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Final Evaluation Report
Periodical evaluation of the Operational Programme Education

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List of acronyms

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ASFEU | Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR for the Structural Funds of the EU |
| C objective | Convergence objective |
| RCE objective | Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective |
| CCA | Central Coordination Authority |
| CA | Certifying Authority |
| EC | European Commission |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund |
| EC | European Community/Communities |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| EU | European Union |
| EU 2020 | Europe 2020 Strategy |
| HP | Horizontal priority |
| GM SSFEU | General manager of the Section for the Structural Funds of the EU (GM) |
| IMMA | Internal Manual of Procedure of the MA OPE and MA OPR&D |
| ITMS | IT Monitoring system |
| CF | Cohesion Fund |
| CoP | Communication Plan for the OPE and OP R&D |
| MIP | Manager for Information and Publicity |
| MRC | Marginalized Roma communities |
| MESRS SR | Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic |
| MC OPE | Monitoring Committee for the OPE |
| MH SR | Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic |
| NFC | Non-repayable financial contribution |
| NP | National project |
| NRP | National Reform Program |
| NSRF | National Strategic Reference Framework of the Slovak Republic for 2007-2013 |
| AA | Audit Authority |
| PICS | Project Implementation and Control Section |

| | |
|--------|--|
| PPIRS | Public Procurement and Irregularities Review Section |
| MTAS | Methodology and Technical Assistance Section |
| OPED | Operational Programme Education Department |
| OP | Operational Programme |
| OPE | Operational Programme Education |
| OP R&D | Operational Programme Research and Development |
| PMS | Programme Management Section |
| PU | Paying Unit |
| WGP | Working Group for Publicity |
| RIO | Regional Information Office |
| MA OPE | Managing Authority for the Operational Programme Education |
| AOP IP | Annual Operative Plan for Information and Publicity |
| SSFEU | Section for the Structural Funds of the EU |
| IBMA | Intermediate body under the Managing Authority |
| SR | The Slovak Republic |
| SF | Structural Funds |
| SB | State Budget |
| TA | Technical assistance |
| MIA | Major information activity |
| PP | Public procurement |
| AFNFC | Application for payment |

Introduction

The Operational Programme Education (hereinafter referred to as “OPE”) has been approved by the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as “EC”) on 7 November 2007, with the EU financial contribution for this operational programme at 617, 801, 578 EUR. MA OPE”). [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR](#) (hereinafter referred to as “MESRS SR”) is the managing authority for OPE (hereinafter referred MA OPE”), having been charged with its tasks by the Slovak Government’s resolutions. The Managing Authority constitutes the operational level of the system of structural funds management. In this respect, it carries out all functions arising out of the provisions of Article 60 of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, of 11 July 2006, laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No.1250/1999 (hereinafter referred to as the “general regulation”).

Within the meaning of Article 59 of the general regulation, the managing authority may delegate some or all of its tasks to the intermediate body under the managing authority. Even in the event of delegation, the ultimate responsibility for the management of the operational programme (hereinafter referred to as “OP”) rests with the managing authority. The ministry’s (MESRS SR) Agency for Structural Funds of the EU (hereinafter referred to as “ASFEU”) and the Ministry of Health of the SR (hereinafter referred to as “MH SR”) act as Intermediate Bodies under the Managing Authority (hereinafter referred to as “IBMA”) for OPE. Mutual relations between the MESRS SR, as the managing authority, and the intermediate bodies under the managing authorities are laid down by special agreements, defining their mutual rights and obligations in the area of providing assistance from the European Social Fund.

The global objective of the OPE is to ensure long-term competitiveness of the Slovak Republic by adapting its education system to the needs of the knowledge-based society. OPE, through contributions from the ESF resources financially supports shaping and fostering the human capital to acquire basic skills and key competences required in the knowledge-based society and in the labour market. OPE (available at <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=957>) covers all levels of the education system – primary, secondary, higher and further education. All levels of education system must be linked to the needs of the labour market and the challenges of the knowledge-based society. Modernisation and support of education and training at all levels of the education system is an essential component for developing the knowledge-based society in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as “SR”). Investments in this area are designed to start up or strengthen the processes that will ensure competitiveness for the Slovak Republic, in both European and global terms, as well as an overall development of education, creativity, competence and freedom of every citizen’s personality.

For a more detailed elaboration of OPE down to the level of measures, from the aspect of contents and financial planning, see the Programme Manual for OPE (available at: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=957>). It includes examples of activities, indicators at the level of measures, eligible expenditure, categorisation of assistance, eligible recipients, target groups and financial plans of measures concerned.

Annual implementation reports of the OPE for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 (available at: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=2970>) contain the data on the implementation of OPE achieved at the level of priority axes in monitoring and financial indicators for 2007-2010. The annual reports on the implementation of OPE (hereinafter referred to as “AIR OPE”) also contain the information about the contribution OPE has made to horizontal priorities, as defined in the National Strategic Reference Framework for 2007-2013 (hereinafter referred to as “NSRF”).

MESRS SR, as MA OPE, and IBMA (ASFEU and MH SR) are governed by procedures laid down in the Internal Manual of Procedures. MA OPE in cooperation with IBMA has produced the Guide for the Applicant and the Guide for the Recipient, to provide guidance (available at: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=476>).

Periodical evaluation of the Operational Programme Education

Within the meaning of the Central Coordination Authority's Methodological Guideline No. 5 for the elaboration of the evaluation plan of operational programmes for the Programming Period 2007 – 2013, of 18 September 2008, (hereinafter referred to as "CCA Methodological Guideline No. 5") every managing authority shall have the obligation to carry out periodical evaluation of the whole OP every 2 years, starting from 2009.

In view of the date of the a OPE approval, (November 2007), the dates of first calls for demand-driven projects and national projects (Quarter 1 of 2008) and the dates of conclusion of first contracts with recipients on the provision of non-repayable financial contribution (Q2 of 2008), MA OPE did not carry out periodical evaluation of the whole OPE in 2009. Instead, at the advice of the Commission, an operative evaluation exercise has been undertaken "Evaluation of Efficiency of the OPE Management System." It was conducted from November 2009 to April 2010.

The purpose of the evaluation was to review the efficiency of activities by MA OPE, IBMA; the analysis of the set-up of the system of management and the system of implementation of the OPE. At the same time the evaluation also assessed the activity of available administrative capacities involved in the implementation of the OPE. The main areas covered by the evaluation included: the assessment of the system of management, coordination, and cooperation, transparency and effectiveness of the implementation system. The evaluation also covered the efficiency of the activity of the Monitoring Committee for the OPE (hereinafter referred to as "MC OPE") and the attainment of its tasks.

In November 2011 MA OPE conducted the periodical evaluation of OPE, in accordance with the CCA Methodological Guideline No. 5, and in accordance with the exception of the Central Coordination Authority (hereinafter referred to as "CCA") from this methodological guideline, to be completed by 1 March 2012.

Evaluation was undertaken as a planned interim internal evaluation. The evaluation was conducted by the OPE manager for evaluation working with the Task Force for Evaluation of OPE, set up at the MA OPE. The evaluation consisted in the overall assessment of the OPE implementation, as of 31 December 2011, and was undertaken without financial claims.

The following four areas have been the object of the periodical evaluation of the OPE implementation:

1. Evaluation of the current state of implementation of OPE;
2. Evaluation of the system of management of OPE;
3. Evaluation of the system of monitoring and monitoring indicators;
4. Evaluation of the OPE information and publicity.

In the preparation of the background materials and evaluation questions, MA OPE considered a number of aspects. The implementation of this evaluation coincided with the implementation and

completion of an external strategic evaluation, titled the “Progress evaluation in the implementation of OPE from the aspect of relevance and achievement of the Operational Programme objectives”, within which the data was evaluated, as of 30 June 2011. Hence MA OPE decided to evaluate within its periodical evaluation the areas that had not been covered by the strategic evaluation, while striving to avoid duplicity of topics within both these evaluations.

The first part of the evaluation focused on the evaluation of the current state in the publication of calls for national projects and calls for demand-driven projects, the evaluation of the current state in the OPE implementation and the evaluation of the OPE contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy objectives and to those of the National Reform Programme 2011 – 2014.

In preparation, the MA OPE decided to assess also the current state in the area of OPE management system, and thus compare in certain areas the changes occurring since the implementation of the “Evaluation of Efficiency of the OPE Management System”. The latter part of the evaluation then concentrated on the assessment of the management system, including cooperation between the MA OPE and IBMA.

The third part of the evaluation focused on the assessment of the monitoring system and its indicators. In this area, an external thematic evaluation was carried out from September 2010 to February 2011 - the “Evaluation of Correctness of Set-up of Measurable Indicators and the Monitoring Functionality”. In this regard, MA OPE concentrated particularly on the evaluation of the experience and the identification of the most serious problems from the aspect of previous MA OPE experience. Recommendations for the preparation of indicators for the next programming period 2014-2020 were also part of it.

The last selected area for evaluation concerned information and publicity. It is an area which had not been previously dealt with in any of the OPE evaluations and that was why efficiency in this area was assessed.

A list of evaluation questions is enclosed as Annex 1 to this report.

Timetable for the implementation of evaluation

The implementation of the periodical evaluation of the OPE commenced in November 2011 and was concluded in February 2012.

Methodology of evaluation

- The analysis of timetables of calls for submission of applications for non-repayable financial contribution (hereinafter referred to as “NFC”), the analysis of the publication of calls for demand-driven projects and calls for national projects;
- The analysis of the planned, contracted and drawn funding earmarked for the OPE;
- The assessment of the OPE contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to the National Reform Programme 2011-2014;
- The analysis and assessment of the management system of the MA OPE, the assessment of the administrative capacities involved in the OPE implementation and the funding for Technical Assistance (hereinafter referred to as “TA”) for administrative support of the OPE implementation;

- The analysis and assessment of the system of monitoring and measurable indicators, based on experiences of MA OPE;
- The analysis in the area of information and publicity, evaluation of the effectiveness of information activities and of activities in information and publicity, the appraisal of sufficiency of TA funding allocated to Priority theme 86 for the area of information and publicity.

Information sources

The following information sources have been used for the purposes of evaluation:

- The National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 – 2013;
- The Operational Programme Education;
- The Programme Manual for the OPE, version valid from 17 May 2011;
- The Internal Manual of Procedures of the MA OPE and the MA OP R&D, version 13.0 (hereinafter referred to as “IMMA”);
- The Communication Plan for the OPE and the OP R&D;
- The Financial Management System for the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the Programming Period 2007 – 2013, version 6.0, of December 2010 (hereinafter referred to as the “Financial Management System for the SF and the CF”);
- The Management System for the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the Programming Period 2007 – 2013, version 4.4, of 31 December 2010, (hereinafter referred to as “the Management System for the SF and the CF”);
- Annual implementation reports for the OPE;
- Semi-annual Monitoring Reports by the IBMA ASFEU and IBMA MH SR;
- Data of MA OPE on contracting and drawing of the OPE;
- Questionnaires designed for the MA OPE to evaluate the management system;
- Interviews with MA OPE and IBMA staff.

1. Evaluation of the current state of implementation of the Operational Programme Education

OPE is a multi-objective programme covering both the Convergence objective (hereinafter referred to as “C objective”) and the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective (hereinafter referred to as “RCE objective”).

Within the total financial allocation for the Slovak Republic for 2007-2013, the OPE was allocated EUR 600,000,000 under the C objective, and 17, 801, 578 EUR, under the RCE objective. Together it amounts to EUR 617, 801,578 for the EU funds.

The OPE’s objective is “to ensure long-term competitiveness of the Slovak Republic through adjusting its education system to the needs of the knowledge-based society”.

The main objectives of the OPE include:

- To reform primary and secondary school education and support quality improvement of higher education and the quality of human resources in research and development;
- To create and develop an effective system of life-long learning and life-long guidance aimed at developing the key competences and raising qualifications in accordance with the current and prospective needs of the knowledge-based society;
- To increase the education level of persons with special educational needs with regard to the marginalized Roma communities (hereinafter referred to as “MRC”);
- To improve the quality and the access to life-long learning with emphasis on the transformation of the education content, with a view to developing the key competences to ensure long-term competitiveness of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region;
- To ensure efficient implementation of the OPE, in accordance with the requirements made on the management and administrative structures responsible for the OP implementation.

The OPE is implemented under the following priority axes and measures:

| Priority axis / measure |
|---|
| 1 Reform of the education and vocational training system 1.1 Transformation of traditional school into modern one 1.2 Tertiary schools and research and development as drivers of the development of the knowledge-based society |
| 2 Life-long learning as the basic instrument of the human resource development 2.1 Support to life-long learning 2.2 Support to life-long learning in the health sector |
| 3 Supporting the education of persons with special educational needs 3.1 Raising the education level of members of the MRC 3.2 Raising the education level of persons with special educational needs |
| 4 Modern education for the knowledge-based society for the Bratislava Region 4.1 Transformation of traditional school into modern one for the Bratislava Region 4.2 Raising the competitiveness of the Bratislava Region by developing the tertiary education and the lifelong learning 4.3 Technical assistance for the RCE objective |
| 5 Technical assistance for the C objective 5.1 Technical assistance for the C objective (MA OPE and IBMA ASFEU) 5.2 Technical assistance for the C objective (IBMA MH SR) |

The OPE measures are implemented through the implementation of projects – the national and demand-driven projects.

The National Projects (hereinafter referred to as “NP”) are implemented at national level as instruments of the education reform. They involve comprehensive projects, which directly follow out of the legislation, or from the conceptual documents. They are awarded directly to organisations managed by the education sector, or by the institutions charged with the implementation by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR. The implementation of NP is in the competence of the MA OPE.

The demand-driven projects are the projects addressing the needs of the target groups in a particular region. They are implemented through calls for submission of applications for NFC, published for the particular measure, objectives and activities. Any applicant satisfying eligibility conditions can submit an application for a NFC. The implementation of demand-driven projects is in the competence of either of the IBMA.

1.1 Is the current state of publication of calls for national projects and calls for demand-driven projects satisfactory from the aspect of the scheduled timetables for making calls?

The purpose of this part of internal evaluation of the OPE is to assess the status in the calls for national projects and for demand-driven projects in relation to the timetables for calls for submission of applications for a NFC for demand-driven projects and their subsequent updating.

A planned timetable of calls is a document drawn up by the MA OPE, or IBMA, as a rule, for a period of one calendar year, containing the titles of priority axes/measures for which calls are scheduled to be made in the relevant year, the anticipated dates of the publication of calls, financial allocations scheduled to be earmarked for relevant calls and the anticipated deadline for submissions of applications for NFC for the relevant calls. The planned timetable of calls can be updated and amended, depending on disposable funds under a given priority axis, or in response to a change in priorities within the particular areas supported. The purpose of updating the planned timetable of calls for submission of applications for NFC is to inform stakeholders, particularly potential applicants, of anticipated dates of calls for projects for particular OP measures by the end of the relevant calendar year.

The Management System for the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the Programming Period 2007 – 2013 stipulates the obligation for the MA OPE to draw up the planned timetable of calls for a period of at least one calendar year. The MA OPE posts the timetable of calls for “n+1” calendar year on its website by 15 December of the „n” calendar year, at the latest. MA OPE is responsible for the timeliness of the planned timetable of calls on its website. With a view to ensuring publication of up-to-date timetables of calls under particular OP at central level, the MA OPE forwards the CCA the planned timetables of calls for the “n+1” calendar year by 15 December of the “n” calendar year, and notifies the CCA forthwith of any changes in the planned timetable of calls.

In accordance with the Management System for the SF and the CF for the programming period 2007 – 2013, MESRS SR, as the MA OPE, periodically posts on its website (www.minedu.sk) the planned timetables of calls for submission of applications for NFC, as well as any updating made by either of its IBMA.

IBMA ASFEU

In the period under review IBMA ASFEU was issuing and updating planned timetables of calls for submission of applications for NFC for demand-driven projects as follows.

In **2008** the planned timetable of calls was updated 5 times (19 March 2008, 12 March 2008, 31 July 2008, 7 October 2008, 5 December 2008). In the originally planned timetable of calls for 2008, IBMA planned calls under measures 1.1 – 2 times; 1.2, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.2 – 2 times, with a total allocation for calls at **EUR 56, 429,662**. 4 calls in 2008 were made through updating of the original timetable namely for measure 1.1 and 4.1, amounting to **EUR 49, 956, 847.90**, which was down by **11.5 %** against the original timetable of calls. The calls under measures 1.2, 2.1 and 3.1 were deleted from the planned timetable of calls for 2008.

In **2009** the planned timetable of calls was updated 6 times (5 February 2009, 2 March 2009, 3 June 2009, 19 June 2009, 10 August 2009, 28 September 2009). In the original timetable of calls for 2009, IBMA ASFEU planned to make calls under measure 1.1 – 2 times; measures 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2 and 4.2 – 2 times, with a total financial allocation for calls at **EUR 101 million**. By updating the planned timetable of calls in 2009 there were 7 calls published for measures 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2 and measure 4.2 – 2 times, at a total financial allocation of **EUR 85 million**, which is **15.9 %** less against

the originally planned financial allocation. One call from the timetable 2009, namely under measure 1.1, was not published.

In **2010** the planned timetable of calls was updated 9 times (22 February 2010, 29 April 2010, 19 May 2010, 28 June 2010, 31 August 2010, 18 October 2010, 3 November 2010, 14 December 2010, 27 December 2010). In the original timetable of calls for 2010 IBMA ASFEU planned to make calls for measures 1.1 – 2 times, 1.2 and 3.1 with the total financial allocation for calls at **EUR 92 mil.** Through updating of the planned timetable of calls in 2010 there were 3 calls published for measure 1.2, 2.1, and 4.2, with the total financial allocation at **EUR 26.8 million**, which is a decrease by **70.9 %** against the originally planned timetable of calls. In 2010 the call under measure 3.1 at the financial allocation of **EUR 17 million** was eventually cancelled after its publication on account of the need to extend the eligibility of applicants. Two calls for measure 1.1 were deleted from the originally planned timetable of calls for 2010.

In **2011** the planned timetable of calls was updated 5 times (28 February 2011, 13 April 2011, 20 May 2011, 31 August 2011, 21 November 2011). In the original timetable of calls for 2011 IBMA ASFEU planned to make calls for measure 1.1 – 2 times, 3.1 and 3.2, with the total financial allocation for calls at **EUR 65 million**. Owing to updating of the planned timetable of calls in 2011 there were 5 calls made for measure 1.1 – 2 times, 1.2 – 1 x and 3.1 – 2 times (of which one call was of a running nature and was announced in 2 rounds) with the total financial allocation at **EUR 112 million**, which was an increase against the originally planned timetable of calls by **72.3 %**. The call for measure 3.2 was deleted from the planned timetable of calls for 2011.

As follows from the above overview of changes made to the planned timetables of calls in 2008 – 2011, frequent changes to the scheduled timelines of calls and the shifting of calls from one year to the other, or complete leaving out of calls from the planned timetables entail uneven calls under particular measures and slackening of the implementation of some of the OP measures. As of 31 December 2011, IBMA ASFEU has launched 7 calls for measure 1.1 (of which 4 were already in 2008), 3 calls for measure 1.2, 2 calls for measure 2.1, 3 calls for measure 3.1 (of which 2 were in the year 2011), 1 call for measure 3.2, 4 calls for measure 4.1 (only in 2008) and 3 calls for measure 4.2. The year 2011 was positive as regards updating of the planned timetable of calls, as the new calls for measures 1.2 and 3.1 were inserted in the planned timetable thus raising the allocation for calls by almost 100 % despite the call for measure 3.2 having been deleted from the timetable.

