

**The European Union's IPA 2008 Programme  
for the Republic of Croatia**

**Ex-ante evaluation of programming  
documents and strengthening  
evaluation capacity for EU funds  
post-accession**

**(EUROPEAID/130401/D/SER/HR)**

**Component 2 "Strengthening Evaluation capacity for EU  
Cohesion Policy funds management"**

**Activity 2.4 "Development of individual plans and procedures for  
Cohesion Policy Programmes"**

***EVALUATION PLAN OF THE  
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT  
OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME (OPHRD)***

Croatia

Service contract No. 2008-0303-050201



**This project is funded by  
the European Union**



**The project is implemented by  
LSE Enterprise Ltd; CASE –  
Center for Social and Economic  
Research; EUROPE Ltd;  
Euroconsultants Croatia Ltd.**

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**PROJECT SYNOPSIS**

Project title:	Ex-ante evaluation of programming documents and strengthening evaluation capacity for EU funds post-accession		
Project number:	EuropeAid/130401/D/SER/HR; Service contract No.: 2008-0303-0502-01		
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The present "Evaluation Plan for Human Resources Development Operational Programme" is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements under Activity 2.4 "Development of individual plans and procedures for Cohesion Policy Programmes" of the project.

Date of Report: 04 April 2013

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## PROGRAMME IDENTIFICATION

<b>Programme title</b>	<b>Operational Programme Human Resource Development 2007 - 2013</b>
<b>Country</b>	Republic of Croatia
<b>Overall Objective</b>	To create more and better jobs. More immediately, to attract and retain more people in employment by increasing human capital investment, reinforcing social inclusion and promoting adaptability of enterprises and workers.
<b>Priority axes</b>	<p>Priority Axis 1 – Support access to sustainable employment and adaptability of the labour force</p> <p>Priority Axis 2 – Reinforcing social inclusion and integration of people at a disadvantage</p> <p>Priority Axis 3 – Enhancing human capital in education, research and development</p> <p>Priority Axis 4 – Technical assistance</p> <p>Priority Axis 5 – Strengthening the role of civil society for better governance</p>
<b>Managing Authority</b>	Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Ulica grada Vukovara 78, 10 000 Zagreb
<b>Intermediate Bodies level I</b>	<p>Ministry of Labour and Pension System (for Priority axes 1, 4 and 5.1), Ulica grada Vukovara 78, 10 000 Zagreb</p> <p>Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (for Priority axis 2.1 and 2.3), Savska cesta 66,, 10 000 Zagreb</p> <p>Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (for Priority axes 2.2 and 3), Donje Svetice 38, 10 000 Zagreb</p> <p>Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs (for Priority axis 5.2), Radnička cesta 80/V, 10000 Zagreb</p>
<b>Intermediate Bodies level II</b>	<p>Croatian Employment Service (for Priority axes 1, 2.1 and 2.3; 4 and 5.1), Ulica grada Vukovara 70/3.</p> <p>Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (Priority axes 2.2 and and PA 3), Radnička cesta 37b, 10 000 Zagreb</p> <p>National Foundation for Civil Society Development (Priority axis 5.2), Štrigina 1a, 10 000 Zagreb</p>
<b>Total ESF allocation</b>	60 000 000 EUR
<b>Eligibility period for expenditures</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> January 2013 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2016

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CATI	Computer Aided Telephone Interview
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
DG	Directorate General
CEC	Commission of the European Union
CPR	Common Provision Regulations
EC	European Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EP	Evaluation Plan
EWG	Evaluation Working Group
“Ex ante and evaluation capacity project”	“Ex-ante evaluation of programming documents and strengthening evaluation capacity for EU funds post-accession”, (EuropeAid/130401/D/SER/HR). i.e.: the project within which the present document has been produced.
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
KE	Key Expert
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NKE	Non-Key Expert
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
SCF	Structural and Cohesion Funds

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SF	Structural Funds
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
ToR	Terms of Reference
WD	Working Document

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present document is the Evaluation Plan for “Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007 - 2013” (OPHRD).

*The main purpose of establishing an EP, therefore, is to provide an overall framework for the “on-going” evaluation and to ensure that evaluation is effectively used and integrated as a management tool during the implementation of operational programmes (OPs)<sup>1</sup>.*

The Evaluation Plan reflects deferred preparation for Structural Funds in Croatia following the postponement of the accession to the EU. In the course of the accession negotiation, the Structural Funds funded period has been reduced from the initially expected two-year period (2012-2013) to the last 6 months of 2013. As a result of the short time remaining for Structural Funds within the 2007 – 2013 programming period, a pragmatic decision has been taken to continue supporting mainly the same human resources priorities as supported by IPA. Thus the first ESF envelope in Croatia will be divided between the sectors of employment, social inclusion, education, social dialogue and civil society development supported by IPA in the previous period. In addition to that, ESF will support two new operations, namely (1) Supporting the entrepreneurship development and improving SMEs and crafts competitiveness and (2) Development of human potential in research and innovation.

