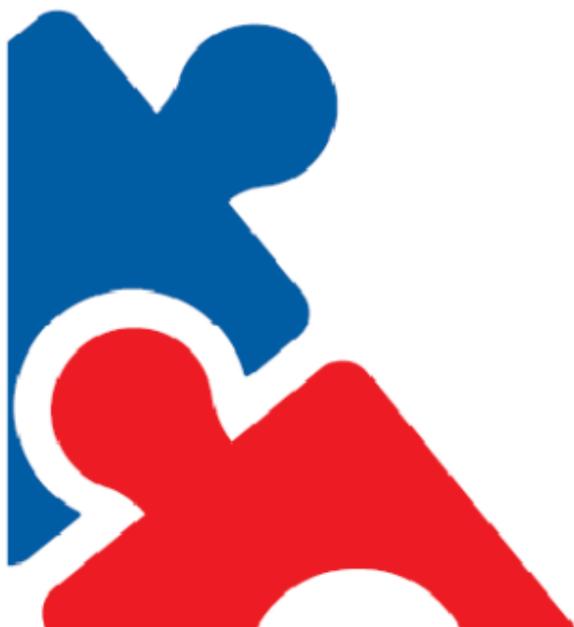


“Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011”

FINAL REPORT

PODPORUJEME VAŠI BUDOUCNOST

www.esfcr.cz





evropský
sociální
fond v ČR



EVROPSKÁ UNIE



OPERAČNÍ PROGRAM
LIDSKÉ ZDROJE
A ZAMĚSTNANOST

PODPORUJEME
VAŠI BUDOUCNOST
www.esfcr.cz

This report is the outcome of the “Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011” contract, co-financed by the European Social Fund and state budget of the Czech Republic.

Report compiled on: 18 July 2012

Report compiled for the benefit of:

Czech Republic – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Na Poříčním právu 1

128 01 Praha 2

Report compiled by:

HOPE-E.S., v.o.s., EUservis.cz division

Brno office:

Palackého tř. 10, 612 00 Brno

Reg. No.: 25342282

Prague office:

Lidická 1, 150 00 Prague 5



evropský
sociální
fond v ČR



EVROPSKÁ UNIE



OPERAČNÍ PROGRAM
LIDSKÉ ZDROJE
A ZAMĚSTNANOST

PODPORUJEME
VAŠI BUDOUCNOST
www.esfcr.cz

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	9
2	PROJECT INVESTIGATION: PROGRESS AND METHODOLOGY	10
3	PRIMARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	14
3.1	OUTCOMES OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS EVALUATION.....	14
3.1.1	<i>Evaluation of financial and physical progress</i>	14
3.1.2	<i>The effects of political and socio-economic development.....</i>	18
3.2	CASE STUDY RESULTS.....	19
3.2.1	<i>Case study results.....</i>	19
3.2.2	<i>Project survey results relevant to projects in the area of support 1.1 – Increasing employee adaptability and enterprise competitiveness – for the purpose of the call announcement</i>	26
3.3	RESULTS OF THE HREOP CLIENT SURVEY AND THE EVALUATION PLAN FEEDBACK WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE MANAGING AUTHORITY	27
4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	31

SUMMARY

The Annual Operational Assessment of HREOP 2011 was compiled on 30 June 2012 and focuses primarily on three separate parts:

- 1) Preparation of documentation for the 2011 annual report by analysing data obtained from monitoring.
- 2) Elaboration of case studies of successful projects with photographic documentation and coordination of other on-going evaluation activities (projects).
- 3) Methodological guidance associated with system set-up for eliciting feedback from clients (applicants/beneficiaries) and feedback within implementation structure associated with the Evaluation plan. Methodological guidance associated with the implementation of the first surveys conducted in 2012.

The Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 includes the elaboration of case studies to be used by call announcers, for reporting and publicity purposes, including set-up of methodologies for subsequent years as well as capacity development facilitating client feedback. The evaluation specifically focuses on evaluative support for the preparation of a new call in the area of support 1.1.

The Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 provides also a list of recommendations. Their relatively low number is primarily the result of the fact that many of them have been mentioned in previous evaluations and the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 merely confirms their validity for the year 2012.

Preparation of documentation for the annual report by analysing data obtained from monitoring

In terms of financial progress in 2011, programme implementation continued to accelerate – both in terms of the increasing volume of contracted funds as well as with respect to the initiation of the implementation of a large number of projects which resulted in increased expenditures. The volume of contracted resources (75 % of the overall allocated sum) corresponds to the current stage of progress within the programme cycle. The amount of funding disbursed among individual beneficiaries (32 % of the overall allocated sum) may be described as slightly lower than the amount expected to correspond to the current stage of progress within the programme cycle. With respect to the launching of a number of projects in the near future, positive developments in this area may be expected in the upcoming year. The least amount of progress has been made in priority axis 5 (PA 5) which has been assigned contracted funds amounting to 34 % and discharged funds amounting to 21 % of the overall allocated sum. However, a great deal of progress has been made in priority axis 4 (PA 4), especially in comparison with the preceding period.¹

The fulfilment of project level indicators at programme level has surpassed the current rate of spending and the overtaking of target values may be expected. The development of impact indicators (including Lisbon indicators) has been primarily influenced by external factors, especially by the economic recession in late 2008 and subsequently by the second recession in 2011. However, the differentiation of regional unemployment rate registered a decline, especially due to the fact that the

¹ As of 4 January 2011

2011 economic crisis severely affected regions with lower unemployment rates while regions with traditionally high unemployment rates underwent no significant changes.

No significant socio-economic changes in long-term unemployment rates, gender-linked or regional disparities – which would call for changes at the programme level or the adjustment of programme priorities – took place in 2011. In the light of recent socio-economic developments, the strategy defined in HREOP thus still remains relevant and functional.

Recommendations associated with this part of the evaluation include a more pronounced manner of programme management by means of announcing calls and turning to specific assessment criteria in order to provide support for suitable projects as well as refocusing programme orientation in the desired direction (e.g. in support of the employment of graduates, who have been negatively impacted by the economic recession).

Elaboration of case studies of successful projects

The Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 comprises a total of 20 processed case studies in all areas of support and one thematic case study which includes 21 projects in the area of support 1.1.

Case studies of successful projects

A number of successful projects were selected for the purpose of case studies, both in order to illustrate as best as possible the various causalities between inputs, activities, outputs and results and also due to the fact that records of some of these projects are intended for publication in forthcoming proceedings. Project selection primarily reflected the physical focus of the projects in such a way as to be characteristic of the area of support in question as well as attempting to represent individual grant projects and ensure insofar as possible an even distribution with respect to regional project affiliation. Key factors contributing to the success of individual projects were subsequently specified on the basis of processed case studies. Although the success of the project does not in fact call for the fulfilment of all of the defined factors, some of them constitute a necessary prerequisite for overall project success. These factors include suitable project preparation, i.e. appropriate activity set-up, scheduling, etc. and appropriate communication with the target group which leads to obtaining their trust. Such factors were ascertained in all case studies. Other associated factors included project activities localization, inclusion of experience in projects and project cooperation and partnerships.²

Obstacles encountered by beneficiaries were described as well, many of them falling outside the scope of the project and outside of the competence of the managing authority. These obstacles include primarily systemic components such as the local legislative environment, lack of support on the part of social companies, an unstable and shifting public administration

² The factors listed correspond to those experienced by the evaluator during case study processing and may thus not constitute a comprehensive overview of all factors.

(i.e. election cycles and political changes in local government) and general mistrust of the target group.

The success of some projects has shown that the vast majority of best practices may be transferred and that many principles may be applied throughout the programme.

Recommendations made in this section of the evaluation support recommendations defined in the first part of the project (evaluation of progress in programme implementation). Other recommendations were made in order to improve programme results as well as its efficiency, e.g. by means of dividing projects into “innovative/pilot” projects – which primarily focus on developing and testing developed products – and projects which use existing products, thereby saving money and streamlining the overall programme implementation process. Recommendations also included the introduction of unit costs for courses (projects focusing on further education) and the usage of template/type projects aimed at simplifying project implementation. In order to improve programme results, it is essential to emphasize project output quality assurance, both during on-site checks and during the inspection of a completed project. It is also possible to introduce random monitoring visits and to participate in selected project activities. It is essential to highlight this option in guidebooks for applicants and beneficiaries as well as in call announcements.

Due to the programme implementation stage, most of these recommendations will only affect the 2014+ programming period.

Regional analysis of calls Nos. 23 and 35 and calls Nos. 33 and 52

Regional analysis of the implementation of calls Nos. 23 and 35 and calls Nos. 33 and 52 has shown that the regional distribution of projects de facto corresponds to the regional distribution of the target group throughout the area of support. The only problematic aspect thus remains the comparatively low proportion of support for the Ústí nad Labem Region.

No systemic distortions have been ascertained in the regional project selection process set-up (e.g. the regional differentiation of refused applications does not show any disproportionate deviations which would point to systematic errors in support settings).