The most frequent reasons for updating the planned timetables of calls related to modifications on account of the actual needs of the ongoing education reform in the SR, activities reflecting the Government Policy Programme, the legislations passed, changes within new priorities of the new Government in 2010, systemic changes and priorities of the SR Government, postponements in the dates of publication of calls, shifting calls to the next year, decreasing or increasing the financial allocation for a particular call, changes brought about by the change in the labour market due to the financial crisis, as well as the harmonisation of the text of calls with the rules of the state aid and the associated consultations with the MA OPE, the Ministry of Finance of the SR and the European Commission regarding increasing % limits in deliveries from direct costs.

IBMA MH SR

In the period under review IBMA MH SR was issuing and updating planned timetables of calls for submission of applications for NFC for demand-driven projects as follows.

In **2008** the planned timetable of calls was updated 3 times (10 March 2008, 26 August 2008, 30 October 2008). In the originally planned timetable of calls for 2008, IBMA MH SR planned to make 2 calls under measure 2.2, with the total financial allocation for calls at **EUR 10, 920, 799.30**. Through updating of planned timetable of calls in 2008 3 calls were launched for measure 2.2, at the total

financial allocation of **EUR 12, 580, 495.25**, which is an increase by **15 %** in the financial allocation against the originally planned timetable.

In **2009** the planned timetable of calls was updated 5 times (6 May 2009, 28 May 2009, 30 June 2009, 7 August 2009, 8 September 2009). In the originally planned timetable of calls for 2009, IBMA MH SR planned to make 1 call for measure 2.2, with the total financial allocation at **EUR 3, 319, 391.88**. Through particular updating of planned timetable of calls 2 calls were made for 2.2 at the total financial allocation of **EUR 8.5 million**, which is an increase against the original planned timetable of calls by **1.5 times** the amount of the original allocation.

In **2010** the planned timetable of calls was updated 5 times (29 January 2010, 24 March 2010, 30 August 2010, 18 October 2010, 24 November 2010). In the originally planned timetable of calls for 2010, IBMA MH SR planned to publish 1 call for measure 2.2 with the total financial allocation of **EUR 15 million**. Through updating of the planned timetable of calls in 2010 there were 2 calls launched for measure 2.2 at a total financial allocation of **EUR 30 million**, which is a **100 %** increase against the originally planned timetable of calls.

In **2011** the planned timetable of calls was updated 2 times (29 April 2011 and 28 June 2011). In the originally planned timetable of calls for 2011 IBMA MH SR planned to launch 1 call for measure 2.2, with the total financial allocation for call at **EUR 9.64 mil**. Through updating of the planned timetable of calls in 2011 there was 1 call made for measure 2.2 at a total financial allocation of **EUR 8 million**, which is down by **18 %** against the originally planned timetable.

The above updating of the planned timetables in 2008 to 2011 positively contributed to the calls for measure 2.2, as a well as to increasing the allocation compared to the amount planned.

The most frequent reasons for updating the timetables of calls related to the shifts in dates of launching calls, harmonisation of the text of calls with the rules of the state aid and the associated consultations with the MA OPE, Ministry of Finance of SR and the European Commission, the decreasing or increasing of the financial allocation for the call concerned.

MA OPE – MESRS SR

MESRS SR, as the MA OPE, does not publish calls for national projects on the basis of a planned timetable, but rather, draws on the timely needs in the area of education and training, based on the ongoing education reform in the SR and the legislative changes in the area of education. MA OPE sets the priorities and areas at which the OPE implementation should be aimed in any given year within the NP, and the directly managed organisations under the MESRS SR develop proposals for NP. MA OPE then assesses the submitted proposals from the aspect of consistency with the character of the OPE.

In **2008**, MESRS SR, as MA OPE, published 7 calls for NP, of which 6 were mirror calls for NP covering C objective and RCE objective for measures 1.1 and 4.1, and 1 mirror call for measure 2.1 (including both C + RCE objectives) and 4.2, with the total allocation of calls for NP at **EUR 112, 527, 384.93**.

In **2009** MESRS SR as MA OPE, made identical calls for national projects (NP) as in 2008, i.e. 7, of which 1 was a mirror call under measures 1.1 and 4.1 (including both C and RCE objectives), 3 were mirror calls under measures 2.1 and 4.2 (including both C and RCE objectives) and 1 call for NP under measure 1.1 (for C objective), with the total financial allocation for calls for NP amounting to **EUR 243.1 mil**. In 2009 there were additionally 2 calls for national projects published for measure 1.1 (C objective) with the allocation of EUR 45 million that were cancelled owing to the change to the amount of aid and support for the calls concerned.

In **2010** MESRS, as MA OPE, published only 2 calls for national projects of which 1 call was for measure 1.1 (C objective) and 1 call was for measure 2.1 (C objective), at a total financial allocation of **EUR 17.7 million**, which is a decrease over the years 2008 and 2009.

In **2011** MESRS SR as the MA OPE issued 1 call for NP for measure 3.1 aimed at the support of MRC (for C objective) with the allocation of **EUR 28.5 million**.

Based on the above overview of calls for national projects in 2008 - 2011 we may note that despite good progress in the calls seen in 2009 and 2010, the process has significantly slowed down in 2010 and 2011, not only in terms of number of calls for NP issued but also in terms of the amount of allocated funds for the relevant calls. The allocation for calls for NP for 2010 and 2011 makes up only **13 %** of the allocation of calls for NP in 2008 and 2009.

It follows from the above, that the MESRS SR, as MA OPE, should intensify its communication and work with the organisations directly managed by the Ministry and concentrate more on the development of proposals for NP and the issue of calls for NP. It would equally be both appropriate and expedient to have a planned timetable for calls for national projects, which would generally intensify the work in drafting national projects specifically designed for those measures that have no or very poor support within the system of NP, and the impact of changes in the sector's management would to some extent be attenuated, as would be the associated reviewing of priorities in times of political changes in the country. The existence of a concept for the planned measures in the area of education is a prerequisite for creating a timetable of calls for national projects, which would reflect timely needs in this area and would be subsequently matched with the planned timetable for calls.

1.2 Is the system of the preparation and updating of the timetable of calls for demand-driven projects set adequately and effectively? Would it be adequate and effective to draw up also a timetable for planning and preparation of calls for national projects?

To ensure adequate information of potential applicants on the possibility to receive a NFC to finance demand-driven projects and an adequate preparation of project proposals submitted, an indicative timetable of calls is issued for submission of applications for a NFC. The timetable of calls defines the anticipated dates of calls to submit applications for a NFC for particular priority axes or measures and the amount earmarked for the call concerned.

IBMA, annually, as of 15 November, draws up the timetable of calls for the period of next calendar year, which it submits, to MA OPE for approval. MA OPE submits it, within 3 days, to the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR for approval (this procedure is also followed in any updating of the timetable of calls). The approved timetable of calls for a given calendar year is then posted by the IBMA on its website, no later than by 15 December.

Based on the above we may note that the system of preparation of the timetable of calls is set appropriately and effectively.

By contrast, frequent updating of timetables of calls by IBMA cannot be considered effective with regards to the effective implementation of the OPE. The purpose of updating of the indicative timetable is to inform the stakeholders, particularly potential applicants, of the modified dates for anticipated calls to submit applications for the provision of a non-repayable financial contribution under particular measures, or of any changes to the allocation under particular OPE measures.

The annual indicative timetables of calls of IMBA MH SR for the relevant calendars year were updated in 2008 3 times, in 2009 5 times in all, in 2010 5 times, and in the year 2011, 2 times, respectively.

The annual indicative timetables of the IBMA ASFEU for the relevant calendar years were updated 5 times in 2008, 6 times in 2009, as much as 9 times in 2010, and 5 times in 2011, respectively.

Frequent updating of timetables for calls does not add to the binding nature of these timetables, undermining careful preparation by potential applicants for relevant calls and thus has negative effects on stability of processes of the OPE implementation. In the long run, this does not contribute to stability and efficiency of the OPE management itself.

The Management System for the SF and the CF for 2007 – 2013 obliges the managing authority or IMBA, to publish the indicative timetable of calls for submission of applications for a NFC (this involves particularly making public the priority axis, the anticipated date for the call and the allocation for the call concerned) with the primary objective to ensure adequate information of potential applicants on the possibilities to receive a NFC financing the projects and sufficient preparation for and drafting of proposals which is crucial for demand-driven projects.

On the other hand, there are OP within the NSRF, such as the OP Digital Society that post both, the planned timetables of calls for demand-driven projects and the calls for national projects for the given calendar year on their website.

The issue of planning and preparation of calls for national projects is also a frequent question emerging at different forums, e.g. annual meetings with the Commission, (e.g. the requirement to have a detailed Action Plan of MA OPE for all priority axes), MC for OPE, etc.

MESRS SR manages a large number of directly managed organisations that are, or could be potential applicants for a NFC under a NP of the OPE (Centre for Methodology and Pedagogy, the Institute for Education Information and Forecasting, the State Vocational Training Institute, The National Sport

Centre, the State Pedagogic Institute, the Slovak Pedagogic Library, the State School Inspection, the National Institute of Certified Education Measurements, the National Institute of Lifelong Learning, IUVENTA – the Slovak Youth Institute, The Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, etc.). In considering having timetables for calls for national projects one should take into account another specific feature of the ESF programmes, namely that they are long-term, i.e. multi-annual projects.

It is not solely for these reasons that it would be appropriate and effective - for the MA OPE and for potential NFC recipients under national projects - to have available the indicative timetable for planning or preparation of calls for NP within the whole programming period, linked to the approved OP objectives and priorities.

1.3 Is the current state of the OPE implementation - contracting and drawing of funds satisfactory? What is the anticipation regarding full absorption of the planned funding for particular measures by the end of the programming period?

Current state of funds contracted, as of 31 December 2011

Within the overall financial allocation for the Slovak Republic for 2007-2013, the OPE was allocated EUR 600, 000, 000 under C objective, and EUR 17, 801, 578 under RCE objective from the EU funds. This is the EU resources allocation; in the project implementation public and private resources of the SR increase this amount. The OPE allocation for both objectives, excluding TA measures, is EUR 593, 089, 515 from the EU resources.

Table 1 gives the financial plan of the OPE for 2007 – 2013 by measure and source of funding.

Table 1. Financial plan of the OPE for 2007 – 2013, by measure

| Operational Programme Education | Amount (EU) | Rate of co-financing from the EU |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Priority axis 1 | 365, 000,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 1.1 | 255,000,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 1.2 | 110,000,000 | 85 % |
| Priority axis 2 | 146, 000,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 2.1 | 109, 500,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 2.2 | 36,500,000 | 85 % |
| Priority axis 3 | 65,000,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 3.1 | 48,700,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 3.2 | 16,300,000 | 85 % |
| Priority axis 4 | 17,801,578 | 85 % |
| Measure 4.1 | 6,911,514 | 85 % |
| Measure 4.2 | 10,178,001 | 85 % |
| Measure 4.3 | 712,063 | 85 % |
| Priority axis 5* | 24,000,000 | 85 % |
| Measure 5.1 | 22,820,635.00 | 85 % |
| Measure 5.2 | 1, 179, 365.00 | 85 % |
| Total | 617,801,578 | 85 % |

* Under priority axis 5, the MH SR (IBMA) was given measure 5.2, with the allocation at EUR 1, 179, 365 (source: ESF)

As of 31 December 2011, 563 projects have been contracted under OPE (excluding TA projects under measures 4.3, 5.1 and 5.2) at the total amount of EUR 294,722,989.59 from the EU resources. As of the above date, the greatest volume of contracted projects and also at largest amount, was under measure 1.1, namely 350 contracts, amounting to EUR 130, 049,893.24 from the EU resources. The second in size of projects contracted is measure 1.2, at total financial volume of EUR 36, 452, 379.54 from the EU funds. The fewest projects contracted (disregarding TA) were under measure 4.2, namely 7 projects amounting to EUR 7, 937, 047.28 from the EU funds. From the aspect of the lowest amount of contracted value under a measure, (again excl. TA), it is measure 3.2, with the total amount of contracted resources at EUR 2, 859, 162.01 from the EU funds, and 26 projects.

Table 2 gives the summary data on the state of contracting under all measures of OPE, as of 31 December 2011.

Table 2. State of MA OPE + IBMA contracting, as of 31 December 2011, by measure

| Operational Programme Education | Contracting by measure, at 31.12.2011 | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Amount (EE) | Number of contracts |
| Priority axis 1 | 166,502,272.78 | 414 |
| <i>Measure 1.1</i> | 130,049,893.24 | 350 |
| <i>Measure 1.2</i> | 36,452,379.54 | 64 |
| Priority axis 2 | 83,669,676.97 | 47 |
| <i>Measure 2.1</i> | 54,952,252.59 | 19 |
| <i>Measure 2.2</i> | 28,717,424.38 | 28 |
| Priority axis 3 | 31,307,792.51 | 69 |
| <i>Measure 3.1</i> | 28,448,630.50 | 50 |
| <i>Measure 3.2</i> | 2,859,162.01 | 19 |
| Priority axis 4 | 14,194,249.07 | 46 |
| <i>Measure 4.1</i> | 5,306,200.05 | 26 |
| <i>Measure 4.2</i> | 7,937,047.28 | 7 |
| <i>Measure 4.3</i> | 951,001.74 | 13 |
| Priority axis 5 | 22,026,056.39 | 20 |
| <i>Measure 5.1</i> | 20,846,691.41 | 18 |
| <i>Measure 5.2</i> | 1,179,364.98 | 2 |
| Total | 317,700,047.72 | 596 |

Based on the data of tables 1 and 2 above, we may note that, at 31 December 2011, around 49.69 % had been contracted of the total OPE allocation for the programming period 2007-2013 (excl. TA measures). This percentage figure is not fully accurate as we need to take into account the financial resources that are currently “blocked,” e.g. within the calls published in 2011, for which at 31 December 2011, the process of contracting of approved projects was not yet completed. The real state will differ from the “tabular” already at the beginning of 2012.

If we used the same way of calculation (contracted/allocated) for all measures of OPE, including TA, we would arrive at the percentage figure of contracting given in Table 3.

Table 3. State of contracting of MA OPE + IBMA, as of 31 December 2011, by measures

| Operational Programme Education | Contracted funds as of 31 Dec. 2011 Sum of (EU + SB + PF) | Contracted funds as of 31 Dec. 2011 Amount (EU) | % share per EU allocation for 2007-2013 |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Priority axis 1 | 196,401,648.98 | 166,502,272.78 | 45.62% |
| <i>Measure 1.1</i> | 153,263,256.40 | 130,049,893.24 | 51.00% |
| <i>Measure 1.2</i> | 43,138,392.58 | 36,452,379.54 | 33.14% |
| Priority axis 2 | 99,579,673.85 | 83,669,676.97 | 57.31% |
| <i>Measure 2.1</i> | 64,984, 219.64 | 54,952,252.59 | 50.18% |
| <i>Measure 2.2</i> | 34,595,454.21 | 28,717,424.38 | 78.68% |
| Priority axis 3 | 36,881,270.99 | 31,307,792.51 | 48.17% |
| <i>Measure 3.1</i> | 33,476,552.28 | 28,448,630.50 | 58.42% |
| <i>Measure 3.2</i> | 3,404,718.71 | 2,859,162.01 | 17.54% |
| Priority axis 4 | 16,768,541.30 | 14,194,249.07 | 79.74% |
| <i>Measure 4.1</i> | 6,289,112.14 | 5,306,200.05 | 76.77% |
| <i>Measure 4.2</i> | 9,360,603.57 | 7,937,047.28 | 77.98% |
| <i>Measure 4.3</i> | 1,118,825.59 | 951,001.74 | 133.56% |
| Priority axis 5 | 25,913,007.54 | 22,026,056.39 | 91.78% |
| <i>Measure 5.1</i> | 24,525,519.32 | 20,846,691.41 | 91.35% |
| <i>Measure 5.2</i> | 1,387,488.22 | 1,179,364.98 | 100.00% |
| Total | 375,544, 142.66 | 317,700,047.72 | 51.42% |

From the data of Table 3 above one can see that the greatest volume of the EU contracted funds (excl. TA measures) is found under measures 2.2 – 78.68 %, 4.2 – 77.98 % and 4.1 – 76.77 %. By contrast, the lowest volume of contracted funds in under measures 3.2 – 17.54 % and 1.2 - 33.14 %.

Current state of funding drawn as of 31 December 2011

The total amount of drawing of the OPE allocation funding for the programming period 2007-2013 from the EU funds (excl. TA measures), as of 31 December 2011, is EUR 72, 756,684.67, which is 12.26 % of the total OPE allocation (excl. TA measures). Table 4 gives the drawing of funds broken down by measures.

According to the data given in Table 4, the highest rate of drawing (excl. TA measures) is under measures 4.1 – 27.82 % and 1.1 – 22.30 %, the lowest rate is under measures 2.1 – 2.27 % and 1.2 – 3.51 %. Overall, with the exception of measures 4.1 and 1.1, none of the measures exceeds even 10% in drawing, as of 31 December 2011.

Table 4. State of drawing of funds of the OPE, as of 31 December 2011

| Operational Programme Education | Amount (EU) | % of drawing in the EU allocation for 2007-2013 | To be drawn from the ESF by 31 December 2012 | Rate of drawing of adjusted commitment 2009 in % * |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| Priority axis 1 | 60,759, 414.65 | 16.65% | C objective | C objective |
| Measure 1.1 | 56, 866,755.42 | 22.30% | 57,923,927.83 | 38.47% |
| Measure 1.2 | 3,892,659.23 | 3.54% | | |
| Priority axis 2 | 6, 006, 778.00 | 4.11% | | |
| Measure 2.1 | 2, 487,472.42 | 2.27% | | |
| Measure 2.2 | 3,519,305.58 | 9.64% | | |
| Priority axis 3 | 3, 572,719.38 | 5.50% | 1,086,262.93 | 62.42% |
| Measure 3.1 | 2,704, 391.46 | 5.55% | | |
| Measure 3.2 | 868,327.92 | 5.33% | | |
| Priority axis 4 | 3, 043,450.05 | 17.10% | | |
| Measure 4.1 | 1,922,884.24 | 27.82% | | |
| Measure 4.2 | 494,888.40 | 4.86% | 59, 010,190.76 | 39.18% |
| Measure 4.3 | 625,677.41 | 87.87% | | |
| Priority axis 5 | 9,131,399.14 | 38.05% | | |
| Measure 5.1 | 8,598,895.82 | 37.68% | | |
| Measure 5.2 | 532, 503.32 | 45.15% | | |
| Total | 82,513,761.22 | 13.36% | | |

*Note: Monitoring of drawing was adjusted based on the amendment of the general regulation 1083/2006 – Regulation 539/2010 (in force from 24 June 2010), which stipulates that in monitoring drawing within the meaning of n+3/n+2 rules, one sixth of the annual budget commitment related to the 2007 total annual contribution shall be added to each of the 2008 to 2013 budget commitments, the so-called deadline for attainment of the first commitment is postponed to 31 December 2011.