From the perspective of the Evaluation Plan it is important to bear in mind the differences in procedures and possible overlapping of impacts between IPA and ESF interventions.

ESF OPHRD 2007 – 2013 will be implemented under N+3 rule which means that the eligibility period for expenditures under OPHRD spans from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2016. Accordingly, the scope for evaluation activities is necessarily reduced in scope and timeline.

The main text of this Evaluation Plan contains eight Chapters. In particular, the subsequent Chapters of this Evaluation Plan are structured as follows:

Chapter 2 presents, in separate paragraphs, the legal basis for an evaluation plan and the regulations prescriptions on Evaluation.

Chapter 3 illustrates the organization and management structure of the evaluation plan, detailing the Manager of the Evaluation plan, the role of evaluators, and the role and main characteristics of the Evaluation Steering Group.

Chapter 4 deals with the scope of evaluation and the evaluation questions, while Chapter 5 lists the indicative evaluations to be carried out.

Chapter 6 describes the potential use of evaluation and the arrangements to disseminate evaluation results, while Chapter 7 contains an indicative timetable of the evaluation activities and products.

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<sup>1</sup> Working Document (WD) n. 5 of the European Commission “The New Programming Period 2007-2013 - Indicative guidelines on evaluation methods: evaluation during the programming period”, issued on April 2007 (Working Document) p.12

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd5\\_ongoing\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd5_ongoing_en.pdf)).

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Finally, Chapter 8 presents the resources needed to carry on the EP, distinguished as financial and human resources.



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## 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR EVALUATION AND EVALUATION PLAN

### 2.1 EU Structural and Cohesion Funds regulations for the programming period 2007-2013

Evaluation of cohesion policy in 2007-2013 is basically ruled by Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 establishing that main aim of evaluation is

*"to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from the Funds and the strategy and implementation of operational programmes with respect to the specific structural problems affecting the Member States and regions concerned, while taking account of the objective of sustainable development and of the relevant Community legislation concerning environmental impact and strategic environmental assessment"*(art. 47).

The regulation identifies three types of evaluation according to their timing: before (*ex ante*), during (*on going*), and after (*ex post*) the implementation period.

The concept of "ongoing evaluation", introduced in 2007-2013<sup>2</sup>, emphasizes flexibility, not only in the timetable of the exercise, but also with regards to evaluation scope and design, adapted to internal demands, and has to be seen in a wider context of planning and managing the evaluation process preferably based on a multi-annual evaluation plan. This new approach aimed to overcome the rigidities of the 2003 mid term evaluation exercises and facilitate the evaluation of parts or themes across programmes at a time when those responsible for the programme have a need for information, evidence, analysis or judgments from evaluators.

The rationale and focus of on-going evaluations varies depending on the specific needs of the Member States/Managing Authorities. The demand for evaluation might come both from questions related to general policy (strategic) *"in order to examine the evolution of a programme or group of programmes in relation to Community and national priorities"* and from questions on more specific (operational) issues *"in order to support the monitoring of an operational programme"*.

A priority of this approach is to assess the contribution of cohesion policy to the achievement of the Lisbon goals and to make that contribution more visible. In this context, on-going evaluation may assess, for example, the macro-economic impact of Structural and Cohesion Fund assistance and the continuing relevance and consistency of strategies at national and operational programme levels, as well as propose their adjustments in line with changes in the socio-economic environment or in Community, national and regional priorities.

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<sup>2</sup> In the programming periods 1994-1999 through 2000-2006 evaluation during the implementation phase was identified as *Interim* or *Mid-term evaluation* (MTE)<sup>2</sup>. This had to be carried out periodically in accordance with a pre-established timetable aimed at ensuring that the findings of evaluation would be taken into account for any decision on the renewal, modification or suspension of the programme. The scope and the contents of the MTE were also largely provided by the guidance and methodological documents issued by the European Commission, among which a focus on management and delivery mechanisms aspects, that, in practice, often took a disproportioned role compared to assessment of results. It. An assessment of the 2003 MTE exercise made by the Commission, however, highlighted some critical rigidities that suggested a new approach.

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It may also focus on specific themes which are of strategic importance for an operational programme (e.g., innovation, the information society, SME development) or on horizontal priorities (equal opportunities, environment).

In addition to the strategic dimension, the managing authorities will have to consider more operational aspects of the Structural and Cohesion Fund assistance, i.e. by measuring, assessing and analyzing progress in implementation of operational programmes.

Such analysis should aim, *inter alia*, to review the quality and relevance of the quantified objectives, analyzing data on financial and physical progress and providing recommendations on how to improve the performance of an operational programme, e.g., in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Evaluation could also assess the functioning of administrative structures and the quality of implementation mechanisms, which very often have a significant impact on the overall performance of an operational programme.

