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The European Union's Programme for Croatia European Social Fund

Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance

EuropeAid/133183/D/SER/HR

FINAL REPORT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALMM	Active Labour Market Measures
AVETAE DEFCO	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education Organisational Unit for Management of Structural Instruments
BROP	Body Responsible for Operational Programme
BRPM	Body Responsible for Priority/Measure
CES DFC	Croatian Employment Service, Department for Financing and Contracting of EU Projects
EC	European Commission
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FRIF	Final Recipient Identification Form
HRD OP	Human Resources Development Operational Programme
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JNKE	Junior Non-key expert
KE	Key Expert
MIS	Management Information System
MSES	Ministry of Science, Education and Sport
MSPY	Ministry of Social Policy and Youth
MLPS	Ministry of Labour and Pension System
NKE	Non-key expert
OG	Official Gazette
OS	Operating Structure
PA	Priority Axis
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SNKE	Senior Non-key expert
TL	Team Leader
ToR	Terms of Reference

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Project title:	Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance		
Project number:	EuropeAid/133183/D/SER/HR; Service contract No.: HR.4.1.02-0005		
Country:	Republic of Croatia		
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project "Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance" (EuropeAid/133183/ D/SER/HR, Contract No: HR.4.1.02-0005) aimed at evaluating actions implemented in the period 2007-2013 in the framework of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP).

The programme received co-financing by the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), and following the EU-accession of Croatia, co-financing was ensured through the European Social Fund (ESF). It is implemented through different types of contracts, that all have their own specifics (service contracts, supply contracts, grant schemes, direct award contracts and framework contracts).

The objective of the evaluation project was to provide relevant findings, conclusions and recommendations, in relation to the achievement of the specific objective for each measure of the Programme, particularly as regards its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The ultimate goal was to provide valuable inputs into the programming of future European Social Fund (ESF) assistance.

Overview of the Programme

The total allocation for the IPA HRD OP is €111.084.756 EUR, out of which the amount of €94.422.000 is provided by IPA and €16.662.756 come from the Croatian public contribution. Following accession to the EU, the financial allocations of the HRD OP increased, with funds provided by the ESF. The overall financial allocations of the HRD OP for the period 2007-2013 were modified to a total of €179,309,591.00 (€152,413,106.60 from the EU and €26,896,486.40 being the national contribution).

The structure and financial allocations of the HRD OP are presented in the following table:

Table 1: Structure of the HRD OP 2007-2013

Priority axes and measures	Total (€)	EU (IPA & ESF) (€)	National (€)
Priority Axis 1: Support access to sustainable employment and adaptability of the labour force	52,866,870.00	44,936,822.60	7,930,047.40
Measure 1.1 <i>Implementation of active labour market measures through national and local initiatives</i>			
Measure 1.2 <i>Supporting the effectiveness and quality of Croatia's employment services</i>			
Measure 1.3 ¹ <i>Supporting the entrepreneurship development and improving SMEs and crafts competitiveness</i>			
Priority Axis 2: Reinforcing social inclusion and integration of people at a disadvantage	47,037,039.00	39,981,474.00	7,055,565.00
Measure 2.1 <i>Supporting access to employment by disadvantaged groups</i>			
Measure 2.2 <i>Supporting access to education by groups with special needs</i>			
Measure 2.3 <i>Development of social services to improve employment opportunities</i>			
Priority Axis 3: Enhancing human capital in education, research and development	56,210,843.00	47,779,210.00	8,431,633.00
Measure 3.1 <i>Enhancing the education system</i>			
Measure 3.2 ² <i>Development of human potential in research and innovation</i>			
Priority Axis 4: Technical assistance	13,798,134.00	11,728,400.00	2,069,734.00
Measure 4.1 <i>Project development and support for preparation of the next programming period</i>			
Measure 4.2 <i>Management of the OP and administrative capacity building</i>			
Priority Axis 5: Strengthening the role of civil society for better governance	9,396,707.00	7,987,200.00	1,409,507.00
Measure 5.1 <i>Promotion of Social dialogue</i>			
Measure 5.2 <i>Strengthening the role of Civil Society Organisations for socio-economic growth and democratic development</i>			
Total 2007-2013 (Euro)	179,309,593.00	152,413,106.60	26,896,486.40

Source: HRD OP 2007-2013, September 2013.

The IPA HRD OP is managed according to an institutional set-up referring to the system of management and control established in accordance with the Act on Establishment of Institutional Framework for the Use of

¹ Measure included only in the ESF HRD OP, not taken into consideration by the analysis performed under the present project.

² This measure was introduced in the ESF HRD OP as a replacement of the "Measure 3.3 Supporting the quality and effectiveness of institutions responsible for policy design and provision of education and training" of the IPA HRD OP which falls under the scope of this evaluation.

European Union Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia (OG 78/12, 143713, 157/13) and Decree on the Bodies of the Management and Control System for the Use of European Union Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia (97/12) following Croatia's accession to the European Union on 1 July 2013, while prior to the accession, the system of management and control was in force for the implementation of IPA Human Resources Operational Programme. The transition from Instrument for Pre-Assistance to Structural instruments, i.e. ESF was followed by adoption of ESF Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013 (October 2013).

The ESF institutional set-up, in terms of institutions involved and their sector responsibilities, remained the same as during the implementation of IPA HRDOP. The body responsible for the management of the Programme is the Ministry of Labour and Pension System (MLPS) and the management is ensured by a number of relevant institutions, according to the following structure³:

Body responsible for OP* Managing Authority**	Ministry of Labour and Pension System (MLPS)				
Body responsible for Priority / Measure* Intermediate Body (Level 1)**	PA1 Employment	PA2 Social Inclusion	PA3 Education	PA4 Technical Assistance	PA5 Civil Society
	Ministry of Labour and Pension System	Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (Measure 2.1, Measure 2.3) Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (Measure 2.2)	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	Ministry of Labour and Pension System	Ministry of Labour and Pension System (Measure 5.1) Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs (Measure 5.2)
Implementing Body (Contracting Authority)* Intermediate Body (Level 2)**	Croatian Employment Service (CES DFC)	Croatian Employment Service (CES DFC) (Measure 2.1, Measure 2.3) Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE DEFCO) (Measure 2.2)	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE DEFCO)	Croatian Employment Service (CES DFC)	Croatian Employment Service (CES DFC) (Measure 5.1) National Foundation for Civil Society Development (Measure 5.2)

* According to institutional setup under IPA

** According to institutional setup under ESF

Source: HRD OP 2007-2013, September 2013

Content of the evaluation

The Main Project Partner of the project “Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance” was the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Directorate for Coordination of European Union (EU) Programmes and Projects in the field of Labour and Social Security, responsible body for the implementation of the overall OP. All other bodies responsible for the implementation of Priority axes and Measures of the OP participated in the evaluation

³ Differences in terminology used by IPA and ESF are explained in page 20 of the present report.

as Project Partners. These institutions formed the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which was chaired by a senior representative of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System.

The main project results were listed by the Terms of Reference (ToR) as follows:

- Result 1: Impact survey on interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education with assessment of overall contribution to human resources development conducted.
- Result 2: Assistance provided under IPA HRD in the field of employment, social inclusion and education assessed.
- Result 3: Lessons learned in policy-making, implementation, absorption and capacity needs delivered.
- Result 4: Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions in management principles/procedures in ESF and policy changes delivered.

The final project outputs were clustered in five (5) reports, which will consolidate the various project outputs listed in the ToR. All reports are annexed to the final implementation report. The project reports' titles are:

Report 1:	Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education
Report 2:	Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector
Report 3:	Recommendations for future ESF interventions
Report 4:	Compendium of best practices
Report 5:	Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations

The overall project duration was of 12 months starting from 30 June 2014.

According to the project ToR and following the discussions held between the Project Partners and the Consultant's team in the course of the inception phase (July 2014), the evaluation carried out by the project concentrated on the assessment of grant schemes which were finalized or at a final stage of implementation in the course of the project implementation period. These grant schemes were implemented under the IPA HRD OP and therefore, all references to the titles of the programme's Priority Axes and Measures follow the wording in the titles included in the pre-accession document (IPA HRD OP).

Table 2: Implementation status of the grant schemes examined by the project

No	Grant Scheme title	Type of project	Contracting	Implementation Status ⁴	Comments
Measure 1.1 Implementation of active labour market measures through national and local initiatives					
1	Local Partnerships for Employment - Phase 3 EuropeAid/129225/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	26 grant contracts signed	26 contracts finished	Final payment executed for 25 grant contracts.
2	Improving access to sustainable employment of long-term unemployed highly educated persons EuropeAid/131871/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	7 grant contracts signed	7 contracts finished	Final payment executed for 7 grant contracts.
3	Youth in the labour market EuropeAid/129227/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	31 grant contracts signed	30 contracts finished	1 contract was terminated. Final payment executed for

⁴ Situation on December 2014.

					29 grant contracts.
Measure 2.1 Supporting access to employment by disadvantaged groups					
4	Fostering effective inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market EuropeAid/129157/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	19 grant contracts signed	19 contracts finished	Final payment executed for 17 grant contracts.
5	Establishing Support in Social Integration and Employment of disadvantaged and marginalised groups EuropeAid/129121/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	19 grant contracts signed	19 contracts finished	Final payment executed for 18 grant contracts.
6	Women in the labour market EuropeAid/129003/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	18 grant contracts signed	18 contracts finished	Final payment executed for 18 grant contracts.
7	Establishing Support in Social Inclusion and Employment of disadvantaged and marginalized groups – phase 2 EuropeAid/131454/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	17 grant contracts signed	12 contracts finished	The implementation of the grant scheme is on-going ⁵ . Final payment executed for 1 grant contract.
Measure 2.2 Supporting access to education by disadvantaged groups					
8	Access to education by students with disabilities Europeaid/128940/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	7 grant contracts signed	7 contracts finished	Final payment executed for 6 grant contracts.
Measure 2.3 Development of social services to improve employment opportunities					
9	Broadening the Network of Social Services in the Community ⁶ EuropeAid/131524/M/ACT/HR EuropeAid/133922/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	28 ⁷ grant contracts signed	3 contracts finished	The implementation of the two grant schemes is on-going ² .
Measure 3.1 Enhancing the education system					
10	Implementation of new curricula Europeaid/128900/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	18 contracts signed	17 contracts finished 1 contract was cancelled	Final payment executed for all 17 grant contracts
11	Modernisation of school curricula in VET schools in line with the changing needs of the labour market / economy	Grant scheme	30 grant contracts signed	30 contracts finished	Final payment executed for all 29 grant

⁵ The analysis of the present report is based on the information included in the application forms.

⁶ The grant scheme “Broadening the Network of Social Services in the Community” under Measure 2.3 is considered under the present analysis as one grant scheme, but it was published in two phases with the procurement numbers EuropeAid/131524/M/ACT/HR and EuropeAid/133922/M/ACT/HR.

⁷ Including 2 contracts that were terminated.

