**Identification**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project name: | Ex-ante Evaluation of Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014–2020 |
| Contract No | ДО3-76/26.02.2014 |
| Contracting Authority: | Ministry of Education and Science |
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| Date of contract signature: | 26/02/2014 |
| Date of starting execution: | 26/02/2014 |
| Contract end date: | 26/08/2014 |
| Type of report: | Final report |
| Date of report: | 12/08/2014 |

*This report has been drafted under project BG051PO001-8.1-01-0001 "Support for General Directorate "Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes" of the Ministry of Education and Science to manage successfully priority axes 3 and 4 of Operational Programme Human Resources Development" which has been implemented with the financial assistance of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union.*

***The opinions expressed in this evaluation are of its authors and may not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of Education and Science***

About the Consultant

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# List of Abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **AA** | Agricultural Academy |
| **BAS** | Bulgarian Academy of Sciences |
| **CCP** | Climate Change Policy |
| **CCU** | Central Coordination Unit |
| **CM** | Council of Ministers |
| **CMD** | Council of Ministers’ Decision |
| **CSF** | Common Strategic Framework |
| **EC** | European Commission |
| **EP** | Environmental Policy |
| **ESIF** | European Structural and Investment Funds |
| **ESF** | European Social Fund |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **GD SFIEP** | General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |
| **IP** | Investment Priority |
| **MA** | Managing Authority |
| **MES** | Ministry of Education and Science |
| **MFP** | Maritime and Fisheries Programme 2014–2020 |
| **OPAC** | Operational Programme Administrative Capacity 2007–2013 |
| **OPHRD** | Operational Programme Human Resources Development |
| **OPGG** | Operational Programme Good Governance |
| **OPIC** | Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness 2014–2020 |
| **OPE** | Operational Programme Environment |
| **OPRD** | Operational Programme Regional Development 2007–2013 |
| **OPRG** | Operational Programme Regions in Growth 2014–2020 |
| **OPDCBE** | Operational Programme Development of the Competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy |
| **OPTTI** | Operational Programme Transport and Transport Infrastructure 2014–2020 |
| **OPSESG** | Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth |
| **PA** | Priority Axis |
| **PA 2014-2020** | Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria |
| **R&D** | Research and Development |
| **RDP** | Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 |
| **SACP** | State Agency for Child Protection |
| **SCF** | EU Structural and Cohesion Funds |
| **SEN** | Special Educational Needs |
| **SO** | Specific Objective |
| **TL** | Team Leader |
| **TS** | Technical Specification |
| **TWG** | Thematic Working Group |
| **VET** | Vocational Education and Training |
| **WD** | Working Document |

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# Summary

The ex-ante evaluation of Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth for the 2014–2020 Period is made as part of the mandatory activities related to programming of the operational programme. The evaluation was designed to support and contribute to the improvement of the quality of the programming process, in accordance with the Common Provisions Regulation (1303/2013).

The evaluation is financed by project BG051PO001-8.1-01-0001 *"Support for General Directorate "Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes" of the Ministry of Education and Science to manage successfully priority axes 3 and 4 of Operational Programme Human Resources Development*” which has been implemented with the financial assistance of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union.

The evaluation report, of which this summary is an integral part, gives account of the Consultant's opinion and recommendations on the latest version of the operational programme from May 2014. The analyses are structured in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Contracting Authority and according to the evaluation questions in the following chapters/evaluations:

* Evaluation of external coherence;
* Evaluation of internal coherence;
* Evaluation of the system of indicators;
* Evaluation of the Programme's financial allocation;
* Evaluation of the administrative capacity;

The evaluation contains 6 annexes as follows: sources of information (Annex 1), meetings held and focus groups (Annex 2), on-line surveys (Annexes 3 and 4), Programme's intervention logic (Annex 5) and indicator fiches (Annex 6).

This evaluation has been made in close cooperation with the Contracting Authority, General Directorate "Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes" of the Ministry of Education and Science, which is the Managing Authority of the operational programme. The opinion of other key stakeholders such as the following has been taken into account through meetings, on-line research and focus groups: the working group for Programme preparation, directorates of the Ministry of Education and Science, representatives of scientific organisations, higher, school and pre-school education, NGOs and potential programme beneficiaries. The following qualitative and quantitative methods of gathering information and assessment have been used: desk research of documents and data; interviews; on-line questionnaires; focus groups; stakeholder analysis; tree of objectives; analysis of the intervention logic; comparative analysis; workload analysis; risk analysis; financial and legal analysis; SMART analysis of indicators and indicator fiches.

The main conclusions from the analyses of the topics and the issues subject to evaluation are given below.

Evaluation of the Programme's External Coherence;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **?** | Coherence with the European strategic framework – contribution to the EU Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth |

Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth for the 2014–2020 Period is expected to contribute to two of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy: Target 2 - *Investing 3% (target of 1.5% for Bulgaria) of GDP in research and development (R&D)* and Target 4 – а) *Reducing the rates of early school leaving to 10% (11% for Bulgaria)* and b) *at least 40% (36% for Bulgaria) of 30-34–year-olds completing third level education.* The Programme supports the execution of 5 out of the 7 flagship initiatives for Strategy implementation.

The Programme is also expected to contribute to axis 7 "Society of Knowledge" of the Danube Strategy. This operational programme is expected to complement the measures under the Horizon 2020 Programme, as well as the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation and the Erasmus for All Programme.

The Programme does not reflect to a sufficient degree the territorial aspects related to the problems with diverging quality of education in small towns and big cities and the territorial concentration of children from ethnic minorities.