The full text of regional analysis is attached to the Final Report.

Evaluation for the preparation of call in area of support 1.1

This sub-analysis of a sample of 20 projects focuses on determining success and failure factors in projects claiming to support the further education system. The vast majority of respondents from among project beneficiaries actually promote the assembly of an educational plan or system. Although all of the examined projects actually used the word “system” in the title, approximately 20 % of all beneficiaries have stated that the development of an educational plan, system or competency model was not part of the project. Due to a lack of clear terminological definitions, the concept of “education system” varies between beneficiaries and tends to cover a range of very different learning schemes. The “system” is thus perceived in a variety of different ways by individual beneficiaries. Over one half of the examined projects included activities promoting internal supervisors or lecturers. This element in particular may

be considered significantly pro-systemic. It may be assumed that this is part of an effort to develop the internal know-how of recipient institutions, in addition to a reasonably feasible sustainability. Approximately one half of the beneficiaries listed a “newly developed educational system” as their main project output. Simultaneously, almost all of them indicated that primary project output was to include educational programmes and courses. However, answers to open questions generally provide evidence of the fact that beneficiaries aimed to focus on the implementation of courses and training programmes.

Recommendations made in this section of the evaluation are directed at prioritizing a systemic approach to further education and employee potential development in the beneficiary's company in order to motivate the beneficiary to undertake additional activities in the field following project completion.

For the purpose of proper assessment of projects affiliated with the call, it is appropriate to define – directly in the call announcement (or in the attachment) – as best as possible the terms covering the area of further education, thus preventing misinterpretations or inconsistencies between projects (this concerns e.g. the following concepts: system of education, educational programme, educational module, newly created/innovated product, pilot implementation/verification). The correct, but most importantly universal understanding of the terms on the part of the applicants, reviewers, and – subsequently – the beneficiaries and administrators, constitutes the key to maximizing project benefits.

The call announcement should likewise indicate which aspects will be considered system-related by the administrator and evaluator (e.g. activities aimed at promoting internal supervisors and lecturers or the development, implementation and evaluation of an educational system). It is essential for the applicants to be able to clearly identify which elements are considered to constitute an “adequate system” by the announcer.

Taking into account significant system-related aspects of a given project should be chief among the evaluation criteria. Such elements constitute a great deal of incentive for the individual applicants; thus, in the case of a call looking to promote a systemic approach, scores obtained according to specific criteria will help promote system-focused projects in the case of an excessive number of project offers.

Methodological guidance associated with system set-up for eliciting feedback from clients and implementation structures

Both tasks were designed to provide methodological guidance, support and the transfer of know-how to the provider. The tasks were carried out in close cooperation with the provider by means of “learning by doing” form. A preliminary questionnaire survey was held in both cases. In upcoming years, it will be possible to carry out all surveys with the help of internal HREOP capacities. A sociology expert participated in this part of the evaluation.

Feedback from beneficiaries and applicants

This section included the development of methodology for assessing client feedback and establishing a procedure for the satisfaction survey of applicants and beneficiaries. The outcome is a system for

identifying the value of a composite indicator, i.e. the “satisfaction index of beneficiaries and HREOP applicants”, conducted via an electronic questionnaire survey which allows for the identification of the primary problem areas associated with implementing client access to the HREOP managing authority. The overall satisfaction index calculated by the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 stood at 2.1 (on a scale of -10 to 10), thereby indicating that the average client expressed a moderate degree of satisfaction. Detailed results will be published in separate reports processed internally by managing authority personnel above and beyond the scope of the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011.

Feedback from implementation structures to the evaluation plan

A questionnaire was designed in order to elicit feedback on the evaluation plan – it was to update the HREOP Evaluation Plan for 2012, supplementing it with new themes and evaluation activities and obtaining feedback on activities implemented thus far. During the survey, the evaluation unit received a number of evaluation proposals for new tasks to be included in the scheduled evaluations. The indicator for the “number of incentives for evaluation outside the evaluation unit” was also calculated.

1 Introduction

On 7 November 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and HOPE - E.S., v.o.s. concluded an agreement designed to facilitate the implementation of the “Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011” project.

As the end result of the “Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011” project, the final report aims to present the main findings, outcomes and ensuing recommendations for future HREOP management. The applied methodology, course evaluation task development, outcomes and partial answers to evaluation questions are all included in the technical report.

The primary objective of this evaluation was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the development and achieved physical results of the programme in 2011 and first half of 2012, identifying successes and potential shortcomings and subsequently furnishing the provider with information relevant to their resolution.

The contract covers the following evaluation tasks:

- 1) Processing documentation for the annual report by analysing data obtained from monitoring.
- 2) Developing case studies of successful (and potentially also of unsuccessful) projects along with the processing of photographic documentation and coordination of other ongoing evaluative activities.
- 3) Methodological guidance associated with the establishment and implementation of a system designed to elicit feedback from clients (applicants/beneficiaries) and feedback associated with the evaluation plan implementation structure.

The expected impact of this evaluation is continuous quality improvement and programme and project efficiency as well as – ultimately – their positive impact on target groups.

2 Project investigation: progress and methodology

On 7 November 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and HOPE - E.S., v.o.s. concluded an agreement designed to facilitate the implementation of the “Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011” project. An Initial Project Report elaborating on the methodology and methods utilized by the project, specifying a timetable for the implementation of individual tasks and providing an overview of activities completed during the initial phase of the project was prepared and approved by 12 December 2011.

The implementation of individual evaluation tasks was carried out according to the approved schedule.

Evaluation Task 1

Work on evaluation task 1 was conducted on the basis of data supplied by the client, i.e. data generated on 4 January 2012 from the MSC2007. The objective was to conduct a monitoring analysis designed to serve as an introduction to the annual report with input data acquired from performance indicators. The HREOP Annual Report 2011 introduction was processed in March 2012 on the basis of such materials and subsequently finalized according to client requirements. A regional analysis of the distribution of support applications and the distribution of completed projects of the 1.1 area of support, calls 23, 35, 33 and 52, was also prepared.

Evaluation Task 2

In addition to the Introductory Report, a methodology for the selection and analysis of case studies was also approved and designated as the basis for further work on the task. A large number of projects generated on the basis of data from IS Monit7+, available information on successful projects and the esfcr.cz website was generated by the provider and subsequently passed to representatives of the contracting authority in order to assess the suitability of projects along with a query for the provision of supplementary information regarding the issue of project suitability for various case studies types and other relevant projects. A narrower selection of projects was prepared on the basis of information from project managers and a priority sequence for addressing recipients with requests for cooperation was developed. Beneficiaries were invited to cooperate and a final list of projects was subsequently established. Evaluation visits were carried out in two stages – the first focusing on establishing causalities between inputs, activities and outputs and the second targeting publicity purposes; a photographer was present during the second stage (task 2.3).

A partial analysis of HREOP 1.1 project samples was also performed due to client requests. The analysis focused on determining project success or failure factors in projects which declared support of the further education system in implemented projects. Beneficiary representatives were contacted by telephone in order to request participation in the investigation according to a proposed scenario utilizing QCA elements (binary yes/no questions) supplemented by qualitative queries designed to examine additional aspects of the phenomenon. The conclusions and recommendations were drafted on the basis of a total number of 21 responses gathered from individual companies.

Task 2 included a requirement for the coordination of evaluative activities with representatives of other evaluation companies. A workshop was thus held in order to discuss selection procedures and case study evaluation methodologies. Individual evaluation companies remained in close contact in order to avoid duplication or overlapping of selected projects during the selection procedure.