European Council Regulation (EC) n. 1083/2006 thus provides for flexible arrangements for the thematic scope, design and timing of on-going evaluation. Within this flexible framework, Managing Authorities are not limited to evaluations at the level of the operational programme. In fact, they are also encouraged to undertake evaluations by themes/priority axes/groups of actions/major projects or by policy fields (e.g., for ESF interventions) across operational programmes, or within a specific operational programme, as well as of their National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRFs), as appropriate<sup>3</sup>.

Such an approach could help to avoid duplication of effort, enabling, for example, a single evaluation of an aspect which occurs in several operational programmes. Moreover, it could also have the advantage of capturing interactions between operational programmes or of offering a comprehensive picture for further analysis of combined effects of other active policy tools outside the cohesion policy. It is important that such evaluations are undertaken in situations where they add value to the management of the Structural and Cohesion Fund assistance and support the coherence and relevance of the strategies adopted.

Depending on the specific needs of decision-makers and the nature of the evaluation, the following key evaluation issues may be focused upon by the Managing Authorities when assessing the Structural and Cohesion Funds assistance:

- *relevance*, which includes analysis of the objectives of an NSRF or operational programme and their adequacy in relation to changes in the social, economic and environmental context during the programming period

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<sup>3</sup> A few examples may help here to clarify the concepts: where promotion of research and innovation in SME is priority, the evaluation should/could consider jointly ERDF lines of intervention financing projects in the enterprises and ESF financed interventions such as specific training for staff, hiring of “temporary managers” or “innovation managers” to ensure effective implementation of the projects. Where SF are a component, although predominant, of the overall resources devoted to a priority, the overall package of measures regardless of the source of financing should be considered, pointing out at the role and specificities of the SF tools (the so called “Community Value Added” etc.

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- *Consistency*, which aims to analyse, for example, the relationships and complementarities between the different priority axes and their contribution to the objectives of an operational programme
- *Effectiveness*, which involves the analysis of outputs, results and impacts and the assessment of their compliance with the expected objectives in order to understand why there are or may be varying degrees of success in this respect. Particular attention should be placed on the variables explaining the effects of interventions and deviations from the objectives, including the analysis of processes and implementation mechanisms
- *Efficiency*, which compares processes and effects to the means and resources mobilised, in particular, the costs of the assistance in relation to its effectiveness.

## 2.2 Institutional framework for evaluation in Croatia

Two main normative documents provide the framework for the organizational system for evaluation in Croatia:

- The Evaluation Strategy for European Structural instruments; and
- Law on the Establishment of the Institutional Framework for the Use of EU Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia.

### 2.2.3 The Evaluation Strategy For European Structural Instruments

The “Evaluation Strategy for European Structural Instruments” has been designed primarily for Croatia’s transition from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA – Components III and IV) to the Structural Instruments in the second half of the year 2013 and for the programming period 2014-2020.<sup>4</sup>

The Evaluation Strategy has been prepared in order to set a coherent framework for SCF evaluation activities and to ensure consistency of evaluations within the SCF administration. From 2014 and thereafter, in addition to Funds providing support under the Cohesion Policy, Croatia will be entitled to the Funds for rural development, namely the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and for the maritime and fisheries sector, namely the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), therefore common evaluation provisions should be established for all these Funds (the 'CSF Funds') under a then updated Evaluation Strategy.

The Evaluation Strategy sets the objectives and the guiding principles of evaluation. It also sets priorities and specific actions to reach the objectives set.

The Evaluation Strategy requires Ministries and/or bodies with the responsibility for implementation of SCF to set up “**evaluation function**” in their organisation. The evaluation function needs to be clearly visible in the administrative set-up of the organisation and the evaluation function needs to be proportional to the volume of the programmes under its responsibility. The evaluation function, therefore, can take the form of a department, section, unit or individual, as appropriate in the public administration system of Croatia and proportional to the volume of programmes under the organisation’s responsibility.

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<sup>4</sup> Adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia on 29 March 2012 (however, please check for the latest available amendments).

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As a Coordinating Body for European Structural Instruments, MRDEUF/Directorate for Strategic Planning, is responsible for the overall management of this Evaluation Strategy in cooperation with bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs. The bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs will be responsible for commissioning and managing evaluation projects for their own OPs and for disseminating their results in the respective OP Monitoring Committees.

A major role is also carried out by the **Inter-institutional Evaluation Working Group (EWG)** that will be the main forum for coordinating and discussing SCF evaluation issues.