	EuropeAid/131231/M/ACT/HR				contracts. Payment is pending for 1 grant contract (due to identified irregularity).
Measure 3.2 Development of human potential in research and innovation					
12	Regional Network of local learning institutions EuropeAid/129021/M/ACT/HR	Grant scheme	20 grant contracts signed	19 contracts finished 1 contract was cancelled	Final payment executed for 19 grant contracts.

Source: Administrative data, Own calculations.

Table 3: Summary of projects examined under the evaluation project

Number of grant schemes	12
Number of contracts signed	237
Number of grant contracts and descriptions of the action available to the evaluation team	237
Number of final grant contracts' reports approved and available to the evaluation team	192
Number of projects finished with final reports submitted	201
Number of grant contracts examined under the evaluation project	237

Source: Administrative data, Own calculations.

In addition, the evaluation examined the recommendations provided by the **service contracts** linked to the selected grant schemes, which were implemented in the framework of the above measures, in order to assess the degree to which the recommendations included in the service contract reports were taken over in the programming and implementation of the grant schemes. The list of the service contracts falling under the scope of this evaluation are:

Title	Type of project	Contracting	Value of contract (EUR)	Implementation status
Measure 1.1 Implementation of active labour market measures through national and local initiatives				
Local Partnerships for Employment - Phase 3 EuropeAid/127435/D/SER/HR	Service	14 October 2009 Gesellschaft für Versicherungswirtschaft und -gestaltung e. V (GVG)	1.870.780	Contract finished
Youth in the labour market EuropeAid/127761/D/SER/HR	Service	27 October 2009 GOPA Consultants	1.093.955	Contract finished
Measure 2.1 Supporting access to employment by disadvantaged groups				
Fostering effective inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market EuropeAid/127436/D/SER/HR	Service	3 December 2009 Hulla & Co Human Dynamics KG	923.475,99	Contract finished
Establishing Support in Social Integration and Employment of disadvantaged and marginalised groups EuropeAid/127999/D/SER/HR	Service	12 February 2010 European Profiles S.A.	1.399.050	Contract finished
Women in the labour market EuropeAid/128290/D/SER/HR	Service	28 July 2010, WYG International & YTKO limited	871.500	Contract finished

Main findings and recommendations of the evaluation

With about €179 million made available by the EU and Croatia through the period 2007-2013, the IPA HRD OP supported a large number of projects and technical assistance activities throughout Croatia. The framework objective of the IPA HRD OP was, *“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.”*

Specific objectives were defined under each Priority Axis (PA), which were linked to the OP framework objective contributing to its fulfilment. Financial allocations among PAs were almost equally distributed among those which provide support for the main sectors of the HRD OP, namely the sectors of employment, social inclusion and education.

The amounts allocated to the first three PAs of the HRD OP 2007-2013 which fall under the scope of this evaluation, correspond to 87% of the overall HRD OP financial allocations⁸. They support measures which include actions implemented through a variety of service contracts and action grants. The distribution of the operations among various types of contracts is, as of February 2015, as follows:

Table 4: Types and total number of contracts of the HRD OP 2007-2013

Priority Axes % Measures	Grant Schemes	Service Contracts	Framework Contracts	Direct awards	Supply Contracts	TOTAL CONTRACTS
Priority Axis 1: Support access to sustainable employment and adaptability of the labour force			109			
Measure 1.1 Implementation of active labour market measures through national and local initiatives	102	2		3		107
Measure 1.2 Supporting the effectiveness and quality of Croatia's public employment services		2				2
Priority Axis 2: Reinforcing social inclusion of people at a disadvantage			197			
Measure 2.1 Supporting access to employment by disadvantaged groups	91	3				94
Measure 2.2 Supporting access to education by disadvantaged groups	75	1				76
Measure 2.3 Development of social services to improve employment opportunities	26	1				27
Priority Axis 3: Enhancing human capital in education, research and development			111			
Measure 3.1 Enhancing the education system	63	4	1			68
Measure 3.2 Development of human potential in research and innovation	40	1				41
Measure 3.3 Supporting the quality and effectiveness of institutions responsible for policy design and provision of education and training		2				2
TOTAL	397	16	1	3	0	417

Source: MLPS published data (www.strukturnifondovi.hr)

⁸ Calculations made on the total public expenditure including National public contributions and Community contributions.

As mentioned earlier, the present evaluation refers to 12 selected grant schemes with 237 contracts in total. Their objectives and corresponding financial allocations used for the analysis of the financial resources spent for the different types of actions are detailed in the following table. The examined grant schemes correspond to 19% of the funds allocated by the HRD OP to the relevant Measures and to 21% of the amounts of the signed contracts⁹ until February 2015.

Table 5: Objectives and financial allocations¹⁰ of the examined grant schemes

Priority Axes Measures Grant schemes	Grant schemes’ global objectives	Financial Allocations		
		Total amount available ¹¹	Share of the operation in the total financial allocations of the Measure	Number of grant schemes’ projects
Priority Axis 1: Support access to sustainable employment and adaptability of the labour force		52.866.870,00		
Measure 1.1 Implementation of active labour market measures through national and local initiatives		44.407.348,00		
Local Partnerships for Employment - Phase 3 EuropeAid/129225/M/ACT/HR	To reduce unemployment and threat of new unemployment at the regional and local level.	2.600.000,00	6%	26
Improving access to sustainable employment of long-term unemployed highly educated persons EuropeAid/131871/M/ACT/HR	To enhance the employability of highly educated unemployed persons in order to integrate them into labour market.	1.846.000,00	4%	7
Youth in the labour market EuropeAid/129227/M/ACT/HR	To reduce youth unemployment at the regional level	1.000.000,00	2%	30
Priority Axis 2: Reinforcing social inclusion of people at a disadvantage		47.037.039,00		
Measure 2.1 Supporting access to employment by disadvantaged groups		17.615.139,00		
Fostering Effective Inclusion of the Persons with Disabilities into the Labour Market EuropeAid/129157/M/ACT/HR	To promote social inclusion of persons with disabilities through their integration in the labour market.	1.235.000,00	7%	19
Establishing Support in Social Integration and Employment of Disadvantaged and Marginalised Groups EuropeAid/129121/M/ACT/HR	To promote the social inclusion of long-term unemployed social assistance beneficiaries by supporting their access to the labour market.	1.500.000,00	9%	19
Women in the Labour Market EuropeAid/129003/M/ACT/HR	To increase the employability of disadvantaged women and assist their access to the labour market.	2.000.000,00	11%	18
Establishing Support in Social Inclusion and Employment of Disadvantaged and Marginalized Groups EuropeAid/131454/M/ACT/HR	To promote the social inclusion of long-term unemployed social assistance beneficiaries by supporting their access to the labour market.	1.000.000,00	6%	17
Measure 2.2 Supporting access to education by disadvantaged groups		15.023.846,00		
Access to education by students with disabilities Europeaid/128940/M/ACT/HR	To enhance educational accomplishments of secondary education students with disabilities, according to their needs, and their overall labour-market prospects/ overall social integration.	1.320.000,00	9%	7
Measure 2.3 Development of social services to improve employment opportunities		14.398.053,00		

⁹ Excluding the Direct award contract to CES "Ugovor o dodjeli bespovratnih sredstava za projekte koji su financirani iz Europskog socijalnog fonda u sklopu Operativnog programa Razvoj ljudskih potencijala 2007.-2013."

¹⁰ Total EU and National contribution.

¹¹ HRD OP for PAs and Measures, and Calls for proposals for the grant schemes.

Priority Axes Measures Grant schemes	Grant schemes' global objectives	Financial Allocations		
		Total amount available ¹¹	Share of the operation in the total financial allocations of the Measure	Number of grant schemes' projects
Broadening the Network of Social Services in the Community EuropeAid/131524/M/ACT/HR EuropeAid/133922/M/ACT/HR	To improve employment opportunities by supporting further development of efficient and inclusive social services.	3.698.472,00	26%	28
Priority Axis 3: Enhancing human capital in education, research and development		56.210.843,00		
<i>Measure 3.1 Enhancing the education system</i>		<i>41.181.164,00</i>		
Implementation of new curricula Europeaid/128900/M/ACT/HR	To facilitate the delivery of new modularised curricula based on learning outcomes, particularly in view of introducing systemic approach to relevant vocational education and training (VET) innovations in line with the changes in the labour market at the local and/or regional level and in line with new methodology and requirements of VET Act and National Framework Curriculum for preschool education and generals obligatory education in elementary and high school.	4.300.000,00	10%	17
Modernisation of school curricula in VET schools in line with the changing needs of the labour market / economy EuropeAid/131231/M/ACT/HR	To reinforce the introduction of new modern and innovative contents /features into VET schools provision within initial VET system, in line with the VET Act and Primary and Secondary School Education Act, with a view of ensuring their labour market relevance / adaptability, raising their capacities for provision of modern school based practical training as well as meeting the needs of the knowledge-based economy.	2.600.000,00	6%	30
<i>Measure 3.2 Development of human potential in research and innovation</i>		<i>7.153.973,00</i>		
Regional Network of local learning institutions EuropeAid/129021/M/ACT/HR	To improve key competencies and other competencies of adult learners, which will enable them to participate more actively in the labour market.	3.500.000,00	49%	19
TOTAL		26.599.472,00		237

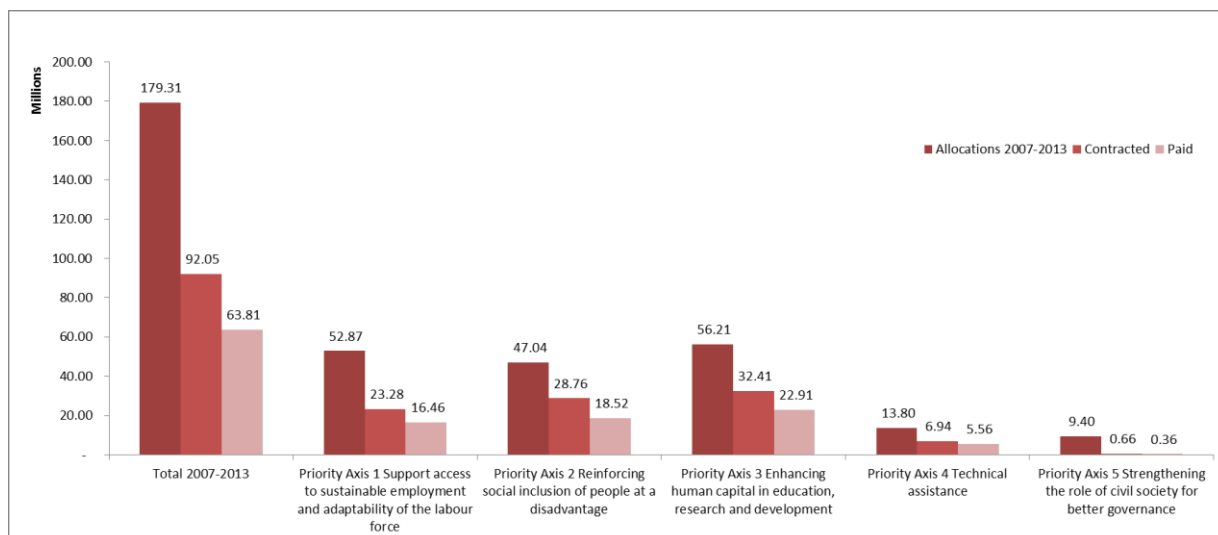
Source: HRD OP, MLPS published data (www.strukturnifondovi.hr), Own calculations.