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| ? | Coherence with the national strategic framework – National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020, National Reform Programme |

The operational programme is based on and takes account of the analyses and the measures provided for in the National Development Programme and in the National Reform Programme in the field of science and education.

|  |  |
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| ? | Coherence with the EU legislative framework |

The operational programme takes account of the requirements of the basic regulations concerning the 2014-2020 programming period, specifically the Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013, the European Social Fund Regulation 1304/2013 and the European Regional Development Fund Regulation 1301/2013.

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| --- | --- |
| ? | Coherence with the national legislative framework |

The operational programme does not contradict to the provisions of national legislation with regard to science and legislation. Some laws in this area, such as the Secondary Education Law and the Vocational Education and Training Law, which may influence the implementation of some of the Programme measures, are still to be drafted and updated.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Coherence with other sectoral programmes |

As a whole, the operational programme takes account of most of the targets and measures set in EU and national strategic sectoral documents, including: Bucharest Communiqué of the Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Supporting Growth and Jobs – an Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems (2011), Bruges Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011—2020, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: New Impetus for European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to Support the Europe 2020 Strategy, Updated National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2030, National Youth Strategy 2010-2020, „[National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014–2020](http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=476),[National Research Development Strategy 2020](http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=708), Strategy for Preventing and Reducing the Share of Drop-outs and Early School Leavers 2013-2020 and National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2020.

The National Roadmap for Research Infrastructures has been taken into account but has not ministered to focusing the support as it is being updated. The National Higher Education Strategy, the National Smart Specialisation Strategy, the National Teaching Staff Development Strategy and the Strategy for Effective Implementation of Information and Communication Technologies in Science and Education of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014–2020 are being elaborated, which has hindered the focusing of Programme support in those areas.

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| --- | --- |
| ? | Coherence with the Partnership Agreement |

The Programme is in accordance with the main policy lines of the Partnership Agreement. The Programme does not take full account of the following challenges in the field of science, education and innovations outlined in the Partnership Agreement:

* Establishing and enhancing of partnerships among higher education, enterprises and research;
* Strengthening of the management capacity of scientific institutes;
* Creating of possibilities for researcher traineeships in enterprises;
* Urging of educational institutions to deliver educational services beyond their infrastructure on the basis of partnership with employers, state and municipal institutions and other stakeholders;
* Developing of partnerships between business and scientists.

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| --- | --- |
| ? | Coherence with other operational programmes |

During the preparation of the Programme and of the other operational programmes there has been a process of synchronisation, division and complementing of support. As a result, many of the issues have been taken into account and addressed. These processes still continue, though to a much smaller degree, and will continue until programmes are finally approved. In this regard, Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth may undergo some further corrections with regard to complementing and distinguishing from the other operational programmes. This is particularly needed in reference to Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness.

Evaluation of the Programme's Internal Coherence

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| ? | Relevance of the OPSESG strategy |

The Programme strategy is based on the problems in the following three areas: scientific research, higher education and school education. The strategy is well grounded and reasoned, with the major weaknesses being related to the need for supplementing the analyses and addressing all of the analysed problems through appropriate measures.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **?** | * Adequacy of the measures set forth in the Programme and the degree to which they will contribute to achieving its objectives |

The Programme is formulated in 4 priority axes. Three of the axes address the key problems discussed in the strategy and the fourth axis is planned for technical assistance to support Programme management and implementation.

The first specific axis ”*Scientific Research and Technological Development”* is laid down in two investment priorities referring to improvement in scientific infrastructure and promotion of scientific and applied research and the link between science and business. These two priorities and the specific objectives reflect the basic needs. The justification of the first specific objective outlines the main problems and approaches to their solution but there is a need for better structuring and editing of the wording. The justification of the second specific objective is much more vague and the approaches and the measures for addressing it are therefore not sufficiently convincing. The existence of a clear strategy for dividing and supplementing of the support to be delivered in this area between Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth and Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness is of particular importance for the focusing of the investment priority.

The second specific axis ”*Education and Lifelong Learning”* is outlined in four investment priorities aimed at (1) reducing and preventing of early school leaving, (2) improving of the quality of and access to higher education, (3) lifelong learning and (4) improving of the systems of education and training towards the labour market. The first investment priority is well laid down in three specific objectives aimed at improving of children's achievements, inclusion and retention of pupils in school, and improving of the quality of education. The justification of the second investment priority which is aimed at higher education is also well grounded, with some possibilities for improvement for the third specific objective referring to the access to higher education. The third investment priority gives a fair account of the problems related to the qualification of the persons working in the field of education. The second specific objective of this priority which relates to ongoing education needs to be focused so as to avoid duplication of support with Operational Programme Human Resources. The justification of the fourth investment priority needs focusing and complementing of the needs analysis. The promotion of education in engineering and technical and natural subjects is not well grounded. The support for improving computer skills as a whole has already been addressed in the previous investment priorities 1 and 2.

The third priority axis ”*Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion”* is laid down in two investment priorities aimed at active inclusion with the purpose of better employability and social and economic integration of marginalised communities. The two specific objectives of the first investment priority address two major problems for inclusive education: inclusive education for children with special educational needs and the system of education that takes account of the individual needs. The justification of the second specific objective is too general and is possible to be focused on the all-day organisation of the learning process. The justification of the second investment priority points to the major problems but is not exhaustive in terms of rendering specific information about the segregation in the process of learning, which would, as a result, support focusing of the measures.

The fourth priority axis ”*Technical Assistance”* includes one specific objective covering the need for strengthening of the administrative capacity of the Managing Authority and of Programme beneficiaries. In general, the basic needs are outlined, as well as the possible measures to address them.