As of 31 December 2011, the fifth year of the implementation of the programming period 2007-2013 was completed. If we take 2008 as the real commencement year with regard to OPE, as this was the year of first calls for demand-driven projects and for national projects, then it involves the fourth year of implementation. Given that it will be possible to contract funding by 31 December 2013, we may note that the contracting of funding (excl. TA measures) for certain measures is insufficient. The problem is most eminent in measure 3.2, under which more than 80% of the allocation for the measure still needs to be contracted, yet in 2011 there were no calls launched for this measure, which implies that the values at 31 December 2011 are definitive, and we cannot reckon with “blocked” funds in the form of approved but not yet contracted projects. Another measure with a very low contracting at 31 December 2011 is measure 1.2, under which roughly 67% of the measure’s allocation needs to be contracted. In this measure there was a visible year-on-year progress between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2011, with the number of contracted projects going up by 26

demand-driven projects. At the end of the year, on 22 December 2011, a call was published for this measure with the total amount of assistance at EUR 50 million. In an ideal case with contracting for the full amount of this call, the rate of contracting of funding earmarked for this measure would increase to approximately 70%.

The situation in the drawing of funds contracted (excl. TA measures) can be assessed as unsatisfactory in the light of the average drawing per measure standing at 12.26 %, with only two measures exceeding 10 % figure in reality – 1.1 and 4.1 that were intensely supported by multiple calls in the very first year of their implementation (2008).

Technical assistance for the Convergence objective and for the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective

Within the meaning of Article 46 of the general regulation, in order to ensure high quality of the implementation of OP and its priority axes eligible entities at all levels of management structures can use funding under the TA OPE to support the activities and functions relating to the preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control and audit, together with the activities to strengthen administrative capacities, i.e. to attract and safeguard adequately trained human resources, ensure their professional development and necessary expertise and adequate conditions for high-quality decision making.

In the area of TA, the following priority themes are implemented:

- Priority theme 85 – Preparation, administration, monitoring and control
- Priority theme 86 – Evaluation and studies, information and communication.

The TA for the C objective is a special priority axis of the OPE – priority axis 5, the purpose of which is to support the implementation of priority axes 1, 2 and 3 of the OPE. In the RCE objective, the TA is co-financed under a separate measure, 4.3, its purpose being to support the implementation of priority axis 4 – measures 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 5 gives the total OPE allocation for TA under both objectives. An amount at EUR 24,712,063 has been earmarked from the EU funds for both objectives under the OPE for the purpose of technical assistance.

Table 5. Financial plan of the TA OPE funding for 2007 – 2013

| Operational Programme Education | Amount (EU) | Rate of co-financing from the EU |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Priority axis 4 | 712,063 | 85 % |
| <i>Measure 4.3</i> | 712,063 | 85 % |
| Priority axis 5* | 24,000,000 | 85 % |
| <i>Measure 5.1</i> | 22,820,635.00 | 85 % |
| <i>Measure 5.2</i> | 1,179,365.00 | 85 % |
| Total | 24,712, 063 | 85 % |

* Within priority axis 5, measure 5.2 has been designed for MH SR (IBMA) with the allocation at EUR 1, 179,365 (ESF source)

Contracting and drawing of TA funding, as of 31 December 2011

At 31 December 2011, the contracting of TA funding was at EUR 22,977,058.13 from the EU sources, which is 92.98 % of the total allocation for these measures. Drawing at 31 December 2011 was at EUR 9,757,076.55 for the EU sources, which is 39.48% of the allocation for these measures.

Table 6 gives accurate data for particular TA measures for both objectives.

Table 6. Current state of contracting and drawing of TA OPE funding

| Operational Programme Education | Allocation by measure | Contracting by measure at 31 December 2011 | | Drawing by measure at 31 December 2011 | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------|--|--|
| | | Amount (EU) | Number of contracts | Amount (EU) | % drawing in the EU 2007-2013 allocation |
| Priority axis 4 | 712,063 | 951,001.74 | 13 | 625,677.41 | 87.87% |
| Measure 4.3 | 712,063 | 951,001.74 | 13 | 625,677.41 | 87.87% |
| Priority axis 5 | 24,000,000 | 22,026,056.39 | 20 | 9,131,399.14 | 38.05% |
| Measure 5.1 | 22,820,635.00 | 20,846,691.41 | 18 | 8,598,895.82 | 37.68% |
| Measure 5.2 | 1, 179,365.00 | 1,179,364.98 | 2 | 532,503.32 | 45.15% |
| Total | 24,712,063 | 22,977,058.13 | 33 | 9,757,076.55 | 39.48% |

On the whole we may note that contracting and drawing under TA funding is satisfactory.

Is there a risk of non-compliance with n+3, or n+2 rules?

With regard to non-compliance with n+3 or n+2 rules for annual budget years we do not assume the risk of non-compliance with the 2009 commitment. As partially risky seems the achievement of commitment related to 2010 and 2011, by the end of 2013 (this year brings together fulfilment of commitments for two budget years in relation to compliance with n + 3 and n + 2 rules). To minimise the risks associated with non-fulfilment of particular budget commitments in relation to compliance with n + 3 and n + 2, it is necessary to achieve highest possible rate of contracting as soon as possible under both OP Education objectives (this rate of contracting may even exceed 100 % of the OPE level – we need to take into account the disposable resources that accrue within unused funds with respect to already completed projects).

The factors retarding the rate of drawing of funds within certain projects of the OP Education and potentially affecting the overall level of drawing of funds under the OPE include:

- Poor quality of applications for a NFC submitted (hereinafter referred to as “AFNFC”) from both formal and substantive aspects, recurring shortcomings in AFNFC, AFNFC being returned to applicants for supplying the missing items;
- High administrative demands of submitted expenditure, mostly involving personal cost that are characteristic by great amount of submitted obligatory supporting documentation and low volume of the accounted funding;

- Problems relating to public procurement by some recipients, which often results in repeated public procurements and retardation of the process of financial implementation of projects.

At the same time we need to mention that compliance with n + 3 and n + 2 rules can be assessed only in relation to OP and both objectives as a whole (the breakdown in relation to projects except TA and separately to TA projects is not justified).

As to the using up of the funding for TA measures, it is very likely to be absorbed at 100 % because the MESRS SR, as MA OPE, has already identified shortage of funding under TA measures for the provision of the OPE implementation, and the need to cover part of expenditure (owing to low level of disposable TA resources) from the state budget of the SR.

1.4 In view of contracted funds, which OPE measures need to have additional calls for demand-driven projects /calls for national projects launched?

The current state of contracting funds allocated for particular measures is in the range from 17.54 % to 78.68 %. Table 3 gives the accurate percentage shares in contracting.

Based on this data it is evident that the publication of **calls for demand-driven and for national projects will be necessary for almost every measure.**

The most marked problem with low contracting is seen under measure 3.2, with contracting at the level of 17.54 % of the allocation, for which only one call has been published for the whole duration of the OPE implementation. At 31 December 2011, this measure needs both types of calls to be published by the end of the programming period worth EUR 13, 440, 837.99 (EU resources).

Another measure with low contracting at 31 December 2011 is measure 1.2. As of that date, 34.14 % of the allocation for the measure has been contracted. In late 2011, a call for demand-driven projects was published for this measure, OPE-2011/1.2/03-IBMA, and ideally, i.e., if the whole amount of assistance under the call is successfully contracted, the contracting under this measure would go up to approximately 70 %. That would leave approximately 30% of the allocation of the measure, for which calls and contracting would be needed by the end of the programming period.

Another measure, with the third lowest contracting, is measure 2.1. Under this measure 50.18 % of the allocation has been contracted as of end of 2011. There remains still to contract EUR 54,547,747.41 from the EU resources of this measure.

The fourth place among measures with lowest contracting is taken by a measure with the highest allocation, measure 1.1. Of this planned allocation of EUR 153,263,256.40 (EU funds) still 41% of the funding needs to be contracted.

Under measure 3.1, the current contracting, as of 31 December 2011 amounts to EUR 28, 448,630.50 (EU funds), which is 58.42 %. In 2011, one call for NP was published under this measure, OPE/C/NP/2011-1 "Through Training the Pedagogic Staff to the Inclusion of the Marginalized Roma Communities," and two calls for submission of AFNFC for demand-driven projects OPE-2011/3.1/02-IBMA and OPE-2011/3.1/03-IBMA – this call is running, linked to the Pilot call for applications for the provision of support under local strategy for comprehensive approach.

The contract for the NP "Through Training the Pedagogic Staff to the Inclusion of the Marginalized Roma Communities," was concluded on 28 September 2011 after which the implementation commenced. The amount of funding earmarked for this project is EUR 21,240,651.00 from the EU funds.

The results of calls for demand-driven projects at 31 December 2011 did not reflect the data on contracting, given that the selection process was not completed at 31 December 2011. Under the above running call for AFNFC, on 21 November 2011, its second round was published with the deadline on 20 January 2012. Hence under this measure, there is assumption for the overall contracting to go up over the course of the first half of 2012.

Measure 4.1 is the third best in terms of contracting figure (%). Under this measure, 76.77 % of the allocated funding has been contracted. On the whole, calls need to be issued for this measure for the amount of EUR 1,605,313.95 from the EU funds.

The second highest contracting is for measure 4.2. Here, the remaining 22.02 % of the allocation stills needs to be contracted, which is EUR 2,240,953.72 (EU funds).

Measure 2.2 is one having the highest rate of contracting, 78.68 %. On 15 July 2011, a call for demand-driven projects was published under this measure. Ideally, with contracting of projects selected under this measure, the contracting might achieve roughly 100%.

Table 7 gives summarily the ranking of measures (in %) from lowest to highest rate of contracting.

Table 7. Order of contracting for particular OPE measures

| No. | Operational Programme Education | Allocated funding as of 31 Dec.2011 (EU) | Contracted funding as of 31 Dec.2011 Amount (EU) | % share in the EU 2007-2013 allocation |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1. | <i>Measure 3.2</i> | 16,300,000 | 2,859,162.01 | 17.54% |
| 2. | <i>Measure 1.2</i> | 110,000,000 | 36,452,379.54 | 33.14% |
| 3. | <i>Measure 2.1</i> | 109,500,000 | 54,952,252.59 | 50.18% |
| 4. | <i>Measure 1.1</i> | 255,000,000 | 130,049,893.24 | 51.00% |
| 5. | <i>Measure 3.1</i> | 48,700,000 | 28,448,630.50 | 58.42% |
| 6. | <i>Measure 4.1</i> | 6,911,514 | 5,306,200.05 | 76.77% |
| 7. | <i>Measure 4.2</i> | 10,178,001 | 7,937,047.28 | 77.98% |
| 8. | <i>Measure 2.2</i> | 36,500,000 | 28,717,424.38 | 78.68% |

1.5 How does OPE contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and to the objectives of the National Reform Programme 2011 - 2014?

The Europe 2020 strategy (hereinafter referred to as “EU 2020”) is the EU common strategy designed to provide for sustainable economic growth, including recovery from the economic crisis and the job creation. It was approved on 3 March 2010, its launching being approved on 17 June 2010. It is the follow-up to the so-called Lisbon strategy for 2010 – 2020.

The Europe 2020 strategy sets to achieve 5 main targets by 2020 at the EU level:

1. raise the rate of employment for women and men aged 20 to 64 to 75 %, inter alia, by increasing participation rates for young people, older workers, and workers with low qualifications as well as by improved inclusion of legal migrants,
2. improve conditions for research and development in particular with a view to improving the overall conditions for R&D public and private investment in this sector to achieve the target of 3 % of GDP,
3. reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 % compared to 1990 levels, increase the share of renewable energy in final energy consumption to 20 %, and achieve a 20% increase in energy efficiency (EU is committed to adopt a decision to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, if the developing countries undertake to contribute to the reduction of emissions proportionally to their responsibility and possibilities),
4. raise the education level, particularly by efforts to reduce the share of early school leavers to less than 10 % and increase the share of population aged 30 – 34 having completed tertiary education to at least 40 %,
5. support social inclusion particularly by reducing poverty, and the efforts of lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty or social exclusion.

The Lisbon strategy and its follow-up, EU 2020, have been translated into so-called national reform programs at the Member State level, (hereinafter referred to as “NRP”), which define the actions and reforms within a three-year programme cycles, which the relevant countries intend to adopt to meet the Lisbon/EU 2020 targets.

The NRP 2010 is the first Slovak NRP to have been based on EU 2020. At present the NRP of the SR 2011-2014 is effective, which the Government of the SR adopted by its Resolution No. 256/2011, of 20 April 2011.

The following are the areas that NRP SR 2011-2014 defines as priority areas:

- education, science and innovation,
- employment and social inclusion,
- business environment,
- transparent environment and law enforcement,
- health.

Measures under the priority of “Education, science and innovation” should focus on:

1. Regional education, namely the inclusion of children from socially excluded groups; digital agenda for the school; the school quality assessment; debureaucratization of the school; opening up of the textbook market; supporting good practices; vocational training and financing,
2. Tertiary education and science, namely the accreditation reform; quality improvement of top academic staff – professors and associated professors, the abolition of tertiary school classification, empowering excellent faculties and universities, changes aimed to improve the quality of external study (part-time), financing tertiary schools and the reform of financing research and making the use of the EU funds more effective,
3. Lifelong learning,
4. Innovation (the area of innovation in the form set out in the NRP 2011-2014 does not fall within the OPE scope).

On 12 July 2011, the Council of the EU issued the Council Recommendation on the National Reform Programme of Slovakia and delivering a Council opinion on the Updated Stability Programme of Slovakia, 2011-2014. To priority “Education, Science and Innovation” the following recommendation was made: “Speed up the implementation of planned general education, vocational education and training reforms and take steps to improve the quality of higher education and its relevance to market needs. Develop a framework of incentives for both individuals and employers to encourage participation of the low-skilled in lifelong learning.”

How does OPE contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and to the objectives of the National Reform Programme 2011 – 2014?

The Government of the SR is primarily responsible for pursuing the goals of the EU 2020 strategy, namely by translating them into the national reform programmes and subsequent implementation of the NRP objectives. The SR Government implements the objectives of NRP 2011-2014 through the state education policy, which has a very broad range and different tools to achieve the goals, including legislative instruments. OPE is a support instrument contributing to the support of education in Slovakia but, given its specifications, it cannot fully cover the goals of the EU 2020 and the NRP 2011-2014. On the other hand, we can say that the OPE can, based on its high quality set up, significantly support both the EU 2020 goals and those of the NRP 2011-2014, despite having been approved in 2007.

EU 2020 and the NRF 2011-2014 deriving from it, are at this point in time in their early stages of implementation, hence it is not possible to comprehensively evaluate the contribution of the OPE to the implementation EU 2020 goals and the NRF 2011-2014 (the focal period for the implementation of EU 2020 goals through the Structural Funds will be the next programming period 2014-2020). In the period under review, we can note that the OPE contributes to the set objectives of EU 2020 and NRF 2011-2014 through a range of published calls for national projects and calls for demand-driven projects, which - directly or indirectly – support the objectives in the field of education, as laid down in EU 2020, and three out of four areas defined under Priority “Education, Science and Innovation” in the NRP 2011-2014.

In view of EU 2020 having been reflected in the NRP 2011-2014, the attainment of objectives for both documents through calls for national projects and calls for demand-driven projects is given simultaneously.

1. Regional education

The European Commission in the Europe 2020 Strategy recommends reducing the share of early school leavers from the current 15% to 10% by 2020. Its current measure for the SR is at the level of 6 % and the Government of the SR is committed in the NRP 2011-2014 to maintain this rate. It is equally committed to increase the quality of primary education, particularly by raising the level of knowledge and skills of pupils to an average 505 in the OECD – PISA 2018 survey.

In the NRP 2011-2014, the Government of the SR identified the areas within the regional education to be pursued in order to contribute to the attainment of the above targets.

OPE supports the following areas:

1. The inclusion of children from socially excluded groups – the OPE support takes the form of NP “Through Training the Pedagogic Staff to the Inclusion of the Marginalized Roma Communities,” as well as through calls for demand-driven projects No. OPE-2009/3.1/01-IBMA “Programmes and courses for primary school pupils coming from the marginalized Roma communities”, OPE-2011/3.1/02-IBMA “Supporting reading literacy of socially disadvantaged primary school pupils coming from the marginalized Roma communities” and the running call No. OPE-2011/3.1/03-IBMA, “Supporting the access of members of the marginalized Roma communities to education, including further education”.

For the future a NP is planned on the prevention of aggressive behaviour and support of personality maturing of children and youth, and a demand-driven call under OPE measure 3.2.

2. A digital agenda for the school - OPE supports this area through the NP “Further training of primary and secondary school teachers in informatics”, “Modernisation of the education process in primary schools”, and “ Modernisation of the education process in secondary schools”, and to lesser extent also through the NP “Education of kindergarten pedagogic staff as part of the education reform”. Within the demand driven calls for projects, this area is supported by Call No. OPE-2011/1.1/06-IBMA “Innovation of the content and methods of education for primary schools” and OPE-2011/3.1/02-IBMA “ Supporting reading literacy of socially disadvantaged primary school pupils coming from the marginalized Roma communities”.

The planned NP designed for the development of the task bank and supporting e-testing of pupils in Slovakia should support the digital agenda for the school.

3. The school quality assessment – this area is supported by the NP “External evaluation of school quality promoting self-evaluation processes and school development.” Another contribution should be through the planned NP “ The development of school through self-evaluation. “

4. Vocational training – this area is supported by calls for demand-driven projects No. OPE-2008/1.1/01-IBMA “Design and implementation of development programmes for secondary schools supporting quality increases in education consistent with the reform of the education system,” OPE-2008/4.1/01-IBMA “Design and implementation of development programmes for secondary schools supporting quality increases in education consistent with the reform of the education system,” OPE-2008/1.1/04-IBMA “The development and implementation of school educational programmes for secondary schools”, OPE-2008/4.1/04-IBMA "The development and implementation of school educational programmes for secondary schools", OPE-2009/1.1/05-IBMA “ Developing and increasing efficiency of the school educational programmes of secondary vocational schools” and OPE-2011/1.1/07-IBMA "Innovation of the content and methods in secondary vocational school education relevant to the labour market needs". Vocational training should also be supported by the planned NP focused on the development of secondary vocational education in selected fields.

Equally the calls OPE-2008/1.1/02-IBMA “Design and implementation of development programmes for primary schools supporting quality increases in education consistent with the reform of the

education system”, OPE-2008/1.1/03-IBMA “The development and implementation of school educational programmes for primary schools”, OPE- 2008/4.1/02-IBMA “Design and implementation of development programmes for primary schools supporting quality increases in education consistent with the reform of the education system”, and OPE-2008/4.1/03-IBMA “The development and implementation of school educational programmes for primary schools” contribute to the development of regional education. By being focused on the design and implementation of school educational programmes they lead to both improving of results in the area of education and to reducing the share of early leavers of school.

2. Tertiary education and science

In the EU 2020 strategy, the European Commission recommends to increase the share of young people aged 30 – 34 that have a degree or diploma to at least 40% by 2020. This measure is currently at the level of 30% in Slovakia. In addition to attaining this goal, the SR Government is committed in the NRP 2011-2014 to improve the quality of science and higher education research particularly by increasing the overall expenditure for research and development to 1% of GDP by 2020 and achieving a rate of citation per researcher of at least 70% of the EU average.

The areas on which NRP 2011-2014 is focused in supporting tertiary education and science do not directly concern OPE, rather the state policy including legislative changes seem to be the instrument for its implementation.

OPE supports the development of tertiary education through the NP “Professional and Career Development of Pedagogic Workers”, where tertiary education pedagogues are among the target groups. Within the demand-driven projects, the area of tertiary education and science is supported by Call No. OPE-2009/1.2/01-IBMA “Supporting innovative forms of education in higher education institutions and the human resource development in research and development”, OPE-2009/4.2/01-IBMA “Supporting innovative forms of education in higher education institutions and the human resource development in research and development”, OPE-2010/1.2/02-IBMA “Supporting quality improvement of higher education institutions and the Slovak Academy of Sciences”, OPE-2010/4.2/03-IBMA “Supporting quality improvement of higher education institutions and the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the Bratislava Region” and OPE-2011/1.2/03-IBMA “Supporting quality improvement of higher education institutions and the Slovak Academy of Sciences.” In 2012 the call under measure 4.2 should be launched, “Supporting quality improvement of higher education institutions and the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the Bratislava Region” and there is also a plan for the call for demand-driven projects under measure 1.2. The implementation of the NP and the demand driven projects from the above calls is expected to make higher education more attractive, which will contribute to increasing the share of young people aged 30-34 with tertiary education. At the same time, higher education can increase the chances of these young people for employment.

