of Articles 58 up to 62 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Section 3 of Commission Order (EC) No. 1828/2006, with the exception of the area of the provision substitutability of job positions at the PU.

The form of the Agreement for NFA which was to be issued by the CCA as the annex to guideline No 12 constituted the common finding for the MA and IB/MA. The issuance of the form of the Agreement for NFA occurred only on December 18, 2007²³, i.e. after the completion of Phase III of the System Audit²⁴.

2.3.3 Administrative Capacities

The experience from the program period 2004 – 2006 indicated the need to strengthen the administrative capacities of bodies implementing assistance from the EU Structural Funds. Insufficient personal backup of Managing Authorities and Intermediary Bodies in the program period 2004 – 2006 caused many problems, such as late payments to final recipients/assistance recipients (according to the Administrative Capacities Analysis for the

²³ On February 13, 2008 a bilateral meeting of the CCA and the MoEdu SR took place on the premises of the MoEdu SR; the subject matter of the meeting was constituted by the discussion of comments regarding the form of agreement for NFA.

²⁴ The Report for Phase III of the System Audit was submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR on January 4, 2008. KPMG issued a negative evaluation of the MA of the OP Education. A conditional conclusion was issued for the IB/MA OP Education – Agency, the conditional conclusion was issued for the IB/MA OP Education - MH SR and PU MH SR and an unconditioned conclusion was issued for the PU MoEdu SR. Individual findings will be re-evaluated in connection with the updating of the SF and CF Management System and Internal Manuals in the progress of the system audit.

The Managing Authority was at the same time informed by the Minister of Finance that a negative or conditional finding itself does not prevent the launching of the implementation process. The declaring of calls is fully within the MA competency. The real status of the elimination of findings from the system audit and compliance with the existing EC and SR legal regulations for which the MA is liable constitutes the decisive status for the assessment of preparedness. The compliance audit will be carried out in the course of 2008 after the submission of the descriptions of the management and control systems.

program period 2007 – 2013 some payments were delayed by 6 to 9 months), which also negatively influenced the quality of the implemented projects themselves. It is also necessary to mention the turnover rate of employees which also caused significant problems in the project implementation. The most frequent causes of turnover included the insufficient financial motivation of employees in relation to the high workload, long overtime work, diversity of tasks which required detailed knowledge of a wide range of regulations and guidelines, etc.

Another factor significantly affecting the strengthening personal capacities of these bodies in case of the MoEdu SR was the overlapping of the program period 2004 – 2006 with the program period 2007 – 2013. Since according to assumptions, the administrative capacities of the Ministry of Education of the SR were fully engaged by the implementing projects from the program period 2004 – 2006, it was necessary to increase the number of employees to simultaneously carry out activities connected with the preparation of the new program period. Nevertheless, other factors should be mentioned. For example, the allocated financial EU means in new period constituted approximately 7 times the overall allocation of the EU financial means in the accelerated period 2004 – 2006 (or 3 times the average annual volume of the allocated EU means in the accelerated period). Through SR Government Resolution No. 217 of March 7, 2007, the Government of the Slovak Republic instructed the individual involved ministries to ensure the preparedness of the administrative and organizational structures of MA, IB/MA, CA, PU and OA for implementation of the **Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund in the program period 2007–2013 by June 30, 2007.**

Ministry of Education of the SR

It was also necessary to adjust the status of administrative capacities to the overlapping of the program periods 2004 – 2006 and 2007 – 2013 at the MoEdu SR. According to the Administrative Capacities Analysis for the program Period 2007 – 2013 which was discussed by the Government of the SR on May 2, 2007 (the “Analysis”) the MoEdu SR has the absolutely highest number of small projects in comparison with other ministries (within the framework of the program period 2004 – 2006, the MoEdu SR concluded more than 760 agreements on the provision of non-returnable financial allowance with the final recipients/recipients of assistance). According to the given report, in May 2007, on average, one manager was responsible for the cost management administration of 50 projects in implementation (and it is necessary to emphasize that the number of applications does not equal the number of applications for payment – one project can involve even 12 applications for payment every year) and on average, one monitoring manager was responsible for the administration of 60 projects/agreements. According to the Analysis, the overall requirements for the increased number of employees within the framework of the MoEdu of the SR who deal with activities connected with the implementation of OPE and OPR&D (the 2007 – 2013 program period) and the course of the implementation of SOP HR and SPD Objective 3 (the 2004 – 2006 program period) constituted 50 employees and 14 employees for the area of control and audit (however it is necessary to state that even this increase can not be considered as sufficient). The administrative capacities for the management and implementation of EU Structural Funds were increased by 284 positions to a total number of 347 positions for the MoEdu SR (including the Agency) through SR Government Resolution No. 396 of May 2, 2007.

The MoEdu of the SR adapted to the new needs throughout 2007 and in the course of this year it essentially modified the organizational structure of units implementing assistance from the EU Structural Funds. From the aspect of the OPE, the most distinctive modifications took place through Minister’s Order No. 66/2006-I of December 18, 2006, through which the

Division of European Integration was abolished with effect from January 1, 2007 and the Division of European Affairs was established at the same time. The number of employees and other modifications to the organizational structure were more distinctly modified through Minister's Orders No. 23/2007-I of April 12, 2007, when another 10 civil servant positions for the department for the OPE were approved (by the end of 2007, a total of 18 of 25 established positions were filled within the framework of the Department for OPE) and the positions in the Department of Economics for the EU Structural Funds were increased. Through Minister's Order No.33/2007-I of June 27, 2007, the Department of Economics for EU Structural Funds with 78 civil servant positions was abolished and the independent Division of Economics for EU Structural Funds with 79 civil servant positions was established (of which 54 positions belonged to the Department for the Eligibility of Costs of EU Structural Funds and 22 positions belonged to the Department for Financing of the EU Structural Funds). The Department of Methodology, Technical Assistance, State Assistance and Reporting with 6 civil servant positions was established in the Division of Economics for EU Structural Funds with effect as of November 1, 2007. The following table depicts the staffing within the framework of the OPE at the MoEdu SR in 2007:

Status as of December 31, 2007

MoEdu SR	Body within Management of Assistance from Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund	Unit	Administrative Capacity		
			Number of Created Positions as of the End of the Quarter: December 31, 2007	Number of Filled Positions as of the end of the Quarter: December 31, 2007	Of which Number of Filled Positions for OPE as of end of the Quarter: December 31, 2007
	MA	Department for Operational Programme Education, DEA	25	18	18
		Department of Eligibility of Costs of EU Structural Funds, EDEUSF	49	47	7
		Department of Methodology, Technical Assistance, State Assistance and Reporting, EDEUSF	6	4	4
	DG DEA	Division of European Affairs (DEA)	1	1	1
	Secretariat of the DG DEA	Division of European Affairs	4	3	3
	DG EDEUSF	Economics Division for EU Structural Funds (EDEUSF)	1	1	1
	Secretariat of the DG of the EDEUSF	Economics Division for EU Structural Funds	3	2	0
	PU for SF	Department for Financing EU Structural Funds, EDEUSF	21	20	4

	Follow-up Financial Control	Department of Follow-up Financial Control of EU Means, CD	12	6	1
	MA CD	Control Department (CD)	1	1	1
	Internal Audit	Internal Audit Department	4	1	0
Total			127	104	40

The above mentioned employees may simultaneously participate in the Sector Operational Programme Human Resources and the Unified Program Document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 and OPE (or OP Research and Development), and the percent ratios of the work of employees on individual Operational Programmes/Program Documents are established pursuant to Rule No. 11, EC Regulation No. 448/2004.

Agency of the MoEdu SR for EU Structural Funds

The Agency provided for all activities connected with the OPE implementation in the course of 2007 from its own staff resources. Within the framework of administrative capacities, as of December 31, 2007, the Agency employed 49 employees of which a total of 22 were involved in implementing the OPE.

The administrative capacities were covered in as follows:

1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter
3	3	1	15

Individual positions were filled in connection with the needs of the assistance implementation process. By 2009, the Agency should have a total of 100 employees involved in the Operational Programme Education.

Ministry of Health of the SR

The increase of the civil servant positions for the MH SR by 35 positions was approved through SR Government Resolution No. 839/2006; at the same time the Government of the SR instructed the Minister of Finance of the SR to ensure sufficient financial means for the resort of the Ministry of Health of the SR for approved civil servant positions necessary for implementing the Operational Programme Healthcare. On December 6, 2006, in connection with SR Government Resolution No. 1010/2006, the MH SR was approved as the IB/MA for the OPE, Measure 2.2. Within the framework of the 35 positions approved through SR Government Resolution No. 839/2006, the capacities for the management of Measure 2.2 within the framework of the OPE were not considered. It is anticipated that the implementation of Measure 2.2 within the framework of the OPE will be administratively more demanding due to the large number of small budget projects. As a result, it became clear that it would be necessary to increase the number of positions at the MH SR framework 35 to 65.

In compliance with the requirement of the MCRD SR, the MH SR carried out an assessment of the administrative capacities of the departments involved in implementing EU Structural Funds and the control systems for programming and implementation based on the real need of the resort. As mentioned above, the need for the provision of sufficient administrative

capacities of the MH SR in the area of drawing assistance from EC Funds arose especially due to the responsibility of the Ministry for the fulfillment of the tasks of the MA for the Operational Programme Healthcare and the IB/MA for the OPE. Considering the scope of activities of the MA and IB/MA, it was impossible to ensure the continuous implementation of Structural Funds within the framework of responsible units – Department of EU Programs, Project Assessment Department, Project Implementation Department, Payment Unit, Resort Control and Internal Audit Department from the medium-term and long-term aspect within the framework of existing administrative capacities.

On January 15, 2007, new organization structures were created at the Ministry of Health of the SR for the management and implementing of Structural Funds for the program period 2007 – 2013. In the course of 2007, employees for the IB/MA and the Payment Unit of the Ministry of Health of the SR with the job description including the fulfillment of tasks within the framework of the Measure 2.2 OPE were hired. (See the table below):

UNIT	NUMBER OF POSITIONS		
	Status as of March 2007 for OPE	Status as of December 31, 2007 for OPE	Required Number for OPE 2007 -2008
Department of Project Assessment (DPA)	1	4	6
Department of Project Implementation (DPI)	2	6	8
Department of the EU Programs (DEUP)	3	5	7
Payment Unit (PU)	0	4	7

2.3.4 Problems with the IT Monitoring System

Data collection for monitoring purposes is carried out by the MA and IB/MA employees in the electronic system entitled “IT Monitoring System for Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund” (the “ITMS”). The task of this system is to ensure the recording of data on Operational Programmes, projects, verifications and audits for the purpose of the effective and transparent monitoring of all processes connected with the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund implementation. The system underwent the testing regime in the course of 2007, in which the testing operation of ITMS II (1st and 2nd version) and the testing of individual functions took place.

The MA identified several problem areas in the initiation of the OPE which required solutions with the cooperation with the CCA. They related to the late access award for the ITMS resort administrator, incomplete the defining of the administrator’s rights for the ITMS resort administrator, the incorrect defining of involved bodies in the program structure within the framework of ITMS II and the related incorrect defining of the roles of the bodies, incorrect classification of users within individual bodies, the lack of a structure of users’ roles of the body for the program period 2007 – 2013 and the problematic setting of processes within the framework of implementation on the project level in connection with the modification to the system of Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund management for the program period 2007 –

2013. The problems were eliminated on an ongoing basis in close cooperation with the resort of administrators and responsible employees of the Central Coordination Authority.

2.4. Modifications in the OPE Implementation Context

2.4.1 Preparation of New Concepts, Legislative Changes and their Connection to the National Reform Program of the SR

Based on the bilateral negotiations of the European Commission and the Slovak Republic on July 12, 2007, the European Commission concluded that Slovakia had made progress in the implementing of its national program of reforms. In the area of education, progress in the reform of university education together with new measures for the promotion of the use of information and communication technologies and the integration of disadvantaged children into the education system were cited as the strong points of the reform process.

At the same time the European Commission recommended that in the area of education Slovakia do the following:

- direct more resources into research and development, innovation and education;
- adopt a life-long education strategy focused on labor market needs and helping to develop qualifications and skills,
- reform the elementary and secondary school system and thus complementing the university education reform.

In order to fulfill these goals it was necessary to adopt a number of conceptual and legislative documents in the course of 2007. Through SR Government Resolution No. 489 of June 6, 2007, the ***draft Concept of the Two-Level Model of Education Programs in the Field of Technical Education and Preparation in the Slovak Republic*** was approved. Other concepts, resolutions and materials were subsequently adopted by the Government in the course of 2007.

Through its Resolution No. 767/2007 of September 12, 2007, the Government of the SR approved the ***Draft Concept of Teaching Foreign Languages at Elementary and Secondary Schools***.

The amendment of the Act on Colleges/Universities, whose goal is to contribute to the effective operation of the university education system in compliance with the Bologna Process documents and the needs of the practice, entered into effect on September 1, 2007. At the same time it regulates the operation of foreign and private universities/colleges through which it ensures that only accredited colleges/universities will operate on the territory of Slovakia; the EU Regulation pertaining to refugees and third countries students is also implemented in this Act. It promotes the possibilities for the introduction of new support programs of education in the university system through a system of scholarships, tax relief, modification of wage terms and the motivation and promotion of universities/colleges to introduce specific modules especially related to small and middle-sized business.