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| **?** | * Adequacy of the eligible beneficiaries and target groups identified |

The beneficiaries and the target groups have generally been adequately identified and qualify for the measures and activities set. The exception is the Ministry of Education and Science which is included as a beneficiary under Priority Axis 1 without pointing out clearly its role in the measures for support of scientific research and technological development.

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| ? | Relevance of the proposed forms of support; |

The Programme does not envisage any specific forms of support and it is expected that the support will be provided by both direct grant contracts and in a competitive way. The proposed principles for selection of operations are generally appropriate. Two of them, i.e. the thematic concentration and the application of the horizontal principles, are too general and mandatory for all operations and do not therefore add value to the selection of operations.

No financial instruments are planned to be used. Given that there are activities with a potential for the application of such instruments (scholarships, joint science-business initiatives), it is advisory to explore the possibilities to apply financial instruments in some of the measures.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **?** | Assessment of the integration of the horizontal principles   * Analysis of the extent to which the principle of equality and non-discrimination has been included in the programming document and the extent to which it is present in the various parts of the Programme; * Assessment of the potential contribution of the Programme to the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination; |

The Programme is grounded on the basic horizontal principles of partnership, equality and non-discrimination, sustainable development, gender equality, social innovations and transnational cooperation. These principles are envisaged to be integrated in the Programme by both specific measures and through giving advantage in the selection of projects. There are no mechanisms for monitoring of the principles of sustainable development and gender equality. The planned ad hoc monitoring inspections of the application of the principle of equality and non-discrimination could possibly lead to a greater administrative burden for both the Managing Authority and the beneficiaries.

Evaluation of the System of Indicators

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| ? | Assessment of the relevance and the clarity of the system of indicators |

The system of indicators was improved and further elaborated and in August 2014 General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” proposed baseline and target values for most of the indicators. Still the system needs improvement as far as it concerns reduction of the number of result indicators and their better coherence with the specific objectives. Notes have been made with this regard.

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| --- | --- |
| ? | Assessment of the realism in the quantitative expression of the baseline and target values of the indicators |

In August 2014 General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” proposed a new system of indicators with baseline and target values which is not yet incorporated in the text of the programme. The new system has been commented as well as the indicators’ values. As the methodology for calculation of the values have not been presented the evaluation of the realism of the values set is based on data from the previous experience in similar measures under Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, the budget allocated, available administrative capacity and information presented in the programme on the activities and objectives which the indicators measure. Not all of the result indicators have baseline values. Most of the values set seem realistic judging on the available information.

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| ? | Relevance of the milestones defined |

This section could not be drafted as the Programme's latest version of May 2014 does not identify any milestones for most of the indicators.

Evaluation of Budget Allocation

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| --- | --- |
| ? | Consistency and justification of budgetary allocation against the Programme objectives |

The budget of the operational programme is allocated between education and lifelong learning (36.8 for Priority Axis 2 and 19.4% for Priority Axis 3 respectively) and research and technological development (Priority Axis 1 – 39q8.5). 4% of the programme's funds are allocated for technical assistance.

In order to improve *education and lifelong learning (Priority Axis 2)* with the EUR 200 million of EU funds planned given the high priority of education in the achievement of smart growth in the long run, the 9% increase, which is in fact a one percent increase in real terms, seems insufficient. Another important issue is also connected to the allocation of funds among the variety of activities covered by this priority axis, for which there is no information at this stage. Information is also needed about the manner in which the requirement for focusing of at least 60% of all ESF funds on 5 investment priorities at the most will be met.

In order to achieve the targets connected to *integration in education* (Priority Axis 3), EUR 116 million of EU funds have been earmarked. These resources are considerably smaller than the financing of similar activities in the 2007-2013 period under the Operational Programme Human Resources Development.

With the budgetary commitment profile by years defined in the up-to-date version of the operational programme and assuming that Programme implementation will generally follow that of Priority Axes 3 and 4 of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, there is a risk of automatic decommitment of funds as early as in 2018-2019. It is therefore advisable to plan lower budgetary commitments in the first three years of Programme implementation on account of the following years when certification is expected to speed up.

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| ? | Consistency and justification of budgetary allocation against regulation requirements (integrated approach, focus of interventions, financial engineering, etc.) |

The allocation of budgetary commitments by year is ambitious and runs the risk of an automatic loss of funds in the first years of implementation if the profile of absorption of funds will be similar to those of similar activities under Operational Programme Human Resources development 2007-2013. The evaluator has therefore proposed an alternative allocation.

The version of May 2014 does not include a financial justification, which does not allow assessing whether the requirement of thematic concentration has been met.

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| --- | --- |
| ? | Analysis of the share of financial resources targeted at areas of strategic importance and of the extent to which funds are directly targeted at the needs and challenges identified in the socio-economic analysis |

The operational programme will be conducive to the achievement of the following priorities of the National Development Programme:

1. Improving the access to and enhancing the quality of education and training and the quality characteristics of the workforce.

2. Reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion.

5. Support of innovation and investment activities to increase the competitiveness of the economy.

The financial allocation of the Partnership Agreement suggests that a total of 23% of all EU funds[[1]](#footnote-1) will be spent for thematic objectives 9 and 10,[[2]](#footnote-2)which is lower but comparable to the 28% planned for analogous priorities of the National Development Programme.

Evaluation of the Administrative Capacity, Programme Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

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| ? | Adequacy of the management structure |

In June 2014, General Directorate "Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes" of the Ministry of Education and Science was restructured by setting up new units in connection to the functions to be assumed by the Directorate as the Managing Authority of the operational programme.