According to the data provided in the Annual Implementation Report 2013 (AIR 2013), the HRD OP had until the end of the year 2013 contracted 51% of its allocations.

The corresponding payments covered 36% of the OP allocations. Progress is well balanced across the PAs, with the PA2 having performed the higher absorption rate in terms of contracting (61%) followed by PA3 (58%) and PA1 (44%).

In terms of payments, 69% of the contracted amounts of the HRD OP were disbursed, with payment rates compared to contracted amounts being slightly higher for PA3 and PA1 (71% of the total amounts of the contracts signed) compared to PA2 (64%).

Figure 1: Progress in the absorption of funds of the HRD OP until the end of the year 2013



Source: AIR 2013, Own calculations.

The situation with the absorption of the funds in terms of contracting as of February 2015 is slightly improved for almost all PAs, and particularly for PA2.

The **progress in the implementation** of the Measures shows a net advance in contracting for measures under PA2 and PA5. It is however to be noted that with the transition from IPA to ESF, several Measures increased significantly their financial allocations. Consequently, increased absorption of the funds is taking place in 2014 and 2015.

The analysis of the implementation of the examined grant schemes under the sectors of employment, social inclusion and education show a very good performance in terms of contracted and implemented projects.

In terms of **absorption**, projects were in average able to absorb the funds allocated to them. In total, the ten finished grant schemes show an average absorption rate of 94%. This is translated to less than €2 million not spent, compared to €27 million of certified expenditure. Generally there are no major differences emerging from the assessment of the financial performance of the grant schemes under each of the sectors of employment, social inclusion and education, due to the rather symptomatic character of the observations on the overall expenditure rate of the individual projects. Structural discrepancies are recurrent in the projects of the education sector only, with a relatively high number of projects showing a difference in the amount needed for the implementation of the planned activities, compared to the amount allocated to them, either higher or lower. It is for example noticeable that 5 out of the 7 projects approved under the grant scheme "Access to education by students with disabilities, Europeaid/128940/M/ACT/HR" requested additional funds in order to complete their activities, while 13 projects under the three grant schemes of PA3 did not spend between 9% and 28% of the total project budget. The reason to these discrepancies may come from the type of beneficiary institutions of the education grant schemes, which are all public institutions possibly benefiting from a certain degree of trust on behalf of the OS in handling the activity and budget modifications in the course of the implementation of a project.

The analysis of the **type of beneficiary** organisations of the grant scheme's projects varies among sectors. In the education sector grant schemes, 64% of the beneficiary organisations are public institutions, while in the social inclusion sector the beneficiaries are at 57% NGOs and at 18% public institutions. In the employment sector grant schemes, the beneficiary organisations are mainly NGOs (32%) and public institutions (35%), or local and regional authorities (14%). Almost all beneficiary organisations work in partnership with other institutions (96%), usually public employment services or local and regional authorities. Only 4% of the beneficiaries (public institutions or NGOs) act alone without partners.

Grant schemes under the IPA HRD OP included a variety of **activities** depending on the grant scheme sector and objectives. The activities implemented under the examined grant schemes can be clustered in the following measures:

- Training and skills development
- Counselling
- Job placement
- Partnership

- Information and awareness raising
- Engineering (including studies, analyses, advice, etc.)
- Equipment upgrading

The sector distribution of the above types of measures is as follows:

Sector	Training and skills development	Counselling	Job placement	Partnership	Information and awareness raising	Engineering	Equipment upgrading
Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Social inclusion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Education	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

In average, the activities mostly preferred by the projects are those providing training and skills development (41% of the total projects' expenditure), engineering activities providing studies, action planning and modernisation of the services (25% of the funds), and counselling (referring mainly to job counselling) under the sectors of employment and social inclusion (11%).

We further analysed the distribution of the **cost categories by type of activity**. This assessment can only be approximate, given that the majority of projects included more than one type of costs under a given activity. For example, counselling activities may to a certain extent include also costs of awareness raising which are not identified as a separate activity. However, this analysis provides with a number of indicative elements on the distribution of the budget categories for the implementation of the activities promoted by the grant scheme's projects. Overall, the grant schemes' implementation provided to the beneficiary institutions with approximately €10 million for staff salaries and related costs, and approximately €4 million for the purchase or renting of equipment and supplies. About €13 million were used for the payment of services allowing the implementation of the planned activities. These allocations show an important injection of funds, of which mainly benefited public institutions and NGOs, with €16 million and €6 million respectively. The private companies share in the use of the IPA funds was extremely limited, accounting for less than €1 million in total.

With regard to the **size of the projects**, despite the relatively large amount of funds distributed through the grant schemes, the size of the projects is rather small, not exceeding about €150 thousand in average. Even in grant schemes where higher amount of maximum grant was eligible, projects remained within fairly small budgets. This is a clear indication of the still low capacity of the beneficiaries (lack of staff, lack of experience, etc.) in preparing and implementing larger scale projects.

This observation is strengthened by the result of the examination of the **content of the projects**, which generally lack integrated approach in the design of the activities with clear targets regarding the results to the target groups and appropriate monitoring mechanisms. There is also a certain fatigue observed on behalf of both the beneficiaries and the end recipients, in implementing or participating on a recurrent basis in the same type of activities without a clear vision and development perspective. At the present early stage of implementation of the ESF support in Croatia, the impact of the low capacity of beneficiaries for large projects is still relatively insignificant, but it will be much more present in the course of the period 2014-2020. Training activities are the most common activities under the IPA HRD OP grant schemes, and they benefited from about €11 million of funding, an amount almost double than the amount spent in engineering activities such as the development of studies, action plans, and support in the modernisation of the services to the target groups. Activities such as counselling or information and awareness raising clearly benefitted from lower amounts of funds, about €2.8 million and €2.4 million respectively, placing them at the 3rd and 4th position in terms of received financial support. Activities supporting partnership and networking received about €1.4 million. Job placement activities are at the last position of the ranking of the different types of activities on the funds spent under the examined grant schemes, with less than €250 thousand of financial expenditure.

Despite the fact that effort is made on behalf of the managers of the PAs and the Measures to introduce new, innovative and more integrated indicative activities in the guidelines of applicants, grant schemes' beneficiaries remain within the traditional types of activities (training, counselling and awareness raising in the sectors of employment and social inclusion; training and equipment acquisition in the education sector).

With regard to the **cost-effectiveness** of the projects, the analysis of the expenditure alone is not sufficient. The lack of reliable monitoring data on the projects' end recipients makes it difficult to reach safe conclusions. However, taking into consideration the results achieved by the activities involving directly the participation of the target groups, we can calculate an average cost per participant at around €1,500 - €3,000. This figure is

higher in projects which accurately report the numbers of end-recipients that actually participated in the activities. Taken into consideration with precaution, and re-adjusted with corrections on the data provided by the individual projects, we may reach an approximate calculation result indicating that the most balanced and cost effective projects represent approximately 17% of the grant schemes' projects falling under the scope of the evaluation. The analysis per sector reveals an approximate proportion of 13% balanced and cost-effective projects in the sector of employment, 16% in the social inclusion sector and 21% in the education sector (corresponding to 8, 9 and 15 projects respectively).

Recommendations

The following points summarise the main recommendations transpiring from the evaluation reports prepared under the project:

1. Invest time in the specification of the operations and awareness raising of the potential beneficiaries on the need to be consistent with the policies while at the same time responding to the real needs of the target groups. Clearly address aspects such as territorial specificities, administrative capacities at the local level and involvement of a wide spectrum of partners including partners from the private sector.
2. Invest in strengthening the capacity of the potential beneficiary institutions in designing and implementing large-scale projects under the ESF co-financed grant schemes with integrated innovative activities. Tackle project management weaknesses at project level.
3. Support partnerships between the public and private sector and the civil society, in order to improve capacity for the implementation of larger projects with higher potential for sustainable results to the target groups.
4. Strengthen innovative approaches in providing support to the target groups. Innovation can be introduced not only to activities aimed at providing support in the creation/enhancement of structures, but also in activities providing direct services to individuals, such as for example better and more focused training programmes with innovative content and learning modules. Encouraging learning at the workplace, even in form of short-term internships, has been recognised as one of the best learning methods for those returning to the labour market after a long period as unemployed or to the inactive.
5. Strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms and provide for e-reporting facilities allowing for direct data exchange on results and data corrections. Further rationalize and strengthen monitoring systems and procedures in order to avoid shortcomings in information and data collection and storage and to ensure effective and efficient management of the ESF investments.

INTRODUCTION

This report is the final report of the project “Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance” (EuropeAid/133183/D/SER/HR, Contract No: HR.4.1.02-0005). The project aimed at evaluating actions implemented in the period 2007-2013 in the framework of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP) and thus enhancing Croatia’s capacity for effective and efficient use of the funds provided by European Social Fund (ESF), by preparing adequate number and high quality operations.

The HRD OP receives co-financing by the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), and following the EU-accession of Croatia, co-financing was ensured through the European Social Fund (ESF).

It is implemented through different types of contracts, that all have their own specifics (service contracts, supply contracts, grant schemes, direct award contracts and framework contracts).

Within this framework, the project “Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance” focused on the evaluation of the IPA HRD OP with the objective to providing relevant findings, conclusions and recommendations, in relation to the achievement of the specific objective for each measure¹² of the Programme, particularly as regards its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. It was clearly expected that the IPA HRD OP experience will provide valuable inputs into the programming of ESF operations. The project was thus meant to provide meaningful conclusions and recommendations that will be relevant for the future ESF-assistance.

It is to be noted that due to the late contracting of the present evaluation project, programming of the period 2014-2020 was already advanced at the beginning of the project, and it was already finished with the approval of the ESF HRD OP 2014-2020. Thus, the evaluation results provide inputs for the preparation and implementation of the operations co-financed by the ESF in the new programming period 2014-2020.

In light of the above, and considering the requirements of the Terms of Reference (ToR), as well as the objectives and obligations of Croatia in relation to the implementation of future interventions co-financed by the ESF in the programming period 2014-2020, the project reviewed all previous European Union (EU) assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education, and concentrated in the assessment of the finalised grant schemes. It produced a series of reports containing the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation exercise.

The project duration was of 12 months starting from 30 June 2014 (Administrative Order No. 1 issued on 26.05.2014.). The official project ending date is 29 June 2015 and all project activities and expenses, including expert inputs, are completed by that date.

The project implementation was supervised by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) formed by the main institutions involved in the management of the HRD OP, and chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Pension System.

The present Final Report contains a short description of the achievements, including problems encountered during the implementation of the project and recommendations.

The reporting period of reference for the present report is **30 June 2014 – 29 June 2015**.