The Evaluation Working Group will be chaired and serviced by MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning and will meet regularly to monitor the state of progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategy. The Working Group membership will be made up of persons with a designated role for evaluation from MRDEUF/ Directorate for Strategic Planning and from bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs. Other persons with specific SCF evaluation interests and/or relevant experts in the field may also be invited to participate in meetings of the Working Group.

Members' responsibilities will include reporting on Working Group activities to their respective OP Monitoring Committees and/or other strategic partnership bodies established for SCF. Once agreed in the framework of the Working Group, common evaluation guidance, standards and tools will be applied by the bodies responsible for the management and implementation of OPs, where relevant, in their evaluation-related tasks.

The Evaluation Working Group draws up and agrees its own detailed rules of procedure that include provisions for the regular review and amendment of the Evaluation Strategy.

#### **2.2.4 Law on the Establishment of the Institutional Framework for the Use of EU Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia.**

*The Law on the Establishment of Institutional Framework for the Use of European Union Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia* (Official Gazette No 78/2012) is the main regulation establishing the governance set up for the systems of management and control of SCF funded OP in programming period 2007-2013.

The Law assigns evaluation functions as follows:

- The Coordination Body (the MRDEUF): develops evaluations plans, coordinates, organizes or performs evaluations related to the use and implementation of structural instruments, ensures that general public is familiarized with the results and ensures implementation of activities;
- The Managing Authority: ensures that evaluations of Operational Programmes are carried out; carries out the evaluations defined in the evaluation plans;
- Intermediate Body level 1: carries out the evaluations of Operational Programme defined in the evaluation plans.

The setting up and institutionalization of the inter-ministerial Evaluation Working Group may introduce some fine-tuning in the allocation of duties between the bodies involved, especially concerning the drafting of EP and the management of their results.

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## 2.3 The Evaluation Plan

The present “Evaluation Plan for Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2007 - 2013” has been drafted in response to the recommendations contained in the European Council (EC) Regulation 1083/2006<sup>5</sup> that stipulates:

*“Member States shall provide the resources necessary for carrying out evaluations organize the production and gathering of the necessary data and use the various types of information provided by the monitoring system. Member states may also draw up, where appropriate an evaluation plan presenting the indicative evaluation activities which they intend to carry out in the different phases of the implementation”*

The formats and contents of the Evaluation Plans have been modelled on the guidance provided in the Working Document (WD) no. 5 of the European Commission “The New Programming Period 2007-2013 - Indicative guidelines on evaluation methods: evaluation during the programming period”, issued on April 2007 (Working Document)<sup>6</sup>, where also an outline format is contained.

As evaluation carried out during the programming period should serve – as far as possible -the needs of decision-makers in implementing Structural and Cohesion Fund assistance. In this respect, planning is crucial to ensure that this overall objective is met during programme implementation.

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<sup>5</sup> 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 1260/1999, art. 48.1

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/general/ce\\_1083\(2006\)\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2007/general/ce_1083(2006)_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd5\\_ongoing\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/working/wd5_ongoing_en.pdf)

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### 3. The organizational/management structure

#### 3.1 The Manager of Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan is a complex document, entailing several tasks and activities and envisaging a number of outputs each requiring specific processes leading to the final product. Therefore, it needs to be managed and coordinated. In accordance with the recommendations, the Managing Authority of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme OPHRD has appointed two persons as *Managers of the Evaluation Plan*, identified as evaluation experts appointed to perform the evaluation function within the Ministry of Labour and Pension System in line with the Evaluation Strategy and according to an Appointment Letter of the Assistant Minister. .

The Manager of the Evaluation Plan will have the following functions:

- coordination for drafting the Plan
- organization and run of partnership activities needed to identify themes evaluation questions
- organization of the relationship and management of evaluators (for making available data and return the results of evaluations) and with the Steering Groups
- promotion of implementation
- periodically update and / or integration of the Plan

#### 3.2 The evaluators

Managing Authority is going to use external evaluation expertise through two separate contracts covering the whole period of implementation following the indicative list of evaluations to be carried out (see Chapter 5). This is the result of the limited timeframe of the operational programme implementation which also takes into consideration the procurement process that has to be managed to the final contract signature successfully and on time in a short period of time. However, these two contracts should not be a substitute for the tasks and responsibilities of the Managing Authority in implementing the operational programme, especially in the field of monitoring and risk management.

The possible scenario of engaging own internal evaluation capacity (e.g. evaluation unit) as a major conductor of evaluations was considered as a risk due to the limited number of evaluation unit members and currently the limited experience of the staff. However, internal evaluation capacity should be actively involved in evaluations (e.g. attend the project meetings and comment on drafts of outputs) and be fully responsible for the provision of supporting documents, contacts and data. As a result, such an involvement should lead to higher understanding of evaluation principles under the Structural Funds, gaining the necessary experience and considered as “learning by doing”.