Evaluation Task 3

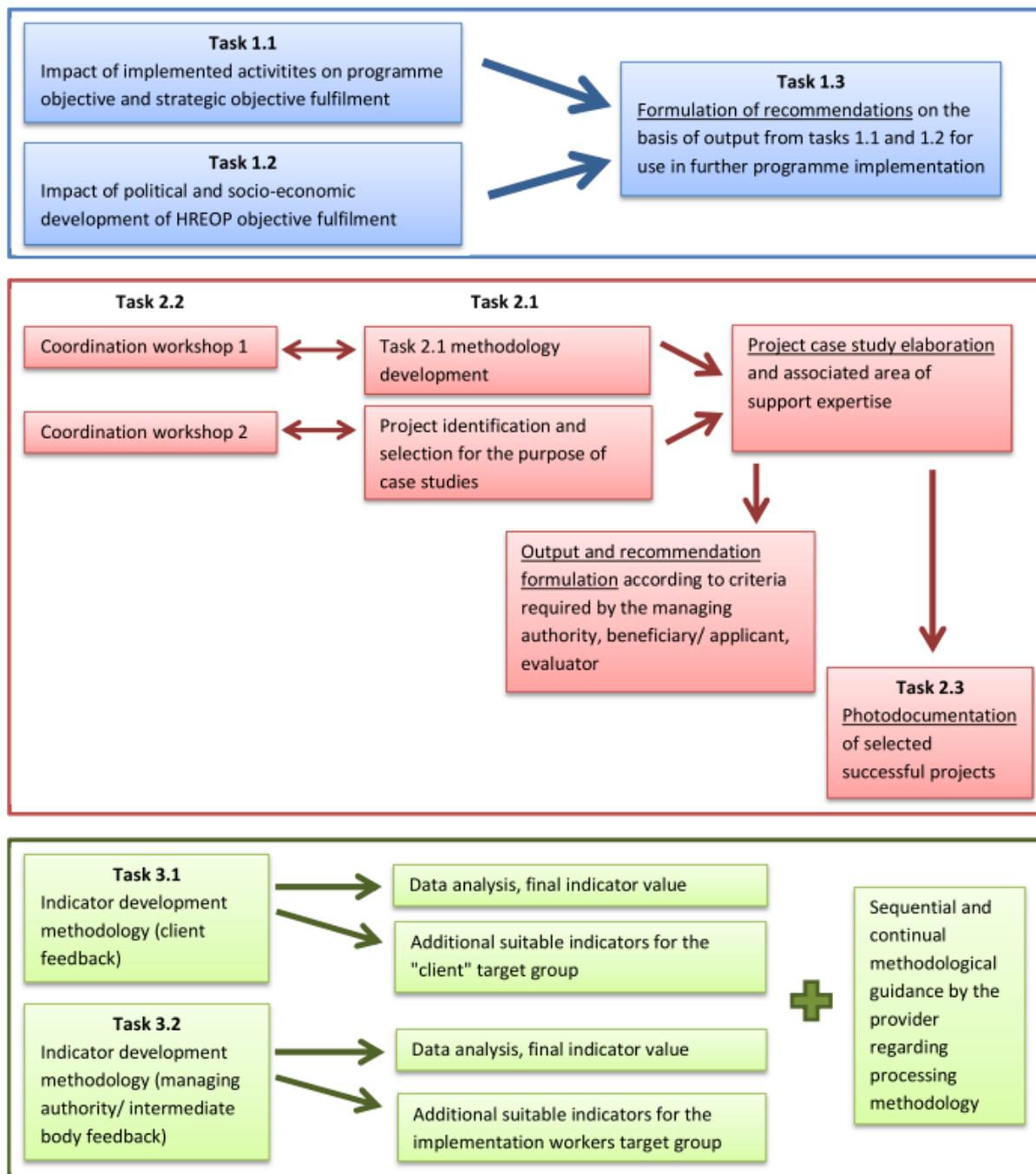
Evaluation task 3 was subdivided into two separate tasks with varying schedules. Both tasks were designed to provide methodological guidance, support and the transfer of know-how to the provider, especially in the area of questionnaire survey set-up and implementation. A seminar introducing the LimeSurvey online questionnaire software was thus held for representatives of the contracting authority.

Task 3.1 – Mutual collaboration and the “learning-by-doing” method produced a questionnaire designed to measure the degree of satisfaction of individual customers (i.e. HREOP applicants and beneficiaries). The provider prepared a version of the questionnaire in MS Word format and – with the assistance of the client – programmed the questionnaire in the LimeSurvey online software. The provider ensured the implementation of a pilot survey and the questionnaire subsequently went live from 16 to 29 March 2012. A total of 5,432 beneficiaries and HREOP subsidy applicants were addressed. A total of 15.5 % of all questionnaires were subsequently submitted (i.e. 843 completed questionnaires). The questionnaire produced an indicator of “customer satisfaction” which was subsequently broken down by stages, factors, areas of support, beneficiary types, project types, etc.

Task 3.2 – The development of a questionnaire for eliciting feedback from implementation structures to the evaluation plan was also implemented with the help of the “learning-by-doing” method. The questionnaire survey was carried out from 13 to 23 December 2011; a total of 32 persons were interviewed, all employees appointed by individual department guarantors or team leaders. A total of 17 completed survey questionnaires and 5 incomplete questionnaires were submitted, i.e. a 53 % success rate. The questionnaire results include processed analysis and the calculation of the indicator for the “number of incentives for evaluation outside the evaluation unit”.

The approach to resolving individual tasks, partial issues and their interconnections is presented below:

Figure 1: Addressing Evaluation Issues



The following table provides an overview of specific methods and the number of associated activities.

Table 1: Evaluation Methods Utilized

Method	Number	Specifications
Questionnaire Survey	2 + 8	Two extensive investigations were carried out, focusing on beneficiaries/applicants (task 3.1) and on implementation structure personnel (task 3.2). A total of eight additional questionnaire surveys were conducted in connection with field investigations (task 2.1).
LimeSurvey Seminar	2	Questionnaire development and data export from investigations conducted in connection with the methodological management of tasks 3.1 and 3.2.
Workshop	3	In connection with task 2.2 and 3.1, once for recommendation consultation purposes at the end of the project
Individual interviews with beneficiaries	19	In connection with field investigations conducted under task 2.1.
Assessment visit	19	In connection with field investigations conducted under task 2.1.
Group interview	6	In connection with field investigations conducted under task 2.1, according to the nature of projects selected for case studies.
Telephone survey	25	In connection with a partial analysis of the HREOP 1.1 projects with the support of the education system. Further telephone surveys were also utilized in field investigations under task 2.1.
Ad-hoc consultations	Implemented as needed	Included under all evaluation tasks. Held irregularly throughout the commission.

3 Primary findings and conclusions

3.1 Outcomes of programme implementation progress evaluation

3.1.1 Evaluation of financial and physical progress

Financial progress

In terms of financial progress in 2011, programme implementation continued to accelerate – both in terms of the increasing volume of contracted funds as well as with respect to the initiation of the implementation of a large number of projects which resulted in increased expenditures. The volume of contracted resources (75 % of the overall allocated sum) corresponds to the current stage of progress within the programme cycle. The amount of funding disbursed among individual beneficiaries (32 % of the overall allocated sum) may thus be described as slightly lower than the amount expected to correspond to the current stage of progress within the programme cycle. With respect to the launching of a number of projects in the near future, positive developments in this area may be expected in the upcoming year.³

The least amount of progress has been made in priority axis 5 which has been assigned contracted funds amounting to 33.6 % and discharged funds amounting to 20.6 % of the overall allocated sum; however, thanks to presently announced calls, the number of projects undergoing evaluation is currently sufficient. However, a great deal of progress has been made in priority axis 4, especially in comparison with the preceding period. Although the sum total amount of funds paid out to beneficiaries is still rather low (12.8 % of the axis allocation), non-contracted projects – comprising 75.9 % of the axis allocation – provide a feasible basis for the acceleration of drawing on resources in the upcoming period.

Table 2: OP financial progress (EU and national sources) – cumulative (as of the end of 2011)

Priority axis	Allocation 2007–2013	Resources allocated via Decision/Contract (amendment)		Resources reimbursed to beneficiaries		Certified resources	
	EUR	EUR	%	EUR	%	EUR	%
	a	b	b/a	c	c/a	e	e/a
1	573,576,280	483,295,330	84.26	183,770,422	32.04	84,511,177	14.73
2	712,678,036	523,475,226	73.45	244,728,021	34.34	244,159,558	34.26
3	529,148,318	345,675,903	65.33	210,801,185	39.84	137,170,804	25.92
4	229,555,121	174,150,792	75.86	29,501,265	12.85	13,189,628	5.75
5	41,078,286	13,798,959	33.59	8,441,828	20.55	4,047,319	9.85
6	86,420,600	83,116,208	96.18	15,445,068	17.87	15,438,521	17.86

³ As of 4 January 2011

OP							
TOTAL	2,172,456,641	1,623,512,418	74.73	692,687,790	31.88	498,517,007	22.95

Source: Input for HREOP Annual Report 2011

Physical progress

Programme quality

The fulfilment of project level indicators at programme level has surpassed the existing rate of spending and – according to the state of currently contracted projects – the overtaking of target values may be expected. Whereas in the case of the MI 07.41.00 indicator – Number of persons receiving support – the number of project implementation commitments are reaching planned target values, in the case of indicator MI 07.46.13 – Number of successful course graduates – commitments have already exceeded the target value by 138 %. In the case of the MI 07.01.00 indicator – Number of newly created jobs – the number of implementation commitments has exceeded the target value by 17 %, largely due to the implementation of the anti-crisis-oriented Community Service Project which accounts for an overwhelming 95 % of the total.

The fulfilment of the MI 07.46.16 indicator – Proportion of successfully supported persons – has been determined on the basis of an evaluation study and stands at 61.41 %; the target value for 2015 has been set at 60 %. In the absence of further deterioration (e.g. due to an ongoing economic recession), the fulfilment of this indicator may be expected.