In a knowledge society citizens must continuously renew, complement and broaden their knowledge, competencies and skill. Slovakia ***lacks an established comprehensive legislative framework for life-long education*** which would regulate the implementing of informal education and acknowledging of its results and the results of non-institutional education in relation to the existing legal norms regulating formal education. This issue will be resolved through the elaboration and adoption of the ***Act on life-long education***. The main goal of the Bill on life-long education, whose preparation took place in the course of 2007, is to establish the prequalifications for ensuring the operation of informal education as a part of life-long

education and to regulate basic social relationships among formal, informal and non-institutional education to raise the quality of provided informal education and to acknowledge the education leading to achieving partial or complete qualifications. The adoption of Act is expected in the course of 2008.

The Government of the SR approved ***the Strategy of Life-Long Education of Life-Long Counseling*** through SR Government Resolution No. 382/2007 of April 25, 2007. The baseline materials of the draft strategy are constituted by European and national strategic and conceptual materials targeted on issues of human capital development as the driving force for the development of the entire society. They include materials of the European Commission from 2000, the Memorandum of Life-Long Education, the Concept of Life-Long Education in the SR adopted by the Government of the SR in 2004, the Strategy of Competitiveness of Slovakia until 2010, the Minerva Governmental Program of Knowledge Economy Development and other relevant European and national strategic and conceptual materials targeted among others on the area of human resource development as a basic prequalification for the development of the entire society.

In order to ensure the goals in the education policy, attention must also be paid to the improvement of teacher training and flexibility, considering the constant changes in the needs of education. Since these changes are dynamic, teacher education must be broadened and developed. After expert discussions, the Government of the SR approved ***the draft Concept of the Professional Development of Teachers in the Career System*** (SR Government Resolution No. 367/2007 of April 18, 2007). The draft concept is built on the principles of the professional development of the teacher and the quality of the school. It anticipates the introduction of a career system as a set of rules necessary for the classification of teachers into career levels and positions.

Integration of children at risk and marginalized groups into the standard school environment also constitutes a significant area of education. Attention to the field of the content of education, material backup and implementation in practice is being paid to children from socially disadvantaged groups, especially children from the Roma environment and students with disabilities. In course of 2007, ***the innovation of the concept of integrated education of Roma children and youth***, which was approved through the Resolution No. 498/2004, including the development of secondary and college/university education, was prepared for approval. Its approval is expected in the course of 2008.

In the interest of optimizing the school integration of students with special upbringing-education needs, the ***Concept of Special Pedagogical Counseling*** was approved through SR Government Resolution No. 282 of March 21, 2007, which constitutes an innovation of the Concept of Special Pedagogical Counseling from 1998 and 2000 and supplements it by other matters arising from the requirements of practice. Its goal is to improve the quality of the process of school integration of students with special upbringing education needs. It represents a comprehensive special pedagogical approach to children with every kind and level of disability from their birth until the completion of their preparation for work. It allows for more effective activities of special pedagogical counseling facilities and their connection with common and special schools.

Due to the fact that no calls were announced for the submission of applications for non-returnable financial allowance in the monitored period, no process mistakes were recorded and it was not necessary to propose new steps in the preparation, evaluation and selection of projects or to implement modifications in the monitoring system, data collection and announcement of calls.

2.5. Substantial Modifications Pursuant to Article 57 Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 (If Relevant)

No cases were identified in the monitored period in which substantial modifications would be implemented pursuant to Article 57 of General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006.

2.6. Complementariness with Other Instruments

2.6.1 Cross Financing

Pursuant to Article 34 (2) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, the financing of all actions belonging to the scope of the competency of assistance from the European Regional Development Fund (the “ERDF”) is submitted within the framework of all Priority Axes of the OPE in a supplementary manner and with a limitation of 10% of Community means per each OPE Priority Axis. The percent definition of the amount of cross co-financing per project will be given in the call or direct assignment.

Use of cross financing within the framework of OPE anticipates a capital outlay which is not eligible from the ESF (especially those whose recipients may not apply in the form of a write-off).

Within the framework of cross financing it will be possible to finance the purchase of computing technology, audio-video technology, furniture, machinery and equipment for technical practice at schools and aids for persons with special education needs.

Due to the fact that that no implementation of individual Priority Axes occurred within the monitored period, it is impossible to evaluate the use of cross financing.

2.6.2 Coordination between Assistance from the Funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Fisheries Fund, Interventions of the European Investment Bank and Other Existing Financial Instruments.

Pursuant to Article 9 (4) of Council Regulation (EC) No.1083/2006, which anticipates the coordination between the assistance from the funds, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (the “EAFRD”), the European Fisheries Fund (the “EFF”), investments from the European Investment Bank (the “EIB”) and other existing financial instruments, the OPE will be in an implementation process that is complementary with the Rural Development Program SR 2007-2013 and OP Fisheries.

Priority Axis 2 and Priority Axis 4 OPE are complementary with Axis 1 – Enhancement of the Competitiveness of Agriculture and Forest Management and Axis 3 – Quality of Life in Rural Areas and Diversification of Rural Economy within the framework of the Rural Development Program 2007-2013.

The common goal pursued by the OPE and the Rural Development Program SR 2007-2013 is to strengthen the competitiveness of the SR and the growth of employment through the development of competencies, capacities and skills that will enable the labour force to flexibly react to new requirements of the labour market required by the knowledge society, especially in compliance with the development of high added value production and the application of new technologies (including the ICT).

Both strategic documents strive to solve the common universal issues of the SR in the area of human resources, such as low labour force qualifications, insufficient expertise and

information levels, insufficient speed of innovations and shortage of capital and financial means to retain qualified experts. Multifunctional education and the informing of subjects complementarily affects with the economic growth, improvement of social conditions and quality of life of the rural population.

Priority Axis 2 and Priority Axis 4 OPE are complementary with Axis 2 – Aquaculture, processing and introducing the fisheries and aquaculture products to the market within the framework of OP Fisheries. The promotion of education activities in Axis 2 within the framework of OP Fisheries represents supplementary education for recipients in the affected measures or improvement of the use of new knowledge and transfer of outcomes from research into practice and strictly includes only matters in the field of fisheries.

Due to the fact that no implementation of individual Priority Axes occurred within the monitored period, it is impossible to evaluate the coordination between the assistance from the Funds, EAFRD, EFF and the EIB interventions.

2.7. Monitoring Mechanisms

2.7.1 Monitoring System

Monitoring constitutes the basic instrument for ensuring the effective set-up and subsequent implementation of the OPE and projects implemented within the framework of this program. Monitoring provides for data collection and submits the summary information on the current status of the implementation process. The monitoring mechanisms were designed pursuant to the System of the SF and CF management for the program period 2007 – 2013. Monitoring and data collection on the level of priority Axes, Measures and projects will be carried out by the MA. The IB/MA will carry out the monitoring and data collection on the levels of projects and measures.

Pursuant to Article 66 of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, the MA is responsible for the effectiveness and correction of the management of assistance implementation, and especially for the introduction of a system of reliable financial and statistical information on implementing assistance for monitoring indicators and for forwarding this data in compliance with mechanisms agreed upon between member countries and the Commission as established by Article 103 Section 3 of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006. The final responsibility for OPE monitoring lies with the Managing Authority for the OPE, specifically, the OPE Department of the Division for European Affairs of the MoEdu SR. The MA is responsible for correct, effective, systematic and prompt monitoring. These outputs provide inputs for the MA for decision making for the purpose of improving the implementation of the OPE, elaboration of annual reports and the final report on the implementation of the OPE and the materials for the decision making of the monitoring committees (for example in connection with a possible revision of the OPE).

The monitoring process is based on the structured management model on the level of the NSRF, OPE and on the project level. Monitoring and evaluation are provided by all the subjects involved in the management of the SF and CF in the scope of defined tasks and responsibility and the subjects drawing financial means from the funds.

In elaborating the indicators, the MA worked with the methodology and list of the examples of indicators issued in the European Commission Manual related to the selection of suitable indicators for the evaluation of achieved outcomes of the programs financed from the SF (Working Document 2) for the program period 2007 – 2013. The categorization of the assistance areas is in compliance with Article 9 of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006 and Annex II of Council Implementation Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of December 8, 2006.

Submission of Semi-Annual Monitoring Reports and Materials for Annual and Final Reports on the Implementation of the Operational Programme for the MA by the IB/MA.

Pursuant to Article 67 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, the Managing Authority is obliged to annually submit an annual report to the EC not later than June 30 of the calendar year for the previous calendar year. The MA is obliged to submit the final report on the OPE implementation to the Commission not later than May 31, 2017. The MA is responsible for the collection and aggregation of necessary data and information on the project level, Measure level and Priority Axis level and for their submission to the MC for the OPE and subsequently to the EC in the form of an annual and final report for the OPE.

The IB/MA elaborates and submits to the MA²⁵ the Semi-annual Monitoring Report, which incorporates data on OPE implementation achieved on the level of Measures in monitoring and fiscal data by the deadline determined for the end of the following month after the lapse of half a year.

Due to the specifics of the 1st year of the OPE implementation, The representatives of the MA and IB/MA agreed that the data for 2007 would be incorporated in the 1st monitoring report cumulatively for the entire year 2007. Due to the fact that in 2007 neither calls not direct assignments were announced, no projects were monitored.

2.7.2 Monitoring on the Project Level

Data Collection

The monitoring report on the project level constitutes the written output generated by the ITMS based on the data from the recipient and data entered in the ITMS. It contains selected data and project information for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

The monitoring report includes the following data:

- entered by the recipient accepted by the MA project manager or the IB/MA project manager;
- read in for the pertinent project from the ITMS; and
- attached by the recipient to the monitoring report in written form according to MA or IB/MA requirements.

According to the project phase and the character of reported information there are following types of the project monitoring reports:

- ongoing monitoring reports submitted in the course of the implementation of project activities ;
- the final monitoring report submitted after the closing of the implementation of project activities ; and

²⁵ Based on Article 3 Point 6 d) of the Authorization on the Delegation of Competencies from the MA to IB/MA.

- the follow-up monitoring report submitted after closure of the implementation of project activities.

The content and form of the monitoring report is standardized and obligatory for all subjects involved in the monitoring and evaluation process.

The **Ongoing Project Monitoring Report** is prepared in three month intervals and submitted by the 15th day of the month following the monitored period; the first month constituting the subject of the ongoing monitoring report is the month of the signing of the Agreement on the Provision of NFA.

The **Final Project Monitoring Report** is submitted by the recipient not later than 1 month from the closing of the implementation of project activities and the monitoring of the project implementation phase is completed. The same conditions that pertain to the ongoing project monitoring report also pertain to the form and content of the final project monitoring report. The final project monitoring report contains besides others:

- the actually achieved values of the project result indicators;
- the list of outputs of the individual project activities;
- the final project budget designed based on the analytical accounting of the recipient; and
- other documentation required by the IB/MA in connection with the verification of the project results.

The same information and data is monitored in the final project monitoring report and the ongoing project monitoring report however final project monitoring report summarizes this information and data for the entire period of the project duration. The recipient is obliged to indicate the real deadlines of implementation of individual activities within the framework of the project and the actually achieved values of the output and outcome indicators.

Monitoring after Completion of the Actual Project Implementation

Pursuant to Article 57 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, after the completion of the implementation of the activities, the project monitoring is carried out from the day of the actual completion of the project and ends by the expiration date of the validity and effect of the Agreement on the Provision of NFA between the IB/MA and the recipient.

In compliance with the Agreement on Provision of NFA, the recipient submits the follow-up monitoring report after completion of the implementation of the project activities. The fulfillment of the impact indicators, newly created jobs and their structure are monitored in the follow-up monitoring project report. The recipient also evaluates in writing the contribution of the implemented project.

2.7.3 Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee (the “MC”) is established based on Article 64 of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006. The MV constitutes the authority which, pursuant to the partnership principle through its members, represents the public interest in social economic coherence within the SR. The MV for the OPE ensures the supervision of the preparation and subsequent implementation of the OPE and harmonizes the interest of the MoEdu SR as the MA with the requirements of the public and private sector to ensure the even development of the regions of the SR in compliance with the common EC policy.

Based on SR Government Resolution No. 407/2007 of May 2, 2007, the task B.10 was defined which instructs the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR to establish the MV for the OPE according to the CCA methodological guidelines within 4 months from the approval of the pertinent EC Operational Programme. This task was fulfilled by the MA for the OPE.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR, through his letter of June 20, 2007, asked for the nomination of representatives of individual organizations for positions on the MV for the OPE.

After obtaining nominations the list of members was designed and subsequently the invitations for the MC for the OPE session were sent to the members on October 17, 2007.

Pursuant to Article 11 of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, the composition of the MC for the OPE is based on the principle of partnership and equality of opportunities – its representatives are representatives of the MA and IB/MA, relevant ministries, universities/colleges, state administration in the resorts of education, regional and local self-government, the Office of the Government of the SR, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, the Association of Employers' Unions and Associations of the SR, the Confederation of Trade Unions of the SR, the Republic Union of Employers, the Union of Industries of Slovakia, the Union of Industrial Research and Development Organizations, the Slovak Academy of Science, the third sector (non-governmental organizations), the Union of Youth of Slovakia and other social economic partners related to the OPE content.

The MA for the OPE organized the first regular session of the MC for the OPE on November 14, 2007 with the participation of Mr. Aurelio Cecilio and Mrs. Elena Hindemith, the EC representatives, as observers. Ján Mikolaj, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, as a representative of the MA is the Chairman of the MC and Miriam Kováčiková, the General Director of the Division of European Affairs of the MoEdu SR, is its Secretary. Ján Tuček, a representative of the Slovak Rectors' Conference, was elected Deputy Chair of the MC for the OPE. Ing. Alexandra Drgová, the General Director of the Agency, was elected recording secretary for the 1st session of the MC for the OPE.