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### 3.3 The Steering Group

To enhance independence and quality of evaluations, the MA of OPHRD has chosen to establish an evaluation steering group following recommendations in line with the European Commission guidance<sup>7</sup>.

*"A steering group steers and guides an evaluation. It supports and provides feedback to evaluators engages in dialogue in the course of the evaluation and is thereby better able to take seriously and use results"*.

For programming period 2007-2013 the MA has chosen a **single steering group** that will preside over all evaluation activities concerning the OP<sup>8</sup>.

Members of the Steering Group will be **appointed by the MA**, and they will define and approve the **internal regulation** of the Group in the first meeting, or, in any case, before starting their activities.

In order to ensure timely and efficient functioning of the Steering Group, the MA has opted for a **two layer membership system**:

#### PERMANENT MEMBERS

They will be involved in the whole evaluation process. They will have the role of "guiding the evaluation process". A non exhaustive list of their responsibilities includes:

- initiating a specific evaluation in accordance with the Evaluation Plan;
- promoting (and contributing to) the elicitation and fine tuning of the evaluation questions;
- developing the terms of reference for external as well as internal evaluators;
- identifying and managing any risks associated with the evaluation process;
- providing relevant information or advice which may be used by the evaluators;
- ensuring interactions with the evaluators on the methodology adopted,
- defining quality standards for evaluation, and ensuring overall quality of the evaluation process and products;
- ensuring, where necessary, that the Evaluation Plan is updated;
- receiving, discussing and proposing for acceptance the evaluation reports presented by the evaluators.
- ensuring the adequate dissemination and use of evaluation results.

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<sup>7</sup> According to EVALSED "A steering group steers and guides an evaluation. It supports and provides feedback to evaluators engages in dialogue in the course of the evaluation and is thereby better able to take seriously and use results. Steering committees may include the evaluation commissioner, programme managers and decision makers plus some or all of the other main stakeholders in an evaluated intervention. An evaluation steering committee may notionally involve any person who is potentially a user of its recommendations, any person who has an interest in the information produced, and any person who is likely to win or lose in the course of the programme. The main categories of stakeholders are funding authorities, managers, operators and concerned groups. Stakeholders invited to join an evaluation steering committee improve the relevance of the questions asked and their presence makes the evaluation more credible"

<sup>8</sup> As opposed to appoint a SG for each of the evaluations envisaged in the present plan.

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The permanent members of the Steering Group, therefore, while having an all round responsibility, will have mostly an organization and technical/methodological role.

Permanent Members of the Steering Group will be:

- The Managing Authority, or its representative – Ministry of Labour and Pension System;
- The representatives of all bodies/structures involved in the implementation of the OPHRD, in particular, those in charge of line of interventions direct object of analysis (sectorial ministries) – Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, Government Office for cooperation with NGOs, Croatian Employment Service (CES SFC), Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE DEFCO), National Foundation for Civil Society Development
- The Manager of the Evaluation Plan;
- Other Evaluation Experts of the Ministry or body in charge of the OP, if and when appointed;
- The Head of the Evaluation Coordination Unit at MRDEUF;
- Appointed person for NSRF Evaluation.

#### **NON PERMANENT MEMBERS**

They will be involved in specific phases of the evaluation process. They will represent the views and interests of the stakeholders connected to the specific area of analysis of the evaluation. A non-exhaustive list of their responsibilities includes:

- contributing to the formulation and the fine tuning of the evaluation questions;
- providing relevant information, data, interpretation, or advice which may be used by the evaluators;
- discussing, and interpreting the evaluation reports presented by the evaluators.
- ensuring the adequate dissemination and use of evaluation results;
- ensuring, where applicable, the use of evaluation results in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme implementation.

Non-Permanent Members of the Steering Group will be the main stakeholders of the OP at large. They can be selectively invited to attend the meetings of the Steering Group according to the meeting agenda. A non limiting list of Non-Permanent Members includes:

- Representatives of the Evaluation Working Group
- Representatives of the Managing Authorities of the OPs ,
- Representative of the main stakeholders of the OP, specifically, civil society organizations and socio-economic partners;
- Representative of the Government Office for Gender Equality;
- Representative of the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities and,
- Representative of the Ministry of Environmental and Natural Protection;



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- Ministry of Agriculture.

The Non Permanent Members of the Steering Group will play largely a policy specialist/consultative role; however, they will also act as catalysts of the diffusion of information within their bodies and of the dissemination of the evaluation results.

It is expected that the Steering Group will play an important function in guaranteeing the independence of the evaluator, making it none directly dependent from an administration and thus making evaluation more credible. Also, considering that evaluation is a new practice in Croatia, the Steering Group can play a role of “cultural mediation” between the evaluator from one side and the stakeholders and administration from the other. This may also favor the diffusion of an evaluation culture in the public administration and in the country as a whole.