3. Lifelong learning

The NRP 2011-2014 goals are supported by means of the OPE through the NP “Lifelong learning of primary and secondary teaches in informatics”, NP “Professional and Career Development of Pedagogic Workers”, NP “KomPrax – Competences for the Practice” and calls for demand-driven projects No. OPE-2009/4.2/01-OBMA “ Supporting innovative forms of education in higher education institutions and the human resource development in research and development,” OPE 2008/2.2/01 “ Replenishing the health system with qualified specialists”, OPE 2008/2.2/02 “Developing new forms of lifelong learning in the health sector”, OPE 2008/2.2/03 “Replenishing the health system with qualified specialists,” OPE 2009/2.2/01 “Supporting systematic training of medical workers ”, OPE-2009/2.1/01-IBMA “Supporting lifelong learning in selected sectors”, OPE-2009/4.2/02-IBMA “Supporting lifelong learning in selected sectors,” OPE 2009/2.2/02 “Developing further skills of workers in the health sector,” OPE 2010/2.2./01 “ Increasing additional skills of workers in the health

sector,” No. OPE-2010/2.1/02-IBMA “Supporting lifelong learning in the area of tourism,” OPE 2010/2.2/02 “Developing additional skills of workers in the health sector,” 2011/2.2/01 “Developing additional skills of workers in the health sector.”

For the area of lifelong learning plans are for NP aimed at education of pedagogues in the area of physical education, administrators of digital classrooms or the development of the portal and in progress is the work on the call for demand-driven projects under measures 2.1 and 2.2 “Support to lifelong learning of workers in the health sector”.

Conclusion

Frequent changes to the scheduled timelines of calls for demand-driven projects of IBMA ASFEU and the shifting of calls from one year to the other, or complete leaving out of calls from the timetables entail uneven calls under particular measures and slackening of the implementation of some of the OPE measures. Moreover, frequent updating of timetables for calls does not add to the binding nature of these timetables or the assurance of applicants and has indeed negative effects on stability of processes of the OPE implementation. Hence, in the long run, this does not contribute to stability and efficiency of the OPE management itself.

Our recommendation is to consider **lower frequency of modifications of calls' timetables** and their more precise planning, particularly with regard to the overall contracting of the OPE funds.

From the aspect of publication of calls for national projects, we can note that despite good progress in the publication of these calls in 2009 and 2010, the process significantly slowed down in 2010 and 2011, not only in terms of number of calls for NP published but also in terms of allocated funding for these calls. The allocation for calls for NP for 2010 and 2011 makes up only **13 %** of that for 2008 and 2009. The reason could be linked to the political change in the country and the review of priorities of supported areas of education.

MESRS SR as MA OPE should intensify its communication and work with the organisations directly managed by the Ministry and concentrate more on the development of proposals for NP and calls for NP. The **existence of a timetable for calls for national projects** would support greater continuity.

As for the idea of publicising the timetable for calls for NP, apart from it being an issue frequently raised at different forums, it seems that it would be practical and efficient both for MA OPE and NFC beneficiaries to have an indicative timetable for planning or preparation of calls for NP throughout the whole programming period, corresponding to the approved objectives and priorities under OP. A prerequisite for having a timetable of calls for NP is the existence of a concept of planned measures in the area of education that would reflect the current needs and match the planned timetable of calls accordingly.

In contracting we may note insufficient contracting of funds for some measures (with the exception of technical assistance measures).

The only solution to increase contracting under the OPE is by **launching calls for NP and for demand-driven projects, particularly for measures 3.2 and 1.2.**

As for drawing of contracted funds (excluding TA measures,) the overall state can equally be said to be unsatisfactory, with average drawing per measure at 12.26 %, and the limit of 10% absorption being exceeded only by two measures – 1.1 and 4.1. Thus the main and basic recommendation is to **increase significantly the rate of drawing.**

OPE is, owing to its high quality set-up **capable of contributing to the implementation of Europe 2020 strategy goals and the National Reform Programme 2011-2014.** The EU 2020 and the NRP 2011-2014 deriving from it, are at this point in time in their early stages of implementation, hence it is not possible to comprehensively evaluate the contribution of the OPE to the implementation of Europe 2020 goals and the NRP 2011-2014 (the focal period for the implementation of EU 2020 goals through the Structural Funds will be the next programming period 2014-2020). In the period under review we can note that the OPE contributes to the set targets of EU 2020 and NRP 2011-2014 through a range of published calls for NP and calls for demand-driven projects, which – directly or indirectly – support the targets in the field of education, as laid out in Europe 2020, and in three out of four areas defined under priority “Education, Science and Innovation” in NRP 2011-2014.

2. Evaluation of the OPE management system

The Ministry of education was charged with the tasks of the Managing Authority by the Government resolutions. The Government of the Slovak Republic Resolution No. 832, of 8 October 2006, assigned the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport to act as the managing authority for the OPE.

The function of the MA OPE is carried out by the Section for the Structural Funds of the EU – OPE Department of the Programme Management Section (“OPED”), the Methodology and Technical Assistance Section (“MTAS”), the Projects Implementation and Control Section (PICS”) and the Public Procurement and Irregularities Review Section (“PP IRS”). OPED is responsible for the OPE implementation process. MTAS discharges the tasks following for it from the provision for the financial management of the ESF at the level of MA OPE, being responsible for the financial management of OPE. PICS pursues the tasks of financial and project management of the ESF at the level of MA OPE, being responsible for the processes of financial and project management of NP OPE. PP IRS discharges the tasks relating to the control of public procurement processes under NP, the control of public procurement for TA projects and records keeping of irregularities and frauds, including their notification to the Paying Authority/Certifying Authority.

The managing authority constitutes the operational level of the system of management of structural funds. In this connection the MA OPE carries out the following functions:

- Draw up the OP and the programme manual, including coordination of all stakeholders, negotiate with the European Commission of the OP;
- Responsible for the management and implementation of the OP in accordance with the principle of sound financial management while applying Article 60 of the general regulation;
- In OP management, comply with the methodological guidelines of the CCA in the area of management and implementation of assistance from the structural funds, and with the methodological guidelines of the Certifying Authority (MF SR, hereinafter referred to as “CA”) and the Audit Authority (hereinafter referred to as “AA”) in the area of financial management, control and audit.

Within the meaning of Article 59 of the general regulation, the managing authority may delegate some or all of its tasks to the intermediate body under the managing authority. In the event of delegation, the ultimate responsibility for the management of the operational programme rests with the managing authority.

The Agency for the Structural Funds of the EU of the MESRS SR and the Ministry of Health of the SR act as Intermediate Bodies under the Managing Authority.

Mutual relations between the MESRS SR, as the managing authority, and the intermediate bodies under the managing authorities are laid down by special agreements, defining their mutual rights and obligations in the area of providing assistance from the European Social Fund.

2.1 Are the tasks of relevant MA OPE sections clearly separated so as to avoid procedural or administrative duplication? Has there been created an ambience for cooperation and coordination between different levels of management?

The IMMA defines the tasks, obligations and processes falling in the competence of relevant MA OPE sections. In view of the facts that the System of Management of the SF and the CF and the System of Financial Management for the SF and the CF lay down the same procedures for all bodies involved in the drawing of funds from the structural funds of the EU, the MESRS SR has produced a single internal manual valid for both managing authorities.

The IMMA unequivocally defines the procedures and steps within the process of receiving, approving and implementing projects in both the programming and the implementation phase. IMMA also deals with the issue of human resources – their competencies, job descriptions, acting for and separation of functions.

All employees of the relevant sections and secretariats of MA OPE are obliged to comply with the processes and procedures defined in the IMMA.

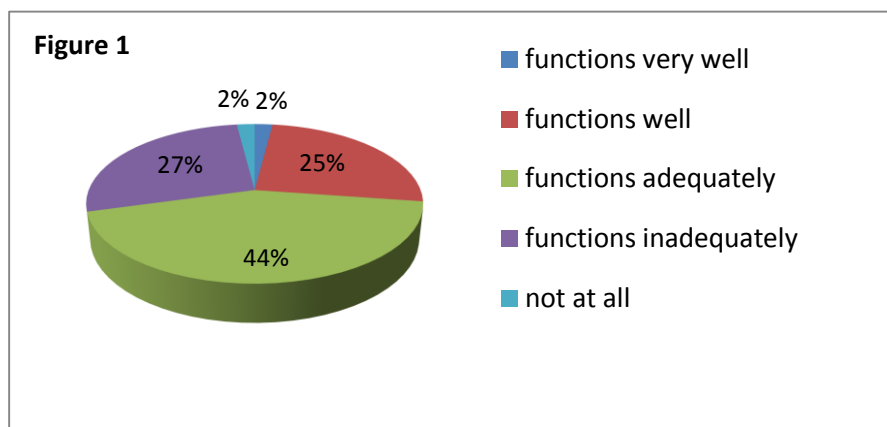
Owing to precise assignment of tasks to relevant sections in the internal manual there is no overlapping in most work tasks, but given the complexity of the activity relating to the OPE implementation, some rare duplication may occur and certain tasks get carried out by several units. In general however, we may note that the division of tasks among sections is set appropriately and there is not administrative and procedural duplication.

At the same time the complexity of the OPE implementation assumes intense cooperation of MA OPE units. The processes of implementation build on each other, or are complementary to each other and hence call for joint coordination. The General Director discharges the function of the general manager of the programme and coordinates the activities of the MA OPE sections concerned.

A questionnaire was designed for the MA staff that dealt with the issues of information, communication, the system of information sharing, cooperation and coordination within the MA OPE and its units. The form of the questionnaire is enclosed as Annex 2 to this report. All employees of the MA were approached with the voluntary anonymous questionnaire survey. Of the total number of 77 employees, 51 took part in the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire focused on communication and cooperation between sections/units. The purpose was to see if the employees of sections concerned consider the information flows sufficient and also in what areas they would appreciate more information being shared by sections.

The majority of employees of MA OPE maintain that the shared information by sections is adequate (43 %), 27 % of respondents perceived the system of information sharing as inadequate. 25 % workers of MA OPE hold the view that the system of information sharing is good. Based on the responses, only one respondent (representing 2% of the total number) is convinced that the information sharing, whether written, e-mail or oral functions very well. Equally, one respondent is convinced that the system of information sharing does not function at all. Figure 1 below shows the responses to the question regarding the functioning of the information sharing system in the MA OPE (top down: functions very well – well – adequately – inadequately – not at all).



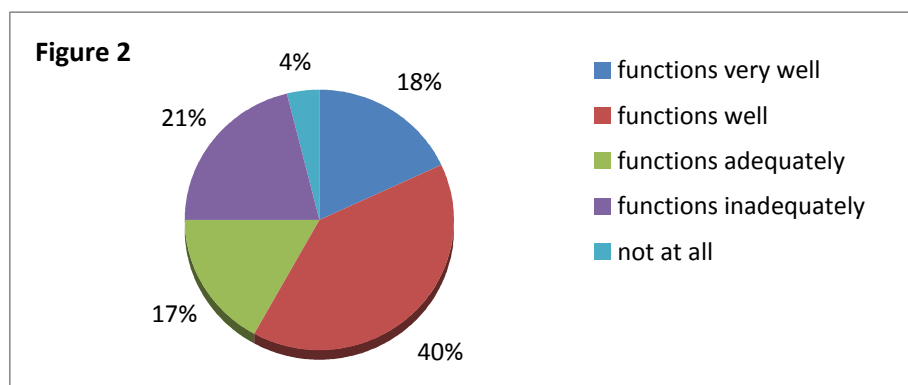
On the whole the figure indicates relative satisfaction with the information sharing. Behind the most frequent response “functions adequately” there is clearly a scope for improvement in this area. In the same way, in the question on sufficiency of information flows between sections, as much as 71 % of respondents considered them partially adequate. Equally, there may be scope for improvement in the communication between different section/unit staff. 43 % of respondents expressed satisfaction with communication with other sections staff and consider it efficient while 53 % considered the communication only partially efficient. The responses to the question clearly show that the staff of particular sections felt there were certain weaknesses in the extent and intensity of communication between sections, particularly in the area of coordinating the roles of sections and also made request to intensify information provision top down, from MA OPE managers to employees.

Holding common information briefings/training of the whole MA OPE staff emerged as a fit means in terms of cooperation and information. Positive feedback was seen from the responses to the question whether they would welcome common information meetings or training or briefings for all sections/unit (MA OPE sections and Paying Unit staff) – at the training held in the late 2011 on 15-16 December 2011. The majority of the interviewed – 65% told they would welcome common information meetings or training. The most frequent proposal for the subject of these meetings was provision of information on the NP – particularly the state of implementation of NP that are in progress and also on the prepared NP and the joint discussions of sections when elaborating recommendations to NP. The respondents’ requests can be generally summed up as follows: overview of affairs within the MA OPE, more information being shared by MA OPE sections on their respective tasks; information relevant for the performance of work activities (e.g. updating of IMMA, manuals for the applicants and the recipient); issues and problems addressed by particular sections; briefing employees of the MA OPE management visions of the implementation of the OPE and personnel issues concerning the staff, the future of the ESF and the new programming period, strategic goals and their implementation within the sector.

The second part of the questionnaire covered the assessment or evaluation of the area of internal communication and information sharing within particular sections and OPED, as well as the task assignment and clarity of work instructions.

Of all respondents, 58 % considered the information sharing in their section/department to function well (40 %) or very well (18 %), 21 % felt that the information sharing functioned inadequately, while 4 % thought it did not function at all; 17 % of respondents considered the information sharing to be adequate. As the questionnaire was anonymous, and hence it is not possible to identify which section or department the information expressed concerned, we can speculate that the negative responses are also often associated with a particular unit not holding regular meetings of its staff. As much as 90 % of all respondents support holding regular meetings and would welcome their

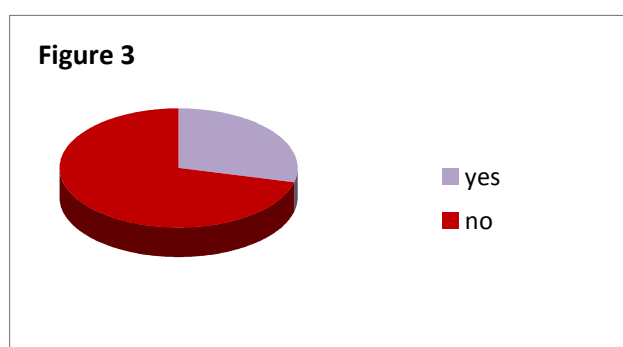
organisation in their particular unit. Figure 2 shows the responses regarding the functioning of information sharing within the section/department.



With respect to the work tasks assignment within particular sections/department 57 % of respondents consider them to be distributed effectively and no modifications or task redistribution in their view is necessary. In this case, the majority of respondents agree with the status quo; on the other hand we need to take on board that 43 % of respondents think the task distribution to be ineffective and consider that redistribution would result in increased effectiveness of the section/department's work. The questionnaire also shows that respondents have available all information necessary for the performance of their work tasks, but they would appreciate on-going up-to date information on any changes, modifications and decisions that could affect their work.

The third part of the questionnaire concerned the staff motivation. Respondents were making observations on different forms of motivation, the real or those that would boost their motivation in carrying out work tasks in the future.

As much as 71 % of the MA OPE employees involved in the questionnaire consider themselves not to be sufficiently motivated for effective work performance. Responses identified financial remuneration as one of the essential forms of motivation, with 69 % of respondents stating it is for them motivating to a great extent. To the question, which form of motivation would motivate them for better work performance almost all respondents stated regular and well set system of financial remuneration, taking the form of either increased personal financial appraisal or bonuses. Figure 3 shows responses (Yes-No) to the question of whether they feel motivated for effective performance of work tasks.



Yet, financial motivation is not the only form of staff motivation. 64 % of respondents stated also other forms for improved efficiency of work. Based on the responses it is evident that employees feel strongly about and are markedly influenced by the quality of working atmosphere, communication on the part of their superiors and the need for one common approach of superiors to their subordinates.

Employees are most frequently discouraged by low financial remuneration, frequent changes of instructions made at short notice. They also indicated absence of verbal feedback from their superiors regarding work done or being carried out and the poor working environment.

One way to motivate the staff is through the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning and for increasing qualifications. This is the opinion held by most of our respondents. A greater part of respondents consider the number of training activities offered sufficient. What might be a problem is the purposefulness of training events as a relatively high number of respondents – 37 % hold the view that the training offered to them is not sufficiently directed to the areas they need to carry out their tasks and 92 % would welcome support programs to be aimed purposefully at MA OPE work tasks.

The problem likely to cause the MA OPE staff discontent with purposefulness of training may be attributable to a number of aspects. One is the low number of representatives of a managing authority that can participate in training. Another, more significant aspect, is the timeliness of training topics. For example the training events dealing with changes of the management system for the SF and the CF are often held long after they had been updated and at the time of training employees already have to work according to the changes. Hence the overall contribution of training is lost. The remedy is not fully in the competence of the MA OPE since most of training is organised by the CCA.

The OPE implementation is a complex of activities that are closely related. The processes of implementation build on each other, or are complementary to each other and hence call for mutual coordination. At the same time the complexity of implementation requires intense collaboration of MA OPE sections. The internal manual defines precisely the roles and tasks for sections involved in the OPE implementation. In carrying out certain tasks some rare duplication may occur but in general the division of tasks among sections is set appropriately and there is not administrative and procedural duplication.

The question of whether the ambience for cooperation and coordination has been created between different levels of management can be answered from several aspects. From the aspect of overall environment the system of management, information sharing, communication and coordination of MA OPE sections is set appropriately. On the other hand, we have to note that the work environment needs some adjustments and improvements.

After overall evaluation the requests for improvement of the environment conducive to cooperation and coordination can be summed up as follows: increase the staff information of affairs within the MA OPE, regular briefing for the staff on the progress in OPE implementation, on personnel issues pertaining to employees, increase information shared by MA OPE sections on their respective tasks; provide staff with timely and full information necessary for their tasks (for example, updating of manuals for the applicant and the beneficiary); inform the staff, on a regular basis, of the issues and problems addressed by particular sections.

A similar situation is found at the level of MA OPE sections/department. The situation evaluation points out to the need to raise information of the staff of the affairs inside the sections; regularly brief the staff of the tasks, problems, changes and provisions regarding performance of their work activities. Holding regular meetings of the entire section/department appears to be one of the means to meet the conditions for improved collaboration and coordination. Equally the distribution of tasks of the staff needs to be revisited as 43 % think that work tasks have not been divided effectively and should be changed.

Another important aspect for the improvement of environment for collaboration, coordination and work activities is to boost the staff's motivation. Regular and well-set remuneration is the most

commonly asked for form of motivation. Based on responses, it is evident that employees feel strongly about and are significantly influenced by the quality of working atmosphere, communication on the part of their superiors, and that they call for a common approach of superiors to subordinates.

On the whole, employees are most frequently discouraged by low financial remuneration, frequent changes of instructions made at short notice. They also indicate absence of verbal feedback from their superiors regarding work done or being carried out and poor working environment.