At its session, the MC for the OPE discussed the Statute and the Rules of Procedures for the MC for the OPE, and Evaluation and Selection Criteria for the OPE and approved them with comments while noting with comments the OPE Program Manual²⁶.

Within the framework of discussion in the course of the session, the requirement for the nomination of a representative for the member of the MC for the OPE for the Horizontal Priority Equality of Opportunities came up. Applications for additional nominations were sent to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR on November 15, 2007.

2.7.4 OPE Evaluation

²⁶ The draft of the Statute and Rules of Procedure, evaluation and selection criteria and the OP Program Manual were sent to the Committee members electronically on October 30, 2007 with the possibility of comment on documents by November 8, 2007. All delivered documents were assessed and the evaluation of comments was electronically sent to all members on November 13, 2007.

The goal and role of the evaluation is to improve the quality, effectiveness and compliance of assistance from the funds and the strategy and implementing OP while respecting special structural issues influencing affected member states and regions, while also taking into consideration the objective of sustainable development and pertinent legal regulation of the Community related to the influence on the environment and strategic environmental assessment.

The MA evaluation manager is responsible for designing the evaluation strategy and evaluation plan and ensuring the assistance evaluation (ex-ante, ongoing, follow-up). Based on the monitoring outcomes he/she carries out the evaluation of the provided assistance. The MA evaluation manager also guides the evaluation managers at the IB/MA.

Internal Evaluation²⁷

The internal evaluation is carried out within the OPE with the consideration of the Priority Axes of this program. The subject of the internal evaluation is constituted by a comparison of achieved progress in the fulfillment of output, outcome and financial indicators on the Priority Axis level.

The internal evaluation of the Horizontal Priorities (the “HP”) is carried out based on the project monitoring reports of the subject matter pertinent OPE Priority Axes and is provided by the evaluation manager on the level of each OPE Priority Axis.

The HP internal evaluation is targeted on the qualitative and quantitative assessment of the benefit of the implemented projects to the given Horizontal Priority in the form of ratio indicators (the number of projects with an influence on the Horizontal Priority/overall number of projects, output indicators in connection with the Horizontal Priority/overall output indicator). It is carried out based on the data aggregation from project monitoring reports of the pertinent Priority Axes, whose relevance in relation to the HP was established by the HP coordinator. The MA provides the aggregated data for the HP through focal points/persons from the project monitoring required for the HP internal evaluation by the HP coordinator. The HP coordinator is responsible for the internal evaluation on the level of HP.

In the evaluation of the OPE benefit to the HP, the MoEdu SR is responsible for the ongoing and final evaluation of the HP on the OPE level within the framework of the annual and final OPE report.

External Evaluation

The external evaluation is carried out by experts from internal and external units of the pertinent state administration body, independent in function from the MA, with the goal of establishing the relevancy and purposefulness of supported measures in connection with the established general objectives of the program and the identified needs.

The basic external evaluation principles incorporate proportionality (size and identified risks of the OP), independence (from the MA), partnership (participation of involved parties in the evaluation) and transparency. The MA’s role is to design the plan of strategic external evaluations within 12 months from the acceptance of the OP by the European Commission, to send it to the CCA and to submit it to the pertinent MC for approval.

²⁷ The description of the internal and external evaluation is in compliance with the description presented in the MA Internal Manual.

Ex-ante Evaluation

The goal of the ex-ante evaluation is to optimize the allocation of the budget resources within the framework of the OP and to improve the programming quality. The role of the evaluation is to determine and assess the development differences, gaps and potential, goals which are to be achieved, expected outcomes, quantified goals, coherence of strategy proposed for the region, if necessary, the added value of the Community, the extent to which the Community priorities were taken into consideration, experience from the previous programming and the quality of the procedures of implementation, monitoring, evaluation and fiscal management. The MA is responsible for carrying out the ex-ante evaluation. The OPE was submitted for the official approval to the EC after incorporating the ex-ante evaluation outcomes implemented in 2006.

Ex-ante Evaluation Design Procedure for the Pertinent Program Period 2007 - 2013 on the Program Level:

The ex-ante evaluation identifies and assesses development disparities, gaps and potential, goals to be achieved, expected outcomes, quantified goals, the coherence of the strategy proposed for the region (if applicable), the added value of the Community, the extent to which the Community priorities were taken into consideration, experience from the previous programming and the quality of the procedures of implementation, monitoring, evaluation and fiscal management.

The main objectives of the ex-ante evaluation of the OPE for the program period 2007–2013 included:

- assessing the analytical materials, including a SWOT analysis, identification of development disparities and factors;
- assessing the suitability, justification and consistence of the OP, i.e. to assess its internal logic to ensure the logical links between the analyses outcomes, objectives, priorities, financial resources and measurable indicators including evaluation of its expected impacts;
- assessing the OP coherence with policies and strategic documents of the SR and the Community; and
- assessing the quality of the existing and proposed management system in terms of its functionality and effectiveness for management, monitoring, evaluation and financial management processes.

The OPE ex-ante evaluation was carried out by an external evaluator²⁸. It took place from February 10, 2006 to November 30, 2006. Working meetings and consultations between the MoEdu SR and the evaluators took place throughout the entire evaluation process. The ex-ante evaluation recommendations were incorporated into the following OPE versions.

The author carried out the OPE ex-ante evaluation based on the following objectives:

- to assess the suitability, relevance and implementability of the proposed strategy from the perspective of its link to the SWOT analysis and achievement of its goals;

²⁸ In the selection process for evaluator, the MoEdu SR prepared the Framework Assignment Terms for the Performance of the Ex-ante Evaluation OP 2007 – 2013 by setting up goals and relevant evaluation questions.

- to assess the internal logic of the strategy/document to ensure the logical links between the analyses outcomes, objectives, measures, financial resources and measurable indicators including evaluation of its expected impacts;
- to assess whether the specific priority has well defined, consistent and balanced measures and objectives, whether it reflects qualified opinion, regarding the relevance of objectives, their quantifiability and the achievability;
- to assess the incorporation of horizontal priority/ies within the specific priority;
- to assess whether the specific priority constitutes a suitable instrument for the resolution of issues facing the SR, sector or region faces and whether it constitutes a step forward pursuant to the positive change of the social economic situation in the SR. To assess the expected impacts of the priority on the economic, social and environmental situation in the SR;
- to assess the suitability and effectiveness of the financial resources from the perspective of expected impacts;
- to assess the suitability of the distribution of the financial means to the regions of the SR;
- to assess the suitability of the proposed priority strategy from the perspective of ensuring compliance with relevant EU regulations, guidelines, strategies, national and regional strategic documents of the SR in this area and their contribution to the fulfillment of the EU cohesion policy and the goals of the SR national policies;
- to analyze the adequacy, quality and effectiveness of the implementation process and to assist in the preparation of procedures and criteria for the project selection;
- to assess the overall coherence of the specific priority design and the NSRF for the period 2007–2013 (especially in the area of analyses, strategy, priorities and objectives, indicators).

Ongoing Evaluation

Pursuant to Article 48 (3) of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, in the course of the program period, the member states carry out evaluations connected with the OP monitoring, especially if the above mentioned monitoring will reveal a distinct deviation from the originally established objectives or if the revision of the OP pursuant to Article 33 of the above mentioned Regulation is proposed. The outcomes are sent to the MC for the OPE and to the EC.

The MA for the OPE will carry out an ongoing evaluation in the following cases:

- if monitoring reveals a distinct deviation from the originally established objectives;
- if the OPE revision is proposed; and
- other.

The following may constitute the causes of the OPE revision:

- essential social economic changes;
- essential changes in the Community, in national or regional priorities;
- problems/difficulties related to implementation; and
- distinct deviation from the originally established objectives.

The MA for the OPE has the final responsibility for the ingoing evaluation process, i.e. it makes decisions in cooperation with the working group for evaluation, on the structure and contents of the evaluation plan and provides for the administrative base for its implementing.

The MA for the OPE ensures the following tasks in the ongoing evaluation process:

- the collection and accessibility of monitoring indicators;

- guaranteed respect for the evaluation objectives and preservation of its quality standards;
- financial resources from the technical assistance necessary for the evaluation implementation;
- evaluation outcomes submitted to the Monitoring Committee for the OPE and the EC.

OPE Evaluation Plan

Pursuant to Article 48 (1) of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, and pursuant to the proportionality principle within the Objective Convergence, the member state may design an evaluation plan in which it incorporates the orientation evaluation activities which it plans to carry out in the individual phases of implementation. The EC recommends designing the evaluation plan on the national level and where suitable (in compliance with the proportionality principle) on the program level.

Follow-up Evaluation

Pursuant to Article 49 (3) of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, a follow-up evaluation is carried out for each objective in close cooperation with the member state and the MA. The goal of the follow-up evaluation is constituted by the research of the extent to which the resources were used, the effectiveness and efficiency of programming and the social economic impact. Each objective is evaluated with a focus on the elaboration of conclusions for the policy of economic and social coherence. The follow-up evaluation identifies the factor which contributed to the OPE implementation success or failure and identifies well-tested procedures. The follow-up evaluation must be completed by December 31, 2015.

Cooperation with the CCA

Based on the CCA decision, the Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation was established, which constitutes the CCA advisory body. It met twice in 2007. At the first session which took place on May 9, 2007, the Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation commented on the draft of the Statute of the Working Group for Monitoring and Evaluation and held a discussion regarding the form of the project monitoring report. At its session which took place on August 20, 2007, the comments regarding the form of the project monitoring report were discussed and approved. Communication regarding the final version of the report took place electronically.

Cooperation of the Supranational Level

Since December 2007, the MA representative has participated in meetings of the ESF Evaluation Partnership. The DG Employment Evaluation Unit guides individual member states during these meetings in the solution of issues connected with evaluation of programs financed from ESF means. At the same time, based on information acquired by comparing the experience of individual member states, it is possible to draw conclusions about the optimal manner for solving evaluation issues within the framework of the OPE in the SR.

2.7.5 ITMS in the Monitoring Process

Data collection for monitoring purposes is carried out by the employees of the MA and the IB/MA in the electronic system entitled “IT Monitoring System for Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund”²⁹. This is an integral information system. The forwarding of ITMS data to the Structural Funds Common Database SFC 2007 took place through ITMS at the same time

ITMS is used evenly by all MA and IB/MA. The role of the Common Monitoring System is to provide a unified and compatible system of monitoring, management and financial management of the programs financed from the SR and CF. The Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the SR and the Ministry of Finance of the SR are responsible for the general OPE initiation data; the MA is responsible for the OPE initiation data.

Access to the ITMS system for the new program period 2007 – 2013 was ensured for the MA MoEdu SR and the IB/MA MH SR in 2007. To date, the Agency of the MoEdu SR for the EUSF in 2007 has not been ensured access to the ITMS system.

The following working commissions are established for ensuring the due system operation:

1. the Managing Committee of the ITMS II Project – the MCRD SR representatives, representatives of the MF SR, DataCenter and suppliers of the ITMS II;
2. the ITMS Experts Commission – the MCRD SR, the MF SR and the MA representatives; and
3. the Commission for Access Rights – DataCenter, the MCRD SR, the MF SR.

In course of 2007, the ITMS II (1st and 2nd version) testing operation took place. The ITMS II contains functionalities for communication with the EC, detailed defining of Operational Programmes, set-up of processes and roles, planning, defining of calls, accepting applications for the NFA through the public part of the Monitoring System, evaluation of applications for NFA, project contracting, project financial management, i.e. accepting and processing applications for payment and summary applications for payment and functionalities of control and audit. Before implementing new versions of systems into the productive operation the testing of new functionalities and integration testing of systems are carried out. The length of these testing constitutes more than 2 months; tests are launched by the suppliers and the customer gradually takes part (the MF SR and the MCRD SR). By the end of the testing operation the representatives of the individual MA or IB/MA are also involved.

The MA for the OPE in cooperation with the CCA defined into the ITMS the initiation data and basic settings of the ITMS II. The Following areas were defined within the framework of initiation data:

- Operational Programme structure (title of the Operational Programme, Priority Axes, Measures, periodicity of measuring indicators, technical assistance, call obligation);
- sums of dimensions on the Priority level in EUR;
- dimensions of Measures;
- OP management organization structure (title of organization unit, roles, their affiliation to Measures and Priority Axes);
- financial plan (on the level of program documents, on the level of Priority Axes approved for the given OP, on the level of Measures for the pertinent Priority Axis and on the level of Measures distributed according to years);
- selection criteria; and

²⁹ A new agreement on ITMS development and maintenance services for the program period 2007 – 2013 was concluded for the program period 2007 – 2013 on May 3, 2006 between the MCRD SR and the supplier.

- specific fields of application for NFA.

The bulk of the initiation data has been entered into the system. Presently the processes of the individual MA and IB/MA have been set up. These settings are necessary for ensuring the functioning of the system for the individual OP. It is also necessary before the launching of a call to announce the set up of Operational Programmes, to design structures of bodies based on the MA Internal Manuals and to set up the program and project management processes³⁰.

Other system versions will incorporate various extensions of functionalities related to project monitoring, in addition to public procurement control, applications for payment at the EC, returning of financial means and preparation for EURO introduction, and adoptions to OP specialties which do not constitute part of the NSRF (programs of cross-border cooperation, OP Fisheries).