The structure is adequate to the Directorate's new responsibilities. Risk Management and Control Department should be directly subordinate to the general director in order to ensure the independence of the irregularities officer.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Adequacy of the human resources and administrative capacity for Programme management |

The Managing Authority is planned to be operational with 87 experts. Analyses show that the human resources planned are not adequate to the responsibilities of the following departments: Programming and Contracting Department, Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments Department and Risk Management and Control Department. The first two departments need additional human resources. In order to reduce the workload of Risk Management and Control Department, it is advisable to abolish the ex-ante control of beneficiaries' procurement procedures or to introduce a threshold above which to exercise such control.

The officers have experience in EU funds management and have possibilities for training. There is some experience in the elaboration of procedures and manuals. The work on the elaboration of the management and control systems has already started.

The turnover of staff in this directorate is small and the experts are generally satisfied with working for the General Directorate but their better motivation will improve the Directorate's administrative capacity.

The insufficient technical resources of the Directorate turn out to be a key impediment to Programme implementation. An equipment supply procurement has already been launched.

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| ? | Capacity of Programme beneficiaries and measures aimed to strengthen it |

A significant number of potential Programme beneficiaries have already built up a capacity on the basis of the projects implemented in the present programming period. Nevertheless, both the Managing Authority and the beneficiaries are of the opinion that they need support in the current programming period as well. This support will be in the form of training and meetings, information campaigns and furnishing accessible, clear and timely information. The reduction of the administrative burden for beneficiaries is also expected to contribute to effective Programme implementation.

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| ? | Suitability of milestones from the point of view of administrative capacity (by making connection to the analysis of the milestones planned) |

The Programme's milestones are being elaborated at present. For the purposes of the analysis, the possible risks for successful Programme implementation that are linked to administrative capacity are considered and this is used as the basis for defining the possible approaches to avoiding risks.

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| ? | Suitability of the procedures for Programme management, monitoring and evaluation and for data collection on Programme implementation. |

Based on the experience gained thus far as an Intermediate Body of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, the experts of the Managing Authority of the new Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth envisage that the major problems concerning the monitoring system will be connected with the quality of the information submitted at project level, the quality of the information processed at scheme/priority axis level (possibility for aggregation of data), the use of the data collected from the system of monitoring to prepare analyses on Programme implementation and effective use of indicators for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation.

In order to tackle the above issues, the Managing Authority is expected to lay down in the management and control systems an orderly monitoring system. To facilitate the processes of monitoring, the upgrading of the centralised Information System for Management and Monitoring is mostly relied on. In addition, an indicator fiche format has been elaborated as part of this assessment to facilitate the broad understanding of the meaning of the indicators and the ways of measuring them (Annex 6).

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| ? | Adequacy of the Evaluation Plan and recommendations |

The Evaluation Plan of the operational programme has not yet been prepared. Therefore, it was not possible for it to be reviewed within the ex-ante evaluation.

In order to respond to the technical specification of the Contracting Authority and in order to make the ex-ante evaluation useful in the process of preparation of the Programme's Evaluation Plan, some guidelines on its preparation have been given on the basis of the requirements of the regulations for the 2014–2020 period and the Commission's guidelines on monitoring and evaluation and elaboration of evaluation plans.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth for the 2014–2020 Period to a great extent reflects the objectives and priorities of the key EU and national strategic documents in the area of science and education, including the main targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

It is possible for the Programme to lay down more clearly the objectives of the Partnership Agreement relating to partnerships among higher education, enterprises and research and strengthening of the management capacity of scientific institutes.

Demarcation and complementarity with some of the other operational programmes, specifically Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness, is to be specified.

The Programme does not yet reflect to a sufficient degree the territorial aspects related to quality of education in small and big settlements.

Some of the national strategic and legislative papers are being prepared or updated, which to a certain degree impedes focusing of the support planned under the operational programme.

The analyses of the Programme strategy show the major problems in three key areas, i.e. science, higher education and school education. The inclusion of supplementary information would improve the depth of the analyses and would be conducive to the formulation of more targeted measures. Not all of the identified problems are addressed by specific approaches to solving them.

The Programme's intervention logic covers 3 main priority axes, i.e. science and technological development, school and higher education and social inclusion of vulnerable groups in education.

The investment priorities defined are selected adequately and are generally well focused through the specific objectives. The analyses and the presentation of the needs especially concerning the specific objectives referring to the link between science, education and business (Investment Priority 2 of Priority Axis 1, Investment Priority 4 of Priority Axis 2) may be improved.

The activities under most of the priorities are relevant. No sufficiently adequate activities have been laid down to address the needs for better cooperation between science and business and for better possibilities for realisation of graduates. Activities under Priority Axis 2 are too numerous and may be summarised.

The beneficiaries and the target groups are generally adequate and qualify for the objectives and activities set.

The basic horizontal principles are included in the Programme. Information has to be added about the monitoring of application of the principles of sustainable development and gender equality. The monitoring of application of the principle of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination through additional checks would result in increasing of the administrative burden.

The amount of allocated funds is generally insufficient. The funds allocated for education, integration into education and lifelong learning in real terms are less than those in the previous programming period. The funds for technical assistance will probably turn out to be insufficient to ensure the Programme's successful management and implementation. The allocation of budgetary commitments by year runs the risk of an automatic loss of funds and needs to be revised. The version of May 2014 does not include a financial justification, which does not allow assessing whether the requirement of thematic concentration has been met.