Another form to motivate the staff and improve the working environment seems to be through opportunities for lifelong learning and increasing qualifications. But for training to have a positive effect on the quality of environment it is necessary to ensure its purposefulness and timeliness, make support programmes more focused on concrete requirements relevant for the work performance.

Recommendations following out of the findings can be summed up as follows:

1. intensify and improve communication and information at the level of MA OPE on the part of management, and also between particular MA OPE sections;
2. organise regular informative meetings/training at the level of entire MA OPE;
3. intensify and improve communication at the level of relevant sections/department of MA OPE;
4. put in place regular meetings for all employees at the level of section/department;
5. develop an effective system of regular financial remuneration of the staff;
6. consider modifying work assignments of particular employees;
7. ensure timely and targeted staff training in cooperation with the CCA.

2.2 Are sufficient administrative capacities ensured to carry out particular tasks?

Within the administrative capacities of the MESRS SR, as MA OPE for the programming period 2007 – 2013, a total of 100 employees were employed as of 31 December 2011 (including 23 employees of the Paying Unit) of the originally planned 107 employees, which is 93.45 % of the staffing plan for administrative capacities in 2011.

On 8 December 2010, by the order of the minister of education, science, research and sport of SR No. 40/2010-I, the organisational structure of the MESRS SR was changed. As of 1 January 2011, by the cited order the Section of European Affairs and the Section of Economy of the Structural Funds of the EU merged to form the Section of the Structural Funds of the EU. On 25 May 2011 another minister's order No. 30/2011 was issued changing the organisational structure of the Ministry and creating OPED that took over part of the original tasks of the former Section for the NP Implementation (from this change OICP) and part of the tasks discharged previously by the Section of Projects Control, which the order cancelled.

As of 31 December 2011, a total of 106 employees were involved in the implementation of the OPE within the IBMA ASFEU, of the originally planned 108, which is 98.15 % of the staffing plan for the administrative capacities in 2011.

As of 31 December 2011, a total of 25 employees were involved in the implementation of Measure 2.2 of OPE within the IBMA MH SR, of the originally planned 25, which is 100 % of the staffing plan for the administrative capacities in 2011.

As of 31 December 2011, the Paying Unit of MH SR employed 7 persons of the planned 8, which is 87.5 % of the staffing plan for administrative capacities in 2011.

From the aspect of administrative demands involved in the OPE implementation the planned and the actually achieved staffing in the area of administrative capacities, is insufficient. This results in the overloading of the staff while impacting the time aspect of tasks being carried out. Employees deal with several tasks at a time, which slows down the solution of the work agenda.

Experiences of the implementation of ESF-funded projects show greater administrative demands required for processing of the associated agenda than is the case for the programmes co-financed from the ERDF (involving for example high number of supported projects with low financial allocation per project and huge amount of supporting documentation).

The lack of administrative capacities thus represents a risk factor, which can cause serious problems in the near future not merely related to the drawing under the OP co-financed from the ESF.

At the same time, increased demands and workload can be expected before long, in connection with the preparation and subsequent implementation of new national projects as well as the preparation of new management documents for the programming period 2014-2020.

Excessive workload of MA OPE staff emerged also from the responses of the questionnaire with the majority of staff involved in the survey expressing dissatisfaction with administrative capacities and also the conviction that that is the reason why work cannot be carried out well, effectively and on time.

Likewise, IBMA ASFEU considers excessive workload of the staff to be an issue, and in view of the demands of the implementation processes, as one reason for the high turnover of its employees.

Table 8 shows the state in administrative capacities involved in the OPE implementation within the MA OPE and IBMA, as of 31 December 2011. The table also gives an insight into required increases of administrative capacities for 2012 -2015.

Table 8. The state of administrative capacities, as of 31 December 2011

| Administrative capacities | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Authority/body | Actual state as of 31 Dec. 2011 | Planned number of systematized positions as of 3 Dec.2011 | Need for increase (+), decrease (-) or maintaining the planned number (0) for 2012-2015 against the planned number, as of 31 Dec.2011 | Proposal for the number of systematized positions planned for 2012-2015 |
| | a | B | C | d=b+c |
| MA OPE | 77 | 83 | +3 | 86 |
| IBMA – ASFEU | 106 | 108 | +18 | 126 |
| IBMA – MH SR | 25 | 25 | 0 | 25 |
| Paying Unit* | 23 | 23 | +2 | 25 |
| Total | 231 | 239 | + 23 | 262 |

*Involves employees that also participate in the implementation of the OP Research and Development

2.3 Are the communication and information flows between MA and IBMA efficient (updating on the status from the previous evaluation focused on the management system of the OPE)? What are the main constraints and problems in the cooperation of MA and IBMA?

As has already been noted in the introduction to the evaluation of the management system of the OPE, within the meaning of Article 59 of the general regulation, MA OPE delegated some of its tasks to the intermediate bodies under the managing authority – the Agency of MESRS SR for the Structural Funds of the EU and the Ministry of Health of the SR.

The relations between MESRS SR as MA OPE and IBMA are provided by special authorisations on delegating powers, defining mutual rights and obligations in the area of provision of assistance from the European Social Fund.

The area of MA/IBMA OPE cooperation was also dealt with in the OPE external evaluation “The assessment of effectiveness of the OPE management system,” implemented between November 2009 and April 2010.

Within the conclusions of the evaluation MA OPE and both its IBMA were given recommendations to remedy weaknesses identified in their mutual communication and cooperation that can be summed up in the following three points:

1. more intense use of electronic communication between MA – IBMA;
2. intensify the communication between IBMA and MA OPE;
3. set up a permanent/on-going platform between MA OPE and either of IBMA for bilateral proposals for the improvement of tasks performance within OPE.

Within this periodical evaluation of the OPE, the MA decided to assess the current state in the area of cooperation between MA and IBMA and verify to what extent the communication situation has improved/worsened.

To assess this area, interviews with MA OPE and IBMA officials were used.

For MA OPE, interviews were made with representatives of all relevant units and the department for the OPE of the Programme Management Section, the Methodology and Technical Assistance Section, Project Implementation and Control Section and the PP and Irregularities Review Section.

From MA OPE's perspective, the area where most problems occur in the MA/IBMA cooperation includes eligibility of expenditure (time and substantive aspects) and the preparation of the Guide for the Beneficiary. On the whole, there are no problems that the MA OPE would consider unresolved on long term. Just the opposite, communication particularly with ASFEU is intense, and takes place both at the level of officers and management. As for IBMA MH SR, the managing authority considers the communication less frequent and would welcome more initiative on the part of this IBMA. On the other hand, just as with respect to ASFEU, MA did not identify any problems in relation to MH SR that would stay unresolved on long term. A constraint that might be felt in the area of addressing work agenda would relate to lack of administrative capacity on the part of MA OPE, which may be the reason why solutions of matters sometimes take longer than would be considered acceptable by the parties involved.

The most frequently voiced demand on the part of MA OPE officials was the need for the organisation to have regular official meetings with the participation of MA and both IBMA. In the period from the end of the assessment focused on the OPE management system the frequency of meetings began to fall gradually until ceasing altogether. Despite the communication between MA and IBMA being intense, or even increased over time, and the working issues being addressed on a

continuous basis (either in writing or by personal meetings) the need for periodical official meetings of all three institutions remains valid.

Hence in evaluating the current state and the progress made since the previous evaluation of the OPE management system the only major weakness is the non-existence of the official trilateral meetings of MA/IBMA.

In the light of the current state of MA/IBMA communication and cooperation there is a clear need for common activities, in terms of speaking with one voice externally and presenting oneself in unison to the public and to the other bodies involved in the implementation of the structural funds of the EU. On the part of particular units of the MA there is frequent request that intermediate bodies should formulate their requests and comments forwarded to MA more specifically. It often happens that IBMA sends in requests defined in very broad and general terms, making it difficult for MA OPE to assess them.

If we were to define the problem areas and constraints of the MA/IBMA communication and cooperation from the MA OPE perspective, they would include the organisation of periodical meetings of MA and IBMA officials; speaking with one voice when dealing with the other bodies involved in the implementation of the structural funds of the EU and the public; and intensifying communication and information from IBMA MH SR vis-à-vis MA OPE, and backward. On the whole, however, from MA OPE perspective, the communication and cooperation with both IBMAs is effective and contributes to successful implementation of the OPE.

For the sake of objective evaluation of efficiency of cooperation and communication between MA OPE and IBMA, representatives of ASFEU and MH SR were asked identical questions in their interviews held separately.

IBMA ASFEU assessed communication and cooperation with MA as efficient and did not identify any areas that could be considered explicitly problematic. From ASFEU perspective communication channels have been set adequately and functionally. Perhaps as a form of constraint ASFEU indicates the different views on administrative simplification; MA OPE does not always accept suggestions for simplification proposed by IBMA ASFEU (e.g. for computing unit prices, wage cost).

In unison with MA OPE, ASFEU would welcome holding periodical official meetings/briefings of MA and IBMA. To increase effectiveness, ASFEU suggests two types of these meetings – joint trilateral and separate bilateral of either IBMA with MA, in which problems relevant to each IBMA would be addressed.

Similar to ASFEU, the IBMA MH SR also regards communication and cooperation with the MA OPE to be effective. On the other hand, MH SR identified as major constraint somewhat low intensity of communication on the part of the MA OPE and missed coordination and management on the part of the MA OPE. As the result of insufficient coordination MH SR feels an imbalance between the degree of steering and control on the part of MA OPE. Even if the MH SR implements only one OPE measure, they feel it is important for them to be informed of the affairs regarding the implementation of the OPE as a whole. Just as ASFEU, they would welcome periodical official meetings/briefings and suggest (just as ASFEU) two intervals for the meetings – joint meetings with both IBMA, and individual, with only one IBMA present.

With regard to the routine tasks addressed, the IBMA MH SR finds the positions and observations of MA OPE often very general, and has to subsequently ask for their supplementation. It also finds the answers from MA OPE to be sent long after the requests were made.

2.4 Is the amount of TA funding designated for administrative support of the OPE implementation as well as the whole priority theme 85 (Preparation, monitoring, implementation and control of the implementation of assistance from the Structural Funds) adequate ?

Within the meaning of Article 46 of the general regulation, with a view to ensuring high quality of the implementation of OP and its priority axes, the eligible entities at all levels of management structures can use the funding under the TA OPE for the support of the implemented activities and functions regarding the preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control, and audit, along with the activities to strengthen administrative capacities, i.e., for attracting and retaining sufficiently knowledgeable human resources, provision for their professional development and the necessary expert background materials and adequate conditions for their decision making.

To achieve the strategy of the OPE adequate material and technical conditions need to be created and the human capital prepared for the implementation of above objectives. To this end, **priority axis 5** has been designed as part of the OPE - Technical assistance under C objective, the purpose of which is to make provision for effective implementation of the OP Education consistent with the demands laid for the management and administrative structures responsible for the implementation of OPE. Under RCE objective, this aim is pursued under a separate priority axis 4, measure 4.3.

Under TA measures financial resources are allocated under measures 4.3 and 5.1, designated for the managing authority and intermediate body ASFEU, while funding allocated under measure 5.2 is earmarked for IBMA MH SR to secure the implementation of measure 2.2. Table 9 gives the financial plan of TA OPE for 2007 – 2013.

Table 9. Financial plan of TA OPE for 2007 - 2013

| Operational Programme Education | Amount (EU) | Rate of co-financing from the EU |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Priority axis 4 | 712,063 | 85 % |
| <i>Measure 4.3</i> | 712,063 | 85 % |
| Priority axis 5* | 24,000,000 | 85 % |
| <i>Measure 5.1</i> | 22,820,635.00 | 85 % |
| <i>Measure 5.2</i> | 1,179,365.00 | 85 % |
| Total | 24,712,063 | 85 % |

For the area of TA the following priority themes are applied:

- Priority theme 85 – Preparation, implementation, monitoring and control
- Priority theme 86 – Evaluation and studies; information and communication.

Priority theme 85 – Preparation, implementation, monitoring and control

Eligible entities can use the TA funding under Priority theme 85 – Preparation, implementation, monitoring and control to co-finance activities supporting the effective implementation of OP within the meaning of set activity areas, in particular:

- Personnel provision for the preparation, management and control of programmes, projects and horizontal priorities, including the activities of the committees and commissions of the SF, including staff training,
- Material and technical provision necessary for the management and control of the assistance from the SF,

- Provision for services (documents, software, etc.) relating to the preparation, management and control of the SF at the level of programmes, projects and horizontal priorities.

Examples of concrete activities:

- Support for administrative staff in the process of provision of assistance from the ESF – administrative cost, materials and operating cost for authorised staff;
- Support in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Provision for quality and continuity of monitoring throughout the programming period;
- Develop and improve the quality of the financial management including audit and control;
- Organise meetings and ensure activity of the monitoring committee and sub-committees;
- Training and special seminars and sharing of best practice in the area of assistance from the ESF.

The eligible target group for TA measures includes civil and public service employees at MA OPE, both IBMA, the Paying Unit and the control and audit units, other personnel ensuring TA requests (employees, or contracted entities).

Table 10 below gives the allocation of TA funding for priority themes 85 and 86 by objectives in EUR.

Table 10. Allocation of TA funding by priority theme

| Objective | Priority theme 85 Amount (EU) | Priority theme 86 Amount (EU) |
|------------------|--|--|
| C | 20,400,000.00 | 3,600,000.00 |
| RCE | 605,254.00 | 106,890.00 |
| Total | 21,005,254.00 | 3,706,890.00 |

For the purpose of the assessment of this evaluation question account will be taken of the data and financial resources pertaining to the civil and public service employees at the MA OPE, both IBMA, Paying Unit, and the units of controls and audit (budget item 610620).

Thus for the administrative support of the implementation for both objectives, a total of EUR 21,005,254.00 from EU funds has been allocated under the OPE.

As of 31 December 2011, of this amount EUR 15,293,297.29 (EU funds) had been contracted for the purpose of MA personnel wages, of which EUR 763,721.17 (EU funds) under RCE objective and EUR 14,529, 576.12 (EU funds) under C objective. For RCE objective this implies overcontracting of the allocation of the whole measure 4.3, by 33.56 %. Under C objective, the contracting of funds for wage costs of employees is at 60.54 % of the total allocation for measures 5.1 and 5.2, with contracting under measure 5.1 amounting to EUR 13,681,143.92 (EU funds), which is approximately 59.95 % of the allocation, and EUR 848,432.2 EUR (EU funds) for measure 5.2, which is approximately 71.94 %.

Based on the above data we may conclude that the greater part of TA funding earmarked for priority theme 85 is designated and used exclusively for wages of the staff.

Based on the above, and the fact that the hitherto contracted funding covers only the financing of activities relating to the implementation of the OPE by end of 2012, and the fact that for activities implemented in 2013 – 2015 additional TA funding will have to be contracted, or in case of the insufficient allocation, seek other sources of finance for these activities, a risk of shortage of TA funding can be identified in the OPE for the wage cost of the staff involved in the OPE implementation. Experiences of the implementation of ESF-funded programmes indicate high administrative demands involved in the implementation. This is caused, on the one hand, by high number of supported projects with low financial allocation per project and a huge amount of supporting documentation required, and, on the other hand, by time-consuming and administratively demanding delivery of tasks of the managing authority and its obligations vis-à-vis CCA, CA, AA, IBMA, and the programme implementation as such.

Of all TA resources available for RCE objective, 87.87 % of the whole measure had already been used at 31 December 2011. From the measure's allocation for Priority theme 85 around 97.03 % was drawn for wage cost refunds, at 31 December 2011, with all the remaining expenditure incurred in provision for effective implementation of OPE no longer reimbursed within this objective. From the start of 2011, IBMA ASFEU has been reimbursing expenditure incurred in the implementation of projects under RCE objective from the state budget resources.

With regard to C objective under OPE, the using up of the whole allocation by reimbursement of eligible expenditure incurred is assumed in the course of 2014.

It follows from the above that wage costs of MESRS SR and IBMA employees that are involved in the implementation of OPE, as well as other expenditure associated with the OPE implementation will have to be financed from the state budget resources, from the chapter of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR.

Conclusion

The IMMA accurately specifies the tasks of individual units involved in the OPE implementation. In general, we can note that the **distribution of tasks among relevant sections is set suitably** and there is no duplication in administration or processes.

The question if an ambience has been created for cooperation and coordination between different levels of management needs to be answered from several aspects. From the aspect of the overall environment of the MA OPE, we can say that the **system of management, information sharing and communication and cooperation between relevant sections of MA OPE is adequately set**. On the other hand, we also need to note that the working environment does require some modification and improvement.

Based on the overall evaluation, the **demands for improvement of the environment for cooperation and coordination** at the level of MA OPE can be summarised as follows: increase information of the staff on affairs within the MA OPE, consult the staff, on a regular basis, on the progress in the OPE implementation, personnel issues concerning the staff, increase the amount of information shared by different units of MA OPE on the implementation of tasks by relevant sections, provide the staff promptly and in full with important information necessary for the discharge of work activities (e.g. updating of the IMMA, updating of manuals for the applicant and the recipient), inform the staff, on a regular basis, on the issues and problems that are being addressed by particular sections.

The same applies to the level of the relevant sections of MA OPE: there is a need to increase information of the staff on affairs within units, consult the staff, on a regular basis, on the tasks, problems, changes and provisions regarding the performance of their work activities, put in place regular briefings of the whole section, consider modifying the distribution of work assignments of individual members of the staff.

Motivation is a crucial prerequisite for an efficient work discharge. On the whole, the staff most frequently lacks motivation owing to low remuneration, frequent changes of instructions made at short notice. They respond in the same way to the absence of feedback from superiors, with regard to their tasks, which they had carried out or are carrying out, and to a poor working atmosphere.

Our recommendation is to **put in place regular and adequately set financial remuneration, improve the working atmosphere, intensify communication on the part of superiors and ensure timely and focused staff training**.

Deficit in administrative capacities is seen as one of the major problems in view of the management and implementation of the OPE. In the light of tasks to be carried out by MA OPE and IBMA, this status quo can be maintained only on short term; **from a long-term perspective the situation is untenable**. Overall, there is a request to increase administrative capacities by 23 employees for the authorities implementing OPE.

The currently contracted TA funds cover the funding of activities relating to the implementation of the OPE by the end of 2012, hence for the activities implemented in 2013 – 2015 contracting of additional TA funds will be necessary, or in case of inadequate allocation, new sources of funding these activities will have to be sought. **We can also identify a risk of deficit in TA OPE funds for wages** of the staff involved in the implementation of the OPE.

Of all the disposable TA resources under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective, as much as 87.87 % of funds for the measure had already been used, as of 31 December 2011. Of the measure's allocation designed for priority theme 85, around 97.03 % had been drawn for refunds of wage expenses, as of 31 December 2011, with all the remaining expenses necessary for the provision for effective OPE implementation remaining non-refunded under this objective. From the start of

2011, the IBMA ASFEU has been reimbursing all expenditure related to the project implementation under RCE objective from the state budget resources.

In the case of Convergence objective under OPE, the use-up of the allocation through refunds of eligible expenditure incurred is anticipated in the course of 2014.

It follows from the above, that the wage cost of the staff of MESRS SR and IBMA involved in the implementation of the OPE, as well as other costs relating to the OP implementation, will have to be financed from the state budget resources of the MESRS SR chapter.

The most frequent request reported by all parties concerned emerging from the evaluation of cooperation between MA OPE and IBMA was the need to hold regular official meetings of MA OPE with both IBMA present and meetings of MA OPE with one IBMA. Communication between MA OPE and IBMA is in most areas of work intense, in previously less communicated areas an increase in intensity of communication can be seen and the work issues are addressed continually (either in writing or by personal meetings).