The MCRD SR, as the CCA, ensured the training for the ITMS II users in cooperation with the Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, which took place from September 2007 with the goal to provide an overview on the EU assistance management system for the new program period 2007 – 2013. The subject of training incorporated the standardizing of processes, procedures, legislation and MA and IB/MA documentation, project and financial management systems (methodology, procedures, processes, documents) and the special computer skills necessary for working with the ITMS II (OLAP cubes in the ITMS system and in MS Excel). The training consisted of methodological and practical parts.

The function of the resort administrator was established on the MA for the OPE. The ITMS resort administrator is responsible for user role administration, submission of applications for access to the Communication Technological Infrastructure for approval of the VSÚ and their submission together with applications for ITMS access to the Datacenter. The resort administrator also cooperated in the design of workflow schemes for the Managing Authority OPE and in the elaboration and entering of initiation data into the ITMS in the monitored period.

2.7.6 On-the-Spot Verification

The obligation to carry out controls of the physical implementing of the project is primarily based on the requirements of Article 60 of Council General Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006 and Article 13 of Council Implementation Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of December 8, 2006 which establish the requirement that the management and control system procedures verifying the supply of goods or products, execution of work and provision of services include the control of the physical implementing of the project, i.e. the administrative, financial, technical and physical aspects of the project or projects. The control of the physical implementation of the project constitutes part of the ex-ante financial control acts. The ex-ante financial control on the level of the MA and IB/MA is carried out by financial managers. They authorize the compliance with the generally binding legal and internal regulations through their signatures on the document confirming the correctness of the carried out control.

The IB/MA is obliged to submit to the MA the list of implemented on-the-spot verifications pursuant to Article 13 of Council Implementation Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of

³⁰ The first calls for the submission of applications for the provision of non-returnable financial allowance, their registration and the evaluation and approval process (which is also ITMS promoted) will be implemented in 2008.

December 8, 2006, in which the IB/MA briefly presents the outcomes of the control and measures adopted in connection with identified discrepancies. The IB/MA submits the list of implemented on-the-spot verifications at regular intervals to the MA pursuant to Article 13 Point 5 of the Authorization for the Delegation of Competencies.

Due to the fact that in 2007 no projects were implemented, no on-the-spot controls were carried out.

2.8. National Performance Reserve

Information regarding the National Performance reserve will be provided in the Annual Report for 2010.

2.9. Discrepancies and Financial Corrections

The Slovak Republic carried out no financial corrections in 2007 pursuant to Article 98 of the Universal Council (EC) Regulation No. 1083/2006 in connection with individual or system discrepancies since no discrepancies related to the OPE projects were reported to the Certification Body during the given year.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ACCORDING TO PRIORITY AXES

3.1. Priority Axis 1 – Reform of Education and Technical Preparation System

The goal of Priority Axis 1 is to implement the reform of education at ES and SS and to promote the enhancement of university/college education and human resources in research and development with the goal of preparing the graduate for the current and future needs of the knowledge society and labor market.

The fulfillment of this goal is implemented through 2 Measures:

- 1.1 Transformation of the traditional school to a modern school; and
- 1.2 College/University and research and development as a driving force in the development of the knowledge society.

The goal of Measure 1.1 is to revise the educational content at ES and SS and through the use of innovative teaching forms and methods to prepare graduates for the current and future needs of the knowledge society and for related education in the system of universities/colleges and further education.

The goal of Measure 1.2 is to support the enhancing of education and the development of human resources in the field of research and development with the goal of achieving the permanent adaptation of universities/colleges to the current and future needs of the knowledge society.

Within the framework of the monitored period in October 2007, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education approved the preparation of direct assignments for the following national projects³¹ and the 1st call for demand oriented projects:

“Further Education of Teachers of Elementary Schools in the Area of Foreign Languages in Connection with the Concept of Foreign Language Teaching at Elementary and Secondary Schools”. The goal of this national project is to improve the quality of preparation and further education of pedagogical workers. Within the framework of the national project we intend to supplement the education system with qualified teachers of foreign languages at the first level of elementary schools.

The national project within the framework of Priority Axis 1 would cover Measure 1.1: Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 500,000,000 (including both Objectives).

“Modernizing of the Education Process at Elementary Schools”

The goal of this national project is to change the form of teaching at elementary schools; this will lead to the modernizing of the teaching process at elementary schools. The national project is to contribute to ensuring the transformation of the traditional school to a modern school. Within the framework of the national project, a modern teaching environment will be created at elementary schools including the use of ICT aids.

³¹ Within the framework of implementing the mirror projects, all 3 national projects would also cover Priority Axis 4, Modern Education for the Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region, Measure 4.1, The Transformation of the Traditional School into a Modern School for the Bratislava Region.

Within the framework of Priority Axis 1, the national project would cover Measure 1.1: The Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 1,000,000,000 (including both Objectives).

“Modernizing the Education Process at Secondary Schools”

The goal of this national project is to change the form of teaching at secondary schools; this will lead to the modernizing of the teaching process at secondary schools. The national project is to contribute to ensuring the transformation of the traditional school to a modern school. Within the framework of the national project, a modern teaching environment will be created at secondary schools including the use of ICT aids.

Within the framework of Priority Axis 1, the national project would cover Measure 1.1: Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 400,000,000 (including both Objectives).

The call for demand-oriented projects “Further Education of Teachers of Foreign Languages of Elementary and Secondary Schools in Connection with the Concept of Foreign Language Teaching at Elementary and Secondary Schools” within the framework of Priority Axis 1 would cover Measure 1.1: Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School.

3.1.1. Achievement of Objectives and Progress Analysis

Priority Axis was not implemented in the monitored period. This Priority Axis will be launched in the course of 2008.

3.1.2. Substantial Problems and Measures Adopted in Order to Overcome Them

Priority Axis 1 was not implemented in the monitored period. Neither certification testing of the level of the Certification Body nor the auditing event from the level of the Audit Body was carried out.

3.2. Priority Axis 2 – Further Education as an Instrument for the Development of Human Resources

The main goal of Priority Axis 2 is to design and develop an effective system of life-long education and life-long counseling targeted on the development of key competencies, the deepening and enhancement of qualifications pursuant to the current and future needs of the knowledge society available for all citizens of the SR.

The fulfillment of the main objective is implemented within two Measures:

- 2.1 Promotion of Further Education; and
- 2.2 Promotion of Further Education in Healthcare

The goal of Measure 2.1 is to promote the enhancement of further education with an emphasis on the development of key competencies and the deepening and enhancement of employee qualifications.

The Ministry of Education of the SR in February 2007 elaborated **the draft of the Strategy of Life-Long Education and Life-Long Counseling**, which was approved on April 25, 2007 through SR Government Resolution No. 382/2007. the implementation of Measure 2.1 will be carried out in compliance with the Priorities of LLE and LLC strategies.

In the monitored period, the framework of the first topic for the national project for Priority Axis 2 was approved:

“Further Education of Teachers of Information Technology at Elementary and Secondary Schools”

The goal of the national project is to develop key competencies and to deepen and enhance the qualifications of pedagogical employees. Within the framework of the national project, we intend to supplement the education system with qualified teachers of information technology at elementary and secondary schools. Within Priority Axis 2, the national project would cover Measure 2.1: Promotion of Further Education. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 250,000,000 (including both Objectives)³².

The goal of Measure 2.2 is to promote the education of healthcare workers with regard to legislative changes and the re-structuring of the healthcare sector. This further education will lead to the development of healthcare specific knowledge and practical knowledge for the performance of highly demanding and complex professional, specialized and certified work activities in healthcare and the saturation of the arising requirements of individual regions of the Slovak Republic and healthcare facilities to fill missing human resource capacities.

The Ministry of health of the SR constitutes the Intermediary Body under the Managing Authority for Measure 2.2. Regarding this Measure no announcements of call were planned for the monitored period³³.

In the process of the preparation of activities of Measure 2.2 and the systems of their implementation, the Ministry of Health of the SR anticipated possible problems in accepting a large number of small projects, which in the case of the limited number of administrative workers of the IB/MA could put the implementing of Measure 2.2. itself at risk. For the purpose of setting the optimum system of implementing of Measure 2.2, a system of closed calls was designed in which the eligible applicants would be the individual self-government regions. In order to have a professional discussion of the above mentioned method of implementing and setting the model of future calls, a working meeting with the professional organizations, representatives of individual UtTU and education institutions was organized. All invited partners agreed with the proposed model and identified themselves with the conclusion that the effective drawing of means from Measure 2.2 through complex projects of individual UtTU anticipates the elaboration and submission of an analysis of the status of human resources in healthcare for each self-governing region by the UtTU. The IB/MA in cooperation with the section of healthcare education of the MH SR prepared a draft of the

³² Within the framework of implementing the mirror projects, all 3 national projects, which would also cover Priority Axis 4, Modern Education for the Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region, Measure 4.2, Enhancement of the Competitiveness of the Bratislava Region through University and Further Education Development.

³³ The first call within the framework of Measure 2.2 will be announced in the first quarter of 2008.

structure of the above mentioned analysis which was forwarded to representatives of individual UtTU.

3.2.1. Achievement of Objectives and Achieved Progress Analysis

Priority Axis 2 was not implemented in the monitored period. Priority Axis 2 will be launched in the course of 2008.

3.2.2. Substantial Problems Occurred and Measures Adopted in Order to Overcome Them

Priority Axis 2 was not implemented in the monitored period. Neither certification testing of the level of the Certification Body nor the auditing event from the level of the Audit Body was carried out.

3.3. Priority Axis 3 – Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs

The Priority Axis targeted on persons with special education needs, which is defined in the OPE, addresses the issue of the insufficient involvement of these groups in the education system and their endangerment of social exclusion. The main goal of the Priority Axis “Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs” declared in the OPE is to enhance the education level of persons with special education needs while taking into consideration marginalized Roma communities (the “MRC”). Within the framework of Priority Axis 3, the following Measures were defined:

3.1 Enhancement of the Education Level of Members of Marginalized Roma Communities; and

3.2 Enhancement of the Education Level of Persons with Special Education Needs.

Due to the direct addressing of needs of the members of MRC, it was necessary to place this group of the Roma population into a separate Measure 3.1. Within the framework of the earmarked financial allocation and the so-called “comprehensive approach,” the intention of OPE is to aid the fastest possible transformation of unsustainable models surviving in these communities that prevents their full integration in the education system and society.

The goal of Measure 3.1 is to enhance the education level of members of the MRC through the facilitation of their access to formal education and further education.

The goal of Measure 3.2 is to enhance the education level of persons with special education needs through the facilitation of access to formal education, further education and life-long education.

Comprehensive Approach Within the Framework of Measure 3.1

The comprehensive approach is targeted on the system solution of issues in the marginalized Roma communities and allows for the long-term strategic planning of community development and positive change. The comprehensive approach in the use of Structural Funds does not replace the presently used model of individual projects. This approach will be implemented simultaneously with the implementing of demand-oriented projects.

A meeting with the participation of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities (the “OPG RC”) and the DEA MZ SR took place on February 13, 2007; its goal was to discuss the proposal for the solution of the comprehensive approach in the use of SF for issues of the MRC elaborated by the OPG RC regarding the issues of the coordination of the Horizontal Priority MRC. The MoEdu SR demonstrated its support for the proposed

method for the solution of given issues of the MRC in the program period 2007 – 2013. The necessity of elaborating and consulting the proposed course of action with the MCRD SR as the CCA also arose.

In 2007, the indicative allocation reflecting the distribution of the overall allocated sum in the actual measure between the MoEdu SR as the MA for the OPE and the OPG RC as the coordinator for the Horizontal Priority MRC was determined within the framework of Measure 3.1. Determining the allocation was discussed at the pertinent unit of the MoEdu SR responsible for the education of Roma communities with participating institutions and several members of the Council of Experts of the MoEdu SR for the Upbringing and Education of Roma. The determining of the allocation was also based on the intents of the Concept of the Upbringing and Education of Roma Children and Students, including the development of secondary and university education. Based on the above mentioned facts, the indicative allocation was determined in the amount of EUR 17 million for implementing the Comprehensive Approach. The remaining means within the framework of Measure 3.1 in the amount of approximately EUR 40 million will be used for implementing national projects through direct assignments and for implementing demand-oriented projects by the Agency. The sum allocated for the OPG RC is designated for implementing the comprehensive approach for the area of education especially with targeting on the formal and informal pre-school preparation of Roma children in segregated locations as well as the education of parents and community education.

The Agreement on Mutual Cooperation and Coordination in the Fulfillment of the Horizontal Priority MRC between the MA and the OPG RC was not signed in 2007. Furthermore, the implementation of assistance related to the comprehensive approach was not carried out.

The representative of the MA participated in a seminar entitled, “Transnational Cooperation on Issues of the Social Inclusion of Roma Communities” in Spain on June 6 – 8, 2007, where the strategy of implementing the comprehensive approach and priorities in the field of the education of marginalized Roma communities in OPE was presented.

3.3.1. Achievement of Objectives and Achieved Progress Analysis

Priority Axis 3 was not implemented in the monitored period. The Priority Axis will be launched in the course of 2008.

3.3.2. Substantial Problems and Measures Adopted in Order to Overcome Them

Priority Axis 3 was not implemented in the monitored period. Neither certification testing of the level of the Certification Body nor the auditing event from the level of the Audit Body was carried out.

3.4. Priority Axis 4 – Modern Education for the Knowledge Society Bratislava Region

The main goal of Priority Axis 4 is to enhance the quality and access to further education with an emphasis on the transformation of educational content towards the development of key competencies with the goal to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the Bratislava Region.