The development of impact indicators at programme level (including Lisbon indicators) was primarily influenced by external factors. The most significant factor is the onset of the recession in late 2008 and then again in 2011, which negatively influenced impact indicator values. The influence of the economic recession has negatively impacted the development of the MI 07.27.00 indicator – Proportion of persons suffering from long-term unemployment (12 months or more) among the overall number of economically active persons in the 15 to 64 age group – which, in spite of negative developments in 2010 but in view of positive developments in 2007 and 2008 and subsequently thanks to a shift towards positive developments taking place in the first half of 2011, reached a value of 2.6 % by the end of the 3rd quarter of 2011, thus exceeding the target value of 3.28 %. Thanks to the currently worsening economic situation (i.e. the advent of the second recession), further deterioration of this indicator may be expected.

The MI 7.22.02 indicator – Proportion of employed persons in the 15 to 64 age group – women – has returned negative values due to several factors: firstly, the initially established goal was relatively more ambitious, especially in view of the weak results provided by this variable at the outset of the period in question, and, secondly, no long-term significant improvements have been recorded. In a situation where the Czech Republic offers a very low proportion of part-time employment, one of the key aspects to address is the promotion of flexible forms of employment, especially those available for women with children.⁴

⁴ The EU-27 part-time employment average in 2008 stood at 18.2 %; the Czech Republic figure stood at 4.9 %.

Conversely, the recession exerted a “positive” influence on the development of impact indicator MI 07.24.00 – Differentiation of regional unemployment rates. This is largely due to the fact that the economic crisis severely affected regions with lower unemployment rates while regions with traditionally high unemployment rates underwent no significant changes.

Priority axis level

Priority axis 1 target values have been reached or exceeded both in the case of output and results indicators.

With respect to reaching performance indicator target values, priority axis 2 successfully supports the creation of new employment opportunities. On the other hand, a lesser degree of progress is apparent in the implementation of the MI 07.41.00 indicator – Number of persons receiving support – where the total number of assisted persons (i.e. 219 thousand) corresponds to 43.9 % of the target value. The proportion of successfully supported persons (MI 07.46.16) likewise remains low, i.e. achieving only 51.5 % as opposed to the 60 % target value. However, with respect to the state of the economy – currently in a worse situation than during the initial planning stage – the results may be assessed as satisfactory. The impact of the recession has been particularly pronounced in the increasingly problematic access of young people in the 15 to 24 age group to employment opportunities. The registered unemployment rate of specific groups in the 15 to 24 age group (MI 07.29.00) thus exceeds the target value of 15.5 % by 5 percentage points (as of the 3rd quarter of 2011).⁵

Priority axis 3 may be characterized by considerable interest in the announced calls – most indicators are thus being met without difficulty. The MI 07.02.00 performance indicator – Number of newly created employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups – has undergone a significant positive shift in 2011, with a commitment increase in contracted projects reaching up to 81 % of the indicator target value. The impact of the economic recession is still apparent in the unemployment levels of specific categories of disadvantaged persons, subsequently reflected in the relevant indicators exceeding their target values. The long-term unemployment rate of specific groups in the 15 to 24 age group exceeds the target value of 9.6 % indicator by 4.7 percentage points, while the unemployment rate indicator for persons aged 50 exceeded its target value of 10.4 % by 15 percentage points (as of the 3rd quarter of 2011). In connection with the onset of the second wave of the economic recession, the situation may be expected to deteriorate further, i.e. continuing the deterioration of values begun during the course of 2011.

Priority axis 4 has registered a significant improvement in the volume of contracted projects and resources in 2011. Thanks to the commencement of projects implementation, project indicators registered a high degree of growth, peaking at a three and a half to over a fourfold increase. A five to tenfold increase may be expected on the basis of proposed target values in the case of contracted projects. The MI 15.32.1X output indicator – Utilization of e-government public administration at

⁵ The MI 07.01.00 indicator – Number of newly established workplaces – target value of 35 thousand has already been exceeded by 18 %.

regional level (MI 15.32.15) and in municipalities of over 500 inhabitants (MI 15.32.16) – has shown a positive trend, but is still 23 and 8, respectively, percentage points short of reaching target value.

Although priority axis 5 currently has a lower volume of contracted projects, adding up to 33.6 % of the priority axis allocation, a sufficient number of projects are currently undergoing the evaluation process thanks to the announced calls.

Reallocation suitability assessment in the upcoming period

Support area 2.1

The ongoing influence of the economic recession on the unemployment rates of specific groups of people with disadvantages on the job market speaks in favour of further allocations in this area of support. For certain groups of people, the economic recession has made access to the job market increasingly difficult. In terms of monitoring indicators associated with priority axis 2, the impact of the recession has been particularly pronounced in the increasingly problematic access of young people in the 15 to 24 age group to employment opportunities. The registered unemployment rate of specific groups in the 15 to 24 age group thus exceeds the target value of 15.5 % by 5 percentage points (as of the 3rd quarter of 2011). The economic recession has likewise influenced the success rate of persons receiving support. Although one half of the total number of people belonging to the surveyed group did find employment within 6 months after they stopped receiving support, this indicator failed to reach the target value of 60 %. As indicated by case studies, in order to increase the success of persons who received support, it may be beneficial to provide an individual approach to particular clients. 6

The evaluation showed that in order for support to succeed, i.e. increase the employability of unemployed persons and persons at risk on the job market, it is clearly more efficient to provide comprehensive support for individuals and for individual target groups. However, this form of support is costlier in terms of the necessary funding. Nevertheless, its efficiency may be seen as a supporting argument in order to increase the overall allocation costs.

Priority axis 3

The calls of priority axis 3 have attracted a considerable amount of interest and may be characterized by demand in excess of the announced allocation.

Projects under priority axis 3 likewise show a relatively high success rate, which nearly two thirds of all people who received support still employed 6 months later. The impact of the economic recession – still apparent in the unemployment levels of specific categories of disadvantaged persons and subsequently reflected in the relevant indicators exceeding their target values – speaks in favour of providing additional funding. The long-term unemployment rate of specific groups in the 15 to 24 age group exceeds the target value of 9.6 % indicator by 4.7 percentage points, while the unemployment rate indicator for persons aged 50 exceeded its target value of 10.4% by 15 percentage points (as of the 3rd quarter of 2011). In connection with the onset of the second wave of the economic recession,

6 The proportion of successfully supported persons (indicator 07.46.16) was established on the basis of an evaluation study and focuses on the number of persons who remain employed 6 months after no longer receiving support.

the situation may be expected to deteriorate further, i.e. continuing the deterioration of values begun during the course of 2011.

Support area 3.1

In addition to recommendations and the findings ascertained by other evaluations, the proposal to increase allocations in the area of support 3.1 may be furthered thanks to results obtained by case studies which indicate that the efficiency of financial support in the case of social enterprises, which continue to function even after they stop receiving support, eventually become self-supporting and gradually tend to help other people from the same target group in their integration into the job market.

Support area 3.2

Case studies in this field have demonstrated the efficiency of individual and concentrated support of target groups which, however, places greater demands on resources. Nevertheless, these demands above all target efficiency.

Support area 3.4

Key activities targeting equal opportunities for both men and women and reconciling work and family life include child care services, which are likely to grow in upcoming years due to the demographic curve – the number of births was on the increase until 2010. Although the birth rate registered a decline in 2011, the total number of children still remained relatively high. These services will thus most likely be required throughout the rest of the period. Likewise, their indispensability is also supported by the worsening status of women on the job market.

Support area 4.1

A great deal of progress has been made in priority axis 4, especially in comparison with the preceding period. Although the sum total amount of funds paid out to beneficiaries is still rather low (12.8 % of the axis allocation), non-contracted projects, comprising 75.9 % of the axis allocation, will provide – in case the projects are in fact fully implemented – a feasible basis for the acceleration of drawing on resources in the upcoming period. Likewise, the fulfilment of monitoring indicator requirements also registered a substantial increase in 2011. Case studies were successful and functional and consistent with the Smart Administration government strategy (projects for the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 were actually selected according to such criteria).

3.1.2 The effects of political and socio-economic development

No significant socio-economic changes in long-term unemployment rates, gender-linked or regional disparities – which would call for changes at the programme level or the adjustment of programme priorities – took place in 2011. In the light of recent socio-economic developments, the strategy defined in HREOP thus still remains relevant and functional. Socio-economic development, despite a partial recovery, is still marked by the ongoing economic recession and the onset of the second recession; in fact, some of the announced calls already took the situation into consideration in the preceding year.

The impact of socio-economic development on the fulfilment of physical programme objectives is presented in the previous chapter and further on in more detail in the technical report.

No new priorities calling for changes to programme settings were approved at Community level during 2011. Key strategic documents at Community level were approved in 2010 (e.g. Europe 2020). Although proposals for new cohesion policy regulations (including the European Social Fund) and selected additional strategic documents (Territorial Agenda 2020) were announced in 2011, these documents are only relevant to the 2014+ programming period.