The structure of the report is in conformity with the template provided by the Contracting Authority, and it includes the following four (4) sections:

- Section 1** (Implementation framework) presents the institutional and organizational set-up of the project and project monitoring and coordination arrangements.
- Section 2** (Project performance and impact) highlights the achievements in the implementation of the project activities and in the delivery of the various outputs, as well as the deployment of experts’ resources.
- Section 3** (Sustainability) tackles general issues for consideration, such as policy support, gender equality, etc, as well as the provisions for participation and ownership of the project results and outputs by the beneficiaries.
- Section 4** (Conclusions and recommendations) summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations concerning the project implementation, with emphasis to the next implementation period.

All project outputs and evaluation reports are annexed to the present report.

¹² Priority 5 is not subject to this evaluation.

1. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

1.1 Institutional set-up & overall project organization

Management and implementation of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2007-2013 is under the responsibility of Operating Structure that consists of six institutions:

- Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Managing Authority; responsible for the implementation of the overall OP and specifically for Priority 1, 4 and Priority axis 5¹³, Measure 5.1 (or Body responsible for Operational Programme – IPA)¹⁴
- Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, Intermediate Body level 1; responsible for the implementation of Priority axis 2, Measure 2.1 and 2.3 (or Body responsible for Priority/Measure– IPA)
- Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Intermediate Body level 1; responsible for the implementation of Priority axis 2, Measure 2.2 and Priority 3 (or Body responsible for Priority/Measure– IPA)
- Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs; Intermediate Body level 1; responsible for the implementation of Priority axis 5, Measure 5.2 (or Body responsible for Priority/Measure– IPA)
- Croatian Employment Service, Office for Financing and Contracting of EU Projects, Intermediate Body level 2; responsible for Priority 1, Priority 2, Measure 2.1 and 2.3, Priority 4 and Priority 5, Measure 5.1 (or Implementing Body – IPA)
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Intermediate Body level 2; responsible for Priority 2, Measure 2.2, and Priority 3 (or Implementing Body – IPA)
- National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Intermediate Body level 2; responsible for Priority 5, Measure 5.2 (or Implementing Body – IPA).

The above described institutional set-up refers to the system of management and control established in accordance with Act on Establishment of Institutional Framework for the Use of European Union Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia (OG 78/12, 143713, 157/13) and Decree on the Bodies of the Management and Control System for the Use of European Union Structural Instruments in the Republic of Croatia (97/12) following Croatia's accession to the European Union on 1 July 2013, while prior to the accession, the system of management and control was in force for the implementation of IPA Human Resources Development Operational Programme. The transition from Instrument for Pre-Assistance to Structural instruments, i.e. ESF was followed by adoption of ESF Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013 (October 2013). During the programming phase of ESF HRD OP, special focus was given to strengths and weaknesses identified during IPA HRD OP programming and implementation period in order to successfully continue with the implementation and to make transition as smooth as possible. The ESF institutional set-up, in terms of institutions involved and their sector responsibilities, remained the same as during the implementation of IPA HRD OP.

In addition to the above mentioned Responsible Bodies, IPA Strategic coordinator for the regional development and the human resources development components was established. For the IPA HRD OP monitoring the sectoral monitoring committee was established, with two meetings per year.

Other IPA HRD OP target institutions

Other relevant IPA target institutions were as follows:

- National IPA Coordinator
- Competent Accrediting Officer
- National Authorising Officer
- National Fund
- Audit Authority

¹³ Not subject of the impact assessments that were carried out in the framework of this evaluation since the implementation of the first grant schemes within Priority 5 started only in 2013, following the amendment to IPA HRDOP in August 2012.

¹⁴ Since this evaluation focused on grant schemes implemented during IPA HRD OP implementation, a difference in the use of terminology (ESF vs IPA) occurs when referring to roles of institutions/positions. For the purposes of this report and in accordance with ToR, further throughout the report IPA terminology is used.

The project **structure** included four main groups of activities, which will lead to the following results:

- Result 1: Impact survey on interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education with assessment of overall contribution to human resources development conducted.
- Result 2: Assistance provided under IPA HRD in the field of employment, social inclusion and education assessed.
- Result 3: Lessons learned in policy-making, implementation, absorption and capacity needs delivered.
- Result 4: Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions in management principles/procedures in ESF and policy changes delivered.

The final project outputs were clustered in five (5) reports, which consolidated the various project outputs listed in the ToR. The project reports' titles are:

Report 1:	Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education
Report 2:	Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector
Report 3:	Recommendations for future ESF interventions
Report 4:	Compendium of best practices
Report 5:	Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations

The project also produced monthly progress reports, one Interim report and the present Final report, providing the Contracting Authority with information on the progress of the project implementation.

The overall project duration is of 12 months starting from 30 June 2014.

1.2 Staff & qualifications

In the course of its implementation, the project has mobilized 2 key experts, 8 non-key experts and one office manager. Non-key experts were appointed in accordance with a standard procedure as per the instructions received from the Contracting Authority at the beginning of the project implementation, following approval of the non-key experts' TORs and CVs by the project Beneficiary and the Contracting Authority.

Taking into consideration the provisions of the project ToRs and Inception Report, the deployment of the project experts (key and non-key experts) for the overall project implementation period is summarized as follows:

Position	Expert name	Inputs (working days)
Key experts		355.0
KE 1 - Team Leader and Evaluation Expert	Magdalena Ivanova	180.0
KE 2 - Expert for surveys and assessment methodology	Dimitra Ioannou	175.0
Non-Key experts		260.0
<i>Senior non-key experts</i>		200.0
NKE 1 - Senior International Expert	Sacha Koppert	3.0
NKE 2 - Senior International Expert	Daniel Nigohosyan	3.0
NKE 3 - Senior legal and policy evaluation expert	Krassimir Detchev	69.0
NKE 4 - Senior expert in quantitative and qualitative data analysis	Daniel Nigohosyan	35.0
NKE 5 - Senior expert in partnerships and sustainability issues	Sacha Koppert	30.0
NKE 6A - Senior EU Grant schemes expert (Employment and Social Inclusion)	Daniela Ivanova	45.0
NKE 6B - Senior EU Grant schemes expert (Education)	Maja Hranilović	15.00

Position	Expert name	Inputs (working days)
<i>Junior non-key experts</i>		60.0
NKE 7 - Junior evaluation expert	Maja Horvat	60.0
Total experts' inputs (working days)		615.0
Office Manager	Marija Juračić	<i>Full time</i>

In the course of the first six months of the implementation (reporting period of the first interim report, the project has mobilized 56.3% of the overall planned resources. In the course of the second half of the project (second six months of the implementation period), the project mobilised the remaining 43.7% of its resources. Detailed information on the deployment of the project expert resources is included in Annex 4.

1.3 Monitoring & coordination arrangements

Project monitoring and coordination

The Project Management provisions were set for ensuring an efficient implementation and decision making procedures, and they were structured at three levels:

- **Monitoring and control**, ensured by the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
- **Management and co-ordination**, ensured by the Beneficiary and Main Project Partner and the Consultants' representatives (Project Director, Team Leader and Key Expert 2). Coordination of the project activities was done on a regular basis, between the Main Project Partner and other Project Partner institutions, and the Key and Non-key experts of the project.
- **Operational level**, which mainly comprises the Contracting Authority, the Main Project Partner and the Team Leader.

Role of the Steering Committee in the project management

The **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** was setup to ensure cooperation between all relevant project parties (Contracting Authority, Beneficiary, Main Project Partner and other Project Partners, Consultant), to supervise and to monitor the project activities. PSC meetings were chaired by a senior representative of the Ministry of Labour and Pension System. The secretariat for the PSC was ensured by the Contractor.

The **first meeting of the PSC** was held at the end of the Inception Phase, on 25 July 2014. The Inception Report was approved on 14 October 2014 letter of Approval (Class 102-02/13-03/242 Inception Ref: 344-110/2-14-34).

The **second meeting of the PSC** was held on 16 February 2015, in order to examine and discuss the contents of the project Interim Report. Following the comments of the PSC the final version of the report was examined and approved by the Contracting Authority on 18 May 2015 (Class: 102-02/13-03/242 Interim Ref: 344-110/2-15-60).

The **third meeting of the PSC** took place on 18 June 2015 for the examination of the Draft Final Report. Following the comments of the PSC, the present Final Report was prepared and submitted for final approval after the project end.

No extraordinary PSC meetings were held as it was not deemed necessary by the Contracting Authority and the Project Partners, given that the overall project implementation ran smoothly.

The PSC was composed by the following **members**:

No	Organisation	Member (Name, position)	Replacement (Name, position)
1	Ministry of Labour and Pension System (BROP)	Ms Katarina Ivanković-Knežević, Head of Sector for Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation of EU Programmes and Projects	

No	Organisation	Member (Name, position)	Replacement (Name, position)
2	Ministry of Labour and Pension System (BRPM)	Ms Nikolina Volf, Senior Expert Advisor	
3	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (Directorate for Education, Office for EU programmes and projects)	Ms Mirna Štajduhar, Head of Department for monitoring of EU programmes	
4	Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (Directorate for Social Policy Strategy and Youth, Service for EU Funds)	Ms Natalija Bokulić, Head of Department for monitoring programs of EU funds	Ms Željka Ivandić Blažina, Senior Expert Advisor
5	Croatian Employment Service (Office for Financing and Contracting of EU projects)	Ms Sanja Mesarov, Head of Office for Financing and Contracting of EU Projects	
6	Croatian Employment Service (Office for Financing and Contracting of EU Projects, Coordination and Information Department)	Ms Antonija Smakić, Coordination and Information Specialist	
7	Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE DEFCO)	Ms Irena Rožić Qeta, Head of Department for Tender Preparation and Project Implementation	
8	Office for Cooperation with NGOs - Government of the Republic of Croatia	Ms Ana Ugrina, Head of Department for Implementation of EU Programmes and International Cooperation	
9	Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds	Ms Vlatka Marčan, Senior Expert Advisor	
10	Consultant's Team	Ms Magdalena Ivanova, Team Leader	

Project Office

The project office was established at the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Petračićeve 4/1.

The project office hosted the Team Leader (KE 1) and the KE 2, the Office manager, the NKE 3 and NKE 6 A and NKE 6 B. Also NKE 4, NKE 5 and NKE 7 worked at the project office when in Zagreb. Other NKEs worked from their home office and regularly attend meetings and working sessions held at the project office.

Reporting

The project reports comply with the project requirements as settled down in the TORs and analytically described in the project Inception Report. The project reporting includes:

- The project **Inception Report (IR)**, submitted on 30 July 2014 and approved on 14 October 2014.
- **Monthly Reports**, delivered within 7 days after the end of the month, highlighting the progress made during the previous month, the resources used during the period, a work plan for the following month, information on problems encountered and recommendations for remedial actions
- **Interim Progress Report (INR)**, submitted within one month from the end of the first six-months implementation period and containing short description of progress (technical and financial) including problems encountered; planned work for the next six months, accompanied by an invoice and the

expenditure verification report. The INR report referred to the first six months of the project implementation (30 June 2014 – 31 December 2014)

- **Final Report (FR)** - submitted at the end of the period of execution of the contract. The Draft Final Report was submitted one month before the end of the period of execution of the contract, containing short description of achievements including problems encountered and recommendations. The present Final Report is submitted following consideration of the comments of the Main Project Partner, the PSC members and the Contracting Authority, accompanied by a final invoice and the financial report and the expenditure verification report.