The fulfillment of the main goal is implemented within the framework of the following three Measures:

- 4.1 Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School for the Bratislava Region;
- 4.2 Enhancement of the Competitiveness of the Bratislava Region through the Development of University/College and Further Education; and
- 4.3 Technical Assistance for Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment

Within the framework of the monitored period, in October 2007 the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the SR approved the framework preparation of direct assignments for the following national projects:

“Further Education of Elementary School Teachers in the Area of Foreign Languages in Connection with the Concept of Foreign Language Teaching at Elementary and Secondary Schools”

The goal of the national project is to enhance the quality of the preparation and further education of pedagogical employees. Within the framework of the national project we intend to supplement the education system with qualified teachers of foreign language at the first level of elementary schools.

In the national project Priority Axis 4: Modern Education for the Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region, Measure 4.1: Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School for the Bratislava Region should be also covered. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK500,000,000 (including both Objectives).

“Further Education of Teachers of Information Technology at Elementary and Secondary Schools”

The goal of the national project is to develop key competencies and to deepen and enhance the qualifications of pedagogical employees. Within the framework of the national project, we intend to supplement the education system with qualified teachers of information technology at elementary and secondary schools.

The national project would also cover Priority Axis 4: Modern Education for the Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region, Measure 4.2: Increasing the Competitiveness of the Bratislava Region through the Development of University/College and Further Education.

The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 250,000,000 (including both Objectives).

“Modernizing of the Educational Process at Elementary Schools”

The goal of this national project is change the form of teaching at elementary schools which will lead to the modernizing of the teaching process at elementary schools. The national project is to contribute to ensuring the transformation of the traditional school to a modern school. Within the framework of the national project, the modern teaching environment will be created at elementary schools including the use of ICT aids.

The national project within the framework of Priority Axis 4: Modern Education for the Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region would cover Measure 4.1: Transformation of the Traditional School to a Modern School for Bratislava Region. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 1,000,000,000 (including both Objectives).

“Modernizing the Educational Process at Secondary Schools”

The goal of this national project is change the form of teaching at secondary schools which will lead to the modernizing of the teaching process at secondary schools. The national project is to contribute to ensuring the transformation of the traditional school to a modern school. Within the framework of the national project, the modern teaching environment will be created at secondary schools including the use of ICT aids.

The national project within the framework of Priority Axis 4: Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region would cover Measure 4.1: Transformation of Traditional School to a Modern School for Bratislava Region. The planned overall allocation for the national project is SKK 400,000,000 (including both Objectives).

3.4.1. Achievement of Objectives and Progress Analysis

Priority Axis 4 was not implemented in the monitored period. The Priority Axis will be launched in the course of 2008.

3.4.2. Substantial Problems and Measures Adopted in Order to Overcome Them

Priority Axis 4 was not implemented in the monitored period. Neither certification testing of the level of the Certification Body nor the auditing event from the level of the Audit Body was carried out.

3.5. Priority Axis 5 Technical Assistance for Objective Convergence

The goal of Priority Axis 5 is to ensure the effective implementing of the OPE within the Objective Convergence in compliance with the requirements placed on the management and administrative structures responsible for implementing the Operational Programme.

Ensuring effective implementation is targeted on implementation, monitoring, control, evaluation and studies, as well as on information and publicity.

Pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, with the goal to ensure the high quality of the Operational Programme and its Priority Axis implementation, the eligible subjects on all levels of managing structures may use financial means within the framework of the OPE technical assistance (the “TA”) to support performed activities and to function within the framework of activities divided pursuant to the established priority topics and categories of expenses.

The following priority topics are applied to the area of TA:

Priority Topic 85 – Preparation and Implementing, Monitoring and Control and Audit; and
Priority Topic 86 – Evaluation and Studies; Information and Publicity.

In 2007 no TA projects were submitted or approved within the framework of OPE. Projects will be submitted for approval in 2008.

In 2007 no TA means were refunded. Expenses related to the implementation of the technical assistance in 2007, will be refunded retroactively after the TA project approvals in 2008.

Neither certification testing of the level of the Certification Body nor the auditing event from the level of the Audit Body was carried out.

More detailed information regarding implementing Technical Assistance is provided in Part 5 of the Annual Report – Technical Assistance.

3.6. Horizontal Priorities

The NSRF strategy defines the Horizontal Priorities (the “HP”) that have a complementary influence on the Objectives of the NSRF in four areas:

- marginalized Roma communities
- equality of opportunities
- sustainable development
- information society

The idea of each Priority is to ensure the achievement of the Objective defined for it which is related to several NSRF priorities and which can not be ensured through one Operational Programme only, but requires a coordinated approach involving several specific priorities.

The HP monitoring is ensured through a set of indicators. The HP implementation will be monitored separately in the OP annual reports in compliance with the HP character and in the section of the annual report of the NSRF which will be constituted by the monitoring reports prepared by the HP coordinators. In the course of the program period, ongoing evaluations targeted on the success and effectiveness of selected method of the HP implementation will take place. After completion of the program period, an evaluation of the impact of projects implemented within the framework of the HP will be carried out.

3.6.1. Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities

Objective of Horizontal Priority Marginalized Roma Communities (the “HP MRC”) is to increase the employment and education level of MRC members and to improve their living conditions.

In order to achieve visible progress in raising the MRC education level and their success in finding jobs on the labour market, Measure 3.1: Increasing the Education Level of of MRC Members was created, which falls under Priority Axis OPE No. 3, Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs.

On the political level, the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities is responsible for the HP MRC. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for the Roma Communities, specifically, the Department of HP MRC Coordination is the HP MRC coordinator. In 2006, the OPG RC assigned the elaboration of the Regional Concepts for the Development of Roma Communities in the Areas with High Concentrations of Marginalized Groups (Košice, Prešov, Banská Bystrica Regions).

The proposed instruments for ensuring impact and coordination include:

- a comprehensive approach³⁴

³⁴ It is applied in the following OP: Regional OP, OP Employment and Social Inclusion, OPE, OP Environment, OP Competitiveness and Economic Growth and OP Health.

- demand-oriented projects³⁵

The above mentioned instruments serve to strengthen integration and the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups pursuant to Article 10 of the European Parliament and Council (EC) Regulation No. 1081/2006.

The comprehensive approach is described in Section 3.3 of Annual Report Priority Axis 3 – Promotion of Education of Persons with Special Education Needs.

Implementation of demand-oriented projects will take place as follows:

- NFA applicants will clearly identify in a separate part of the application that it is a project targeted on MRC
- the real impact of the projects on HP MRC will be assessed by the OPGRC
- the projects which will be assessed by the OPGRC as projects with a distinctive impact on MRC will be granted extra points (except for the OP that solves HP MRC through independent Measure)
- the OPGRC monitors projects targeted on MRC based on a sample defined by the MA/IBMA

OPGRC tasks and cooperation with the MA in ensuring HP MRC implementation constitute the subject of the Agreement on Cooperation between the OPGRC and MA or IBMA. No agreement on cooperation has been concluded within the monitored period³⁶.

For the purpose of more effective HP MRC coordination, an HP MRC working group was established. The appointed MA representative also regularly participates in these meetings. In compliance with the statute that stipulates that the working group must meet at least once a year, two meetings of this working group took place in 2007. , The HP MRC implementation coordination system was approved during the monitored period. However, the system was not approved in 2007³⁷.

Measurable Indicators for HP MRC in OPE:

OPE Measurable Indicator	Priority Axis OPE	Unit of Measurement	Starting value (2006)
Placement Rate of Graduates from formal education programs for persons from MRC	3.Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs -	- %	- - 0%
Placement Rate of Graduates from further education programs for persons from MRC	- 3. Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs	- %	- - 0%
Number of students from MRC involved in education programs -	3. Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs	- number	- - 0

³⁵ may be applied in all OPs

³⁶ The agreement will be finalized and concluded among three parties (MA, EUSFA and OPGRC) in the first half of 2008.

³⁷ The HPMRC implementation coordination system was approved on April 18, 2008

	-		
Number of formal education programs for MRC students	- 3. Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs	- number	- 0
Number of persons involved in the social inclusion of persons from MRC who were trained within the framework of further education programs	3. Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs -	- number	- 0
Number of further education programs for persons involved in the social inclusion of persons from MRC	- 3. Promotion of the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs	- number	- 0

3.6.2. Horizontal Priority Equality of Opportunities

Pursuant to the approved NSRF, the global goal of the Horizontal Priority Equality of Opportunities (the “HP EO”) is to ensure the equality of opportunities for all and to prevent all forms of discrimination.

The Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR is the coordinator of the HP EO implementation. The Division of Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities of the MoLSAF SR (the “GEEO Division”) is the executive coordinating unit for ensuring HP EO implementation coordination processes. For this purpose, the Support Center for the Equality of Opportunities, made up of a team of coordinators, was established within the framework of the GEEO Division. Their task is to closely cooperate with the focal points/persons at the individual MA. The role of the focal persons also includes the provision of counseling to recipients in determining the relation of the projects to the HP Equality of Opportunities, the evaluation of the project in the project selection process and their implementation/monitoring.

For the purpose of more effective HP EO coordination and ensuring the partnership principle an HP EO working group, which meets at least twice a year, was established at the MoLSAF SR. The appointed MA representative also regularly participates in its sessions. The approval of the HP EO implementation coordination system was approved during the monitored period within the framework of this working group.

The HP EO implementation coordination system was not approved within the monitored period³⁸.

HP EO will promote the prevention and elimination of discrimination based on gender, origin, race, ethnic origin, religion, faith, disability, age or sexual orientation throughout all programs by creating conditions for entry into various social environments that take into consideration their specific needs. In the context of structural assistance implementation, this means that contributions to the improvement or strengthening of equality of opportunities for all,

³⁸ The HP EO implementation coordination system was approved on March 27, 2008.

including special consideration for the support of gender equality and accessibility to transportation, the physical environment and public services for citizens with limited mobility will be taken into the consideration in the programming, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Pursuant to Article 10 of European Parliament and Council (EC) Regulation No. 1081/2006, the assessment of the influence of the project on the fulfillment of HP EO will be obligatory for all applicants from the SF and CF and its fulfillment will be monitored in the project application where the applicant will assess the project's influence on the equality of opportunities. In the event that the project has some influence on the equality of opportunities, this influence is assessed as positive or negative and the relation to the equality of opportunities will be included in the evaluation criteria. In the event that the project has no influence on the equality of opportunities, the relation to the equality of opportunities will not be included into the evaluation criteria.

Relevance of HP EO Objectives to Individual Priority Axes OPE:

Priority Axes OPE	HP EO Objectives
Priority Axis 1 Education and Technical Preparation System Reform	2.3 – Adapting of education to the needs of disabled persons in terms of their integration into the healthy population; Increasing the level of education graduates finding jobs. 3.2. – Decreasing the unemployment rate of school graduates between the ages of 15 and 25; Increasing the level of ES and SS graduates finding jobs 4 – Improvement of anti-discrimination mechanisms in relation to these groups.
Priority Axis 2 Further Education as an Instrument for Human Resources Development	2.3 - Adapting of education to the needs of disabled persons in terms of their integration into the healthy population; Increasing the level of education graduates finding jobs. 3.1. – Increasing the employment rate of seniors (through enhancement of qualifications); Increasing the employment rate of senior women; Increasing the participation of seniors in life-long education. 4 – Improvement of anti-discrimination mechanisms in relation to these groups.
Priority Axis 3 Promotion of Education for Persons with Special Education Needs	2.1. – Decreasing of the specific unemployment rate of people with disabilities. 2.2. – Increasing the degree of barrier-free and safe access to public, social, education, healthcare infrastructure and the infrastructure of employers; Increasing the availability of people with disabilities to information services. 2.3. - Adapting of education to the needs of disabled persons in terms of their integration into the healthy population; Increasing the job placement rate of education graduates . 4 - – Improvement of anti-discrimination mechanisms in relation to these groups.

Priority Axis 4 Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region	<p>2.3 - Adapting of education to the needs of disabled persons in terms of their integration into the healthy population; Increasing the level of education graduates finding jobs.</p> <p>3.1. - Increasing the employment rate of seniors (through enhancement of qualifications); Increasing of employment rate of senior women; Increasing of participation of senior in life-long education.</p> <p>3.2. - Decreasing the unemployment rate of school graduates between the ages of 15 and 25; Increasing the job placement rate SS and universities graduates</p> <p>4 – Improvement of anti-discrimination mechanisms in relation to these groups.</p>
Priority Axis 5 Technical Assistance	-

Measurable Indicators for HP EO in OPE:

OPE Measurable Indicator	HP EO Objective	Unit of Measurement	Starting Value (2006)
Number of education programs adapted to the needs of disabled persons	2.3.	number	0
Job placement rate of graduates with special education	2.3.	%	0
Job placement rate of SS graduates (divided according to gender)	3.2.	%	0
Job placement rate of university graduates (divided according to gender)	3.2.	%	0
PISA index (divided according to gender, other disadvantaged groups)	3.2.	number	1,462

3.6.3. Horizontal Priority Sustainable Development

Pursuant to the approved NSRF, the global goal of Horizontal Priority Sustainable Development (the “HP SD”) is to ensure that the final effect of all interventions financed within the framework of the NSRF synergically supports sustainable development in all its segments, i.e., environmental, economic and social, in compliance with the objectives and indicators of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

On the political level, the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities is responsible for the implementation of the HP SD.

The Deputy Prime Minister fulfills this task through the Council of the Government of the SR for Sustainable Development from the office of its chairman. The Office of the Government of the SR (the OG SR”) is the institutional coordinator of the HP SD.

In 2007, the HP SD implementation coordination system was approved and the OPE's measurable indicators relevant to the monitoring of the contribution of the OPE to the HP SD Objectives were defined within the framework of the sessions of the working group for the HP SD. The appointed MA representative also regularly participated in its sessions. The sessions of this working group took place continuously.