The system of indicators has been made precise and has been considerably improved compared to its initial version. Nevertheless, revision of some of the indicators is expected. A great part of the indicators do not yet have baseline, milestone or target values, which hinders the assessment of the degree of realism of the baseline and target values are and the degree of relevance of the milestones. Specific recommendations have been made concerning the indicators for each priority axis.

As a whole, the available human resources and the structure of the Managing Authority are adequate to the responsibilities related to Programme management. Three of the departments could experience some difficulties due to the shortage of experts. Overcoming these difficulties will require additional resources or a reduction in the workload.

The officers have experience in EU funds management and have possibilities for training. There is some experience in the elaboration of procedures and manuals. Currently there are difficulties due to the shortage of technical resources. This problem is however expected to be solved by the supply of equipment which has already been launched.

Significant number of potential Programme beneficiaries have already built up a capacity on the basis of projects implemented in the present programming period. Nevertheless, some support is needed in the programming period 2014-2020 as well.

The major problems concerning the monitoring system are expected to be linked to the quality of the information submitted at project level, the quality of the information processed at scheme/priority axis level (possibility for aggregation of data), the use of the data collected from the monitoring system to prepare analyses on Programme implementation and effective use of indicators for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation. These problems are expected to be taken into account in the elaboration of the monitoring system and in the preparation of the evaluation plan.

The key recommendations made are as follows:

* To explore possibilities for greater Programme contribution with respect to territorial cohesion;
* To search for options to reflect more fully some of the measures of the Partnership Agreement that are related to enhancing the link between science and business and improving of the management of scientific institutes;
* To clarify the outstanding issues concerning the demarcation and complementarity with some of the other operational programmes, specifically Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness;
* To broaden the analysis of some aspects of the strategic part and of some of the justifications of the specific objectives;
* To combine some of the activities and to make the wording of others more precise;
* Given the lending activities for higher education and the possibilities for joint business–science and business–higher education initiatives, it is advisable to analyse the possibilities for and the advantages of using financial instruments;
* To add information about the way in which the application of the principles of sustainable development and gender equality will be monitored and to reconsider the relevance of the approach to monitoring of the principle of equality and non-discrimination;
* To envisage a more conservative budget allocation by year in order to minimise the risk of an automatic loss of funds in the following programming period;
* To analyse the possibility for allocating funds for technical assistance from the European Regional Development Fund as well;
* To supplement information about meeting the requirement for concentration of at least 60% of the Programme budget on 5 investment priorities at the most;
* To revise the result indicators under the priority axes by following the prescriptions of the European Commission with regard to the indicators of the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund;
* To use the common indicators of the European Social Fund Regulation for all relevant activities;
* To revise/remove some of the indicators and to make the necessary clarifications in the fiches of indicators with regard to their meaning and way of measuring;

The recommendations on the administrative capacity do not concern the wording of the Programme but its implementation and management. The key ones include:

* The Risk Management and Control Department which also includes the irregularity officer should be directly subordinate to the general director rather than to the deputy director.
* Provision of adequate resources with regard to the responsibilities of the following departments: Programming and Contracting Department, Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments Department and Risk Management and Control Department.
* Provision of the necessary technical resources for Programme management and implementation.
* Organisation, as soon as possible, of training courses in relation to the new responsibilities as Managing authority.
* Development of an attractive package of bonuses and remuneration for the staff in order to increase their motivation.
* Introduction in the Project Implementation Manual of a contact point for beneficiaries with clearly defined persons, responsibilities and deadlines for answering beneficiaries’ questions.
* Development of a system for collection and aggregation of indicators data, which identifies the tasks and the deadlines at all levels of monitoring (beneficiary, specific beneficiary, departments within the Managing Authority).

# I. Introduction

The ex-ante evaluation of Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth for the 2014–2020 Period (OPSESG) was made in the period February-March 2014 by a team of Ecorys South East Europe Ltd. experts in accordance with a contract signed with Ministry of Education and Science (MES).

This report is a final evaluation report and reflects the Consultant's opinion and recommendations on the latest version of the OPSESG 2014–2020 from May 2014.

The analysis are structured in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Contracting Authority and according to the evaluation questions in the following chapters/evaluations:

* Evaluation of external coherence;
* Evaluation of internal coherence;
* Evaluation of the system of indicators;
* Evaluation of the Programme's budget;
* Evaluation of the administrative capacity, the Programme management, monitoring and evaluation.

The annexes contain some additional information about the sources of information used (Annex 1), meetings held and focus groups (Annex 2), on-line survey (Annexes 3 and 4), Programme's intervention logic (Annex 5) and indicator fiches (Annex 6).

# II. Objectives and Scope of the EVALUATION

## Objectives of the evaluation

The objectives of the procurement procedure as specified in the technical specification of the Contracting Authority are as follows:

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| **Overall Objective** | Support and improvement in the quality of the process of programming of Operational Programme Science and Education for Smart Growth for the 2014–2020 Period (OPSESG) in accordance with the requirements of the proposal for a Regulation on Common Provisions for the Funds from the Common Strategic Framework (Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013). |
| **Specific Objectives** | * Provision of a result-oriented and well-structured programming document * Ensuring compliance of the strategy and the objectives of OPSESG with the national needs identified * Assessment of the coherence of OPSESG with the other national and European policies and instruments * Studying the ratio between expected results and available resources * Formulation of recommendations for improving the quality and the design of OPSESG * Ensuring the proper implementation of the EU horizontal principles of equality, equal access, non-discrimination, sustainable development, including the requirements for Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment of plans and programmes. |

The evaluation has been made as part of the mandatory activities of OPSESG 2014-2020 programming and is an integral part of the draft operational programme.