The procedure for resolving evaluation task 1 (Documentation for the annual report – physical data monitoring analysis) is documented in the Technical Evaluation Report. The regional analysis of area of support 1.1 is part of the Final Report (Appendix 1) and the detailed documentation for the annual report introduction is included in Appendix 1 to the Technical Report.

3.2 Case study results

The project comprises a total of 20 processed case studies in all areas of support and one thematic case study which includes 21 projects in the area of support 1.1.

3.2.1 Case study results

A number of successful projects were selected for the purpose of case studies, both in order to illustrate as best as possible the various causalities between inputs, activities, outputs and results and also due to the fact that records of some of these projects are intended for publication in forthcoming proceedings. Project selection primarily reflected the physical focus of the projects in such a way as to be characteristic of the area of support in question (i.e. selected projects were not unique in terms of project focus) as well as attempting to represent individual grant projects and ensure insofar as possible an even distribution with respect to regional project affiliation. Although it is impossible to draw universally valid conclusions solely on the basis of two case studies performed in one area of support, key factors contributing to project success may thus be traced, especially as they cut across areas of support – incidentally, this also makes it possible to achieve their wider portability.⁷⁸⁹

Completed case studies have indicated (confirmed) that the success of a project depends on **high-quality, careful and detailed preparation**. The implementation of a given project thus proceeds from a state of preparedness. Throughout the implementation phase, the primary factor is **flexibility**, both in terms of activities and with respect to the temporal aspect. From the perspective of the evaluator, a successful project **must ensure the sustainability of project activities**, which, however, tend to vary according to the focus of individual project outputs. However, it is **the output of individual projects**

⁷ The project includes the Methodology for identifying and evaluating the substantive achievements of successful results (see the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 Technical Report).

⁸ One in some areas of support.

⁹ Evaluation expertise evaluating good and bad practices at project level and their portability options was processed within the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011 framework (see Appendix 5 to the Final Report).

which should be primarily considered in terms of their sustainability. The following section is devoted to analysing the individual factors in greater detail.

It is evident that successful projects invested a considerable amount of time and effort in the preparation stage, with time sometimes amounting to entire years. A key factor which helped projects reach out to future success even during the preparatory stage was **previous experience with European Social Fund projects and experience with the target group**, i.e. experience at the level of either organization or individual and ideally both. This has been confirmed in the long-term by a number of evaluations and studies and clearly demonstrated in the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011. During the selection and/or evaluation of projects, it is nevertheless still necessary to take into account the advantage of experienced applicants and assess it as discriminatory. However, case studies have shown that if an organization does not have the necessary experience but enters into cooperation with suitable partners, this too will significantly influence the project preparation stage in a positive way. In the case of several projects, the presence of even one team member with previous experience with European Social Fund projects was actually indicated as playing a major role in the success of a given project. In the case of “standard” internal educational projects, the involvement of the management on one hand and of the workers – scheduled to participate in the training later on – on the other also proved to constitute an additional important factor.

Furthermore, the **verification of project activity necessity** early on during the preparatory phase is essential: many beneficiaries reported that the finding that the target group was in dire need of the project was of paramount importance and helped launch a real project (rather than one carried out merely for its own sake). This argument may seem trivial, but its constant mentioning by beneficiaries and the situation facing regulatory authorities, the National Coordination Authority, the Government of the Czech Republic and other parties responsible for the utilization of funds (as well as the media-induced pressure to exploit all “Brussels funds”) makes it difficult to verify and ensure the necessity of all projects. The need for project activity verification is linked to **target group analysis**, a component part of the project application; its quality and soundness, as considered by the evaluator, is crucial for the evaluation of the entire project. Target group quality analysis was thus also frequently mentioned as an important success factor, although it tended to differ and included everything from questionnaire surveys to field surveys to consistent and topical work with target groups. In some successful projects, however, the shortcomings of this stage of project preparation became apparent, with the full potential of the project never being fully utilized. Problematic instances included e.g. the **underestimation of target group interest** in some of the project activities, which, however, could not be expanded once the project was under way – either due to a lack of allocated funding or an excessively **narrowly defined target group** discriminating participants from other groups (e.g. on the basis of age) from inclusion in the project in spite of the fact that the activity may have been of great interest to them and even through their presence could have been beneficial for the project.

Another success factor which emerged from the case studies was **appropriate project team make-up** with respect to project activities and target groups. Suitable project team make-up may in fact cover a variety of factors, ranging from the inclusion of a knowledgeable “expert” associated with the project (e.g. an expert specializing in gender issues or legal science) or the inclusion of members of

the target group (e.g. Roma field survey workers) or of persons experienced in working with European Social Fund administration or perhaps the establishment of an interdisciplinary team.

A large number of recipients have also indicated that **correct communication with the target group** likewise constitutes an important success factor, both in terms of ensuring their participation in project activities and throughout the project duration. Beneficiaries, especially in priority axis 3 (but also in areas of support 2.1 and 5.1) have indicated that it was “necessary to **gain the trust of the target groups**”. This was especially relevant in the case of specifically problematic target groups (e.g. homeless persons or persons participating in substance abuse) or in the case of specific target groups (e.g. mothers on maternal/parental leave). This may have taken on the guise of a continuous presentation of project results to target group members not yet included in the project, informing them of the project's merit and indicating that it is indeed capable of producing the anticipated results. Alternatively, gaining the trust of the target group may have been performed by choosing suitable activity modes for individual topics (e.g. including assistance with some activities) or by ensuring adequate supporting activities (e.g. babysitting during project activities and reimbursement of travel costs). As mentioned above, some projects had to invest a great deal of effort into finding target group participants with a desire to take part in project activities; the complicating factors may have included the initial mistrust on the part of the target group (see above), a lack of knowledge associated with project activities (e.g. the topic of equality and its application in practice), the small number of target group members (e.g. homeless persons) or a general reluctance to engage in any public activities (e.g. the public sphere in community planning). The above mentioned auxiliary factors – suitable project team make-up and appropriate project activity settings – were utilized when searching for target groups. In addition, the following may also be appropriate: wide project publicity – including the utilization of unconventional methods (e.g. billboards, happenings), careful partner selection taking into account specific project requirements and opportunities (e.g. a parish with knowledge of local senior citizens, maternity centres, NGOs). Frequently identified subjects included public authorities, especially local government authorities (e.g. regional, municipal or local bureaus and mayors) as well as offices and schools. A number of past projects have also noted that the selection of a suitable locale for carrying out project activities likewise proved significant (see below). European Social Fund projects have shown – among other things – that one of the best ways to forms of advertising, which also attracts target group participants (e.g. homeless persons, persons on maternal/parental leave, Roma people, members of the general public) is the **quality of services and success of project activities**, occasionally referred to as the snowball effect.

Proper **project activity localization** constitutes another factor contributing to the overall success of the project. This factor was mentioned surprisingly often, either in connection with the localization of all project activities or in connection with selected aspects. Three basic criteria were considered: firstly the location's proximity and accessibility with respect to the target group (e.g. city centre), secondly whether the location was one known and trusted by the target group (e.g. municipal or local authority building, maternity centre, library) and, thirdly whether or not the location was thematically connected to project activities (e.g. parent centre, library-affiliated educational activity centre). Location also influences project expenditures (e.g. a municipal authority may be able to

provide a rent-free location). The necessity of gaining the trust of the target group and a positive evaluation on the part of the local authorities thus once again proves to be extremely important.

Another frequently mentioned factor interconnecting the above mentioned criteria is the importance of **cooperation and partnership**. Beneficiaries frequently mentioned the need for partnership during the project preparation and implementation. In some cases this referred to internal cooperation, in other cases to external collaboration – either in connection with a key partner or in reference to the necessity of a wider cooperation scheme including a range of partners.

In the case of **thematically similar projects or projects focusing on similar target groups, other factors may be singled out** (see the factors listed above, this time viewed from the perspective of the target group) **and properly set up activities or practices that have proven successful utilized**. Such “best practices” may be subsequently transferred directly to these thematically similar projects. In the case of **projects aimed at supporting jobs and employment**, the following have proved functional and efficient: active monitoring of the job market situation (either in terms of employment vacancies or – on the other hand – jobs at risk), timely support, either during the first unemployment stage or prior to its commencement (Restart projects), the logical and smooth interlinking of various activities, emphasis on a personal approach (e.g. the replacement of standard diagnostic tests with detailed consultations and sessions with a psychologist), the inclusion of accompanying services (e.g. previously mentioned babysitting services, preferably on site at the premises where project activities take place), employment promotion or the direct employment recovery of the target group and complex target group support (from initial consultations to reinstatement on the job market). **Work specifically targeting problematic groups** indicated proximity of the target group, either spatial (e.g. the project activities location, field work) or personal (e.g. target group participation in the project team). Other criteria emphasized the importance of a personal approach and care for individuals, which ultimately always leads to higher project activity costs (e.g. assistants become necessary, work with each individual participant does not allow for the inclusion of group activities such as training exercises). Additional frequently listed factors include the necessity of strong target group motivation, temporary trial work periods, networking – the involvement of a large number of partners (e.g. in the case of employing people with disabilities) and complex activities. The support of social enterprise has also proved functional.