The HP SD implementation coordination system was not approved within the monitored period³⁹.

Specific and Partial Objectives of HP SD with the Relevance to OPE:

- 1 Increasing of economic prosperity
 - Strengthening of the competitiveness and effectiveness of the Slovak economy
 - Enhancement of the level of research, development and education

- 3 Social solidarity and inclusion
 - decreasing of the unemployment rate
 - Strengthening of the position of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of the population

Relevance of Priority Axes of OPE to the HP SD Objectives:

OPE Priority Axes	HP SD Objectives
Priority Axis 1 Education and Technical Preparation System Reform	1 – Increasing of economic prosperity 3 – Social solidarity and inclusion
Priority Axis 2 Further Education as Instrument for Human Resources Development	1 – Increasing of economic prosperity 3 – Social solidarity and inclusion
Priority Axis 3 Promotion of Education for Persons with Special Education Needs	1 – Increasing of economic prosperity 3 – Social solidarity and inclusion
Priority Axis 4 Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region	1 – Increasing of economic prosperity 3 – Social solidarity and inclusion

Measurable Indicators for HP SD in OPE:

Measurable Indicator	HP SD Objectives	Unit of Measurement	Starting Value
Number of newly designed education programs	1.,3.	number	0
Number of pedagogical employees involved in the further education programs	1.,3.	number	0
Number of employees in research and development involved in further education	1.,3.	number	0
Number of further education programs for healthcare employees	1.,3.	number	0

³⁹ The HP SD implementation coordination system was approved on March 26, 2008.

Number of healthcare employees involved in further education programs for healthcare employees	1.,3.	number	0
Number of further education programs for persons with special education needs	1.,3.	number	0
Number of further education programs for persons involved in the social inclusion of persons with special education needs	1.,3.	number	0
Number of newly designed education programs	1.,3.	number	0
Number of pedagogical employees involved in further education programs	1.,3.	number	0
Number of employees in research and development involved in further education	1.,3.	number	0

3.6.4. Horizontal Priority Information Society

The main goal of the Horizontal Priority Information Society (the “HP IS”) defined in the NSRF is the development of an inclusive information society.

The above mentioned goal can be fulfilled by monitoring the specific objectives especially in these three topical areas:

- information literacy (for example modernization of the education contents with regard to ICT, Innovation of ICT information of teachers and students, enhancement of the level of Slovak universities so it would be competitive with developed EU countries)
- effective electronization of public administration
- wide availability of internet (for example to support school multimedia classrooms)

On the political level the Deputy Prime Minister for Knowledge Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities is responsible for the implementation of HP IS. The Deputy Prime Minister fulfills this task in the relation to the information society through the Council for Knowledge Society from the office of its chairman. The Department of Knowledge Society of the Office of the Government of the SR is the coordinator of HP IS on the working level.

On the subject matter level the Ministry of Finance of the SR which is the central state administration body on the field of informatization, is responsible for horizontal management and implementation of all projects of society informatization.

In 2007 the approval of the HP IS implementation coordination system took place within the framework of the sessions of the working group for HP IS. The appointed representative of MA was also regularly participating in its sessions. The sessions of this working group took place as necessary.

The HP IS implementation coordination system for 2007 - 2013 has not been approved within the monitored period⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ The HP IS implementation coordination system for 2007 - 2013 was approved on April 16, 2008

Declaring of the influence of the project on the fulfillment of HP IS is obligatory for all applicants for NFA from the SF and CF and will be monitored in the application for NFA form:

- in the application for NFA the applicant will assess if the project has influence on the Information Society development,
- if he/she answers “yes” , he/she specifies the influence of the Information Society development regarding the goal, target group and project activities,
- if he/she answers “yes” , he/she is obliged to select at least one measurable indicator of the HP IS outcome and impact and to define its target values through which the influence of the project on HP IS will be monitored,
- if any from the above mentioned indicators is not suitable due to the objectives of the project, the applicant declares that the project does not contribute to HP IS,
- when declaring the influence on the Information Society development and selection of HP IS measurable indicators the applicant will follow the manual for the applicants or from other support documentation (such as instruction to how to complete form of application for NFA and the form itself) which are available to him/her in time of declaration of the call,
- when declaring the influence on the Information Society development the evaluation sheets with evaluation criteria for HP IS are also available,
- if necessary he/she consults the questions related to HP IS primarily with the focal person (nominated MA employee – member of the HP IS working group) for individual OP.

Measurable Indicators for HP IS in OPE:

OPE Measurable Indicator	OPE Priority Axis	Unit of Measurement	Starting Value (2006)
Number of newly established / innovated education programs targeted on the use of ICT in the teaching process	1. Education and Technical Preparation System Reform -	- number	- 0
Number of newly established / innovated education programs supporting digital literacy of university teachers and human resources in S&R	1. Education and Technical Preparation System Reform -	- number	- 0
Number of pedagogical employees successfully involved in programs supporting the enhancement of digital literacy/skills	1. Education and Technical Preparation System Reform	- number	- 0
Number of university teachers and S&R employees successfully involved in programs supporting the enhancement of digital literacy/skills	1. Education and Technical Preparation System Reform	- number	- 0
Number of newly established / innovated education programs targeted on the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills in the field of ICT	2. Further Education as Instrument for Human Resources Development	- number	- 0
Number of education programs targeted on the use of ICT in the	3. Promotion of Education for Persons	- number	- 0

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teaching process	with Special Education Needs		
Number of newly established / innovated education programs targeted on the use of ICT in the teaching process	4. Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region	- number	- 0
Number of newly established / innovated education programs supporting the digital literacy of university teachers and human resources in S&R	4. Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region	- number	- 0
Number of pedagogical employees successfully involved in programs supporting the enhancement of digital literacy/skills	4. Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region	- number	- 0
Number of university teachers and S&R employees successfully involved in programs supporting the enhancement of digital literacy/skills	4. Modern Education for Knowledge Society for the Bratislava Region	- number	- 0

4. ESF PROGRAMS: COHERENCE AND CONCENTRATION

4.1 Compliance of the OPE with the Strategic Documents of the SR and the EU

The targeting of the OPE fulfills the recommendation of the EU on employment, the European Employment Strategy, the EU Lisbon Strategy and constitutes a continuation of the strategic documents of the SR (the Strategy of Employment Growth Promotion Based on the Social System and Labor Market Reform, the National Action Plan for Employment for 2004 – 2006), the Commission working program “Education and Professional Preparation 2010”, the Memorandum on LLE and the Bologna Declaration, the European Parliament and Council Recommendation of December 18, 2006 on key competencies for the LLE (2006/962/EC). Education constitutes one of the basics of economic and social activity and employability support in these strategic documents. The intention of the OPE is constituted by the reform of education system and enhancement of labor force qualifications.

The OPE is in full compliance with the Strategic Guidelines of the Community for economic, social and territorial cohesion defining the basic framework for national strategic referential frameworks of the member countries with the goal to promote harmonic, even and sustainable development of the Community. The Priority Axes of the Operational Programme are based on and fully support the development part of the Strategy of Competitiveness of Slovakia until 2010 – the National Lisbon Strategy, which indicates in its introduction that “the long-term competitiveness of Slovakia can only be ensured in one way: by creating conditions for the development of the so-called knowledge economy.” They are focused especially on topics within the framework of the second and third guidelines: “Improvement of knowledge and innovation for growth” and “more amount and better quality jobs.”

The OPE is in compliance with the following programs:

- *The National Program of Reforms of the SR for 2006-2008*, approved by SR Government Resolution No. 797 of October 12, 2005, including the amendment to the proposed amendment to the national program of reforms of the SR for 2006 – 2008 approved by SR Government Resolution No. 1056 of December 13, 2006, emphasizes the future prosperity and competitiveness of the SR in the renovation of the traditional school to a modern school, the support of gifted youth, the active mastering of foreign languages, the support of teaching and learning through information technologies, the increasing of the availability and quality of university/college education, the opening of the system of further education and the integration of children from marginalized communities in the school environment. The National Program of Reforms of the Slovak Republic for 2006 – 2008, Part III. 1 Modern Education Policy has the goal to promote further education and compliance between regional offers of further education programs and the current needs of the regional labor market. Within the framework of Measure 2.2, the OPE, by introducing innovation to the content, methods and forms of further education of healthcare workers will improve their professional competency and competency profile.
- *Strategy of Competitiveness of Slovakia until 2010 (Lisbon Strategy for Slovakia)*, which was approved through SR Government Resolution No. 140 of February 16, 2005. The national Lisbon strategy emphasizes the modern education policy targeted on changes in the content of teaching, improvement of education in the field of foreign languages and skills in the field of information technologies; enhancement of the quality of teachers,

broadening of the instruments for development of gifted children and youth and the promotion of integration programs for children from marginalized groups into the standard education environment. Four Action Plans constitute its continuation (the *Action Plan Education and Employment*, the *Action Plan Science, Research and Innovations*, the *Action Plan Information Society* and the *Action Plan Business Environment*) approved by SR Government Resolution No. 557 of July 13, 2005. The OPE is based on the **Action Plan for the Field of Education and Employment**, which under the section entitled, Modern Education Policy, defines the priorities and establishes the tasks considered as the key tasks from the perspective of the overall renovation of the traditional school to a modern school. It places emphasis on the field of work with gifted youth, increasing the accessibility and quality of university/college education and opening the system of further education for the largest circle of citizens.

In Measure 2.2, the OPE aims to bring about the purposeful specialization and effective connecting of life-long education and the needs of the local and regional labor market needs by respecting the requirements of individual regions of the Slovak Republic and healthcare facilities for the provision and increasing of possibilities for life-long education of healthcare workers. And all this in the form of the active involvement of self-government, education institutions, professional associations and chambers, which is in compliance with the Strategy of Competitiveness of Slovakia until 2010. The fulfillment of the goals of this Strategy will lead to the improved access of healthcare workers to the further education and the design of a functional model of financing the further education of healthcare workers and stabilizing of healthcare workers by connecting the resources of the employer, public finances and the employee.

- *The National Report on Strategies of Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2006-2008* considers education policy as the key instrument for combating the intergenerational reproduction of poverty. It emphasizes the equality of opportunities in access to education and the possibilities of achieving quality education regardless of the socio-economic environment that a child comes from. It emphasizes the integration of children at risk and from marginalized groups into the standard education environment. Within the framework of Measure 2.2, the goal of the OPE is to ensure available, quality and sustainable health care in the regions in which the development and prognostic indicators of health and illness rates reach negative parameters pursuant to Part 4 (the National Strategy of Health and Long-term Care) of this document through the enhancement of the level of the specific knowledge and practical skills of selected categories of healthcare workers for the performance of highly demanding professional, specialized and certified work activities.

The real impact of OPE on coherence and concentration can not be presently assessed since in 2007 no individual OPE Measures were implemented.

5. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance (“TA”) is a part of the OPE. The main goal of TA is to ensure the effective implementation of the OPE in compliance with the requirements on management and administrative structures responsible for the implementation of the Operational Programme.

TA within the framework of OPE constitutes:

1. a special Priority Axis No. 5: TA for Objective Convergence, the purpose of which is to promote the implementation of Priority Axes OPE 1, 2, 3 and 5; and
2. a special Measure 4.3: TA for Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment, the purpose of which is to promote the implementation of Priority Axis 4 OPE.

Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, through which the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund are established and through which Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 is abrogated (the “General Provision”) provides individual member states with the possibility to use financial means for activities connected with the preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, informing and control of the Operational Programmes and also to activities connected with the strengthening of administrative capacities for implementing programs (Article 46).

Point 2 of Article 46 (Technical Assistance of Member States) provides individual member states with the possibility to design the Operational Programme of Technical Assistance and/or within the framework of individual Operational Programmes to have a separate TA Priority Axis available. Pursuant to this Regulation, the TA is classified as a special independent Priority Axis or a special Measure within the framework of the OPE.

Pursuant to Article 46 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, eligible subjects on all levels of managing structures may use the financial means within the framework of the TA OPE for the promotion of performed activities and functions related to the preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, informing and control and audit together with the strengthening of administrative capacities, i.e. acquiring and maintaining necessary sufficiently educated human resources, ensuring their professional growth and necessary professional prequalification and adequate conditions for their quality decision making with the goal of ensuring the high quality of the implementation of the OPE and its Priority Axes.

The following priority topics are applied for the area of TA⁴¹:

a) Priority Topic 85 – Preparation and Implementing, Monitoring and Control and Audit

The Preparation, monitoring, implementing and control of implementation of assistance from the SF within the OPE the following activities⁴²:

⁴¹ Pursuant to Annex No. II of Commission Order (EC) No. 1828/2006 (Categorization of Assistance from Funds for 2007 – 2013).

⁴² Pursuant to SF CF Management System for the Program Period 2007 – 2013, Version 2.0.

- staffing of preparation, management and control programs, projects and Horizontal Priorities, including activities of established SF committees and commissions, including the training of the staff;
- necessary material-technical backup related to management and control from the SF; and
- the provision of services (documents, software, etc.) related to the preparation, management and control of SF on the program, project, Horizontal Priority levels.

b) Priority Topic 86 – Evaluation and Studies; Information and Publicity.