## Scope of Evaluation and Key Questions

In order to achieve the objectives, some specific activities covering the groups of subjects specified in Figure 1 have been carried out.



Figure 1: Defining the Scope of Evaluation

The relevant groups of subjects have been assessed by using evaluation questions defined for each group. The table below presents the evaluation questions.

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| --- | --- |
| **Subject Area** | **Key Questions** |
| **Analysis of the Programme's External Coherence;** | * Coherence with the European strategic framework – contribution to the Union's Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth. * Coherence with the National Strategic Framework – National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020, National Reform Programme. * Coherence with the EU legislative framework; * Coherence with the national legislative framework; * Coherence with other operational programmes; * Coherence with other sectoral programmes; * Coherence with the Partnership Agreement. * Meeting the conditionalities set in Annex 4 to the General Regulation concerning the funds under the common strategic framework (CSF); |
| **Analysis of the Programme's Internal Coherence** | * Relevance of the OPSESG strategy; * Relevance of the proposed forms of support; * Adequacy of the measures set forth in the Programme and the degree to which they will contribute to achieving its objectives; * Adequacy of the eligible beneficiaries and target groups identified; * Assessment of the integration of the horizontal principles. |
| **Analysis of the System of Indicators and of the Programme's Budget** | * Assessment of the relevance and the clarity of the system of indicators; * Assessment of the realism in the quantitative expression of the baseline and target values of the indicators; * Relevance of the milestones defined; * Assessment of the Programme's budget: * Consistency and justification of budgetary allocation against the Programme's objectives; * Consistency and justification of budgetary allocation against regulation requirements (integrated approach, focus of interventions, financial engineering, etc.); * Analysis of the extent to which funds are directly targeted at the needs and challenges identified in the socio-economic analysis; * Analysis of the share of financial resources targeted at areas of strategic importance. |
| **Analysis of the Administrative Capacity, Programme Management, Monitoring and Evaluation** | * Adequacy of the management structure; * Adequacy of the human resources and the administrative capacity for Programme management; * Capacity of Programme beneficiaries and measures aimed to strengthen it; * Suitability of milestones from the point of view of administrative capacity (by making connection to the analysis of the milestones planned); * Suitability of the procedures for Programme management, monitoring and evaluation and for Programme implementation data collection; * Adequacy of the Evaluation Plan and recommendations (where necessary). |

# III. Approach and Methodology

This evaluation has been made in close cooperation with the Contracting Authority, General Directorate "Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes" (GD SFIEP)of the Ministry of Education and Science, which is the Intermediate Body of OPHRD 2007–2013. Council of Ministers' Decision No 792 of 17 December 2013 appoints the same directorate as a Managing Authority (MA) of OPSESG 2014-2020.

The figure below illustrates the approach used.



Figure 2: Evaluation Approach

The approach to the evaluation used presupposes the concurrent gathering of information for the various elements of the evaluation. Thus, for instance, the interviews, the on-line survey and the focus groups involved several assessment themes.

The following methods of gathering and analysis of information have been used:

Study of national and EU strategic and legislative papers, annual implementation reports of other programmes in the period 2007-2013 which finance measures similar to those planned in OPSESG 2014-2020, assessment reports, Commission guidelines concerning the new programming period, etc. Annex 1 to this report contains a list of the documents used.

Stakeholder analysis - it was implemented with the launch of the evaluation and included in the Inception report so as to ensure that the key stakeholders would be consulted and their opinion would be taken into account in the assessment.

Interviews with experts from GD SFIEP, other directorates and departments of MES, members of the working group set up in connection to Programme elaboration. Annex 2 to this report includes a list of the meetings held.

On-line questionnaire to current beneficiaries under OPHRD 2007-2013 which carry out projects under educational measures with MES as Intermediate Body, potential beneficiaries under OPSESG 2014-2020 (including scientific institutes, universities, schools, kindergartens, employers, branch organisations, municipalities, community centres, NGOs), members of the working group set up in connection to Programme preparation and members of GD EUFIPP. The questionnaire via the web-based platform [www.checkmarket.com](http://www.checkmarket.com), was sent to 1 206 respondents. 190 responses were received (15.8%). 58% of the respondents are potential Programme beneficiaries, 22% are from GD SFIEP and 20% are members of the working group set up in connection to Programme preparation, as presented in the table below.

| **Respondents** | **Total** | **% of responses** | **%** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *1 Potential beneficiary of OPSESG 2014 -2020* | *111* | *1s1_word1e* | *58 %* |
| *2 Managing Authority of OPSESG 2014 -2020* | *41* | *2s2_word2e* | *21 %* |
| *3 Member of the working group for elaboration of OPSESG 2014-2020 (other than the mentioned above)* | *39* | *3s3_word3e* | *20 %* |
| **Total respondents: 191**  **Skipped question: 0** | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 0% | 20% | 40% | 60% | 80% | |  |

The results from the questionnaire have been used as information complementing the analysis, where appropriate, and have been included in Annex 3 to this report.