Holding of periodical meetings of MA OPE and IBMA should be considered as essential recommendation. After assessing requests, official meetings of MA OPE and both IBMA representations are recommended to hold every 2 months on a regular basis. In addition to these “trilateral” meetings we equally recommend to put in place bilateral meetings of MA OPE and respective IBMA, on a regular basis. Both types of meetings will improve communication in all areas, help clarify and specify more precisely the issues and problems of all parties concerned and enable to speak with one voice in work-related matters.

3. Evaluation of the monitoring system and monitoring indicators

Pursuant to Article 66 of the general regulation the managing authority shall be accountable for the efficiency, accuracy of management and implementation of the assistance, particularly for putting in place of a system for collection of reliable financial and statistical information on the implementation of assistance, for measurable monitoring indicators, for submission of this data in accordance with the mechanisms agreed by the Member States and the Commission, as set out in Article 103 paragraph 3 of the general regulation.

Context indicators are indicators that are providing quantifiable information describing social, economic, and ecological situation of the environment in which the OP goals are implemented. Context indicators are used particularly in the process of evaluation of OP (ex-ante, interim, ex-post) and constitute the quantifiable starting points to assess the progress against expected impacts of the implementation of OP on the social, economic and ecological situation of the environment in which the OP is implemented.

The mode and the form of monitoring structural assistance depend on the nature and content of the concrete assistance provided. The purpose of monitoring is to establish with the help of measurable indicators at appropriate levels of programme the effectiveness and efficiency of the funds use. Through monitoring, the attainment of the OPE set objectives is followed.

Measurable indicators are the principal means for monitoring progress in the implementation and evaluation of the achieved OP objectives, horizontal priorities and the NSRF.

Indicators serve to judge the cost-effectiveness (minimizing the costs of an activity or procurements of goods, works and services while maintaining their reasonable standards and quality), effectiveness (maximising the results of an activity for the disposable public resources) and efficiency (the relation between the planned and the actual result of an activity in light of the public funds effected) of financial resources allocated for the relevant OP, priority axis and measure.

Context (macroeconomic) indicators are indicators that quantify the expected impact of a programme, of the programme's global objectives and/or the programme's priority axes. The value of context indicators is not to be calculated on the basis of project-level data; the context indicator values are, as a rule, published by the competent national and international organisations (Eurostat).

Programme indicators detail the values of indicators for a given OP, priority axis and measure. They are calculated from the result and impact indicators of particular projects.

Project result indicators quantify the services and products available to the target group/final recipients on the basis of works, goods and services co-financed by a non-repayable financial contribution within a project's supported activities. Project result indicators depend chiefly on the activity of the recipient.

Project impact indicators portray the planned projection of future changes that are likely to occur upon completion of the implementation of project activities, or with some delay, as the result of the implemented project. Project impact indicators depend on external factors (such as, the demand, the response of a target group/final recipients in connection with the existing legislative framework), which the recipient influences to a minimum extent or not at all.

3.1 Are there any problems of reporting the project-level values of indicators achieved, on the programme-level indicators?

The project-level indicators are result and impact indicators. The programme-level indicators are output, result and impact indicators. The Central Coordination Authority issued Methodological Guideline No.3 on the design and use of project indicators and their entry in the ITMS 2007 – 2013, falling effective on 1 December 2008 (hereinafter referred to as „CCA Methodological Guideline No. 3”) which includes the National Indicators Code List.

To simplify reporting of the programme-level values of indicators achieved, MA OPE provided a link between project and programme indicators. IBMA are obliged to send MA twice a year (as of 30 June and 31 December of the current year) the lists of indicators contracted for the preceding half-year. The MA staff subsequently identifies the project indicators that are contributing to the attainment of programme indicators.

There seem to be particularly two areas of difficulty:

- 1) There is a large number of project-level indicators that do not contribute to the programme-level indicators (no direct link). This is evident also from the quantity of indicators registered within the National Indicators Code List (for OPE as many as 600 potentially useable indicators) and disproportionately lower number of 40 OPE programme-level indicators. Thus there is, on the one hand, the need to monitor progress of the project, or its particular activities (by means of concrete and targeted project indicators), on the other, the need of linking every project to the programme. In this regard, in the selection of their indicators applicants are guided by identified and colour-distinguished project indicators having a direct link to a programme indicator, which the managing authority or IBMA offer in the list of indicators relevant for the call. If there is relevance of project/selected eligible project activities for any of the mandatorily marked indicators, the applicant for the NFC is obliged to select the result or impact indicator thus highlighted. In the case where several indicators are appropriate for the applicant from among obligatory indicators, the applicant is obliged to select all the indicators thus highlighted.

One handicap is the manual calculation of these indicators. Although there was an ITMS functionality launched in 2011 that should allow for this calculation, the experience of the managing authority with this functionality is not positive. It is because the functionality predefines the project indicators relevant for the programme indicator but the predefinition is at variance with the practice of the managing authority and does not consider, for example, the overlapping counting of indicators (an illustration may be the number of newly created educational programmes and the number of newly created /innovated educational programmes using information and communication technologies in teaching, in which case the latter is a sub-group of the former).

- 2) Describing programme- and/or project-level indicators as a percentage. In the current programming period there are some indicators that are given as a percentage ratio (e.g. the percentage of secondary school/university graduates’ successful labour market integration). The managing authority resolved to divide this indicator into a result and an impact indicator (both expressed in number) and the rate is calculated on the basis of the ratio between the result and the impact indicator.

3.2 Based on the hitherto experience of MA OPE, what are the most serious problems of monitoring and the system of measurable indicators? Which indicators are missing for effective monitoring?

From the start of the implementation MA OPE gradually encountered several problems in the area of monitoring and the system of measurable indicators. Most of them were identified over time as the number of implemented projects – national or demand-driven projects -- was growing.

These problems can be divided into - programme-level and projects-level problems.

One area where it will be problematic to express the OPE contribution relates to the values of the NSFR indicators. The contribution of the OPE can be measured by means of two indicators: “Expenditure on human resources (total public expenditure on education) as a percentage of GDP” and “Proportion of population involved in lifelong learning per 100 persons aged 25-64 years”. Measurement of these indicators is undertaken on the basis of the data of the Eurostat, hence it is not possible to express numerically the particular percentage of OPE contribution made to the attained values of these indicators.

Equally problematic as in case of the NSRF indicators will be to evaluate the rate of contribution of OPE to the context indicators, as their attainment is also monitored through the Eurostat measurements. On the whole, in evaluating the real impact of the implementation, the non-verifiable concrete contribution of OPE to the accomplishment of its objectives may be pointed out.

As for the transition from the project to programme level, the main problem proves to be the evaluation of project-level values of indicators in connection with reflecting them in the programme-level values of indicators. The code list of measurable indicators contains around 600 project indicators that can be used in OPE projects, however the linking to programme-level indicators is possible for only a minimum of them. For this reason only about 40 indicators of those specified in the code list are used in reality. At the same time, in order to ensure the linking of project indicators to programme indicators, MA OPE and both IBMA predefine the list of obligatory indicators within the calls for national projects/demand-driven projects, which the applicant must select in the application for a NFC.

Apart from the problem of linking project indicators with programme indicator, referred to above, there is also the problem with counting values within the project indicators more than once. In monitoring reports submitted by the recipient and subsequently in their processing, incorrect calculation of values often occurs, for example in respect of such indicators as “Number of newly created/innovated educational and study programmes”, “Number of newly created educational programmes”, “ Number of newly created /innovated educational programmes using information and communication technologies in teaching” and “Number of newly created/innovated educational programmes designed for the acquisition and development of knowledge and skills in the area of information and communication technologies.” It sometimes happens, when several of these indicators are used within a project that the same educational programme is counted more than once, which, of course, impacts the resulting value of the programme-level indicator.

For the future it would be fitting to avoid semantically interchangeable indicators being predefined in the preparation of indicators for calls, or make sure that the definition of indicators is so clear that any interchange or multiple counting of planned and attained values is ruled out.

From the aspect of monitoring, monitoring in the breakdown by age (aged 15 – 24, aged 55 – 64 years) and by gender (men, women) of the attained values of project indicators and subsequently also programme indicators accomplished also turns out to be problematic. The project indicators are

not used within calls for national projects or calls for demand-driven projects where these categories would be specified concretely. The applicants can select the indicators that are defined within the meaning of these categories, provided their projects contribute to the horizontal priority (hereinafter referred to as "HP") Equal Opportunities. Of course, the data on these categories are gathered also on the basis of information on project participants submitted by beneficiaries, always as of 15 January for the preceding calendar year, and where the data on all participants of the project are broken down in accordance with Annex XXIII of the implementation regulation.

Apart from the above, a relative constraint may also be the fact that there is no real link between the information on the number of project participants to the project indicators selected, which is why the actual outputs of the programme implementation may be distorted, as the values, according to the data in the information on project participants provided, are often several times higher than the attained values of the project-level result indicator, and this is not only in terms of gender and age categories. But we must point out that the data on participants provide the information on the actual number of participants that are being educated or participating in activities, whereas the result indicators refer to the number of persons having completed the activity, or potentially the resulting counting of a participant is linked to, for example, receiving a certificate or a certificate of attendance for an educational activity.

Another of the serious problems encountered by MA OPE in monitoring, was the area of monitoring horizontal priorities. The serious weakness in the implementation of HP was the fact that it was only on the basis of Methodological Guideline No. 3 of the CCA and the connected changes made to the public portal of the ITMS that the obligation was established to incorporate in the Contract of the NCF also the indicators having relevance for HP. For this reason, the projects contracted in 2009 under calls for demand-driven projects and calls for national projects launched before 1 December 2008 did not include the obligation to declare their contribution to HP through the result indicator in the Contract of the NFC.

When MA OPE discovered that the projects reporting relevance for HP within the ITMS actually do not have their HP indicator monitored, they, in collaboration with the CCA, both IBMA and the HP coordinator, set about to change the projects' relevance for HP in ITMS. The data in ITMS regarding all HP was modified for all OPE projects so as to reflect the real state in the contracted projects implemented.

To avoid similar problems in the future, an obligation was prescribed, within updating of the Management System of the SF and the CF, for the managing authorities to send the indicators before they get published in calls for demand-driven projects or national projects to the CCA and the HP coordinator for approval.

In addition to the areas above, technical issues concerning the system of monitoring and monitoring indicators also appear problematic.

From MA OPE perspective, there is a problem in reporting values of indicators where the unit of measurement is given as a percentage. As has been mentioned in the answer for the preceding question, the managing authority resolved to divide such an indicator into result and impact indicator, with both given as a number, and subsequently computing of the rate based on the result/impact indicator ratio.

Another technical constraint relates to the functionality of ITMS, as the ITMS does not fulfil fully its role in gathering the data. ITMS at present lack a functionality that would be capable of generating sets of measurable indicators and their statistics, selections, values achieved. Equally ITMS lacks a functionality that would simplify work in entering the data on project participants in the ITMS. Currently this data must be entered in the ITMS manually. From the administrative simplicity aspect

it would be apt if applicants could upload the information in the ITMS directly, as it is the case for monitoring reports.

In view of MA OPE experience, manual calculation of indicators seems the most correct although it causes excessive administrative workload of the OPE MA and IBMA staff.

3.3 What are the recommendations for the preparation of indicators for the next programming period 2014-2020?

For the new programming period the Commission decided to prepare a list of general indicators covering the support of individuals, systems and structures, and enterprises. The Commission acted on the experience that OP do not always adequately provide evidence of the logics of interventions under a priority axis or measure: the interlinking of the needs, target groups, types of activities, instruments and output indicators is not always unequivocal.

The entire 117 OP implemented in the current programming period and covering more than 7 000 indicators have been analysed. The Member States have also been involved in making proposals for indicators.

Based on available information regarding the new set-up for the new programming period, the following arrangement is assumed. There should be *common indicators* and programme specific indicators. The Commission prepared the list of common indicators (see below), and the Member State will design its programme specific indicators. Programme specific indicators should be complementary with the common indicators. In both categories output and result indicators will continue to exist.

The output indicators on the target groups are based on the breakdown of target groups according to Annex XXIII of the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006, setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund (hereinafter referred to as “implementation regulation”) with several modifications:

- unemployed, including long-term unemployed;
- long-term unemployed;
- inactive persons;
- inactive persons in education or training (*previously it involved inactive persons in education or training*);
- employed including self-employed;
- under 25 years (*previously the breakdown into young people aged 15-24 years, which excluded monitoring of primary school pupils*);
- older workers over 54 years (*previously older workers aged 55-64 years*);
- education (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2);
- education (ISCED 3 and ISCED 4);
- education (ISCED 5 to 8);
- migrants, people of foreign origin, minorities (including marginalized communities such as marginalized Roma communities);
- disabled;
- other disadvantaged people.

All data must be broken down by gender. Indents 1-10 cover the collection of personal data, the last three indents include the collection of sensitive data.

Common immediate result indicators of participants:

- inactive participants having engaged in job search immediately upon the completion of the project;
- participants having engaged in education or training upon the completion of the project;
- participants having acquired qualification upon the completion of the project;
- participants who got employed upon the completion of the project.

(the data will be reported annually)

Common long-term result indicators for participants:

- participants that are employed 6 months after the winding up of the project;
- participants that are self-employed 6 months after the winding up of the project;
- participants having improved their labour market status 6 months after the winding up of the project.

(The data should be reported in 2019 and 2023, it is not necessary to report the data for 100% of participants; the managing authority may select a sample of participants or verify results through a questionnaire.)

Common output indicators for entities:

- number of projects fully or partially implemented by social partners or NGOs;
- number of projects aimed at public administration or public services;
- number of supported micro-enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises.

The existence of such a list of common indicators will allow comparing better the attainment of results by particular Member States.

Program specific indicators are to be defined by each managing authority according to the character of the OP. As the Europe 2020 Strategy is the umbrella document for the programming period 2014-2020, the OP aimed at education will have to obligatorily monitor and evaluate the contribution to EU 2020 indicators relevant for this area, namely: reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% and increase the share of population aged 30-34 having completed tertiary education to 40% (targets for 2020).

Conclusion

Based on lessons learned by the MA OPE we may note that the **monitoring system and its measurable indicators are adequately set**. Currently when the programming period 2007-2013 is in its latter part of implementation it is difficult to talk about any fundamental changes of this system. Most of the problems and lessons identified should therefore be used in the preparation of the next programming period 2014-2020

As for recommendations for the selection or definition of programme specific indicators, based on the experience of the shortened programming period 2004-2006, and from the programming period 2007-2013, we **see no added value in further use of context indicators**.

Context indicators are indicators monitored at country level (e.g. rate of employment or percentage of population involved in lifelong learning). Several factor contribute to the resulting value of the indicator from which the contribution of a particular OP cannot be selected and quantified unequivocally. Other solution would be to change the methodology of computing these indicators. At present the values attained are received from the Eurostat statistics. In evaluating a context indicator it would be necessary to include in the questionnaires used by Eurostat surveys questions about participation in ESF programmes/projects, which is unrealistic.

Monitoring of indicators expressed as a percentage has also proved **problematic** (e.g. percentage of employees enrolled in lifelong learning). MA OPE currently set about breaking this indicator into result and impact indicator (both expressed in number) and the percentage ratio was subsequently calculated based on the result/impact indicator ratio.

Another problem area is **reporting on indicators broken down by gender**, or age. In the form, the information on the participants' data is monitored in accordance with Annex XXIII of the implementation regulation, i.e. the number of men and women, their age structure, etc. at the level of priority axis. However we are unable to align this data with indicators showing the number of pedagogic employees or the number of employees in research and development (how many of them were men and women, of what age structure). This would require the beneficiaries to monitor for every indicator monitoring the number of people (pedagogic employees, research and development employees) also related sub-groups or ancillary indicators showing gender, or age. That would result in a large number of indicators within a project, which could lead to lack of transparency or to "overshadowing" of indicators that are more significant for the measurement of progress accomplished under a project.

As not the most optimal solution turned out to be the **monitoring of indicators only at the level of result and impact** (without the capacity to monitor "immediate" result of interventions taking the form of output indicators). This causes a problem, for example, when we report progress within the annual reports, in which we note a certain rate of contracting and drawing of project funds, but cannot link the financial data immediately with the indicator values. The nature of result indicators often permits to ascertain only the values attained at the end of the project, as that has been accommodated in the current Monitoring Form for the report, as well as the ITMS system serving to collect the data. Not all beneficiaries are willing and/or able to provide ongoing values attained of result indicators. This entails the risk of revealing inadequate attainment of indicator ex-post, after the winding up of the project.

In view of the fact that an indicator should also serve to express cost-efficiency and effectiveness, the practice showed as **problematic quantifying the average cost per certain output** expressed by an indicator (e.g. cost of creating a training course). Linking a unique indicator to every activity would be an ideal solution.

Indicators for the area of horizontal priorities (currently including sustainable development, information society, marginalized Roma communities and equal opportunities) are a separate and specific area, which also involves the issues of indicators. Here, reporting on direct and indirect impact or the contribution to horizontal priorities proves problematic. As a result, paradoxical situations occur, particularly in relation to the marginalized Roma communities, when on account of showing indirect impact or contribution to a horizontal priority of marginalized Roma communities the Bratislava Region reports greatest number of projects supporting MRC. We recommend taking account of only direct contribution to horizontal priority for reasons of its definitiveness.

Last but not least, **only a limited number of project indicators have been found to contribute to the attainment of the programme indicators**. Hence, a general recommendation for the next period would be to monitor fewer indicators but those having direct links to the programme level. This would allow monitoring of OP results in a more targeted way.

The ITMS functionality is a technical obstacle in the system of monitoring, in view of the fact that ITMS does not fully meet its role in gathering the data. The present ITMS does not contain a functionality that would be capable of generating sets of measurable indicators and their statistics, selections, values attained. Equally the ITMS lacks a functionality that would simplify work in uploading the data on project participants into the ITMS. At present this data has to be entered in the ITMS manually. From the aspect of administrative simplification it would be appropriate if this information could be uploaded in the ITMS directly by beneficiaries, as is the case for monitoring reports.

4. Evaluation of the OPE information and publicity

MA OPE discharges the tasks in the area of information and publicity within the meaning of Article 69 of the general regulation and Article 2 of the implementation regulation.

In accordance with Article 2 of the implementation regulation, and with the Management System of the SF and CF, information has been specified on the strategy, objectives, target groups, implementation, indicative budget, indicative timetable, monitoring and evaluation, administrative provision, and entities contributing to the implementation. The Manual for Information and Publicity is part of the Management System of the SF and the CF, defining the minimum standards and procedures in the area of informing on and giving publicity to the EU programmes supported from the funds of the EU and OP. MA OPE has produced one common manual for information and publicity for OPE and OPR&D (available at: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=477>).

Information and publicity are targeted and focus specifically on the target groups and the general public with a view to highlighting the position of the EU and ensuring transparency of assistance from the EU funds. MA OPE is responsible for the information and publicity in keeping with the rules for the implementation of the general regulation and ensures this activity by means of a Communication Plan for the OPE and OP R&D (hereinafter referred to as "CoP") which was approved by the European Commission on 5 May 2008 (available on: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=477>). CoP is a common communication plan for two operational programmes administered by MESRS SR as the managing authority in the programming period 2007 – 2013, namely OPE and OP R&D. MA elaborated the information and publicity measures for the effective use of financial assistance provided to the SR by the EU. CoP contains an indicative plan of information activities for 2007 – 2013, about the possibilities, objectives and volume of assistance offered from the ESF through OPE to potential applicants for a NFC, applicants for a NFC, recipients of a NFC and to the general public. Information and communication activities defined in the CoP have been scheduled for particular years in so-called Annual Operative Plans of Information and Publicity (hereinafter referred to as "AOP IP"). The management of the information and communication strategy is ensured by the MA OP, with IBMAs contributing to it in the scope of their delegated powers.