The evaluation and studies, information and communication of the SF covers the following activities within the framework of the OPE⁴³:

- the adequate provision of information and dissemination of the awareness of Operational Programmes and the provision of publicity for Operational Programmes pursuant to Article 69 Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 and Section 1 of Commission Regulation No. 1828/2006 for recipients, potential recipients and the general public;
- establishing of networks of focal points and information and communication channels;
- the preparation and implementation of a communication plan;
- the provision of methodological and expert counseling, the promotion of activities for assistance to applicants, the provision of training and seminars for experience exchanges and dissemination of good practice, the promotion of partnership and mutual cooperation in the preparation and implementation of projects, implementing activities for the monitoring and evaluation of absorption capacity, etc.;
- ensuring the individual evaluation of Operational Programmes in compliance with the evaluation requirements pursuant to Article 47 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 including the ex-ante evaluation in the process of the preparation of the NSRF and OP; and
- the processing of expert opinions, methodologies, studies, assessments of influence on the environment, regional analyses related to the preparation of implementation of OPE.

5.1. MA - MoEdu SR

5.1.1 TA Projects

No TA projects were submitted or approved within the framework of the OPE in 2007. Projects will be submitted for approval in compliance with Version 2.0 of the SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007–2013, in 2008.

85/86	Project Title	Project Sum (million SKK)	Project Objectives	Project Status
-	-	-	-	-

5.1.2 List of Eligible Costs Paid in the Monitored Period (2007):

⁴³ Pursuant to Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund Management System for the Program Period 2007 – 2013, Version 2.0.

a) Objective 1 CONVERGENCE

Title of Activity to which the Cost is Connected		Unitary Price	Number of Units	Overall Price in Thousands SKK	ESF	SR
1.	Staffing for Preparation, Management and Control including Staff Training (85)	-	-	5 615	85 %	15 %
2.	Necessary Material Technical Backup (85)	-	-	636	85 %	15 %
3.	Provision of Services (85)	-	-	452	85 %	15 %
4.	Provision of Information Dissemination of Awareness about the OPE and Ensuring of Publicity (86)	-	-	130	85 %	15 %
5.	Processing of Expert Opinions, Methodologies, Studies, Evaluations of Impact on the Environment, Ex-Ante Evaluation (86)	-	-	281	85 %	15 %

b) Objective 2 REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Title of Activity to which the Cost is Connected		Unitary Price	Number of Units	Overall Price in Thousands SKK	ESF	SR
1.	Staffing for Preparation, Management and Control including Staff Training (85)	-	-	720	85 %	15 %
2.	Necessary Material Technical Backup (85)	-	-	52	85 %	15 %
3.	Provision of Services (85)	-	-	17	85 %	15 %
4.	Provision of Information Dissemination of Awareness about the OPE and Ensuring of Publicity (86)	-	-	4	85 %	15 %
5.	Processing of Expert Opinions, Methodologies, Studies, Evaluations of Impact on the Environment, Ex-Ante Evaluation (86)	-	-	9	85 %	15 %

5.1.3 Overall Sum of Means Refunded during the Monitored Period

No TA means were refunded in 2007. The expenses will be refunded after the TA project approval in 2008.

5.1.4 Registration of Purchased Equipment for the MA Needs

During the monitored period, the following property was purchased for the needs of the MA OPE: data-projectors -(3), screen -(1), digital Dictaphone -(1), microphone- (1), PC-(13), HP printers -(11), HP notebooks -(4), telephones -(3) and monitor -(1).

5.2. IB/MA – The Agency of the MoEdu SR for EU Structural Funds

5.2.1 TA Projects

In 2007 no TA projects within the framework of the OPE were submitted or approved. Projects will be submitted for approval in compliance with Version 2.0 of the SF and CF Management System for the Program Period 2007–2013, in 2008.

85/86	Project Title	Project Sum (millions SKK)	Project Objectives	Project Status
-	-	-	-	-

5.2.2 List of Eligible Expenses Paid in the Monitored Period

Objective 1 CONVERGENCE

Title of Activity, to which the Expense is Related	Unitary Price	Number of Units	Overall Price in Thousands SKK	ESF	SR
1. Labor Costs (85)	-	-	3,597	85 %	15 %
2. Technical Equipment (85)	-	-	4,950	85 %	15 %
3. Overhead (85)	-	-	1,073	85 %	15 %
4. Information and Publicity (86)	-	-	3,417	85 %	15 %

Objective 2 REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Title of Activity, to which the Expense is Related	Unitary Price	Number of Units	Overall Price in Thousands SKK	ESF	SR
1. Labor Costs (85)	-	-	183	85 %	15 %
2. Technical Equipment (85)	-	-	247	85 %	15 %
3. Overhead (85)	-	-	55	85 %	15 %
4. Informing and Publicity (86)	-	-	174	85 %	15 %

5.2.3 Overall Sum of Means Refunded in the Monitored Period

Due to the date of approval of the Operational Programme, ITMS and Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund Management System for the Program Period 2007–2013, the Agency did not refund any financial means from the Technical Assistance means in 2007.

5.2.4 Registration of Purchased Equipment for IB/MA Needs – the Agency of the MoEdu SR for the EU Structural Funds

Due to the above mentioned, no equipment was purchased in the monitored period from the Technical Assistance means.

5.3. IB/MA – Ministry of Health of the SR

5.3.1 TA Projects

Two Technical Assistance projects were prepared in the monitored period, one for Priority Axis 85 and one for Priority Axis 86.

They were not submitted to the MA for the OPE for approval in 2007.

85/86	Project Title	Project Sum (millions SKK)	Project Objectives	Project Status
-	-	-	-	-

5.3.2 List of Eligible Expenses Paid in the Monitored Period

The wages of employees involved in the preparation and programming of Measure 2.2 of the OPE were paid from the SF financial means - Chapter MH SR.

The design of the Internal Manual for the IB/MA was equally paid from the means of the MH SR.

Title of Activity, to which the Expense is Related		Unitary Price in SKK	Number of Units	Overall Price in Thousands SKK	ESF	SR
1.	Wages for Eligible Employees	-	-	3,000	85%	15%

5.3.3 Overall Sum of Means Refunded in the Monitored Period

The overall sum of means refunded in the monitored period constitutes SKK 0.00.

5.3.4 Registration of Purchased Equipment for the IB/MA Needs

The MH SR purchased equipment from the SF financial means – Chapter MH SR – however the spent means will not constitute the subject of refunding from the OPE Technical Assistance project.

6. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

The submitted Annual Report on the Implementation of the OPE provides information on implementing activities in the field of information and publicity within the framework of the OPE for 2007. The goal of information and publicity is to enhance awareness and the system of assistance provided by the EU Structural Funds for all target groups in order to create a unified picture of pertinent assistance through suitable instruments.

In compliance with Article 69 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of July 11, 2006, (“Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006”) through which the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund are established and through which Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 is abrogated, the Managing Authority provides information and publicity about co-financed programs. This information is addressed to the citizens of the EU and the recipients with the goal of emphasizing the role of the Community and to ensure the transparency of assistance from EU funds. The Managing Authority for the Operational Programme is responsible for its publicity in compliance with the rules for executing this Regulation and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of December 8, 2006, through which the executive rules for Council Regulation (EC) No. 1038/2006 are established, and through which the general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006 on European Regional Development Fund (“Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006”) are established.

The basic framework for ensuring information and publicity is constituted by the Communication Plan for the OPE and Operational Programme Research and Development (the “OPR&D”) which the MA must submit to the EC within 4 months after the approval of the OP⁴⁴. The Ministry of Education of the SR, as the MA for the OPE, in cooperation with the IB/MA for OPE (Agency and MH SR) within the framework of establishing the synergic effect and the information-communication strategy for the OP Education and OP Research&Development (both OP’s are administered by the MoEdu SR as the MA) through the Communication Plan for the OPE and OPR&D (hereinafter the “CoP”) implements the plan of individual information activities for 2007 – 2013. The goal is to ensure information and publicity about the possibilities, objectives and volume of offered assistance from the ESF through the OPE and OPR&D to potential applicants for non-returnable financial allowance, applicants for NFA, recipients of NFA and the general public.

The Ministry of Education, as the MA, provides publicity on the level of EU Structural Funds and one of its tasks is constituted by the control of publicity on the level of national projects pursuant to the concluded agreement on the provision of non-returnable financial allowance. The Agency and the Ministry of Health of the SR, as the IB/MA, focus on publicity on the level of calls for the submission of applications for NFA and control the adherence to publicity on the level of demand-oriented projects pursuant to the concluded agreement on the provision of NFA.

Within the framework of the OPE, the publicity target groups to which the information will be provided in adequate, understandable and most possible effective way, were identified.

⁴⁴ MoEdu SR officially submitted the Communication Plan through SCF2007 on March 26, 2008.

6.1. Activities in the Field of Information and Publicity Implemented by the MA and the IB/MA

6.1.1. Strategic Documents in the Filed of Information and Publicity

In 2007, the MA, in cooperation with the IB/MA, implemented the preparation and design of the following essential documents in the field of information and publicity within the framework of the OPE:

a) Communication Plan

The Communication Plan constitutes the essential document of the MA in the field of information and publicity of pertinent OP. The Communication Plan for the OPE and OPR&D constitutes an information and communication strategy containing measures for information and publicity within the program period 2007 – 2013. The information and communication strategy establishes the method and instruments used for the dissemination of timely, correct and comprehensive information designated for potential applicants for NFA (“Potential Applicants”), applicants for NFA, recipients of NFA (“Recipients”) and the general public on national and regional levels about the opportunities for financial assistance provided by the EU Structural Funds and the state budget of the SR. It is based on the Objectives of the OPE and OPR&D and assists in their fulfillment.

Based on Article 3 of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006, the MA is obliged to forward the Communication Plan from the pertinent OP to the European Commission within 4 months after the approval of Operational Programme. The MoEdu SR, as the MA for OPE and OPR&D, decided to design, submit and implement a common Communication Plan for the OPE and OPR&D because of its synergic effect. Since the OPE was approved by the European Commission on November 7, 2007 and the OPR&D was approved on November 28, 2007, it was necessary to submit the CoP for OPE and OPR&D to the EC not later than March 28, 2008.

In 2007, the MA, in cooperation with the IB/MA, implemented the preparation of the Communication Plan for the OPE and OPR&D.

b) Annual Operative Plan of Information and publicity for the OPE and the OPR&D for 2008

In 2007, the MA cooperated with the IB/MA – the Agency, in the preparation of the Annual Plan of Information and publicity for OPE and OPR&D for 2008. The Annual Publicity Plan was elaborated in connection with the draft of the CoP and is an elaboration of the information and communication strategy established in the CoP. It contains actual measures for information and publicity in 2007 and 2008 and establishes the method and instruments used for the dissemination of timely, correct and comprehensive information designated for potential applicants for non-returnable financial allowance, recipients and the general public. The annual publicity plan was elaborated together for the MA and the Agency with the goal of unifying the presentation of the OPE and coordinating its individual activities in terms of time and money.

The MA cooperated with the IB/MA – MH SR in the preparation of an independent Publicity Operative Plan for Measure 2.2 of the OPE for 2007-2008.

6.1.2. Working Group for Publicity

The MoEdu SR, as the MA, created the Working Group for Publicity, whose role is to cooperate in the implementation of information-communication activities on the level of the MA and the IB/MA for the OPE and OPR&D. The Working Group is comprised of managers for information and publicity (hereinafter the “MIP”) of the MA for the OPE and OPR&D, the MIP for the MH SR and programming managers for the OPE and OPR&D for the IB/MA – the Agency. The meetings dealt with ensuring the connection of the mutual flow of MA – IB/MA information and solution of actual activities and requirements in the field of information and publicity (for example planning activities for 2007/2008 and discussing the budget for their implementing, submitting designs for printed materials or information fliers for the OPE 2007 – 2013 prepared by the Agency and comments on the proposals in question by working group members and managers from the MA responsible for information and publicity and others).

6.1.3. Regional Information Offices

At the end of 2007, the Agency, as the IB/MA, opened a network of Regional Information Offices (“RIO”) for the general public on the level of 8 self-governing regions for the purpose of making information regarding the possibilities and methods of acquiring financial means available directly on the regional level. The RIO are located directly on the premises of selected universities, which are the centers of education, science and research and constitute one of the main target groups of applicants within the framework of the OPE. Agreements on cooperation were concluded with universities in Trnava, Trenčín, Žilina, Zvolen, Nitra, Prešov and Košice in the course of November 2007. The RIO for the Bratislava region is located on the premises of the Agency. In November the Offices were staffed and by the end of 2007 their employees had undergone basic training targeted on the OPE and the EU Structural Funds Management System in the Program Period 2007-2013. The official opening launching of RIO activities of was planned for January 2008.

The RIO fulfill the function of focal points in the region for informing potential applicants for non-returnable financial allowance, applicants for non-returnable financial allowance, recipients and the general public. The RIO provide information on the objectives of the OPE and the possibilities of drawing of financial means from the ESF in the region. The RIO employ a total of 16 employees in the position of regional publicity manager. On the level of the Agency, the position of publicity manager for is filled by another four employees. Information will be provided in the form of personal consultations, via telephone and in writing and via e-mail.

6.1.4. Implementing Information and publicity in 2007

Due to the fact that the OPE was approved by the European Commission on November 7, 2007, the implementing of information and publicity in 2007 was mainly in the phase of preparing the information campaign, whose goal was to raise interest in the OP and provide information about how the system works and OPE possibilities. During this phase the following information communication instruments and means were used:

a) Events

National Conference of the OPE

Publishing the approval of the Operational Programme Education in the form of a press release and subsequently launching the main information activity on the occasion of the approval of the OPE constituted an extremely significant point in the field of information and publicity. The main information activity was constituted by the national conference.