On-line questionnaire to GD SFIEP. The questionnaire via the web-based platform [www.checkmarket.com](http://www.checkmarket.com), was sent to all the staff of GD SFIEP (80 experts) and was aimed to collect information supporting the analyses and the assessment of the administrative capacity for management and implementation of OPSESG 2014-2020. 56 experts (68%) responded to the questionnaire. The table below gives an account of the respondents by department.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Department** | **Number of experts in departments** | **Respondents (No)** | **% of responses** |
| 1 Analyses, Planning and Grants | 9 | 8 | 89 |
| 2 Technical Verification | 17 | 10 | 59 |
| 3 Financial Verification | 19 | 13 | 68 |
| 4 Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments | 6 | 2 | 33 |
| 5 Regional Management of Projects | 23 | 19 | 83 |
| 6 Quality Management | 5 | 2 | 40 |
| 7 Other (director, deputy director, specialist), please specify. | 3 | 2 | 67 |
| Total | 82 | 56 |  |

\* Structure of the directorate during the enquiry. A new structure was adopted at end-May 2014 which is discussed in the analyses below.

The answers to the questionnaire are given in Annex 4.

Focus group of representatives of the working group for Programme preparation which discussed the focus and prioritisation of investments under Priority Axis (PA) 1, PA2 and PA3 of the Programme.

Focus group of beneficiaries under OPHRD 2007-2013 which implement projects under educational measures administered by MES as an Intermediate Body. The focus group discussed the administrative capacity and the possibilities for reduction of the administrative burden based on the project implementation experience in the current programming period.

The list of focus group participants is given in Annex 2.

Experts from the team of assessors took part in meetings of the working group for elaboration of OPSESG 2014-2020.

Analysis of intervention logic was used to assess the Programme's external coherence with basic strategic documents and to assess the Programme's internal logic. Annex 5 presents the Programme's intervention logic by priority axis.

The financial and legal analysis, which includes elements of financial planning and analysis of legislative requirements to the budget as set in the regulations and in the Partnership Agreement for the following programming period, was used to assess the Programme's financial parameters.

Comparative analysis (benchmarking) with reference values from the current programming period has been used to assess the budget allocation of OPSESG 2014-2020.

When assessing the indicators, the concept of SMART indicators has been used by making a SMART analysis.

In order to facilitate the use of indicators, indicator fiche templates have been made which should be filled in with information about the type of indicator and its meaning, as well measuring methods and sources of data. The indicator fiches are given electronically in Annex 6.

When assessing the administrative capacity for management and implementation of OPSESG 2014-2020 workload analysis of GD SFIEP as an Intermediate Body of OPHRD 2007-2013 has been used, as well as self-assessment of capacity and needs and analysis of the risks related to administrative capacity.

# IV. Evaluation

## Evaluation of External Coherence

### Analysis

The analysis of external coherence provides the link between OPSESG 2014-2020 and the basic EU and national strategic and legislative documents. Comments are made of the extent to which the Programme gives an appropriate account of the main objectives and requirements of the national and EU strategic and legislative framework and the extent to which the Programme will contribute to the achievement of objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. A review of the fulfilment of the preconditions laid down in Annex 4 to the General Regulation concerning the CSF funds has been made as part of the external coherence.

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| **?** | Coherence with the European strategic framework – contribution to the EU Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth |

Europe 2020 and the 7 Flagship Initiatives for Strategy Implementation

The main contribution of OPSESG 2014–2020 to the Europe 2020 Strategy is expected to relate to the achievement of Targets 2 and 4 of the Strategy, namely:

Target 2 - *Investing 3% (target of 1.5% for Bulgaria) of GDP in research and development (R&D)*. In order to achieve this target, OPSESG plans to use Programme funds as a complementary investment to the budget portfolio of the Bulgarian research sector. Measures are also planned to enhance scientific infrastructure and develop the innovative potential and the connections between science and business, which will result in a synergy with respect to the development of R&D in the country.

Target 4:

* *Reducing the rates of early school leaving to 10% (11% for Bulgaria)*. OPSESG envisages measures for prevention of early school leaving, improving the access to education for children with special educational needs, including children from the ethnic minorities. The measures aimed at increasing the quality of education and an individual approach to learners' needs with the support and participation of parents are also considered as a key for the reduction of early school leaving.
* *At least 40% (36% for Bulgaria) of 30-34–year-olds completing higher education.* OPSESG 2014–2020 envisages measures aimed at improving the system of higher education through restructuring and improvement of management, improvement in the educational product and in the quality of education and offering greater opportunities for access to education of persons with limited financial means and disabled people. These measures aim to increase the attractiveness and prestige of education and to improve the access of vulnerable groups to the system.

As to the seven flagship initiatives for Strategy implementation[[3]](#footnote-3), OPSESG supports activities in the scope of the following initiatives:

* *Digital Agenda for Europe* – fifth pillar (research and innovation) and sixth pillar (improving digital literacy and skills) through the support envisaged in the field of research and support for broader introduction of digital technologies in the process of education;
* *Innovation Union* – concerning the promotion of innovation and the link between science and business;
* *Youth on the Move* – concerning the support for students and young teachers;
* *An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs* – concerning the change and adaptation of curricula and contents to the changes in the labour market and the challenges of global society and expanding the possibilities for practicing and development of the conditions for lifelong learning.
* *European Platform Against Poverty* – concerning the conducting of youth and education policies.

The Programme also links directly to the other two initiatives (Resource Efficient Europe and An Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era) as far as the provision of financing for research in the areas covered by these initiatives is concerned.

The text of OPSESG 2014–2020 refers to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to the flagship initiatives for its implementation.

Territorial Agenda 2020;

Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 sets "*territorial cohesion for a more harmonious and balanced state of Europe*" as its common goal. It recommends territorial cohesion on European, cross-border, transnational, inter-regional and intra-regional level. It envisages the introduction of the principles of *territorial cohesion* in the integrated national development policies and concerning spatial planning.