The **presence of a practical aspect** has once again proved essential where educational activities are concerned, both in the area of internal and external education: the presence of e.g. service providers (e.g. organizations working with the disabled), the functionality of internal lecturers and interlinking of multiple employee groups, generally within the space of a selected range of training sessions and courses (as opposed to the entire spectrum). Employees occupying different positions (both vertically and horizontally) are thus provided with an opportunity to meet, participate in collective activities, share their experiences and learn about the work and issues facing other employees.

Another group of factors contributing to project success, which may be transferred throughout the programme, is the **quality of communication and work performed by subsidy administrator project managers, simplification of administration, appropriate project duration allocation** in accordance with the scope of a given project and **maximum flexibility in project implementation**. Beneficiaries

reported both on the quality and functionality of support provided by the administrator and lack of thereof, manifested e.g. as long delays in monitoring report reviewing, subsequently leading to payment delays and thus direct threats to project activities funded by the beneficiaries via personal loans. The high turnover rate of project managers was also mentioned as another factor leading to delays in project administration. The above are interconnected and should be improved by actions focusing on the improvement of client access to the managing authority. These facts are also discussed within the framework of task 3.1 of this evaluation, which focuses on processing client feedback (applicants and beneficiaries). As far as project duration is concerned, the three-year-long project system has been evaluated as positive in the case of projects dealing with difficult target groups (area of support 3.2) while two-year-long projects have been found insufficient, especially in the case of large and complex projects (e.g. in the area of employment) since it was not possible to include the required intensive retraining sessions as the retraining itself was preceded by activities focusing on target group acquisition, specific forms of balance diagnostics, individual education plan development and a six-month supported trial work period. Due to the duration of individual projects, a certain amount of flexibility in project activity implementation and focus is necessary. Beneficiaries should not be afraid of changing the project; instead, it is advisable to discuss these changes with project managers (subsidy administrators) in such a way as to reach maximum project activity effectiveness. This in effect calls for skilled project managers. The demanding nature of administrative tasks was frequently alluded to by beneficiaries during problem (bad practice) identification sessions in case studies. Cooperation with regional authorities on contract and form development might be suggested as one potential solution. In some cases, beneficiaries expressed a substantial degree of astonishment upon finding that the administrator failed to provide the necessary contracts and forms for a given “subject area” or even their list, e.g. in the area of reconciling work and family life and child care provided by external organizations. This area is particularly complicated from a legislative point of view and the beneficiary was thus placed under a considerable amount of stress and was in effect forced to resort to resolving problems and finding solutions independently. The beneficiary is now willing to pass on the amassed experience in order to help future applicants and beneficiaries with the relevant stage of the project, thus avoiding the repeated development of forms and procedures.

However, many of the problems encountered by beneficiaries fall outside of the scope of the project and the powers of the managing authority. Such obstacles include systemic components such as the local legislative environment, lack of support on the part of social companies, an unstable and shifting public administration (i.e. election cycles and political changes in local government) and general mistrust of the target group.

The success of some projects has shown that **the vast majority of best practices may be transferred** and that many principles may be applied on the area of support and priority axis level as well as throughout the programme. Selected best practices may be transferred among projects working with the same target group, either in one area of support or even across various areas. In general, the principles apply throughout the programme, although the level of best practice transferability decreases with the level of detail. Interestingly enough, beneficiaries have found good operating practices somewhat difficult to define. Relatively few

instances of bad practices were identified, most likely due to the fact that the selected projects were generally the successful ones.

A total of 15 major project success factors were identified by an analysis of case studies – these may be further subdivided and are often interlinked. These factors may be perceived either in terms of a material or project content standpoint or from a target group point of view. As evaluators list factors encountered during the processing of case studies, no success indicator list is ever entirely complete. **Key factors influencing project success (i.e. reaching expected results) specified in case studies include the following factors (all above mentioned criteria are listed):**

1. Suitable project preparation

- Reflection and verification of the essential nature of the project
- Thorough planning of project activities
- Involvement in the preparation of project management
- Involvement of target group members in project preparation
- Team experience – knowledge of the topic and of European Social Fund projects

2. Suitable project team composition:

- Team interdisciplinary
- Team expertise (e.g. legal expertise, gender issues)
- Part of the project team corresponds to the target group
- Direct and detailed experience with the target group
- Direct and detailed experience with similar projects

3. Cooperation with partners, partnerships:

- Development of a wide partnership scheme (e.g. in the area of community planning)
- Involvement of multiple entities, key players in a selected locality:
 - local authority (even in non-traditional ways, e.g. in the case of an unemployed persons target group)
 - mayor
 - regional authority
 - NGO
- Involvement of persons with target group knowledge, e.g.:
 - for the purpose of obtaining the target group (parent centres, employment offices, family associations)
 - when searching for a space for project activities

4. Suitable localization of project activities:

- Suitable conditions:
 - spatial (e.g. town or city centre)
 - topical (e.g. education – library)
 - site trusted by target group (e.g. library, parent centre)
- Financially economical (e.g. municipal bureau)

5. Suitable communication with target group

- Acquiring the necessary confidence
- Target groups must know about the project
- Suitable presentation of project activities
- Appropriate selection of participants for individual project activities, including a suitable combination of sub-groups
- Flexible communication methods and their suitable combination
- Allocation of communication partners with target group knowledge
- Localization of project activities
- Team composition (e.g. target group members)
- Inclusion of field work
- Quality of services provided (snowball principle)

6. Gaining target group trust:

- Suitable project activity set-up
- Suitable activity localization
- Project team composition
- Suitable partner selection
- Presentation of project results

7. Selecting a high-quality supplier

8. Educational projects

- Adequate inclusion of practice
- Usage of internal lecturers
- Interlinking of employees:
 - Vertical
 - Horizontal

9. Projects in the area of employment and in support of jobs:

- Active market monitoring
- Proactive approach to employers and employees
- Timely awarding of grants
- Logical interlinking of activities
- Individual care
- Inclusion of associated services (e.g. babysitting, travel expenses)

10. Projects for problematic target groups:

- Specific approach to a given target group
- Strong target group motivation
- Long-standing and detailed experience on the part of the beneficiary or partner
- Very individual approach
- Inclusion of test work schemes
- Networking (e.g. promoting employment of persons with disabilities)
- Inclusion of activities in the field (e.g. inclusion of target group members in the project team)

- Complexity of activities (e.g. in the case of unemployed persons, disadvantaged persons, mothers on/after maternity or parental leave)

11. Adaptability – not being afraid of potential changes taking place throughout the duration of the project (e.g. the duration of individual activities)

12. Ensuring sustainability:

- Inclusion of activities with “real sustainability and application” opportunities
- Support for social firms

13. Suitable project duration

- More extensive (3 years in duration):
 - in the case of specific target groups
 - large-scale projects
 - complex projects (e.g. with extensive retraining periods and six-month follow-up employment support periods)

14. High-quality work communication and subsidy administrator communication

15. Comprehensible project administration and deadline management (see also evaluation task 3.1)

Descriptions of key factors central to achieving project results at the project level are included in each of the appended case studies (see Appendix 2 to the Final Report).

Results achieved at selected project level may be evaluated as unambiguously positive. A number of successful projects were selected for case studies purposes, i.e. projects which have achieved targets set out by the beneficiaries; a range of factors influenced the success of individual projects and thus represents the conditions under which a given project actually functions. A total of 15 primary factors from all project stages were identified on the basis of case studies. Although not all of the factors have to be met in order for the project to succeed, the meeting of some of the criteria forms an essential prerequisite for success. These criteria include suitable project preparation, i.e. appropriate activity set-up, etc. and appropriate communication with the target group which leads to obtaining their trust.

3.2.2 Project survey results relevant to projects in the area of support 1.1 – Increasing employee adaptability and enterprise competitiveness – for the purpose of the call announcement

Following the conclusion of an agreement with the sponsor, the contractor performed a partial analysis of sample HREOP 1.1 projects, focusing on factors determining project success or failure in the case of projects which claimed to support the further education system. Based on a preliminary sample, the project quota was set at 20 to 25 projects. A key criterion for sample selection was diversity, i.e. the selection took into account regional aspects (location or impact area) and required budget, etc. Alternative projects were also pinpointed so as to ensure that data from at least 20 projects would in fact be available. Beneficiary representatives were contacted by telephone in order to request participation in the

investigation according to a proposed scenario utilizing QCA elements (binary yes/no questions) supplemented by qualitative queries designed to examine additional aspects of the phenomenon.