The common National Conference for the OP Education and OP Employment and Social Inclusion⁴⁵ took place in Bratislava on November 27, 2007 at the City Hotel Bratislava. Approximately 200 participants (representatives of the academic community, regional school offices, methodical-pedagogical centers, the Slovak Academy of Science, the State Pedagogical Institute, etc.). Ján Mikolaj, the Minister of Education, delivered a speech and Vladimír Špidla, the Euro-Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equality of Opportunities, was the honorable guest. The conference introduced the OPE and the bodies responsible for its implementation (the MA and IB/MA) and presented practical information related to eligible framework activities, eligible target groups and eligible and non-eligible expenses and other necessary information. The national conference was also accompanied by a press conference.

Series of Conferences Targeted on Presenting the NSRF and Individual OP

In connection with the approval of the national Strategic Referential Framework on August 17, 2007, the Central Coordination authority organized a series of conferences targeted on informing potential recipients and the general public about the NSRF and individual OP. These conferences took place on the following dates: November 13, 2007 in Nitra, November 20, 2007 in Trnava, November 27, 2007 in Žilina, December 4, 2007 in Banská Bystrica, December 11, 2007 in Trenčín, December 18, 2007 in Košice, December 19, 2007 in Prešov and January 8, 2008 in Bratislava. The representatives of the MA for the OPE presented material at each of these conferences which introduced the OPE, including information about eligible activities, eligible and non-eligible expenses, etc. and the bodies responsible for its implementation (with the exception of the conference in Nitra,⁴⁶ separate material of the representatives of the MH SR, as the IB/MA, providing information about the implementation of Measure 2.2 of the OPE was presented at each conference).

Information Seminar to Measure 2.2 OPE

The MH SR, as IB/MA, organized the first information meeting for representatives of upper-tier territorial units of the SR on November 30, 2007 on the premises of the MH SR. A total of 13 representatives of all addressed UtTU (except for Bratislava) participated. The goal of this meeting was to establish the methodology, content, process of project implementation and preparation of the contents of the pilot call whose announcement was planned for March 2008⁴⁷. Based on the outcomes of the negotiations of the UtTU, an analysis of educational needs will be carried out, as a result of which they will identify insufficiently represented specializations in the region.

b) Internet

⁴⁵ Both OP are co financed from the ESF

⁴⁶ After agreement with the MA and CCA.

⁴⁷ The UtTU constitute potential applicants. Healthcare workers will constitute the target group in the pilot call.

- www.minedu.sk: Through an information campaign on the national level within the framework of internet portal of the MoEdu SR www.minedu.sk in the form of establishing a special information section – pages focused on the ESF within the framework of the program period 2007 – 2013 with an emphasis on the OPE. Within the framework of these pages, comprehensive information on the OPE and its implementing by the MA and IB/MA, including a section entitled FAQ, are published and updated. The strategic documents were also published on www.minedu.sk: the text of the OPE and the Program Manual to the OPE containing a more detailed elaboration of the Operational Programme on the level of Measures from the aspect of content and the fiscal planning; it contains examples of actual activities, indicators on the Measure level, eligible expenses, assistance categorizing, eligible recipients, target groups and fiscal plans of individual Measures. The above mentioned pages provided the possibility for potential applicants for NFA, applicants for NFA, recipients of NFA and the general public to register on the mass electronic distribution list – the so-called mailing list, through which it is possible to receive information about current calls of the OPE and other important information related to the OPE.
- www.asfeu.sk: The Agency internet page www.asfeu.sk was launched for the access of the general public in June 2007. This page provides basic information about the Agency, its mission and goals and information about EU Structural Funds and other important documents. Other published information will include not only current calls for the submission of applications for non-returnable financial allowance and lists of approved projects, but also training sessions and seminars designated for potential applicants for non-returnable financial allowance and recipients. The visit rate to this page was continuously monitored (as of December 31, 2007 the page was visited 22,021 times).
- www.health-sf.sk: The MH SR, as the IB/MA under the Managing Authority for Measure 2.2 of the OPE, had no special web page for implementing information-communication activities in 2007. Since the intention was to have such page by December 31, 2007, the Ministry launched a market survey for web page for Measure 2.2 with the title www.health-sf.sk.

All important information regarding the OP Education was also published at the information portal www.nsrr.sk.

c) Visual Corporate Identity

Within the framework of this activity, the **OPE logo** (it contains four basic parts – the blue line depicts an open book, the red point depicts the goal, the inscription OPE and everything is closed by a circle of stars which is the symbol of the European Union) was designed and approved by the Minister of Education of the SR and the design manual to this logo was elaborated.

In order to achieve a unified communication strategy for the Agency, the design manual was elaborated as a basic document upon which the Agency can incorporate visual identity. It includes: the logo (an open book in the national colors as a symbol of education, open chances, progress and the development of a modern society), the Agency internet page, printed materials, information materials and publications. The above mentioned design manual, which at the same time includes the Operational Programme logo, is used for all information materials and publications published by the Agency and the information navigation system (the exterior marking of the building, the marking of offices, navigation boards, and the marking of regional information offices).

d) Personal, Telephone and E-mail Counseling

Information about the OPE, bodies responsible for its implementation, eligible activities, eligible expenses and non-eligible expenses, etc. were provided to potential recipients and to the general public personally, by telephone, e-mail and written counseling and responses to potential recipients and the general public by MA and the IB/MA (both the IB/MA keep their own records about providing information).

e) Media

- The magazine EUROREPORT plus (Volume July-August 2007) published an interview introducing the mission and possibilities for use of the OPE.
- Information on the approval of the OP was published on November 7, 2007 in the form of a press release. This information was supported by a press conference of the Minister of Education of the SR on the occasion of the National Conference on the OPE on November 27, 2007.
- within the framework of the enhancement of awareness of the OPE, an information article about the OPE was published in the collection of the "BIBLIOTÉKA – PEDAGOGIKA" fair and exhibition (November 8 – 11, 2007).

The summary of speeches and media appearances from 2007, in which the OPE was mentioned :

- The MEdu SR Established an Agency with the Goal to Successfully Draw Means from Eurofunds (January 9, 2007, TASR),
- The Drawing of Structural Funds (January 17, 2007, Slovak Radio, Rádiožurnál, Petra Maťašovská),
- Negotiations with the EC about the NSRF SR for 2007 - 2013 Will Commence on February 27, (February 26, 2007, TASR),
- Eurofunds. Everything about the Drawing of Means from Euro-funds on Internet....(March 14, 2007, Hospodárske Noviny, page 28, Zuzana Kollárová),
- New Portal Provides Information on the Possibilities of Drawing Money from EU Funds (June 10, 2007, TASR),
- Next Year the Budget of the MoEdu Will be 53 Billion, It Expects 400 Million from the EU (August 15, 2007, TASR),
- Janušek: EC Approves the National Strategic Referential Framework for Slovakia (August 17, 2007, TASR),
- GOVERNMENT: Resort of Education Will Have 4 Billion More in 2008 (October 11, 2007, TASR),
- EDUCATION: EC Approves the Operational Programme Education for the SR in the Volume of EURO 726.8 million (November 8, 2007, TASR),
- SCIENCE: Slovak Science and Research Will Receive EURO 1.4 billion for 2007- 2013 (December 1, 2007, TASR)

The following articles were published in *Učiteľské noviny* (Teachers' News) in 2007:

- The Role of the Agency for Structural Funds, February 20, 2007
- Distinctive European Support for Education, March 6, 2007
- Agency with a New Web Page, June 26, 2007
- Money for Operational Programmes, September 4, 2007
- Application Form for Evaluators for Expert Evaluation of Applications for Non-returnable Financial Allowance, November 26, 2007

- European Commission Approves the Operational Programme Education, November 12, 2007
- Drawing of Money Is within Reach, What Are the Programs' Priorities? (Interview with the GD Miriam Kováčiková), November 12, 2007
- Monitoring Committee Meets, November 26, 2007
- Operational Programme Education, November 26, 2007
- The First calls Will Be in January 2008 (Interview with GD Alexandra Drgová), December 10, 2007
- OP Education: Money also for School Reform, December 10, 2007
- Strengthen Your Potential (Interview with Vladimír Špidla, the Euro Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equality of Opportunities, December 10, 2007)

The MH SR, as the IB/MA, implemented the following publication activities:

- Article in *Zdravotnícke noviny* (Healthcare News) Volume 47/2007 with the title "Project for Stabilizing Healthcare Workers in the Regions" (December 20, 2007),
- interview for internet portal www.euractiv.sk – December 17, 2007.

f) Publications and Promotional Items

Within the framework of publicity of the OPE in 2007, a publication – the printed text of the OPE as the basic document for implementing projects within the framework of the OPE, was published for the needs of potential applicants for the NFA, applicants for the NFA, recipients of NFA and the general public. A total of 500 copies of the text of the OPE were published and distributed to the IB/MA and potential recipients⁴⁸.

In the course of November and December 2007, OPE fliers were designed and printed (125,000 copies) for the needs of public notification. A total of 38,000 CD's and the following OPE booklets were also produced:

- *Information regarding the Operational Programme Education* – the goal of which is to provide basic information about the OPE regarding its Measures and allocation of financial means for individual Priority Axes to the general public. Information about the possibilities of submitting projects, applicant eligibility and access to the ITMS portal constituted part of this booklet. A total of 7,300 copies of this booklet were published in December 2007.
- *Timetable of Calls for 2008* – the goal is to introduce information on calls for the submission of applications for non-returnable financial allowance. A total of 7,300 pieces of this booklet were published in December 2007. The Booklets were produced for the purpose of their distribution to target groups within the framework of prepared regional conferences⁴⁹.

In compliance with the Manual for Information and publicity, the acquisition of small promotion items was carried out in December 2007 for the purpose of raising the awareness of the OPE among the general public. The actual data is incorporated in the following table:

Item No.	Promotion Items –	OP E Logo , Agency Logo, EU Flag	OP E Logo, EU Flag (Number of Pieces)
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⁴⁸ For example within the framework of the National Conference on November 27, 2007.

⁴⁹ Regional conferences took place on January 18-28, 2008 and were connected with opening of individual Regional Information Offices.

		(Number of Pieces)	
1.	Ball-Point Pens	4,000	1,000
2.	Set of Pens	300	200
3.	Post its	2,300	200
4.	Business Card Holders	500	0
5.	Key Chains	1500	0
6.	Key Chains with Tokens	0	2,500
7.	Lanyards (for cell phones)	0	250
8.	Boxes of Crayons	500	0
9.	Opaque Glass Mugs	0	350
10.	Cloth Bags for Documents	100	0
11.	Baseball Caps	100	0
12.	Paper Bags A4	0	1,500
13.	Set of Highlighters	250	500
14.	USB Sticks 1 GB	200	50
15.	Diaries for 2008 (Weekly)	100	100

Monitoring and Evaluation of Information-Communication Activities

Due to the fact that in 2007 no calls or direct assignments were announced – i.e. no project was implemented in the given period, it is not possible to provide any information regarding adherence to the provision of Article 8 of Regulation No. 1828/2006.

Equally, due to the fact that in the given period no CoP was designed and approved by the European Commission, it was not possible to monitor the implementing of the CoP or any fulfillment of monitoring indicators or any evaluation of activities in the field of notification and publicity.

6.2. Cooperation with the CCA

The Central Coordination Authority is responsible for the coordination of activities in the field of information and publicity on the national level within the framework of the National Strategic Referential Framework. The CCA coordinates the working group for publicity (the “WGforP”) which was established for the purpose of the coordination of information-communication activities on the level of the NSRF and individual OP. The representative of the MA – the manager for information and publicity for the OPE, is also a member of this working group. Within the framework of the WGforP, the Manual for Information and publicity was commented on and approved as a document providing minimum standards and unified procedures for activities in the field of notification, and the WGforP Statute.

The manager for information and publicity for the OPE cooperates with the CCA by supplying information and materials related to the OPE. The pertinent information is published at the information portal www.nsrr.sk.

In connection with the approval of the National Strategic Referential Framework on August 17, 2007, material was presented by the representatives of the MA within the framework of the series of conferences targeted on informing about the NSRF and individual OP which introduced the OPE. It included information on eligible activities, eligible and non-eligible expenses, etc., and the bodies responsible for their implementation.

In 2007, the MIP RO participated in 2 training courses (“Effective Communication” and “Lecturing Skills”), organized by the CCA for members of the WGforP.

6.3. Cooperation on the Supranational Level

On the national level, the MIP OPE, as the representative of the MA for the OPE, is a member of the Information & Communication Platform - INFORM Network. The goal of INFORM is to associate managers for the publicity of all Operational Programmes with the intention of information exchanges and identification of methods to enhance the quality of communication activities, raise awareness regarding the benefits of Community interventions among potential recipients and the general public and improve the visibility of projects financed by the EU. Communication among the members of the group takes place in the form of the dissemination of information and experience exchanges by e-mail communication. On November 26-27, 2007, the members of the INFORM group (including the MIP OPE) participated in the conference *“Telling The Story. Communicating The Cohesion Policy Together”* in Brussels. The purpose of the conference was to exchange experience and disseminate best practices in the field of information and publicity.

ANNEXES

Annex No. 1	Data on the Priority Axis Level
Annex No. 2	Priority Axes According to Financing Source
Annex No. 3	Payments Accepted from the European Commission
Annex No. 4	Summary Distribution of Allocated Community Allowance according to Category Following the Annual and Final Report on Implementation
Annex No. 5	Ongoing Applications for Payment Submitted to the European Commission
Annex No. 6	Status of Implementation – Overview of SF CF Drawing in Comparison with Undertakings
Annex No. 7	Data on the Participants of the ESF operations according to Priority Axes