The MA, at its own discretion, and especially in the first years of evaluation activity, may appoint external experts (expert evaluators) to support the work of the Steering Group, or invite external experts at selected meetings.

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## 4 Scope of evaluation and evaluation questions

Managing structures of the OPHRD have full freedom to define the scope of evaluation and to formulate evaluation questions. Considering that quality of evaluation questions is crucial for the usefulness of the evaluation as such, the process of their formulation is of utmost importance.

- When identifying the evaluations to be conducted, the Manager of EP should take into account the needs of programmers, beneficiaries (inside and outside the public administration), institutional partners, civil society organizations and the social and economic partners, as well as the overall debate on policy. Manager of EP is responsible for collecting inputs related to evaluation needs on on-going basis. Proposals for instruments, sectors, issues to be reviewed may result from: suggestions from OPHRD Bodies arising during the programming and/or implementation phase of the OP
- suggestions from main stakeholders of OP at large, especially socio-economic partners and civil society organizations
- suggestions of the evaluation experts or from the EWG as a whole, based on the identification of information needs arising from previous work on evaluation, or observed during self-assessment exercises or during the implementation or programming;
- recommendations ensuing from previous evaluation activities;
- requests from institutional partners (i.e. local and regional authorities, grant beneficiaries, European Commission);

The process of formulating evaluation questions for particular evaluation starts either (1) according to the timeframe set by the Evaluation Plan in case of a planned evaluation or (2) ad hoc in case of an urgent evaluation need which was not foreseen in the Evaluation Plan. The steps towards defining evaluation questions shall be the following:

- Manager of EP reviews evaluation questions listed in the Evaluation Plan and selects those that are relevant for the particular evaluation.
- Manager of EP invites Members of Steering Group to propose evaluation questions to be answered. Based on the evaluation questions listed in the Evaluation Plan and feedback from Steering Group, Manager of EP compiles a draft of possible evaluation questions.
- Steering Group reviews the draft provided by the Manager of EP and, if needed, recommends both methodological and sectoral improvements.
- Based on the recommendations provided by the Steering Group, Manager of EP drafts the final set of evaluation questions and submits them to the Managing Authority for the final approval.

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- Having the final responsibility for the OPHRD, the Managing Authority either approves the final set of evaluation questions or returns it back to the Manager of EP for further amendments.
- The final set of evaluation questions approved by the Managing Authority will be incorporated into the ToR for the particular evaluation.

The process of formulating evaluation questions is essential to ensure credibility to the evaluation processes and to meet the information needs of those involved. When formulating evaluation questions, Manager of EP and Steering Group will assure the compliance with the quality standards for evaluation questions:

**Quality standards for evaluation questions**

- 1) Evaluation question should correspond to a real need for information, understanding or identification of a new solution. *Identify who and how will use the answer provided by the evaluator.*
- 2) Evaluation question should provide a qualitative judgment. *Use questions like: To what extent...? How successful...? How effective....? etc.*
- 3) Evaluation questions should be clear and understandable. *Discuss the understanding of questions with both sectoral and evaluation experts. Refine the wording based on their recommendations.*
- 4) Formulation of questions must be as simple as possible. *Formulate several sub-questions rather than one complicated question.*
- 5) Evaluation questions must be answerable. *Identify possible sources of data and evaluation methodology.*
- 6) Evaluation questions should be reasonable in terms of efforts needed to provide answers. *Consider costs and time needed to collect data.*

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Here is the list of evaluation questions proposed for OPHRD 2007 – 2013:

Evaluation questions for Evaluation of previous IPA OPHRD Assistance

- To what extent are the objectives in every specific sector (employment, social inclusion and education) justified in relation to the needs?
- What were the most significant changes to which operations from each sector within the OPHRD contributed, to what extent are the results and outputs in each sector durable over time and will the impacts continue if there is no more EU/national funding?
- In the terms of efficiency of implementation, what improvements have been made in order to increase the rate of absorption under the OPHRD programme?
- What is the level of progress made towards the achievement of the specific objectives set in each specific sector of the OPHRD and have the expected effects been achieved?
- What are the key lessons learned, based on challenges faced by the OPHRD implementation that can be carried forward into the future implementation of the ESF?

Evaluation questions for Evaluation of active labour market measures

- To what extent have the intended results of the measures been achieved?
- What are the identified effects and recommendations for further improvement of the ALMP measures?
- What are the identified weaknesses of current ALMP and ALMM, if any?
- What are the lessons learned for future implementation of ALMP and ALMM?