The vast majority of respondents from among project beneficiaries actually promote the assembly of an educational plan or system. Although all of the examined projects actually used the word “system” in the title, approximately 20 % of all beneficiaries have stated that the development of an educational plan, system or competency model was not part of the project. Due to a lack of clear terminological definitions, it must be noted that the concept of “education system” varies between beneficiaries and tends to cover a range of very different learning schemes across a range of projects. The “system” is thus perceived in a variety of different ways by individual beneficiaries. Over one half of the examined projects included activities promoting internal supervisors or lecturers. This element in particular may be considered significantly pro-systemic. It may be assumed that this is part of an effort to develop the internal know-how of recipient institutions with reasonably feasible sustainability. Approximately one half of the beneficiaries listed a newly developed educational system as their main project output. Simultaneously, almost all of them indicated that primary project output was to include educational programmes and courses. Answers to open questions indicate that beneficiaries are primarily interested in project output which provides a range of courses and educational programmes.

The procedure for resolving evaluation task 2 (successful project case studies) is documented in the Technical Evaluation Report with methodology described in Appendix 2 to the Technical Report. A narrower project selection is also available in Appendix 3 to the Technical Report. Case studies of implemented field investigations are included in Appendix 2 to the Final Report (separate document) while the associated areas of support evaluation expertise reports are summarized in Annex 5 to the Final Report (separate document).

Evaluation task 2 also included a separate thematic case study (a survey of projects in the area of support 1.1), which forms Annex 3 to the Final Report: the document – in .xls format – in combination with the survey results forms a separate Appendix 4 to the Final Report.

3.3 Results of the HREOP client survey and the Evaluation Plan feedback within the framework of the managing authority

The following were studied in connection with project implementation:

- Feedback from clients – evaluation of satisfaction of applicants and beneficiaries
- Feedback from implementation structures (managing authority/intermediate body) to the evaluation plan

Both tasks were designed to provide methodological guidance, support and the transfer of know-how during the questionnaire survey processing. The tasks were carried out with the Annual Operational Assessment HREOP 2011

methodological support and in close cooperation with the provider by means of “learning by doing”.

This task included the development of methodology for assessing client feedback and establishing a procedure for the satisfaction survey of applicants and beneficiaries applicable to a future period. Task output includes a composite indicator detection system setting established by means of an electronic questionnaire survey among applicants and beneficiaries and facilitating the identification of major problem areas in the implementation of client access.

A scale ranging from -10 to 10 points was used to evaluate the satisfaction rate. The distribution of points is depicted in the following table.

Table 3: Evaluation of applicant and recipient satisfaction

Satisfaction scale	Value
strongly satisfied	10
satisfied	6
somewhat satisfied	2
somewhat dissatisfied	-2
dissatisfied	-6
strongly dissatisfied	-10

The overall satisfaction index – taking into account all HREOP applicants and recipients – is calculated on the basis of data collected by means of a survey and stands at 2.1.

In terms of **project cycle stages**, the project assessment and selection stage and the implementation stage received the lowest ratings (index values of 1.5 and 1.7 respectively). On the other hand, the project proposal preparation stage was rated highly by client responders, reaching an index value of 2.7.

Table 4: Satisfaction index – HREOP beneficiaries and applicants by individual stages

Project proposal preparation	Project assessment and selection	Implementation stage	TOTAL HREOP
2.7	1.5	1.7	2.1

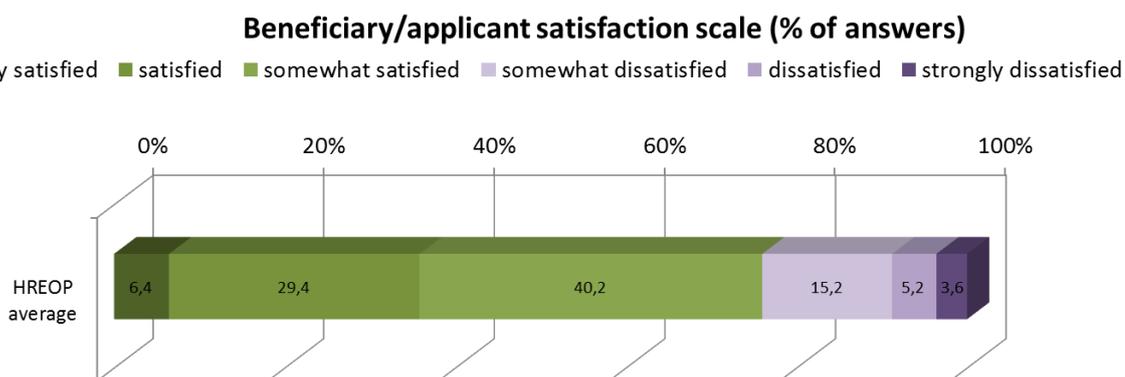
Among the individual **satisfaction factors**, the most problematic aspect seems to be the setting of conditions for granting subsidies and their implementation (particularly compliance with deadlines during the process of monitoring report processing). On the other hand, the quality of documents (manuals, texts, calls, etc.) has been rated very highly by the clients.

Table 5: Satisfaction index – HREOP beneficiaries and applicants by individual factors

Conditions for subsidy allocation	Quality of information/documentation	Provision of information	Human factor	Work with the Benefit7 application
1.3	2.8	2.3	2.4	2.2

The average client has thus expressed a moderate degree of satisfaction. The satisfaction rate for individual questions stood at 76 % (see chart below). The most problematic aspect seems to be the setting of conditions for granting subsidies and their implementation (particularly compliance with deadlines during the process of monitoring report processing).

Graph 1: Satisfaction index – HREOP beneficiaries and applicants



Detailed satisfaction survey results are documented in the analytical output format of .xls, i.e. Appendix 6 to the Final Report. The interpretation of survey results (report on output results) was prepared by the provider in the form of “learning by doing” on the basis of a workshop which took place on 19 June 2012. The processing authority provided a review of the completed research findings.

Feedback on the implementation of the Evaluation Plan

Following a consultation between the provider and the beneficiary, a questionnaire was designed in order to elicit feedback on the evaluation plan – it was to update the HREOP Evaluation Plan for 2012, supplementing it with new themes and evaluation activities and obtaining feedback on activities implemented thus far.

The implementation of the HREOP Evaluation Plan was assessed on the basis of the questionnaire survey, with suggestions for future evaluation activities noted down. The established and implemented procedure is repeatable and may be utilized in upcoming periods using the contracting authority's own capacity.

None of the respondents suggested entirely new evaluation activities during the questionnaire survey, but four of them suggested a combined total of seven new evaluation tasks applicable to existing evaluation activities.

The procedure for resolving the entire evaluation task 3 (Methodological guidance in feedback eliciting and feedback system implementation) is documented in the Technical Report with client satisfaction survey methodology (task 3.1) including the actual questionnaire is attached in Appendix 4 to the Technical Report. The proposed structure of the questionnaire associated with this task is included in Appendix 5 to the Technical Report. The results of the questionnaire survey designed to elicit feedback within the (managing authority/intermediate body) implementation structure (task

3.2) are listed Appendix 7 to the Final Report (the questionnaire text itself is included in Appendix 6 to the Technical Report).

4 Recommendations

This chapter presents recommendations made on the basis of the outcome of the processing of individual evaluation tasks; they are subdivided into the following groups:

- A. Priority axis recommendations
- B. General recommendations
- C. Evaluation recommendations
- A. Indicator recommendations

Furthermore, the chapter also defines proposed objectives for each set of recommendations, including links to analyses, their importance and scheduling and/or suitable event horizon and implementation guarantor. The specification is as follows:

Connection to analysis: the analytical section relevant to the recommendations is indicated

Guarantor/realizer: the recommendations is provided either by a guarantor on the managing authority/intermediate body level and a realizer on subject level (e.g. call announcer); alternatively, the entire process may be performed at departmental or job level.