Other reports

- Random Reports upon request of the project beneficiaries containing supportive and explanatory reports, mission reports of the KE and NKE as appropriate, methodological papers and concept notes were submitted in the course of the implementation period. All reports are annexed to the present document.

Project dissemination

The project **opening event** was organised on 15 July 2014. During this event, the project was presented to the wider community of stakeholders.

A presentation of the project and the content of the evaluation was made at the ESF HRD OP Monitoring Committee of 11th December 2014.

The project team also participated at the second meeting of the Evaluation Steering Group for the Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013 organised by the Ministry of Labour and Pension System on 10 March 2015, for the presentation of the project and the methodology of the Impact Assessment. The team presented the evaluation project progress and methods, and recommendations for future evaluations under the ESF OP.

At the closure phase of the project, a **final project wrap-up event** was organised on 18 June 2015, for approximately 100 persons. During this event, there was the presentation of the main results of the evaluation and prizes for IPA HRD OP best practice projects were distributed as per the results of Activity 4.2.

2. PROJECT PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT

2.1 Activities planned and implemented

All project activities were carried out according to the methodological approach included in the project Inception Report. However, not all outputs that were planned to be submitted in the course of the implementation period were ready on the planned dates, due to the lengthy process of collection of the necessary data and information on the grant scheme's implementation¹⁵. The project Interim Report included updated time schedules for submission of the draft and final outputs, taking into consideration the realistic difficulties in gathering the missing information.

In the table herewith, we present the progress made in the delivery of the project outputs and information on the new planned deadlines. The dates for submission of the final outputs remain unchanged.

Activity No & Titles	Outputs	Reports	Due date ¹⁶	Status ¹⁷	Date of delivery
Inception phase					
Activity 0.1: Establish a fully operational project office	Operational Office established and functioning and staff recruited.	-	July 2014	Done	July 2014
Activity 0.2: Review current state of play	Current state of play related to the HRD OP and ESF OP programming and implementation reviewed.	-	July 2014	Done	July 2014
Activity 0.3: Meetings with relevant institutions and stakeholders	Meetings with relevant institutions and stakeholders held, awareness of the project with the aim to ensure their commitment and participation in the project created.	-	July 2014	Done	July 2014
Activity 0.4: Establishing modalities for collaboration with the project counterparts and stakeholders	Modalities for day to day collaboration with the project counterparts and stakeholders established.	-	July 2014	Done	July 2014
1st PSC meeting organised			July 2014	Done	25 July 2014
Activity 0.5: Presentation of the project	Presentation of the project to the wider community held, presentations made available to the participants by email.		July 2014	Done	15 July 2014
Activity 0.6: Develop	Inception Report	Inception	30 July 2014	Done	First draft:

¹⁵ The reasons and justification are included in the project Interim Report.

¹⁶ This column refers to the dates of submission presented in the project Inception Report. If in the course of the implementation the submission of the given outputs is changed, the reasons are explained in the relevant narrative parts of the report and on the column "Status" are reported the new agreed dates accordingly.

¹⁷ Planned; In progress; Done

Activity No & Titles	Outputs	Reports	Due date ¹⁶	Status ¹⁷	Date of delivery
and submit the Inception Report and Work Plan	submitted no later than 1 month after the start of implementation.	Report			30.07.2014 Approved by the Project Partner: 11.08.2014 Approved by the Contracting Authority on 14.10.2014
Implementation phase					
Component 1 – Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of employment					
Activity 1.1: Impact survey of the employment sector	1.1 Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the employment sector.	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	Methodological concept note: 11 November 2014 Output submitted in June 2015
Activity 1.2: Analysis of stakeholder involvement	1.2 A report presenting an overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of operations in the employment sector	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	Submitted in the end of May 2015
Activity 1.3: Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures, to the successful implementation and absorption of funds	1.3 Report on the strengths and obstacles in the employment sector	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 21 February 2015 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	Submitted in the end of May 2015
Component 2 – Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of social inclusion					
Activity 2.1: Assessment of implemented activities	2.1 Assessment of the effectiveness of the implemented activities vis-à-vis the objectives of the Calls for proposals	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 31 October 2014 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	First incomplete draft submitted on 5 November 2014. Final version submitted on 2 March 2015
Activity 2.2: Impact survey of the social inclusion sector	2.2 Impact survey of the social inclusion interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	Methodological concept note: 11 November 2014 Output submitted in June 2015
Activity 2.3: Analysis of stakeholder involvement	2.3 A report on the overview of the role of public, non-governmental and private sectors in	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	Submitted at the end of May 2015

Activity No & Titles	Outputs	Reports	Due date ¹⁶	Status ¹⁷	Date of delivery
	ensuring projects activities sustainability in the social inclusion sector				
	2.4 200 copies of a handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector for each type of organisation (private, public, non-governmental) published.	Report 2 /Handbook/	19 December 2014	Done	Methodological concept note submitted on 4 December 2014. First draft report submitted on 12 December 2014. Second draft submitted on 1 March 2015. Printed version in 200 copies submitted in June 2015.
Activity 2.4: Evaluation on possible positive/negative influences of law regulations	2.5 The Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in social inclusion sector.	Report 1	Draft: 19 December 2014 Final: 15 May 2015	Done	Draft submitted on 24 April 2015 Updated report submitted at the end of May 2015. Two additional reports were prepared covering education sector (submitted on 21 May 2015) and employment sector (submitted in the end of May 2015)
Component 3 – Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of education					
Activity 3.1: Impact survey of the education sector	3.1 Impact survey of the education interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009	Report 1	Draft: 19 December 2014 Final: 15 May 2015	Done	Methodological concept note: 11 November 2014. Output submitted in June 2015.
Activity 3.2: Analysis of stakeholder involvement	3.2 A report presenting an overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in	Report 1	Draft: 19 December 2014 Final: 15 May 2015	Done	End of May 2015

Activity No & Titles	Outputs	Reports	Due date ¹⁶	Status ¹⁷	Date of delivery
	implementation of grant schemes in the education sector				
Activity 3.3: Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures, to the successful implementation and absorption of funds	3.3 Report on identified strengths and obstacles in the education sector.	Report 1	<i>Draft:</i> 21 February 2015 <i>Final:</i> 15 May 2015	Done	End of May 2015
Component 4 – Lessons learnt and recommendations					
Activity 4.1: Recommendations of possible improvements for future interventions	4.1 Provided and distributed recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions through a printed booklet form (at least 200 copies) and a presentation for at least 20 persons with possibility of discussion	Report 3	<i>Draft:</i> 21 February 2015 <i>Final:</i> 27 March 2015	Done	English version submitted on 25 May 2015
Activity 4.2: Compendium and best practice examples	4.2 An attractive compendium with an overview of types of activities through which readers can easily navigate and which can be used as reference and inspiration for future applicants, 600 USBs and a digitalised version	Report 4	<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> 27 February 2015	Done	Methodological concept note was submitted on 20 October 2014 English draft submitted in April 2015. Final output planned for early June 2015.
Activity 4.3: Analysis of the share of the financial resources spent for different types of activities	4.3 Report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities with recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of operations	Report 5	<i>Draft:</i> 21 February 2015 <i>Final:</i> 27 March 2015	Done	Report submitted on 27 April 2015
Activity 4.4: Lessons learned and communicated	4.4 Lessons learned regarding overall implementation of HRD OP operations	Report 1	15 May 2015	Done	June 2015
Closure phase					
Activity 5.1: Finalization of the evaluation report	5.1 Report: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education	Report 1	12 June 2015	Done	June 2015
Activity 5.2: Wrap-up	5.2 Wrap-up event for	-	18 June 2015	Done	18 June 2015

Activity No & Titles	Outputs	Reports	Due date ¹⁶	Status ¹⁷	Date of delivery
event	approximately 100 people organized				
REPORTING					
Consolidated outputs (Evaluation Reports)					
Report 1 Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education			<i>Draft:</i> 15 May 2015 <i>Final:</i> 12 June 2015	Done	June 2015
Report 2 Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector			<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> May 2015	Done	29.05.2015
Report 3 Recommendations for future ESF interventions			<i>Draft:</i> 21 February 2015 <i>Final:</i> 27 March 2015	Done	25.05.2015
Report 4 Compendium of best practices			<i>Draft:</i> 19 December 2014 <i>Final:</i> April 2015	Done	June 2015
Report 5 Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations			<i>Draft:</i> 21 February 2015 <i>Final:</i> 27 March 2015	Done	27.04.2015
Project reports					
Inception report				Done	First Draft: 30.07.2014 Approved by the Project Partner: 02.09. 2014 Approved by the Contracting Authority on 14.10.2014
Monthly progress reports			No later than 7 days after the end of each month	Done	06.08.2014 02.09.2014 07.10.2014 05.11.2014 08.12.2014 12.01.2014 04.02.2015 05.03.2015 02.04.2015 18.05.2015 01.06.2015 29.06.2015
Interim report			30 January 2015	Done	Draft: 30 January 2015 Approved by the Project Partner on 5 March 2014 Approved by

Activity No & Titles	Outputs	Reports	Due date ¹⁶	Status ¹⁷	Date of delivery
					the Contracting Authority on 18.05.2015
Draft Final Report			30 May 2015	Done	26.05.2015
Final Report			Within 1 month of receiving comments on the draft final report from the Project Manager	Done	Present Report submitted on 29.06.2015

2.2 Resources planned and used

The project activities were organized according to the overall workplan which has been designed based on the ToR provisions and the findings and discussions held during the inception period.

The total resources spent by the project correspond to **100% of the project overall work time**. The delay in the implementation of certain tasks did not affect the overall project planning and the content and final deadlines for the outputs remain unchanged.

The progress in the implementation of the project activities is summarized in the following activities' table.