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## 5 Indicative list of evaluations to be carried out

Within the IPA OPHRD 2007-2013 two evaluations have been envisaged:

1. **Evaluation of Previous IPA OPHRD Assistance** (service contract financed within Priority 4). The project documentation is in preparation and according to the procurement plan the implementation is to start in October 2013. The integral part of the evaluation will be all Grant schemes and one Direct Award (some will be in implementation at the time of evaluation), divided into three components addressing the three sectors covered by the OP: employment, education and social inclusion. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide relevant findings, conclusions and recommendations, in relation to the achievement of specific objective for each measure of the IPA OPHRD, particularly as regards its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.
2. **External evaluation of the active labour market measures** (framework contract financed within Priority 1). The project documentation is in preparation and according to the procurement plan the implementation is to start in 2014. This operation is designed to determine effectiveness and efficiency of active labour market measures that will be carried out by the Croatian Employment Service.

Considering the type of documents (previous evaluation reports, implementation reports, programming documents and other), data available, surveys, statistical analysis, interviews to be used for the purpose of evaluation, counter-factual and thematic evaluation methods will be applied where appropriate in both envisaged evaluations,

Having in mind that the two above mentioned evaluations have already been envisaged within IPA OPHRD and since the ESF OPHRD 2007-2013 is in a way its continuance, it would be more realistic and pragmatic (in terms of timing and financing) to carry on with these already envisaged evaluations.

These two evaluations would thus cover the scope of evaluations initially proposed in this Evaluation Plan. For this reason the following indicative list is proposed:

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Type of evaluation	Scope of evaluation	Timing	Evaluators	Mechanisms to guarantee quality aspects of the evaluation	Indicative budget and human resources	Expected evaluation products and their timing	Dissemination modalities of the results
Operational	Evaluation of Previous IPA OPHRD Assistance	3/2014-5/2015  (as per Procurement Plan)	External	Procurement Plan/Monthly Progress Reports	Operation financed within Priority 4 (560.000 EUR, service contract)	Final evaluation report  5/2015	EC Evaluation Working Group Steering group Management Structures  OP website General Public
Operational	External evaluation of the active labour market measures	2014	External	Procurement Plan/Monthly Progress Reports	Operation financed within Priority 1 (199.000 EUR. framework contract)	Final evaluation report  2015	EC Evaluation Working Group Steering group Management Structures  OP website General Public

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## 6 Potential use of evaluation

The MA is aware that Evaluation is of no consequence unless the findings are communicated, therefore, an evaluation process should not be considered complete until a programme of dissemination has taken place. In principle, all evaluation activities and reports should be given the maximum of external visibility.

Regular reports on the evaluation activities will be delivered during OP Monitoring Committee sessions as well as on occasion of all meetings of the OP where results of the evaluation may be useful for taking relevant decisions.

Upon initiating each evaluation activity, the Manager of the EP will propose to the Steering Group the most appropriate means of disseminating information on, and the results of, each individual evaluation to be carried on. He/she will also indicate specific approaches and means to reach specific stakeholder target groups.

The means and tools of communication will be coordinated with the strategy and tools developed within the OP Communication Plan and at SCF Coordination level. Possible means, non- exhaustively, may include: publications online and/or in printing; information and feature articles on newsletter; press releases; presentations in public events (conference/seminar/workshop).

They will include both technical and non-technical materials; the latter aimed at the non specialist stakeholders and at the public at large.

The table below provides a synoptic view of the provisional main communication targets of each evaluation proposed in the list in paragraphs 3 and 4, and the related evaluation questions in paragraph 3.

Scope of evaluation	Main Target Groups for Dissemination	Dissemination modalities of the results
Evaluation of Previous IPA OPHRD Assistance	Managing Authority (MA) IBs level I and II Evaluation Working Group (EWG) Non permanent members of the Steering Group (SG) Monitoring Committee (MC) General Public	Publication of full report and executive summary on OP website Information by mailing list (with link to webpage) to interested parties Report to MC Press release Public event (to be incorporated

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		in a larger event) OP web site
External evaluation of the active labour market measures	MA IBs level I and II Evaluation Working Group (EWG) Non-permanent members of the Steering Group (SG) MC General Public	Publication of full report and executive summary on OP website Information by mailing list (with link to webpage) to interested internal structures Newsletter (main findings + link to report) Report to MC Press release Public event (to be incorporated in a larger event) OP web site



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## 7 Indicative timetable

Indicative timetable below foresees a single framework contract for 3 consequent operational evaluations. This approach will simplify the tendering and provide additional benefits resulting from the long term presence of the team of experts who will gain a deep knowledge of the programme.

Type of evaluation	Scope of evaluation	Formulation of evaluation questions	Tendering and contracting	Implementation	Expected evaluation products and their timing
Operational	Evaluation of Previous IPA OPHRD Assistance (Operation financed within Priority 4)	Prepared	November 2013 (as per PP)	03/2014-5/2015 (as per Procurement Plan)	5/ 2015
Operational	External evaluation of the active labour market measures  (Operation financed within Priority 1)	In preparation	2014	2014	2015

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## 8 Resources

EP identifies human, financial and organizational resources needed for the evaluation activities. Each topic is treated in turn in the following sub-paragraphs.