To simplify access to coherent information regarding the implementation of measures in the area of information and publicity, the managing authority for OPE produced a guideline for the beneficiary on implementing measures in the area of information and publicity of OPE (available at: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=477>). It covers combined information from all strategic documents. This document markedly facilitated quality improvement in the implemented information and publicity actions on the part of beneficiaries, which in turn brought about increased information of both the target groups and the general public on the OPE projects implemented.

Working Groups for Publicity (hereinafter referred to as "WGP") have been set up to coordinate activities in the area of information and publicity

At supranational level it is the Information & Communication Platform - INFORM Network, the purpose of which is to bring together managers for monitoring and publicity (hereinafter referred to as "MIP") of all OP to share and disseminate experiences and identify ways to improve the quality of communication activities, raise the awareness of benefits of the Community interventions among potential recipients/beneficiaries and in the general public and improve visibility of projects financed from the EU.

At national level, it is the WGP within the NSRF, with members from the CCA and particular managing authorities. At OPE level, it is a WGP made up of the MA OPE and SORO officials. The role of the OPE-level WGP is to coordinate the cooperation of the MA OPE and IBMA in the implementation of

information and communication activities. Meetings are held at least once a year, and operatively, as the need arises.

4.1 Do MA OPE /IBMA discharge their tasks in the area of information and publicity, as defined and scheduled in the programming documents? Are the tools selected for giving publicity sufficient and appropriate?

In accordance with the general and implementation regulations, the main task of MA and IBMA is to highlight the position of the EU and ensure the assistance from the Structural and Cohesion Funds is transparent for all target groups, by giving it broad publicity at all levels of implementation, using a broad range of communication tools.

The sub-tasks for the attainment of the set objectives, following directly from the CoP, are carried out using all instruments of information and publicity, as laid down and defined by MA OPE in this strategic document. Instruments are specified in more detail in the AOP IP and have been selected on the basis of the actual stage of the implementation of information campaign (hereinafter referred to as "campaign") so as to fully support the actual stage of the OPE implementation and ensure dissemination of timely, comprehensive, accurate and correct information on the availability of Structural Funds of the EU with the emphasis on the position and benefits for the OPE. The selected campaign should support:

- the success of the implementation of the EU economic and social cohesion policy tools by means of broad communication on the existence of and possibilities to get involved in the OPE and on the added value that OPE brings to the society;
- successful implementation of OPE by means of high-quality communication in the internal and external environment of OPE, particularly at the strategic level, impacting its direction, position and implementation;
- successful implementation of projects by means of early, structured, and quality communication and information designed for potential applicants for NFC, applicants for NFC and recipients and the general public.

Table 11. Indicative timetable of the CoP communication strategy until 2011

| Activities of information and publicity | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Preparatory stage | | | | | |
| Approval of OP | x | | | | |
| Preparation and approval of CoP | x | x | | | |
| Introductory media campaign | | | | | |
| Communication in mass media (TV, radio, advertising, outdoor, internet) | x | x | | | |
| Main information activity (national conference) | x | | | | |
| Information activities | | | | | |
| Major information activity | | x | x | x | x |
| Promotion in print and electronic media, or other forms (outdoor) | | x | x | x | x |
| News, press conferences, cooperation with journalists | | x | x | x | x |
| Advertising in print and electronic media | | x | x | x | x |
| Public presentation, discussions in electronic media through (TV, radio) programmes | | x | x | x | x |
| Online communication | | | | | |
| Websites (updating) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Database mailing | x | x | x | x | x |
| Direct communication | | | | | |
| External | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dissemination of information through the network of the Regional Information Offices – RIO | | x | x | x | x |
| Conferences, seminars and fairs | | x | x | x | x |
| Information of potential beneficiaries on current OP calls | | x | x | x | x |
| Provision of consultation for potential applicants for NFC, applicants for NFC and recipients of NFC | | x | x | x | x |
| PR event (for journalists) | | x | x | x | x |
| Internal | | | | | |
| Consultation meetings, workshops, seminars, meetings of WGP | x | x | x | x | x |
| Internal training | x | x | x | x | x |
| Publication activities (print and electronic) | | | | | |
| Information publications, specialist publications, brochures | x | x | x | x | x |
| Posters and leaflets | | x | x | x | x |
| Methodologies, manuals, guides and other specialist publications | | x | x | x | x |
| Reports and studies | | x | x | x | x |
| Activities to maintain awareness | | | | | |
| Communication in mass media (TV, radio, advertising, outdoor, internet) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Popularisation activities | | x | x | x | x |
| Distribution of promotional materials and items | x | x | x | x | x |
| Other tools | | | | | |
| Application of a corporate visual identity (Corporate Design manual) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Large display advertising panel, permanent explaining tablet (memorial plaque), notice-board (poster) | | x | x | x | x |
| Putting up the EU flag in front of the MA and IBMA premises during the week including 9 May | x | x | x | x | x |

Introductory media campaign

The introductory media campaign commenced in Quarter 3 of 2007 by publishing the news on the approval of the OPE. This was followed by launching the main information activity on the occasion of the OPE approval. The main information activity took the form of the joint national conference for the OP Education and the OP Employment and Social Inclusion. The conference was held on 27 November 2007 in Bratislava. Approximately 200 participants attended the conference.

The media campaign followed, presenting the OPE at eight conferences organised by the CCA following the approval of the NSRF on 17 August 2007. The conferences were designed to inform potential beneficiaries and the general public of the NSRF and particular OPs. Each of these conferences presented also the OPE, including information about eligible activities, eligible and ineligible expenditures, etc., as well as the authorities responsible for its implementation.

Information activities

Pursuant to the implementation regulation, the organisation of at least one major information activity per year (hereinafter referred to as “MIA”) is part of the information campaign, presenting the results of OPE, including NP, where appropriate.

Every year the MIA OPV had a distinct character. In selecting the appropriate communication tool, account was taken of the actual situation regarding the implementation of OPE, the calls published.

Table 12. Overview of major information activities in 2008 - 2011

| Year | Description of the major information activity | Note |
|------|---|--|
| 2007 | The year the major information activity took place | Held on 27 November 2007 |
| 2008 | National conference Slovakia and the European Research Area | Held on 27 November 2008 |
| 2009 | ASFEU Annual Conference | Held on 4 June 2009 |
| 2010 | Media campaign presenting general information on the OPE and on the MA function and activities. | The campaign consisted in a series of programs broadcast in the media and the PR articles in press, presenting general information on the OPE and the function and activities of MA. |
| 2011 | Modification of the website of the MA - sections www.minedu.sk/opv , preparation of the interactive project map, PR articles | Originally planned MIA – Media campaign was modified, TV advertising spots and the publication of a brochure on NP were abandoned. |

In 2007, following the introductory media campaign, the campaign continued with the information seminars organised by IBMA – MH SR for Measure 2.2.

At this stage the OPE logo was made with a view of creating the corporate visual identity (“corporate identity”) for the OPE; on this occasion the design manual of the OPE logo was also created (available at: <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=477>). For the purpose of corporate visual identity, the IBMA ASFEU ensured the design manual IBMA ASFEU, as the basic document, on which the corporate visual identity of IBMA ASFEU is based.

During the next stage of the campaign, in 2008-2011, numerous press conferences and conferences presenting OPE were held. Information was disseminated by means of articles and advertising in different types of media. An interesting event having built its own tradition was the Annual ASFEU Conference, held every year on the occasion of the IBMA ASFEU foundation anniversary. It presents the topical information about the structural funds and the OPE, NP, demand-driven projects and, as ASFEU also administers OP R&D, one section of the conference deals with the issues of OP R&D. The Structural Funds Day in Healthcare is also an event organised by IBMA MH SR on a regular basis, annually presenting the topical information on Measure 2.2.

To inform the NFC applicants thematically focused information seminars, training and events were organised, always focusing on particular target groups for the entities involved in the OPE implementation.

The OPE visibility was also significantly supported by the organisation of numerous events by IBMA ASFEU, such as:

- Modern school through the lens;
- Modern school in practice;
- Doors Open Day of IBMA ASFEU;
- I am a graphic designer;
- 1st edition of Europrojekt 2011 (presenting successful OPE and OP R&D projects. The event is scheduled also for the ensuing years).

Regular activities, from 2007 onward, also include personal, phone, written and e-mail communication with the target groups; accompanying activities in the week containing “Europe Day”; the publication of the list of NFC recipients; the publication of the OPE Annual Report and the

organisation of the regular and, from 2010, also informal meeting of the MC for the OPE. Promotional items and different publications further support the information activities.

Table 13. Values of measurable indicators for 2007-2010 within the meaning of the CoP, as of 31 December 2011

| | | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011* |
|---|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Indicator – Number of participants /attendees of seminars, conferences and popularisation activities | Attained result | 213 | 3,784 | 5,917 | 7,387 | 8,862 |
| Indicator – Number of publications distributed | Attained result | 0 | 3,232 | 59,032 | 164,723 | 176,573 |
| Indicator – Number of seminars, conferences, and other events held | Attained result | 2 | 39 | 82 | 113 | 150 |
| Indicator - Number of specialist and information publications published | Attained result | 178,102 | 278,903 | 431,204 | 433,205 | 442,205 |
| Indicator - Number of press news, articles and advertisements published in all types of media | Attained result | 3 | 168 | 521 | 925 | 1,232 |

*The values for 2011 contain the data for the IBMA. The data for the MA OPE was not available at the time of evaluation.

The numerical values of monitoring indicators are annually updated in the OPE annual reports. Table 13 gives the data as of 31 December 2011.

With a view to making accessible the information on the possibilities and ways to get financial resources, directly at regional level, the IBMA ASFEU created a network of Regional Information Offices at the end of 2007 (hereinafter referred to as “RIO”) at the level of 8 self-governing regions. RIOs fulfil the role of contact points in the region for informing potential NFC applicants, applicants for NFC, recipients and the public. They are located on the premises of the selected universities that are centres of education, science, research being one of the main target groups under the OPE. RIO for the Bratislava region is located on the premises of the IBMA ASFEU. RIOs form a component part of the IBMA ASFEU. They were officially launched and their activity started in January 2008.

In 2010, RIO serving to inform the public in Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín and Prešov discontinued. The reason for closing four RIOs was the optimisation of the staffing with a view to increasing work efficiency within the Section of OPE at IBMA ASFEU. The RIOs in Bratislava, Košice, Zvolen and Žilina continued operations offering consultation services within the SF EU for OPE.

Online communication

On the whole, information on the OPE is to be found on three websites, namely: www.minedu.sk/opv, www.asfeu.sk and <http://opv.health-sf.sk>. The websites of MA OPE and IBMA and the Internet as such are the strongest and most widely used instruments to disseminate information. Following modification of the website of MA OPE, sections/sekcie www.minedu.sk/opv

in 2011, also the access to the IBMA websites was made more transparent, thereby also to the information on the OPE.

All relevant information on the OPE is also found on the website of the CCA www.nsrr.sk.

www.minedu.sk/opv: In 2007 a section focused on the ESF within the programming period 2007–2013, with the emphasis on OPE was established on the website of MA OPE. Here, from the outset also strategic documents are posted: the text of the OPE itself, and the Programme manual for OPE, as well as all the updating thereto. The section is transparently structured into topical documents and archive of documents for every subsection. Here updated and comprehensive information on OPE and its implementation is posted on a continuous basis, on the activity of the MA OPE and IBMA, including the “Frequently Asked Questions” and Lists of Beneficiaries. Direct links are here to lists of recipients of both IBMAs.

The section’s structure was significantly modified only in 2011, when graphical preparations were started for launching the interactive map of projects, which is the equivalent of the list of OPE recipients in the visual form. It will serve the public to give an easier orientation regarding the implemented projects in a particular city or by a particular entity. The map will contain the data in the scope of the list of recipients. The launching of the interactive projects map is assumed for March 2012.

The section enables the public to register in the electronic distribution list (so-called “mailing list”) through which topical information, notices of document updating, OPE calls and other important information relating to the OPE is forwarded.

On the main page of the internet portal www.minedu.sk the heading EU Structural Funds Calls including also the section on the OPE calls. It contains prompt and transparent links to calls for NP by MA OPE and IBMA via the website www.minedu.sk, whereby access to information on published calls under OPE is simplified. All headings of the ESP section are updated periodically, or as needed.

www.asfeu.sk: The website of the IBMA ASFEU www.asfeu.sk was made available to the public in June 2007. It provides a wide range of information for potential applicants, recipients of NFC and the general public. It has been graphically modernised once since its pilot launch to make information more transparent. It gives basic information on IBMA ASFEU, its mission and goals, information on the structural funds of the EU, and the information about programme documents, structural funds objectives and the regulations in the area of SF. Visitors can find here information on updating of documents, reports of the assessment of calls, events organised by IBMA ASFEU and other important activities. The website also includes FAQ – frequently asked questions and the possibility to register one’s interest to receive information via database mailing (Newsletter). The public has here access to the Lists of recipients of NFC for demand-driven projects (with the exception of Measure 2.2).

www.opv.health-sf.sk: In 2007, MH SR as the IBMA for measure 2.2 under the OPV did not have a special website for the implementation of information and communication activities under measure 2.2. A market survey for the provision of a separate website titled www.opv.health-sf.sk was launched in December 2007. The website was made available to the public on the occasion of the first call for projects published under the OPE for measure 2.2, on 7 April 2008.

Here basic documents, information on calls and their evaluation, the lists of supported projects as well as the news on the IBMA MH SR activities is found. The section Information for the media is designed for journalists and the section Meetings of MC for OPE covers organisational matters, seminars, training, nation-wide events. The information for the public, potential and actual applicants for NFC is posted under sections News, Calls, Assessment of AFNCF and Events.

Usefulness and frequent use by target groups and the general public of these websites is seen from the steadily increasing figures for the monitored indicators within the CoP since 2007, or 2008.

A section of the public opinion survey conducted in 2010 covered also this area. The public opinion survey showed that survey respondents though indicating Internet as the dominant source for OPE

information considered access to the information about OPE complex and felt more information needs to be directed to Internet. Respondents also frequently suggested establishing a separate website with relevant and transparent information on OPE, MA, and IBMA from one site.

MA OPE took on board the survey results in planning and implementation of the information and communication activities for 2011 and 2012. As has been mentioned above, in 2011 the website of MA OPE – section dealing with the ESF www.minedu.sk/opv was modified and will be improved also in the course of 2012.

Table 14. Values of measurable indicators for 2007-2010 within the meaning of CoP

| | | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011* |
|--|-----------------|------|---------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Indicator – Visitors of the web page: A) Number of page viewings | Attained result | 0 | 310,186 | 2,125,119 | 2, 926,236 | 3,204,495 |
| Indicator - Visitors of the web page: B) number of e-mail addresses registered in the mailing list of MA and IBMA | Attained result | 0 | 899 | 1,011 | 1,076 | 1,299 |

* The indicator values for 2011 contain the data for the IBMA. The data for the MA OPE was not available at the time of evaluation.

The numerical values of monitoring indicators are annually updated in the OPE annual reports. Table 14 gives the data as of 31 December 2011.

Based on the above we may conclude that the activity of MA OPE and IBMA resulted in the attainment of objectives set in the CoP, namely by implementing the tasks following out of the campaign. We may note that MA and IBMA used effectively all the available tools and means to deliver the campaign, as identified in the CoP. The activities that particular entities set themselves in AOP IP were designed for target groups that fall in their competences and areas of operation. This targeted character increased the effectiveness, cost-efficiency and expediency of financial resources effected under priority theme 86 (Evaluation and studies, information and publicity).

Yet, the visibility of MA OPE appeared to be somewhat low hence increased action has to be taken in this area. The year 2011 seems to be problematic, with the information and communication activities of MA OPE slowed down which could be due to the changes of the internal administrative and approving procedures for information and publicity actions. This change caused a delay in commencing the preparatory works for some activities (the implementation of public procurements, etc.), which in turn entailed that they either, were not implemented, or were implemented only partially. Thus the MA OPE reduced the campaign in 2011, striving to maintain the effectiveness of financial resources effected for the information and publicity purposes. These activities were put off in part to the next year and will be subsequently implemented as set out in the AOP IP 2012. For 2012, MA OPE for example plans to hold a national conference, participate in the fair - BIBLIOTÉKA, and publish a brochure focused on NP.

Positive results on particular evaluation criteria, defined by concrete indicators set out in the CoP, suggest a correct selection of tools of the communication strategy and its successful implementation. Evaluation criteria are monitored at the level of OP and measures of information and publicity (impact indicators) as well as at the level of particular CoP activities (output and result indicators). Based on the progress also shown in tables 13 and 14, we may claim that the tasks of MA OPE and IBMA following out of the programme documents are delivered along the planned intentions.

The efficient use of funds has equally been confirmed by positive results of the public opinion survey. The results showed the public awareness of the existence of the Structural Funds, the ESF, or OPE to be good. As much as 81% of respondents know there is a possibility to use structural funds for the area of education. 77% of the population know about the ESF. 56% of respondents have heard about the existence of the OPE. The public is adequately informed of the issues relating to the OPE. 55% of respondents know about MESRS SR acting as MA OPE. However only 14% of the population know the other empowered organisations contributing to the implementation of the OPE. Only 22 % of the population know of the possibility to obtain information on the OPE by means of the RIO. 21% of respondents are aware of one of the calls for submission of applications for a NFC. 6% of respondents have been involved in one of the calls thus far and additional 4% plan to do so. 4% of the entire base have taken part in one of the information activities under the OPE. The survey revealed the need to make some changes to the communication strategy. These suggestions for improvement were considered by MA OPE and IBMA and reflected already in AIP IP 2011. They concerned easier access to information on OPE for the public and the provision for new communication channels for public use.

4.2 Are the financial resources of the MA OPE/IBMA allocated for information and publicity used effectively?

Financial resources for particular years have been determined on the basis of the selected campaign supporting the measures within the meaning of the CoP. The indicative budgets were laid down in relevant AOP IP and are the result of cooperation between MA OPE and IBMA and harmonisation of their campaign for a given year. The amounts allocated for communication activities were based on the actual market surveys undertaken at the time, and hence reflected the average prices for a service, activity, or any other action scheduled in the AOP IP. MA and IBMA were actively striving to use the resources most efficiently and were seeking ways to produce an adequate effect for lowest price possible. In few cases they modified the planned activities while maintaining their original effect with lower price achieved. As all purchases of goods and services are made pursuant to the Act No. 25/2006 Coll. on public procurements and on amending of certain, as amended, and Directive No. 23/2011 making provisions for binding procedures in procurement of goods, services and construction works, namely in accordance with Act No. 25/2006 Coll. on public procurement and on amending of certain acts, as amended by Act No. 58/2011 Coll., lawful, economic, transparent and effective procedures have been ensured in using the EU resources. The specific amounts planned for particular activities have been budgeted meticulously, and on the basis of real assumed costs. The financial amounts specified for particular years have never been drawn at 100% despite the successfully implemented campaigns.

Based on the facts above, we may note that the financial resources are being used efficiently and economically. The activities that have been planned before 31 December 2011 have been largely delivered with success, in some cases at lower amounts than originally planned. It would be desirable to continue focusing on the awareness campaign, with a view to maintaining public awareness and presenting the results already achieved by disseminating good practice of successful projects and positive results of the OPE implementation.