The *importance* of individual recommendations is specified according to the following scale:

- Necessary – the recommended course of action is necessary for the achievement of the desired programme objectives
- Recommended – the recommended course of action will improve results, but their implementation is not absolutely necessary
- To be considered – the recommended course of action constitutes a partial recommendation; its implementation will only have limited impact on the overall quality of the programme

The *schedule* is specified as follows:

- Until next call announcement
- 2014+ period
- Continuous

Table 6: Table of recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Connection to findings	Guarantor/realizer	Importance	Schedule
A. Priority axis recommendations					
1.	<p>Programme management by means of calls with respect to performance indicators. Narrowing the focus of individual calls is recommended – this will be reflected in the evaluation criteria. The following additional options are applicable in the case of priority axis 1 (PA 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase support in problematic regions (regions with high unemployment rates may receive bonuses allocated according to specific criteria). - Bonuses allocated in accordance with specific criteria may also be used to support projects which focus on pro-growth industries (or regionally important enterprise sectors) whose support will increase regional competitiveness (specific analyses are necessary prior to issuing calls in such cases). - In the case of larger companies (i.e. mid-sized or larger), support should be conditional by the inclusion of systemic elements – it is not sufficient to support only ad-hoc courses (it may be possible to secure the support of internal lecturers and reach out to a multiplier effect). <p>The following additional options are applicable in the case of PA 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on providing support for graduates (and the 15 to 24 age group) in case they have been influenced by the recession <p>The following additional options are applicable in the case of PA 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase support for projects in order to support poorly performing indicators, i.e. particularly the use of e-government public administration at regional level (MI 15.32.16). Supporting projects which promote the expansion of modern ICT applications and e-government is also desirable. 	<p>Programme progress evaluation (see chapter 3.1)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> Recommendations are based on an evaluation of indicator performance and developments of the socio-economic context</p> <p>In the case of priority axis 1, recommendations are based on regional analysis output, which has shown that – from a regional perspective – support is evenly distributed.</p>	Managing authority /call announcer	Recommended	Until next call announcement

No.	Recommendation	Connection to findings	Guarantor/realizer	Importance	Schedule
2.	<p>Priority axis 1 – Establish unit course costs (further education-oriented projects). Introduce the use of template/type projects.</p> <p>Unit costs must be calculated in such a way so as to ensure that lower costs do not threaten project performance or project quality.</p> <p>On the whole, this will lead to the simplification of project administration and simultaneously to an increase in administration efficiency.</p>	<p>Case studies (see chapter 4.2) and Client feedback (see chapter 4.3)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> Delays occurring during the inspection of monitoring reports may lead to payment delays, subsequently threatening the project activities themselves</p>	Managing authority	Recommended	2014+ period
3.	<p>Area of support 1.1 – Promote the inclusion of practical experience in specific educational projects (GG EDUCA).</p> <p>The calls emphasize the inclusion of direct experience in educational projects (so-called trial places are already being supported in area of support 3.3). Projects may be assigned bonuses during evaluation (especially using specific criteria). Evaluators must be able (and must be instructed) to evaluate this item.</p>	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> <u>The presence of a practical aspect in the case of educational activities has proved significant, both in the area of internal and external education,</u></p>	Managing authority /priority axis guarantors	Recommended	For future calls

No.	Recommendation	Connection to findings	Guarantor/realizer	Importance	Schedule
4.	<p>Priority axis 1 – Divide projects into “innovative/pilot” projects and projects utilizing existing products.</p> <p>Divide projects into “innovative/pilot” projects, i.e. projects focused on product development and verification, and projects using existing products (developed with or without European Social Fund support), in order to provide target groups with the most efficient support system, e.g. in the form of unit costs. The aim is to limit the number of similar educational programmes and methodologies while preventing growing market distortion. The obligatory application of a created/innovated methodology may be submitted for consideration instead of its mere pilot testing (suitable for certain types of projects such as educational courses).</p>	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> Inefficient development of the already developed.</p>	Managing authority /priority axis guarantors	Recommended	2014+ period
B. General recommendations					
5.	<p>Increase the value of the project's contribution to the target group.</p> <p>The following tools are recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allocation of bonuses according to specific criteria. - Detailed description of above mentioned specific criteria in the evaluator's handbook. Focus on this part during evaluator training (examples associated with a particular call should always be used). This aspect is treated in detail by calls in department 82. - It is essential to <u>always</u> elicit – as part of the project application – a processed annex and a target group analysis associated with project activities (already exists in calls in department 82). It is essential to always specify the scope and content of this annex (already exists in call No. 91 in department 82). - Alternatively, the value of criterion B3 – Project contribution for the target group – may be increased. 	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p>Client feedback (see chapter 4.3)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> The negative personal project benefit rating by some of the target groups has occurred in the case of some – otherwise successful – projects.</p> <p>All tools have been designed on the basis of our expert experience and workshop output.</p>	Managing authority /external evaluators	Recommended	2014+ period

No.	Recommendation	Connection to findings	Guarantor/realizer	Importance	Schedule
6.	<p>Focus on output quality assessment</p> <p>Inspect output quality during project implementation; the following implementation options are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on on-site output quality assessment - Establish and implement inspection (monitoring) visits beyond the scope of “standard inspections” In case it is impossible to find sufficient manpower to perform all inspections, allocating outside project managers to conduct the monitoring is also an option. - Participate in randomly selected beneficiary events (e.g. training events) and emphasize this fact in subsidy terms, manuals and call announcements, thereby preparing beneficiaries for every contingency. - Inspect the functionality of the primary output on project completion (in association with the approval of final payment) – recommended especially for web applications, databases, etc. Moreover, output must be functional and <u>used</u> throughout the duration of the project (6 months is a recommended minimum). 	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> Beneficiaries/project managers have mentioned that administrators do not seem to be interested in output quality.</p>	<p>Managing authority – process set-up/project manager or external entity</p>	<p>Recommended</p>	<p>2014+ period</p>
7.	<p>Allow more time for the implementation of demanding projects.</p> <p>Allowing a longer period of time (3 years) for the implementation of projects which comprise a number of interlinked activities which cannot be implemented separately (e.g. diagnostics, retraining, job placement, employment – it is difficult to provide sufficient time e.g. for target group retraining within the scope of such projects).</p> <p>It is appropriate to provide the call announcer with some degree of flexibility, e.g. to adjust the text of the call itself if necessary.</p> <p>(already in existence in some areas of support, e.g. 5.1)</p>	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> The recommendation builds on identified factors essential for successful project implementation.</p>	<p>Managing authority – process set-up/call announcer</p>	<p>Recommended</p>	<p>2014+ period</p>

No.	Recommendation	Connection to findings	Guarantor/realizer	Importance	Schedule
8.	<p>Share experience and best practices used by the beneficiaries.</p> <p>Beneficiaries have complained that they were left to their own devices in their (thematic) project areas and had to find out how to perform all of the necessary administrative steps (e.g. in the area of reconciling work and family life with demanding child-care-related legislation which must be observed by the beneficiary). The following course of action is recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edit section and/or add a section on “administrative project treatment according to material interests” (e.g. reconciling work and family life). <p>This recommendation is generally applicable to all priority axes, but most importantly to areas with specific (e.g. legislative) requirements.</p>	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> The problem was pointed out by beneficiaries/project managers in interviews</p>	Managing authority/methodologists, project managers following completion of their entrusted projects	To be considered	Continuously
C. Evaluation recommendations					
9.	<p>Improved questionnaire survey coordination</p> <p>Recipients have complained about the unbearable quantity of questionnaire surveys, which tend to recycle many of the same issues over and over again. Questionnaire surveys could be coordinated by utilizing some of the following tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider the number of surveys needed at the outset, i.e. when developing and updating the evaluation plan. - Do not perform questionnaire surveys on a complete set of projects – samples may be assigned according to project numbers. 	<p>Case studies (see chapter 4.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> The problematic aspect of the high number of questionnaire surveys was pointed out by beneficiaries/project managers in interviews</p>	Managing authority/evaluation unit	Recommended	Until next call announcement

No.	Recommendation	Connection to findings	Guarantor/realizer	Importance	Schedule
10.	<p>Recommendations for repeating applicant and recipient satisfaction surveys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply the same methodology to ensure comparability - Less robust approach - Do not recycle questions focusing on previously completed stages of the project cycle - Revise some of the questions with respect to respondents' comments (e.g. questions relevant to external evaluator and selection committee). Add a specific question relevant to compliance with monitoring report deadlines - In order to calculate the composite indicator, it is necessary to proceed from a comparable respondent sample in terms of project status (it is recommended that the calculation be made only on the basis of currently implemented projects) 	<p>Eliciting client feedback (see chapter 4.3)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> The recommendation is based on experience obtained by means of a conducted survey</p>	Managing authority /evaluation unit	Necessary	In a repeated survey
11.	<p>Conduct an investigation of sustainability outcomes and implemented activity impacts</p> <p>Given the fact that a number of projects associated with case studies did not facilitate the verification of actual project impact and sustainability – projects were frequently in the implementation stage or only just completed – it may be appropriate to conduct a further inspection in order to re-evaluate the long-term benefits and sustainability of implemented activities. This re-examination may build on the previously performed case studies, i.e. reaching projects which have been included in such case studies and therefore offer a range of additional detailed information (beyond the scope of information normally available from the information system).</p>	<p>Case studies (see chapter 3.2)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> The recommendation is based on experience obtained by means of a conducted survey</p>	Managing authority /evaluation unit	To be considered	Project sustainability stage
D. Indicator recommendations					
12.	<p>Indicator changes</p> <p>The 07.30.OX MI indicator – Proportion of long-term unemployed persons in specific groups in the 15 to 24 and 50+ age groups – have been found unsuitable for interpretation. For future use, it is recommended that this indicator be exchanged for the Rate of long-term unemployed persons in specific groups in the 15 to 24 and 50+ age groups.</p>	<p>Progress evaluation (see chapter 3.1)</p> <p><u>Findings:</u> Issues associated with the interpretation of indicator values</p>	Managing authority	Recommended	2014+ period