### 8.1 Financial resources

The financial resources for both proposed evaluations have been secured in the programming phase.

At this early stage of development of evaluation capacity in Croatia it is still needed to involve international consultants. On one hand assessing Croatian programmes by international experts promises higher quality of the outcomes, on the other hand international experts will contribute to capacity building of evaluators in Croatia.

Planning of financial resources needed for an evaluation contract should be based on estimation of man days needed to conduct the work. Assuming that the first round of evaluations will require development of new evaluation methods reflecting country-specific conditions and intensive field research, the estimation foresees engagement of 2 senior experts for Evaluation of Previous IPA OPHRD Assistance and two experts (senior and junior) for External evaluation of active labour market measures.

. Overall allocation of time will be a minimum of 260 man days for the Evaluation of Previous IPA OPHRD Assistance and 159 man days for External evaluation of active labour market measures.

### 8.2 Human Resources

#### **Management of the Plan**

This is the task assigned to the Plan Manager, as specified in sub-chapter 3.1.

#### **Management of the Evaluation Contract**

Tasks related to the management and administration of the Contract with the Evaluators include:

- Drafting specific conditions and requirements of the Terms of Reference of the Evaluations,
- Managing the procurement, especially the selection process and the assessment of Technical Offers,
- Monitoring the performance of the Contractor focusing on:
  - Timing;
  - Mobilization of the resources;
  - Appropriateness of the deliverables;

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- Proper administration of activities.
- Coordination and timing of the separate evaluation tasks within the Contract.

**Management of the separate evaluations**

Overall management of the separate evaluation assignments in general is managed by the Manager of the Plan. Specific sectoral evaluation assignments, alternatively, may be managed by the Sector or Theme Responsible Officers, as described below.

Evaluation Plan Manager will coordinate evaluation assignments with all relevant OP stakeholders. Officers within the ministries in charge for the specific priority within the OP (IB1) will be appointed for providing assistance (referring to their sectoral responsibility) to evaluators when conducting specific evaluation assignments, specifically;

- Employment – Ministry of Labour and Pension System,
- Social Inclusion, - Ministry of Social Policy and Youth,
- Education,- Ministry of Science, Education and Sport,
- Civil Society. – Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs.

Tasks related with evaluation will be defined and prescribed in Job description of each nominate employee.

**Management of the dissemination of the outcomes of the evaluation**

Plan Manager is responsible for the provision of adequate information to the Steering Group and the Sector and Thematic stakeholders.

Reports and other information are compiled by Sector Responsible and Theme Responsible officers, in accordance with the scope of the specific evaluation tasks.

Specific sectoral or thematic information on the evaluations for sectoral stakeholders and groups interested in thematic issues (as above) is compiled by Sector Responsible and Theme Responsible officers under the control of the Plan Manager.

To manage Steering Group meetings, Plan Manager is assisted by Department for Monitoring and Evaluation within MLPS, specifically:

- Provision of adequate and timely information for the team members ,
- Organisation of the Steering Group meetings, including the timing, invitations, venue and equipment necessary,
- Collection and documentation of feedbacks from team members, including the documentation of the Committee Meetings,

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For informing the general public about evaluations, the Plan Manager is assisted by a Publicity Officer and Department for Monitoring and Evaluation within MLPS, whose tasks cover:

- Advising in ways of communication and the main messages that relate to the outcomes of the evaluation,
- Generating press releases in connection to the most relevant outcomes of the evaluations.

Indicative inputs of the involved officers to the above-outlined tasks (in percentage of total working time)

- Plan Manager: 50%,
- Sectoral/Theme Responsible: 10% per sector or per horizontal theme,
- Publicity Officer: 5%,
- MLPS Department for Monitoring and Evaluation staff: 10%.

### **Building Evaluation capacity**

Promoting a better knowledge and understanding of evaluation process through appropriate capacity building activities is essential to secure that the evaluations are carefully planned, prepared, managed and supervised.

Evaluation capacity needs to be built at different levels (example individual skills and knowledge, organisational management, networking and inter-institutional coordination, society level).

In this context, Evaluation Working Group will contribute to the evaluation culture by:

- Sharing experience,
- Discussing evaluations, evaluation results and implementation of evaluation,
- Discussing evaluation recommendations etc.

Evaluation Steering group is also a platform for their members to:

- Connect and share experience,
- Enhance their familiarity with evaluation purpose and its technical and methodological aspects,
- Strengthen understanding of their role as well as the contribution they are expected to provide to the whole evaluation process.

MA will have a role of coordination of the work of the Steering group as well as disseminating relevant information related to trainings etc.

Members will be encouraged to participate in trainings related to evaluation.

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