Activity 1.1: Impact survey of the employment sector			
Output		Experts	
1.1 Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the employment sector. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1		
	KE2		
	NKE 4		
	NKE7		
		Resources	
		Working days available:	45
		Working days spent:	45
Activity 1.2: Analysis of stakeholder involvement			
Output		Experts	
1.2 A report presenting an overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of operations in the employment sector. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1		
	KE2		
	NKE3		
		Resources	
		Working days available:	25
		Working days spent:	25
Activity 1.3: Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures, to the successful implementation and absorption of funds			
Output		Experts	
1.3 Report on the strengths and obstacles in the employment sector. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1		
	KE2		
	NKE3		
		Resources	
		Working days available:	20
		Working days spent:	20
Activity 2.1: Assessment of implemented activities			
Output		Experts	

2.1 Assessment of the effectiveness of the implemented activities vis-à-vis the objectives of the Calls for proposals. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE4	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	20
	Working days spent:	20
Activity 2.2: Impact survey of the social inclusion sector		
Output	Experts	
2.2 Impact survey of the social inclusion interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE 4 NKE7	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	45
	Working days spent:	45
Activity 2.3: Analysis of stakeholder involvement		
Output	Experts	
2.3 A report on the overview of the role of public, non-governmental and private sectors in ensuring projects activities sustainability in the social inclusion sector. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE3	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	20
	Working days spent:	20
Output	Experts	
2.4 200 copies of a handbook (Report 2) on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector for each type of organisation (private, public, non-governmental) published.	KE1 NKE5	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	50
	Working days spent:	50
Activity 2.4: Evaluation on possible positive / negative influences of law regulations		
Output	Experts	
2.5 Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in social inclusion sector. Additional reports on the employment and education sector, for the provision of a complete evaluation and recommendation for the three sectors under examination. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE3	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	39
	Working days spent:	39
Activity 3.1: Impact survey of the education sector		
Output	Experts	
3.1 Impact survey of the education interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE 4 NKE7	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	45

	Working days spent:	45
Activity 3.2: Analysis of stakeholder involvement		
Output	Experts	
3.2 A report presenting an overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of grant schemes in the education sector. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE3	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	20
	Working days spent:	20
Activity 3.3: Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures, to the successful implementation and absorption of funds		
Output	Experts	
3.3 Report on identified strengths and obstacles in the education sector. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE3	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	25
	Working days spent:	25
Activity 4.1: Recommendations of possible improvements for future interventions		
Output	Experts	
4.1 Provided and distributed recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions (Report 3) through a printed booklet form (at least 200 copies) and a presentation for at least 20 persons with possibility of discussion.	KE1 KE2	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	20
	Working days spent:	20
Activity 4.2: Compendium and best practice examples		
Output	Experts	
4.2 An attractive compendium (Report 4) with an overview of types of activities through which readers can easily navigate and which can be used as reference and inspiration for future applicants: one printable version published in 600 USB keys and one digitalised version.	KE1 KE2 NKE6A NKE6B	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	90
	Working days spent:	90
Activity 4.3: Analysis of the share of the financial resources spent for different types of activities		
Output	Experts	
4.3 Report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities with recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of operations (Report 5).	KE1 KE2	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	25
	Working days spent:	25
Activity 4.4: Lessons learned and communicated		
Output	Experts	

4.4 Lessons learned regarding overall implementation of HRD OP operations. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2 NKE 3	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	25
	Working days spent:	25
Activity 5.1: Finalization of the evaluation report		
Output	Experts	
5.1 Report: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education. <i>Output integrated in the Report 1.</i>	KE1 KE2	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	27
	Working days spent:	27
Activity 5.2: Wrap-up event		
Output	Experts	
5.2 Wrap-up event for approximately 100 people <i>Organisation of the event in June 2015.</i> <i>In the framework of the event, will be organised presentation of selected best practice projects of IPA HRD OP and distribution of prizes (ref. activity 4.2).</i>	KE1 KE2	
	Resources	
	Working days available:	18
	Working days spent:	18

2.3 Achievement of results (review of project indicators)

The project performance is measured on the basis of the following indicators, which have been presented in the project Inception Report. Here follows a description of the progress made in the course of the project implementation period¹⁸.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS			
No	Indicators ¹⁹	Corresponding activity	Achievements
1	Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the employment sector conducted	1.1	Report submitted
2	Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of operations in employment sector delivered	1.2	Report submitted
3	Report on identified strengths and obstacles in employment sector delivered	1.3	Report submitted
4	Assessment report on the most effective activities / group of activities within social inclusion sector that contributed to the operational goal achievement prepared	2.1	Report submitted
5	Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the social inclusion sector conducted	2.2	Report submitted
6	Report on overview of the role of public, non-governmental and private sectors in ensuring projects activities sustainability in social inclusion sector	2.3	Report submitted
7	At least 200 copies of handbook on best practices examples for	2.4	Handbook submitted

¹⁸ A description of the problems encountered, the applied solutions and progress is given in chapter 2.3.

¹⁹ Indicators listed in the ToR, paragraph 8.1, page 26. Indicator 13 was modified in line with the decisions of the PSC (see description of activity 4.2).

	partnerships and sustainability of project in the social inclusion per each sector (private, public, non-governmental) printed		
8	Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in social inclusion sector	2.5	Report submitted. Additional reports submitted for the sectors of employment and education.
9	Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the education sector conducted	3.1	Report submitted
10	Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organizations and institutions in implementation of grant schemes in education sector delivered	3.2	Report submitted
11	Report on identified strengths and obstacles in education sector delivered	3.3	Report submitted
12	Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions given in printed booklet form (at least 200 copies) and communicated with main stakeholders (presentation for at least 20 persons, with possibility of discussion)	4.1	Report submitted
13	At least 600 USB keys (and leaflets) containing a printable version of the compendium of all interventions and best practice examples (including graphical design) delivered; user friendly digital version (allowing cross-referencing by tags agreed with project partners) of compendium for web publication delivered	4.2	Compendium submitted in USB keys produced by the project
14	Report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities with recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of operations delivered	4.3	Report submitted
15	Lessons learned regarding overall implementation of HRD OP operations (included in this evaluation) prepared in a written form and delivered to all HRD OS institutions	4.4	Report submitted

Additional monitoring indicators arranged by Consultant are:

INDICATORS FOR PROJECT MONITORING			
No	Indicators	Project phases	Current achievements
1	Office in Zagreb established	Inception phase	Done
2	Five (5) meetings with relevant institutions held during the Inception phase	Inception phase	Done
3	Presentation of the project to the wider community during the Inception phase	Inception phase	Done
4	Inception report	Inception phase	Done
5	Development and submission of Monthly progress reports	Implementation phase	Done (12 monthly reports)
6	Development and submission of one Interim Report	Implementation phase	Done
7	Development and submission of the Final Report	Implementation phase	Done (26.6.2015)
8	Final project wrap-up event for approximately 100 persons held	Closure phase	18 June 2015

2.4 Problems encountered

The project inception period gave a good insight on the situation with the overall progress in the implementation of the grant schemes, and the project environment as a whole. The Inception report clearly referred to the risk that the available data would be insufficient in terms of quantity and quality and that measures should be taken to ensure the accurate and timely collection of the missing data.

Following the submission of the Inception Report, the first task of the experts' team was the collection of all necessary information and data on the implemented projects under the selected grant schemes falling under the

scope of the evaluation. This task proved significantly longer than initially planned, due to several reasons explained below. This was an important issue that affected the progress in the project implementation and lead to changes in the overall planning of the project activities and the experts' inputs, on a more realistic basis. However, these changes affected only the deadlines for the submission of the draft outputs, which following discussion with the relevant project partners were finalised according to the project planning.

The most important issues which resulted to changes in the planning of some of the project activities from the provisions of the Inception Report are explained in the following table:

Issues	Progress in the course of the project implementation
<p><u>Issue 1:</u> Project reports and other important data on projects were not included in the MIS. Due to the transition from "IPA" MIS to "ESF" MIS at a stage when some grant schemes were already completed, data was not completely transferred (in particular narrative reports, contact data, etc.), to the new MIS. The documents related to the grant schemes were thus stored separately by IBs and, depending on type of reports by the MA.</p>	<p>Project contracts, reports and contact details were collected and classified by the experts' team with the support of the OS bodies' staff. For a large number of projects reports were scanned and classified by the experts' team. A consolidated database of all projects' data was created and made available to the OS.</p> <p>Information on the progress of closing the projects (status of final reports and final payments) was collected through direct contact with CES OFC and AVETAE DEFCO.</p>
<p><u>Issue 2:</u> Unavailability of consolidated data from the Final Recipient Identification Form (FRIFs) at the level of the OS bodies (with the exception of two grant schemes).</p> <p>This issue occurred due to the fact that FRIFs were introduced into monitoring at a later stage, following IPA HRD OP amendments, especially indicators, and for this reason not all grant schemes had the obligation to collect the data through FRIFs.</p>	<p>FRIFs were mainly collected through direct contact of the experts' team with the project beneficiaries.</p> <p>It proved impossible to collect all FRIFs from all projects; however, a representative sample of sufficient number of FRIFs was collected by the experts' team, which allowed the team to proceed with the online/telephone survey with end recipients.</p>
<p><u>Issue 3:</u> Contact details of the project beneficiaries were missing, or not updated.</p>	<p>The experts' team identified the necessary contact data of the beneficiaries, in order to be able to contact them for organising interviews in accordance with the impact surveys methodology and the methodology for the identification of best practices.</p>
<p><u>Issue 4:</u> Monitoring data included in AIR 2013 was not sufficient for conducting the desk analysis including an appropriate analysis of indicators.</p> <p>As AIR 2013 was for the first time prepared according to the ESF regulation and following the adoption of the ESF HRDOP in August 2013, the data for some indicators could not yet be presented in AIR 2013, or were presented only partially. Moreover, although a new/revised set of indicators was adopted, there was no obligation to report on these indicators before 1 July 2013.</p>	<p>Following consultations with the OS, it was agreed that basis for the analysis included in the evaluation report would be the data presented at the Monitoring Committee of the ESF HRD OP, which was held on 11 December 2014.</p>

2.6 Linkage with other operations, complementarity & sectoral coordination between donors

The project “Preparation of project pipeline and support to the ESF beneficiaries” (EuropeAid/132408/D/SER/HR) is directly linked to this project. Both projects were located at the MLPS and have been contracted in the same period (summer 2014). The project concentrates in increasing skills and understanding of opportunities provided under the European Social Fund (ESF) and in building project preparation capacity ensuring that sufficient number of ESF projects and grant projects are fully mature for receiving support by the ESF OP.

Other projects of relevance, have been presented in the project Inception Report and their results were taken into consideration in the analysis performed in the course of the evaluation.

3. SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 Participation & ownership by beneficiaries

Participation and ownership by beneficiaries was achieved through intensive consultations of the OS bodies and direct encounter with all project partners on the process of the evaluation.

Direct contact and consultations with the project partners were done by all project experts, who were not simply collecting and analysing data, but encouraged the beneficiary institutions in better understanding the evaluation as an on-going process, which requires the application of systems and work practices setting the ground for future ESF evaluations.

3.2 Policy support

The evaluation project supported Croatia to prepare for effective future evaluations of the ESF programmes.

It also supported inter-service consultations, and a participative approach in evaluating the ESF interventions, both at programme and project level.

3.3 Appropriate technology

The experts' team developed a comprehensive evaluation data base with the fields needed for accurate collection of grant contracts' data allowing for the analysis needed by an evaluation. The data base was filled with all available information from the finished grant contracts and it was delivered to the OS.

Moreover, at the beginning of the project implementation the experts' team reviewed the Management Information System (MIS) in use by the OS and prepared an overview report with recommendations (Annex 8 of the present report).

3.4 Socio-cultural aspects

Through the consultations with the project partners and the encounter with grant schemes beneficiaries taking place in the framework of the evaluation process, a new culture on the development of particular activities, projects, investments, etc. was promoted, in accordance and respect of social-cultural aspects of development and respect of the diversity. A wide social acceptance of the interventions is a condition for successful implementation of particular key areas of intervention or particular projects under all ESF co-financed actions.

Regional distinctiveness is also a key factor in the ESF programming; the need here is to preserve the specific character of the regions which can have positive impact on quality of life of permanent inhabitants by improving a wide range of factors of socio-economic development.