4.3 Is the amount of Technical Assistance funds allocated for the priority theme 86 (Evaluation and studies, information and publicity) adequate?

Financial resources for the implementation of the communication strategy, i.e. information and publicity, have been laid down in the budget of TA projects. The indicative budget earmarked for particular years and given in the CoP is derived from the planned measures of information and publicity for the programming period 2007-2013. This indicative budget for information and publicity for the programming period 2007-2013 totals SKK 51, 159, 500 /EUR 1,698,184.30 EUR from the EU funds (jointly for MA OPE and IBMA). Concrete measures and funding were subsequently planned through the AOP IP. Allocations indicatively planned for particular years have not been used up at 100% and oscillated according to effective and flexible adjustments to the campaign. It follows from the above that in view of the financial resources not having been planned in AOP IP at 100% of their indicative allocations in the CoP, the financial resources allocated for priority theme 86 (with respect to information and publicity) seem adequate.

Contracting under budget item 637 003 Promotion, commercials and advertising, as of 31 December 2011, is at EUR 1,991,003.14 from the EU funds. The drawing of funds is at EUR 654, 990.22 (EU funds), which is 32.90%. It would be desirable to focus on increasing the number of planned information activities for the ensuing years 2012-2015 as the previous implementation showed the financial resources as adequate.

Table 15. Contracting and drawing under the item 637003 Promotion, commercials and advertising, as of 31 December 2011

| Contracting and drawing under the item 637003 Promotion, commercials and advertising (EU funds) | | |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| Technical assistance projects | Total contracting | Total drawing |
| ASFEU total | 1,595,294.03 | 654,540.82 |
| 26140330004 | 8,450.34 | 8,051.96 |
| 26140330006 | 11,733.31 | 8,157.37 |
| 26140330010 | 14, 628.50 | 3,518.78 |
| 26150130004 | 270,749.52 | 267,293.45 |
| 26150130006 | 407,313.36 | 266,447.16 |
| 26150130010 | 372,419.00 | 90,929.22 |
| 26150130014 | 255,000.00 | 10,142.88 |
| 26150130018 | 255,000.00 | 0.00 |
| MESRS SR total | 342,218.87 | 449.40 |
| 26140330002 | 2,659.25 | 12.58 |
| 26140330008 | 1,020.00 | 0.00 |
| 26140330011 | 16,575.00 | 0.00 |
| 26150130002 | 85,962.12 | 436.82 |
| 26150130008 | 34,340.00 | 0.00 |
| 26150130011 | 93,925.00 | 0.00 |
| 26150130015 | 107,737.50 | 0.00 |
| MH SR total | 53,490.24 | 0 |
| 26150230001 | 53,490.24 | 0.00 |
| Total | 1,991,003.14 | 654,990.22 |

The contracting in the budget item 637 003 exceeded the indicative amount of resources set in the CoP. This is due to the fact that the TA MA OPE and IBMA projects are not concluded for the entire

programming period 2007-2013, but rather on the annual basis. Resources not fully used under particular projects are, and will automatically be used for the TA projects in the ensuing years. Drawing of funding will not exceed the indicative budget, as laid down in the CoP.

Conclusion

The tasks of the MA OPE and IBMA are being attained along the lines defined in the programming documents. The activity of the MA OPE and IBMA continued to be aimed at achieving the objectives specified in the Communication plan (CoP) and the measures are implemented in accordance with the adopted communication strategy. The activity of the MA OPE and IBMA produced positive results and successfully implemented the information and publicity actions, which was reflected also in the results of the public opinion survey conducted. **All of the available tools and instruments** for the implementation of the campaign were found to be **used efficiently**, as identified in the CoP, which is confirmed by the satisfactory values of measurable indicators, i.e., evaluation criteria. Activities that the relevant entities set to implement were correct and were targeting the intended target groups.

The MA OPE should now aim **at giving increased separate visibility to both, the MA OPE and the NP**. Based on the assessment of activities implemented by the MA OPE, the recommendation is to intensify the implementation of measures in the area of information and publicity, specifically aimed at the presentation of the Structural Funds, results achieved in implementing the OPE and good practice of the NP, and the activity of the MA OPE.

Cost-efficiency of using funds was also confirmed by **positive results of the public opinion survey**, which was seen in the adequate public information regarding the OPE. Likewise, the funds that have been allocated for priority theme 86 (Evaluation and studies, information and publicity) can be considered adequate, based on the actually drawn funds and also in terms of the plans laid down in the Annual Operative Plan of Information and Publicity (AOP IP).

In the ensuing years the MA OPE and IBMA should focus on **increasing the number of information and communication activities** aimed at the campaign reminding the public of the support and fostering good visibility of the Structural Funds of the EU and disseminating examples of successfully implemented OPE projects. A closer cooperation in implementing particular MA OPE and IBMA measures would be appropriate to ensure a comprehensive perspective (demand driven + NP) of the OPE.

Evaluation conclusions

1. Evaluation of the actual state of the OPE implementation

Frequent changes to the scheduled timelines of calls for demand-driven projects of IBMA ASFEU and the shifting of calls from one year to another, or complete leaving out of calls from the timetables entail uneven calls under particular measures and slackening of the implementation of some of the OPE measures. Moreover, frequent updating of timetables for calls does not add to the binding nature of these timetables or the assurance of applicants and has indeed negative effects on stability of processes of the OPE implementation. Hence, in the long run, this does not contribute to stability and efficiency of the OPE management itself.

Our recommendation is to consider lower frequency of modifications of calls' timetables and their more precise planning, particularly with regard to the overall contracting of the OPE funds

From the aspect of publication of calls for national projects in 2008-2011 we can note that despite good progress in the publication of calls for NP in 2009 and 2010, the process significantly slowed down in 2010 and 2011, not only in terms of number of calls announced but also in terms of allocated funding for these calls. The allocation for calls for NP for 2010 and 2011 makes up only **13** % of that for 2008 and 2009. The reason could be linked to the political change in the country and the review of priorities of supported areas of education.

MESRS SR as MA OPE should intensify its communication and work with the organisations directly managed by the Ministry and concentrate more on the development of proposals for NP and the calls for NP. The existence of a timetable for calls for national projects would support greater continuity.

As for the idea of publicising the timetable for calls for NP, apart from it being an issue frequently raised at different forums, it seems that it would be both for MA OPE and NFC beneficiaries practical and efficient to have an indicative timetable for planning or preparation of calls for NP throughout the whole programming period, corresponding to the approved objectives and priorities under OP. A prerequisite for having a timetable of calls for NP is the existence of a concept of planned measures in the area of education that would reflect the current needs and match the planned timetable of calls accordingly.

In contracting we may note insufficient contracting of funds for some measures (with the exception of technical assistance measures).

The only solution to increase contracting under the OPE is by launching calls for NP/calls for projects, particularly for measures 3.2 and 1.2.

As for drawing of contracted funds (excluding TA measures,) the overall state can equally be said to be unsatisfactory with the average drawing per measure at 12.26 %, and the limit of 10% absorption being exceeded only by two measures – 1.1 and 4.1. Thus the main a basic recommendation is to increase significantly the rate of drawing.

OPE is, owing to its high quality set-up **capable of significantly supporting the implementation of Europe 2020 strategy goals and the National Reform Programme 2011-2014**. The EU 2020 and the NRP 2011-2014 deriving from it, are at this point in time in their early stages of implementation, hence it is not possible to comprehensively evaluate the contribution of the OPE to the implementation of Europe 2020 goals and the NRP 2011-2014 (the focal period for the implementation of EU 2020 goals through the Structural Funds will be the next programming period

2014-2020). In the period under review we can note that the OPE contributes to the set targets of EU 2020 and NRP 2011-2014 through a range of published calls for national projects and calls for demand-driven projects, which – directly or indirectly – support the targets in the field of education, as laid out in Europe 2020, and in three out of four areas defined under priority “Education, Science and Innovation” in NRP 2011-2014.

Recommendations:

- Reduce frequency of changes to timetables of calls for demand-driven projects;
- Intensify communication and cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport SR with its directly managed organisations and increase the number of published calls for national projects;
- Draw up timetables of calls for national projects and post them on the website of the MA OPE;
- Increase the number of opened calls, particularly for measures with extremely low rate of contracting (particularly for measures 3.2 and 1.2);
- Step up the rate of drawing the contracted funds

2. Evaluation of the OPE management system

The IMMA accurately specifies the tasks of individual units involved in the OPE implementation. In general, we can note that the distribution of tasks among relevant sections is set up suitably and there is no duplication in administration or processes.

The question if an ambience has been created for cooperation and coordination between different levels of management needs to be answered from several aspects. From the aspect of the overall environment of the MA OPE, we can say that the system of management, information sharing and communication and cooperation between relevant sections of MA OPE is adequately set. On the other hand, we also need to note that the working environment does require some modification and improvement.

Based on the overall evaluation, the demands for improvement of the environment for cooperation and coordination at the level of MA OPE can be summarised as follows: increase information of the staff on affairs within the MA OPE, consult the staff, on a regular basis, on the progress in the OPE implementation, personnel issues concerning the staff, increase the amount of information shared by different units of MA OPE on the implementation of tasks of relevant units, provide the staff promptly and in full scale with the important information necessary for the discharge of work activities (e.g. updating of IMMA, updating of manuals for the applicant and the recipient), inform the staff, on a regular basis, on the issues and problems that are being addressed by particular sections.

The same applies to the level of the relevant sections of MA OPE: there is a need to increase information of the staff on what is going on within units, consult the staff, on a regular basis, on the tasks, problems, changes and provisions regarding the performance of their work activities, put in place regular briefings of the whole section, consider modifying the distribution of work assignments of individual members of the staff.

Motivation is a crucial prerequisite for an efficient work discharge. On the whole, the staff most frequently lacks motivation owing to low remuneration, frequent changes of instructions made at

short notice. They respond in the same way to the absence of feedback from superiors, with regard to their task, which they had carried out or are carrying out, and to a poor working atmosphere.

Our recommendation is to put in place regular and adequately set financial remuneration, improve the working atmosphere, intensify communication on the part of superiors and ensure timely and focused staff training.

Deficit in administrative capacities is seen as one of the major problems in view of the management and implementation of the OPE. In the light of tasks to be carried out by MA OPE and IBMA, this status quo can be maintained only on short term; from a long-term perspective the situation is untenable. Overall, there is a request to increase administrative capacities by 23 employees for the authorities implementing OPE.

The currently contracted TA funds cover the funding of activities relating to the implementation of the OPE by the end of 2012, hence for the activities implemented in 2013 – 2015 contracting of additional TA funds will be necessary, or in case of inadequate allocation, new sources of funding these activities will have to be sought. We can also identify a risk of deficit in TA OPE funds for wages of the staff involved in the implementation of the OPE.

Of all the disposable TA resources under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective, as much as 87.87 % of funds for the measure had already been used, as of 31 December 2011. Of the measure's allocation designed for priority theme 85, around 97.03 % had been drawn for refunds of wage expenses, as of 31 December 2011, with all the remaining expenses necessary for the provision for effective OPE implementation remaining non-refunded under this objective. From the start of 2011, the IBMA ASFEU has been reimbursing all expenditure related to the project implementation under RCE objective from the state budget resources.

In the case of Convergence objective under OPE, the use-up of the allocation through refunds of eligible expenditure incurred is anticipated in the course of 2014.

It follows from the above that the wage costs of the Staff of MESRS SR and IBMA involved in the implementation of the OPE, as well as other costs relating to the OP implementation will have to be financed from the state budget resources of the education chapter.

The most frequent request reported by all parties concerned emerging from the evaluation of cooperation between MA OPE and IBMA was the need to hold regular official meetings of MA OPE with both IBMA present and meetings of MA OPE with one IBMA. Communication between MA OPE and IBMA is in most areas of work intense, in previously less communicated areas an increase in intensity of communication can be seen and the work issues are addressed continually (either in writing or by personal meetings).

Holding of periodical meetings of MA OPE and IBMA should be considered as essential recommendation. After assessing requests, official meetings with MA OPE and both IBMA representations are recommended to hold every 2 months, on a regular basis. In addition to these "trilateral" meetings we equally recommend to put in place bilateral meetings of MA OPE and respective IBMA, on a regular basis. Both types of meetings will improve communication in all areas, help clarify and specify more precisely the issues and problems of all parties concerned and enable to speak with one voice in work-related matters

Recommendations:

MA OPE

- Increase the information of the staff of the affairs within the MA OPE, inform the staff, on a regular basis, of the progress made in the implementation of the OPE, personnel matters regarding the staff;
- Increase the volume of information shared by relevant MA OPE units of the implementation of tasks on the part of units, provide employees with prompt and full important information necessary for the performance of their work activities;
- Put in place regular whole-section briefings, increase the information of the staff of the state of affairs within units;
- Consider modifying distribution of work assignments of particular employees;
- Put in place regular information meetings/briefings/training at the level of entire MA OPE;
- Put in place regular and adequately set financial remuneration of staff and ensure up-to-date and focused staff training

MA OPE and IBMA

- Increase administrative capacities involved in the implementation of the OPE;
- Identify the financial coverage for effective provision for the OPE implementation in cooperation with the CCA and the Ministry of finance of the SR;
- Hold regular official meetings of MA OPE and IBMA – meetings with the participation of both IBMA and bilateral meetings with one IBMA.

3. Evaluation of the monitoring system and monitoring indicators

Based on lessons learned by the MA OPE we may note that the monitoring system and its indicators are adequately set. Currently when the programming period 2007-2013 is in its latter part of implementation it is difficult to talk about any fundamental changes of the system. Most of the problems and lessons identified should therefore be used in the preparation of the next programming period 2014-2020.

As for recommendations for the selection or definition of programme specific indicators, based on the experience of the shortened programming period 2004-2006, and the programming period 2007-2013, we see no added value in further use of context indicators.

Context indicators are indicators monitored at country level (e.g. rate of employment, or the percentage of population involved in life-long education). Several factor contribute to the resulting value of the indicator, from which the contribution of a particular OP cannot be unequivocally selected and quantified. Other solution would be to change methodology of computing the indicators. At present the values attained are received from the Eurostat statistics. In evaluating a context indicator it would be necessary to include in questionnaires used by Eurostat surveys questions about participation in the ESF programmes/projects, which is unrealistic.

Monitoring of indicators expressed as a percentage has also proved problematic (e.g. percentage of employees enrolment rate further education). MA OPE currently set about breaking this indicator into result and impact indicator (both expressed in number) and the percentage ratio was subsequently calculated based on the result/impact indicator ratio.

Another problem area is reporting on indicators broken down by gender, or age. In the form, the information on the participants' data is monitored in accordance with Annex XXIII of the implementation regulation, i.e. the number of men and women, their age structure, etc. at the level of priority axis. However we are unable to align this data with indicators showing the number of pedagogic employees or the number of employees in research and development (how many of them were men and women, of what age structure). This would require the beneficiaries to monitor for every of indicator monitoring the number of people (pedagogic employees, research and development employees) also related sub-groups or ancillary indicators showing gender, or age. That would result in a large number of indicators within a project, which could lead to lack of transparency or to "overshadowing" of indicators that are more significant for the measurement of progress accomplished under a project.

As not the most optimal turned out to be the monitoring of indicators only at the level of result and impact (without the capacity to monitor "immediate" result of interventions taking the form of output indicators). This causes a problem, for example, when we report progress within the annual reports, in which we note a certain rate of contracting and drawing of project funds, but cannot link the financial data immediately with the indicator values. The nature of result indicators often permits to ascertain only the values attained at the end of the project, as that has been accommodated in the current monitoring form for the report, as well as the ITMS system serving to collect the data. Not all beneficiaries are willing and/or able to provide ongoing values attained of result indicators. This entails the risk of revealing inadequate attainment of indicator ex-post, after the winding up of the project.

In view of the fact that an indicator should also serve to express cost-efficiency and effectiveness, the practice showed as problematic quantifying the average cost per certain output expressed by an indicator (e.g. cost of creating a training course). Linking a unique indicator to every activity would be an ideal solution.

Indicators for the area of horizontal priorities (currently including sustainable development, information society, marginalized Roma communities and equal opportunities) are a separate and specific area, which also involves the issues of indicators. Here, reporting on direct and indirect impact or the contribution to horizontal priorities proves problematic. As a result, paradoxical situations occur, particularly in relation to the marginalized Roma communities, when on account of indicating indirect impact or contribution to a horizontal priority of marginalized Roma communities the Bratislava Region reports greatest number of projects supporting MRC. We recommend taking account of only direct contribution to horizontal priority for reasons of its definitiveness.

Last but not least, only a limited number of project indicators have been found to contribute to the attainment of the programme indicators. Hence, a general recommendation for the next period would be to monitor fewer indicators but those having direct links to the programme level. This would allow monitoring of OP results in a more targeted way.

The ITMS functionality is a technical obstacle in the system of monitoring, in view of the fact that ITMS does not fully meet its role in gathering the data. The present ITMS does not contain a functionality that would be capable of generating sets of measurable indicators and their statistics, selections, values attained. Equally the ITMS lacks a functionality that would simplify work in entering the data on project participants into the ITMS. At present this data has to be entered in the ITMS

manually. From the aspect of administrative simplification it would be appropriate if this information could be uploaded in the ITMS directly by beneficiaries, as is the case for monitoring reports

Recommendations:

For the preparation of the next programming period:

- Reconsider the selection and use of context indicators;
- Consider resuming the use of project-level output indicator;
- Reconsider the use and methodology of calculating the indicators expressed in %;
- Use fewer project indicators, use the project indicators with direct link to the level of programme;
- Within the IT monitoring system put in place a number of new functionalities allowing for effective monitoring of the measurable indicators used and their values attained, both at project and programme levels.

4. Evaluation of the OPE information and publicity

The tasks of the MA OPE and IBMA are being attained along the lines defined in the programming documents. The activity of the MA OPE and IBMA continued to be aimed at achieving the objectives specified in the Communication plan (CoP) and the measures are implemented in accordance with the adopted communication strategy. The activity of the MA OPE and IBMA produced positive results and successfully implemented the information and publicity actions, which was reflected also in the results of the public opinion survey conducted. All available tools and instruments for the implementation of the campaign, as identified in the CoP, were found to be used efficiently which is confirmed by the satisfactory values of measurable indicators, i.e., evaluation criteria. Activities that the relevant entities set to implement were correct and were targeting the intended target groups.

The MA OPE should now aim at giving increased separate visibility to the MA OPE and the NP. Based on the assessment of activities implemented by the MA OPE, the recommendation is to intensify the implementation of measures in the area of information and publicity, specifically aimed at the presentation of the Structural Funds, results achieved in implementing the OPE and good practice of the NP, and the activity of the MA OPE.

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In the ensuing years the MA OPE and IBMA should focus on increasing the number of information and communication activities aimed at the campaign reminding the public of the support and fostering good visibility of the Structural Funds of the EU and disseminating examples of successfully implemented OPE projects. A closer cooperation in implementing particular MA OPE and IBMA measures would be appropriate to ensure a comprehensive perspective (demand driven + NP) of the OPE.

Recommendations:

- Increasing the number of information and communication activities of the MA OPE;
- Increasing the number of information and communication activities of the MA OPE and IBMA aimed at the campaign fostering the good image of the Structural Funds of the EU and disseminating examples of successfully implemented OPE projects;
- Closer cooperation in implementing measures by the MA OPE and IBMA to ensure comprehensive perspective of (demand-driven + national projects) the OPE.

List of annexes

Annex 1: List of evaluation questions

Annex 2: Questionnaire for the MA OPE staff