3.5 Gender equality

Gender equality is a key principle of ESF evaluation and an overarching policy of the EU, which was taken into consideration at all levels of the evaluation process.

Promoting equality of men and women is one of the fundamental principles of the EU which served it consistently since 1957. However, the progress achieved to date is threatened by the socio-economic crisis in Europe and also in Croatia, as since, the domestic labour market is characterized by a continuous decline in employment and increase of unemployment, with women being at a particular disadvantage.

In 2014 the unemployment rate²⁰ was 17.3%, with the female unemployment rate (18.3%) is higher than that of males (16.5%).

²⁰ Source: Eurostat

Actions promoting gender equality must seek to ensure the promotion of equality between men and women and the integration of a gender perspective in all stages of programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of an Operational Programme, and in particular:

- Promoting social inclusion of women, prevent and combat female poverty and all forms of gender violence
- Mainstreaming gender issues in social care and health care interventions
- Support the harmonization of family and work-life
- Promote equal participation of women in public life and in the policy-making processes
- Fighting gender discrimination and gender stereotypes.

Moreover, the involvement in the EU funds programming of public institutions and civil society representatives dealing with gender equality issues, should be constantly ensured by the managers of the OP through extensive consultations and appropriate monitoring and evaluation provisions.

The gender equality approach, in line with the above statements, has been taken into consideration throughout the implementation of the evaluation project and in the analysis of the findings.

3.6 Environmental protection

The Consultant's team was cautious in applying all common environmental measures, such as circulation of documents in electronic form, avoidance of useless print works, etc. Moreover, it was agreed in the course of the first PSC meeting of July 25th 2014, that one of the project outputs (Compendium of best practices) would be delivered in electronic form (USB key) instead of producing 600 printed booklets.

3.7 Institutional & management capacity

Setting the institutional and management capacity for the management and evaluation of ESF interventions in Croatia will have to fully comply with the relevant EC regulations. It will be supported by government resolutions on the division of responsibilities and duties as well as procedures, including a clear system of data collection and monitoring.

All Managing Authorities are expected to play a leading role in this process, through the establishment of clear evaluation procedures and the accurate collection and classification of data on projects.

3.8 Economic & financial viability

Not applicable for this project.

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Overall conclusions on implementation (for entire duration, including critical issues /risks)

The project implementation ran smoothly, but with exceptionally high workload for both project experts and project partners' staff. At the beginning of the project, the experts' team quickly familiarized with the project environment and got a more realistic view of the challenges and needs concerning the implementation of the project activities and achievement of its overall and specific objectives.

During the first weeks of the inception period, the project office was successfully established. The assessment of the progress in the implementation of the grant schemes lead to a quick selection of those that became the object of the evaluation.

The cooperation with the Main Project Partner and all other Project Partners proved excellent, and the experts' team was quickly integrated. All institutions have efficient and motivated teams, which is an asset for the tasks allocated to them in the framework of the ESF implementation, fully aware of their role and responsibilities in this process. However, it is to be noted the lack of staff at the Ministry of Education, which creates exceptional workload in the few responsible staff in charge of the HRD OP.

All project partners, although overloaded with their current ESF programming obligations, have been rapidly mobilized and took action for their involvement in the evaluation process. Particular effort was made for their continuous information and involvement in the evaluation tasks performed by project and for participation at consultations with the experts' team on the findings of the evaluation.

From the implementation of the present evaluation project, it was shown that the timeframe of 12 months is not sufficient for such large-scale evaluation exercises. Lack of appropriate classified and codified data allowing for a quick desk analysis and setting of the field work parameters, coupled with the workload of the institutions related to other tasks, sometimes of more immediate need for attention, such as programming or implementation, create delays in the overall process of the evaluation. Quality evaluations need in one hand correct information and data for the analysis, and on the other hand sufficient time allocated for the mobilisation of the appropriate partners and organisation of consultations, including with the managers of the programme, beneficiaries and members of the Evaluation Steering Group.

Moreover, overall ex-post and impact evaluations provide better results if they can concentrate on a number of pre-defined strategic themes, in reply to the EU policies and to the national strategies, allowing for comparisons among different programmes, regions and countries. It is therefore strongly advised that a number of strategic evaluations are designed and carried out throughout the programming period 2014-2020 on a variety of themes and priority subjects of interest, as a basis for further specification of the programming (for example development of more targeted grant schemes) and for coping with the methodological requirements of the future ex-post and impact assessments.

4.2 Recommendations for future programmes and projects

Detailed recommendations for future programmes and projects are provided in the Appendix 3: "Recommendations for future ESF interventions". In the text below the main recommendations stemming from the evaluation exercise, are outlined.

1. More clarity in the definition of the operations and their specifications

Based on the OPEHR 2014-2020 strategic programming, programme managers should work around a more concrete contextualisation of the programming and prepare extended specifications of operations with concrete targeting and delivery mechanisms appropriate to the intended measures.

Particularly for the grant schemes, it is important that the guidelines for applicants are clearer with regard to the objectives of the grant schemes and the expected actions to be implemented by beneficiaries. They should also allow better understanding of the link between the objectives of the grant schemes and the objectives of the broader policies. Moreover, grant schemes applicants should be requested to clearly identify the specific

objectives, indicative actions and indicative activities to which their project responds, and provide appropriate justification.

The programme managers responsible for specifying the programming should also make an effort to move away from an approach based on policy sectors by formulating operations/actions designed to directly reach the target groups (individuals) as well as operations/actions that aim to reach the needs of the potential beneficiary organisations (structures and systems).

Programming of operations should be consistent with policies, but clear and specific, able to respond to the needs of target groups. It should also clearly address aspects such as territorial specificities, administrative capacities at the local level and involvement of a broad spectrum of partners including private sector partners.

2. Grant schemes projects should focus more on sustainable results rather on activities and outputs

The main question is how to plan long-term effects to the target groups, and how to measure them over time. An attempt at a more careful planning and better monitoring on behalf of project beneficiaries, under the guidance of the programme managers, should lead to better projects with regard to outputs, results and potential impacts.

If explicit requirements are combined with more time allowed for information, dialogue and support for project applicants, better projects will be designed with better monitoring and reporting provisions. Timely and efficient awareness raising campaigns and continuous training of potential beneficiaries are paramount for the success of the calls for proposals. Better results can also be achieved through the involvement of information multipliers at the local level, and the operation of a permanent help desk (web-based and/or phone hot line) by the MA.

It is also recommended to encourage large and sustainable partnerships between the public and private sector and civil society, in order to build capacity to implement larger-size projects and increase the potential for sustainable results to the target groups.

3. Promote the development and support of innovative ideas in reply to the needs of the target groups

Innovation can be introduced not only in activities aimed at providing support to the creation/enhancement of structures but also in services to individuals, such as, for example, better and more focused training programmes with innovative content and learning modules. Encouraging learning at the workplace, even in the form of short-term internships, has been recognised as one of the best learning methods for those returning to the labour market after a long period as unemployed or inactive.

Promotion of and tangible support to innovative projects is strongly encouraged in all sectors, as well as capacity building and awareness raising related to the promotion of social innovation.

4. Overcome project management weaknesses at project level

Despite a good level of project ownership on behalf of project beneficiaries, project management is often weak or insufficient, for lack of experience or lack of time. Besides the obvious problems in project management that this situation may generate, it also jeopardise the sustainability of the programme as a whole. Also, internal evaluation should be tackled as an important aspect of the projects' implementation, as a means to increase the quality of projects and as an important tool for learning how to increase sustainability of projects.

5. Strengthen programme monitoring and evaluation

Based on the experience gained from the implementation of the HRD OP 2007-2013, the monitoring systems and procedures for the OPEHR 2014-2020, including the MIS, should be further rationalised and strengthened, in order to avoid shortcomings in information and data collection and storage and to ensure effective and efficient management of ESF investments.

ANNEXES

FINAL REPORT ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Updated Log Frame

Annex 2 – Updated Implementation Schedule

Annex 3 – Updated Annual and Final Overall Work Plan

Annex 4 – Updated resource schedule

PROJECT OUTPUTS

Annex 5 – Methodological approach for conducting impact evaluations

Annex 6 - List of beneficiaries interviewed in the framework of the impact assessments

Annex 7 - List of interviews and focus groups conducted in the framework of the impact assessments

Annex 8 - Overview of the MIS

Annex 9 - Concept note on Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector

Annex 10 - Concept note on Compendium on best practices

Annex 11 - List of beneficiaries interviewed in the framework of the preparation of the compendium on best practices

Annex 12 - Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the employment sector

Annex 13 - Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of operations in employment sector

Annex 14 - Report on identified strengths and obstacles in employment sector

Annex 15 - Assessment report on the most effective activities / group of activities within social inclusion sector that contributed to the operational goal achievement

Annex 16 - Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the social inclusion sector

Annex 17 - Report on overview of the role of public, non-governmental and private sectors in ensuring projects activities sustainability in social inclusion sector

Annex 18 - Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of project in the social inclusion per each sector (private, public, non-governmental) – English version

Annex 19 - Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of project in the social inclusion per each sector (private, public, non-governmental) – Croatian version

Annex 20 a - Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in employment sector

Annex 20 b - Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in social inclusion sector

Annex 20 c - Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in education sector

Annex 21 - Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the education sector

Annex 22 - Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organizations and institutions in implementation of grant schemes in education sector

Annex 23 - Report on identified strengths and obstacles in education sector

Annex 24 - Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions – English version

Annex 25 - Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions – Croatian version

Annex 26 - Compendium of best practices – English version

Annex 27 - Compendium of best practices – Croatian version

Annex 28 - Report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities with recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of operations

Annex 29 - Lessons learned regarding overall implementation of HRD OP operations

Annex 30 - Incidental expenditure report

EVALUATION REPORTS

Appendix 1: Report 1 - Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education

Appendix 2: Report 2 - Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector

Appendix 3: Report 3 - Recommendations for future ESF interventions

Appendix 4: Report 4 - Compendium of best practices

Appendix 5: Report 5 - Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations

Annex 1- Updated Log Frame

Project Description	Objectifiable Verifiable Indicators	Sources for Verification	Assumptions
Overall Objective			
To enhance Croatia's capacity for effective and efficient use of ESF funds by preparing adequate number and high quality operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive future evaluations of ESF support in Croatia Good progress on the financial / output / result indicators of ESF-funded programme/s in Croatia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future evaluation reports on ESF support in Croatia ESF-funded programme/s indicator system/s 	
Project Purpose			
To provide relevant findings, conclusions and recommendations, in relation to the achievement of specific objective for each measure of the IPA HRD OP, particularly as regards its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.	Approved findings, conclusions, and recommendations in the evaluation report and all other related reports/analyses within the evaluation of the IPA HRD OP assistance	Evaluation report and all other related reports/analyses within the evaluation of the IPA HRD OP assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The approved findings and conclusions are taken into account for future planning and implementing of ESF operations The recommendations are followed through an action plan
Components / Outputs			
Component 1: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of employment	1.1 Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the employment sector conducted 1.2 Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of operations in employment sector delivered 1.3 Report on identified strengths and obstacles in employment sector delivered	Impact surveys in the employment sector Report on stakeholder involvement in the employment sector Report on identified strengths and obstacles in the employment sector Six-monthly Progress Report Final evaluation report	
Component 2: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of social inclusion	2.1 The Assessment report on the most effective activities / group of activities within social inclusion sector that contributed to the operational goal achievement prepared. 2.2 Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the social inclusion sector conducted; 2.3 Report on overview of the role of public, non-governmental and private sectors in ensuring projects activities sustainability in social inclusion sector delivered 2.4 At least 200 copies of handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of project in the social inclusion per each sector (private, public, non-governmental) printed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment report on the most effective activities / group of activities within social inclusion sector that contributed to the operational goal achievement Impact survey in the social inclusion sector Report on stakeholder involvement in the social inclusion sector 	

Project Description	Objectifiable Verifiable Indicators	Sources for Verification	Assumptions
	2.5 The Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in social inclusion sector delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on identified strengths and obstacles in the social sector Handbook on best practices Six-monthly Progress Report Final evaluation report 	
Component 3: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of education	3.1. Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the education sector conducted 3.2 Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organizations and institutions in implementation of grant schemes in education sector delivered 3.3 Report on identified strengths and obstacles in education sector delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact survey in the education sector Report on stakeholder involvement in the education sector Report on identified strengths and obstacles in the education sector Six-monthly Progress Report Final report 	
Component 4: Final phase, providing lessons learned and recommendations	4.1 Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions given in printed booklet form (at least 200 copies) and communicated with main stakeholders (presentation for at least 20 persons, with possibility of discussion) 4.2 At least 600 printed compendiums of all interventions and best practice examples (including graphical design) delivered; user friendly digital version (allowing cross-referencing by tags agreed with project partners) of compendium for web publication delivered 4.3 The report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities with recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of operations delivered 4.4 Lessons learned regarding overall implementation of HRD OP operations (included in this evaluation) prepared in a written form and delivered to all HRD OS institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publications and compendiums Report with recommendations Report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities Six-monthly Progress Report Final report 	

Annex 2 – Updated Implementation Schedule

Activities and outputs		Timeframe of implementation												Inputs in working days				
		Project months												Calendar months (2014, 2015):				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TL	KE2	SNKE	JNKE	Total
Inception Phase		JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	180	175	200	60	615
0.1	Establish a fully operational project office													25	25	6	0	56
0.2	Review current state of play													1,5	0	0	0	1,5
0.3	Meetings with relevant institutions and stakeholders													2	8	0	0	10
0.4	Establishing modalities													3,5	5	0	0	8,5
0.5	Presentation of the project													1	0	0	0	1
0.6	Develop and submit the Inception Report and Work Plan													5	2	6	0	13
Implementation Phase														12	10	0	0	22
Component 1: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of employment														120	140	194	60	514
1.1	Impact survey of the employment sector (output 1.1)													15	30	25	20	90
1.2	Analysis of stakeholder involvement (output 1.2)													5	10	10	20	45
1.3	Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures (output 1.3)													5	10	10	0	25
Component 2: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of social inclusion														5	10	5	0	20
2.1	Assessment of implemented activities (output 2.1)													40	40	74	20	174
2.2	Impact survey of the social inclusion sector (output 2.2)													5	10	5	0	20
2.3	Analysis of stakeholder involvement (output 2.3)													5	10	10	20	45
2.3	Handbook on best practice results for partnerships (output 2.4)													5	10	5	0	20
2.4	Evaluation on possible positive / negative influences of law regulations (output 2.5)													20	0	30	0	50
Component 3: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of education														5	10	24	0	39
3.1	Impact survey in the education sector (output 3.1)													15	30	25	20	90
3.2	Analysis of stakeholder involvement (output 3.2)													5	10	10	20	45
3.3	Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures (output 3.3)													5	10	5	0	20
Component 4: Lessons learnt and recommendations														5	10	10	0	25
4.1	Recommendations of possible improvements for future interventions (output 4.1)													50	40	70	0	160
4.2	Compendium and best practice examples (output 4.2)													10	10	0	0	20
4.3	Analysis of the share of the financial resources spent for different types of activities (output 4.3)													29	1	60	0	90
4.4	Lessons learned and communicated (output 4.4)													6	19	0	0	25
Closure Phase														5	10	10	0	25
5.1	Finalization of the evaluation report (output 5.1) and project Draft Final Report													35	10	0	0	45
5.2	Wrap-up event (output 5.2) and finalisation of the Final Report													20	7	0	0	27
Outputs (Reports)														15	3	0	0	18
Report 1: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education														Submission dates				
Report 2: Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector														June 2015				
Report 3: Recommendations for future ESF interventions														May 2015				
Report 4: Compendium of best practices														May 2015				
Report 5: Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations														June 2015				
Project reports														Planned dates				
Inception Report (Draft submitted on 30 July 2014 and revised draft following the PSC meeting, on 11 August 2014; Approved on 14 October 2014)														-				
Monthly Progress Reports														No later than 7 days after the end of each month				
Interim Report (Draft submitted on 30 January 2015 and revised draft following the PSC meeting, on 4 March 2015; Approved by the Project Partner on 4 March 2015; Approved by the Contracting Authority on 18 May 2015).														30 January 2015				
Draft Final Report (submitted on 26 May 2015)														30 May 2015				
Final Report (Submitted on 29 June 2015).														Within 1 month of receiving comments				
Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings														1 st : 25 July 2014, 2 nd : 16 February 2015, 3 rd : 18 June 2015				

* Outputs and Reports are signalled as final deliverables (♦)

Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance

EuropeAid/133183/D/SER/HR

FINAL REPORT

Annex 3 – Updated Annual and Final Overall Work Plan

Activities and outputs		Timeframe											
		Project months											
		Calendar months (2014, 2015):											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Inception Phase													
0.1	Establish a fully operational project office												
0.2	Review current state of play												
0.3	Meetings with relevant institutions and stakeholders												
0.4	Establishing modalities												
0.5	Presentation of the project												
0.6	Develop and submit the Inception Report and Work Plan												
Implementation Phase													
Component 1: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of employment													
1.1	Impact survey of the employment sector (output 1.1)												
1.2	Analysis of stakeholder involvement (output 1.2)												
1.3	Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures (output 1.3)												
Component 2: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of social inclusion													
2.1	Assessment of implemented activities (output 2.1)												
2.2	Impact survey of the social inclusion sector (output 2.2)												
2.3	Analysis of stakeholder involvement (output 2.3)												
2.3	Handbook on best practice results for partnerships (output 2.4)												
2.4	Evaluation on possible positive / negative influences of law regulations (output 2.5)												
Component 3: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the field of education													
3.1	Impact survey in the education sector (output 3.1)												
3.2	Analysis of stakeholder involvement (output 3.2)												
3.3	Identification of strengths and obstacles, including administrative procedures (output 3.3)												
Component 4: Lessons learnt and recommendations													
4.1	Recommendations of possible improvements for future interventions (output 4.1)												
4.2	Compendium and best practice examples (output 4.2)												
4.3	Analysis of the share of the financial resources spent for different types of activities (output 4.3)												
4.4	Lessons learned and communicated (output 4.4)												
Closure phase													
5.1	Finalization of the evaluation report (output 5.1) and project Draft Final Report												
5.2	Wrap-up event (output 5.2) and finalisation of the Final Report												
Outputs (Reports)													
Report 1: Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education													
Report 2: Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector													
Report 3: Recommendations for future ESF interventions													
Report 4: Compendium of best practices													
Report 5: Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations													
Project reports													
Inception Report													
Monthly Progress Reports													
Interim Report													
Draft Final Report													
Final Report													
Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings													

Annex 4 – Updated resource schedule

Months	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Experts	Jun-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	
Key experts														
KE1	1	23	11	15	17	20	15	5	20	22	12	16	3	180
KE2	1	23	11	12	12	5	15	15	5	22	12	21	21	175
Total KE	2	46	22	27	29	25	30	20	25	44	24	37	24	355
Non-key experts														
SNKE	0	6	0	0	52	36	25	20	17	16	11	6	11	200
NKE 1		3												3
NKE 2		3												3
NKE 3					10	5		10	10	10	9	7	8	69
NKE 4					13	5	5	10					2	35
NKE 5					9	11			6	4				30
NKE 6 A					20	15	10							45
NKE 6 B							10		1	2	2			15
JNKE	0	0	0	0	15	17	14	10	4	0	0	0	0	60
NKE 7					15	17	14	10	4					60
Total NKE	0	6	0	0	67	53	39	30	21	16	11	6	11	260
Total all experts	2	52	22	27	96	78	69	50	46	60	35	43	35	615

Annex 5 – Methodological approach for conducting impact evaluations

Annex 6 - List of beneficiaries interviewed in the framework of the impact assessments

Annex 7 - List of interviews and focus groups conducted in the framework of the impact assessments

Annex 8 - Overview of the MIS

Annex 9 - Concept note on Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector

Annex 10 - Concept note on Compendium on best practices

Annex 11 - List of beneficiaries interviewed in the framework of the preparation of the compendium on best practices

Annex 12 - Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the employment sector

Annex 13 - Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organisations and institutions in implementation of operations in employment sector

Annex 14 - Report on identified strengths and obstacles in employment sector

Annex 15 - Assessment report on the most effective activities / group of activities within social inclusion sector that contributed to the operational goal achievement

Annex 16 - Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the social inclusion sector

Annex 17 - Report on overview of the role of public, non-governmental and private sectors in ensuring projects activities sustainability in social inclusion sector

Annex 18 - Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of project in the social inclusion per each sector (private, public, non-governmental) – English version

Annex 19 - Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of project in the social inclusion per each sector (private, public, non-governmental) – Croatian version

Annex 20 a - Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in employment sector

Annex 20 b - Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in social inclusion sector

Annex 20 c - Evaluation report on positive / negative influence of law regulations on relevant benefits on project participants / benefit users motivation to get temporary employment after being empowered through project activities in education sector

Annex 21 - Impact survey of the interventions implemented within IPA HRD OP 2007-2009 in the education sector

Annex 22 - Report on overview of the involvement of different types of organizations and institutions in implementation of grant schemes in education sector

Annex 23 - Report on identified strengths and obstacles in education sector

Annex 24 - Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions – English version

Annex 25 - Recommendations on possible improvements for future interventions – Croatian version

Annex 26 - Compendium of best practices – English version

Annex 27 - Compendium of best practices – Croatian version

Annex 28 - Report of analysis of share of financial resources spent on different types of activities with recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of operations

Annex 29 - Lessons learned regarding overall implementation of HRD OP operations

Annex 30 - Incidental expenditure report

Appendix 1

Report 1 - Evaluation of previous IPA HRD OP assistance in the fields of employment, social inclusion and education

Appendix 2

Report 2 - Handbook on best practices examples for partnerships and sustainability of projects in the social inclusion sector

Appendix 3

Report 3 - Recommendations for future ESF interventions

Appendix 4

Report 4 - Compendium of best practices

Appendix 5

Report 5 - Analysis and recommendations for improvement of cost-effectiveness of ESF co-financed operations