Section 4 of OPSESG 2014–2020 considers An Integrated Approach to Territorial Development which in the version of May 2014 notes that the Programme will finance the participation in projects under Priority Axis 7 devoted to development of knowledge-based society of the Danube Strategy. The part concerning integrated territorial investment repeats the texts of the Partnership Agreement by mentioning that the infrastructure measures planned for education will be soft measures financed by OPSESG.

The Programme does not address to a sufficient degree the territorial aspects related to the problems with diverging quality of education in small towns and big cities and the territorial concentration of children from ethnic minorities.

EU Strategy for the Danube Region

OPSESG 2014–2020 addresses Priority Axis 7 "Knowledge Society" – research, education and information and communication technologies of the Danube Strategy. The Programme will support the implementation of transnational projects with countries of the Danube region in these areas.

Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 will succeed the EU programmes in the area of research and innovation existing in the 2007–2013 period by uniting all the existing forms of financing of research and innovation, including the Framework Research Programme, the activities connected with innovation from the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. Support will be targeted at three priorities:

* *Excellence in the scientific area* – support for research, possibilities for education and professional development, support for European high-class research institutes;
* *Leading industrial positions –* investment in key industrial technologies, support for innovations in SMEs and access to risk financing;
* *Coping with public challenges –* provision of financing for complex approaches from research to commercialisation in the following areas: health, demographic change and well-being; food security, sustainable agriculture, marine research and bio economy; secure, clean and efficient energy; smart, green and integrated transport; climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials; inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

Section 8 of OPSESG 2014–2020 describes the complementarity and demarcation of both programmes as follows:

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| **Complementarity** | **Demarcation** |
| OPSESG will support the modernisation of Bulgarian scientific infrastructure, which will provide better opportunities for participation in Horizon 2020 projects. It specifies that the support for research centres will further the mobility of scientists and the attracting of scientists from other countries.  There is complementarity in the area of research.  It is assumed that the possibilities for risk finance for SMEs provided by Horizon 2020 will increase the possibilities for participation of activities supported by the operational programme.  Some synergy effect is anticipated concerning the third priority of Horizon 2020 where the support from the operational programme will, as a whole, have a supplementary role to the more comprehensive research in priority areas at EU level.  There is a possibility for supplementing the Horizon 2020 financing through OPSESG. | Horizon 2020 and OPSESG provide financing for research infrastructure. The demarcation of both programmes refers to the following: OPSESG will finance such infrastructure on the country's territory of national importance, while Horizon 2020 will finance European high class infrastructures.  Both programmes envisage support for applied research and innovations in SMEs. Demarcation is envisaged to take place at the level of projects (beneficiaries, target groups and activities). |

EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation

The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation has three main directions as follows:

* *Progress Axis* will finance analyses, studies and exchange of experience in the area of employment policies, social issues and labour conditions, including universities and research institutes.
* *EURES Axis* will continue supporting the European network of intermediary services for professional mobility.
* *Micro-finance and Social Entrepreneurship Axis* will provide access to start-up micro-financing for unemployed and employed persons, micro-enterprises and social enterprises.

Section 8 of OPSESG 2014–2020 specifies the coordination with the Programme with regard to the mechanisms for avoiding double financing and complementarity. The following complementarity and demarcation has been identified

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| **Complementarity** | **Demarcation** |
| Progress Axis provides opportunities for the financing of research of European importance. Such research at national level may potentially be financed by the operational programme.  Complementarity with EURES Axis concerning the mobility of researchers and scientists.  Complementarity with Micro-finance and Social Entrepreneurship Axis is possible within the framework of lending to enterprises, lecturers and students. | There is no potential overlapping of programmes. |

Erasmus for All Programme

The Erasmus for All Programme 2014–2020 will succeed a number of EU programmes from the 2007–2013 period in the area of education and training, youth policies and sports. The programme will provide support for mobility for learning purposes, cooperation and policy reforms. The student loan scheme will allow to support students who want to get a Master's degree in another member state.

Section 8 of OPSESG 2014–2020 points to the following complementarity and demarcation from the Erasmus for All Programme:

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| **Complementarity** | **Demarcation** |
| The support from the operational programme is expected to strengthen the capacity of potential Bulgarian beneficiaries of Erasmus for All for participation in the EU programme, including through investment in infrastructure.  It says that *"good opportunities for complementarity may be expected from cooperation for innovations and good practices, as well as from support for policy reforms in education, training and youth".* | Both programmes support mobility and it is therefore specified that demarcation at project level is needed. The operational programme is expected to complement the financing from the Erasmus for All Programme. |

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| ? | Coherence with the national strategic framework – National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020, National Reform Programme |

National Development Programme

OPSESG 2014–2020 addresses most of the measures of Priority 1.*Improving the access to and enhancing the quality of education and training and the quality characteristics of the workforce* of the National Development Programme, namely: educational reform, modernisation of curricula, development of a career orientation system, enhancing the qualification of teachers, introduction of ICT in education, prevention of early school leaving, updating the model of accreditation in universities and scientific organisations, establishment of centres for excellence.

The Programme also incorporates some of the measures set in Priority 5. *Support of innovation and investment activities to increase the competitiveness of the economy* such as: support of the links between science, education and business, support of PhD candidates and specialists when working with the business.

National Reform Programme (2012–2020, Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria and Recommendations in the Conclusions of the Commission Report on Annual Growth Survey (2013 and 2014)

The National Reform Programme updated in 2013 lays down that Bulgaria preserves its national targets related to the EU 2020 Strategy by planning an interim assessment and a possible review of those targets as of the middle of the period of the EU 2020 Strategy.

Concerning the national R&D target, it says that no increase in the R&D financing is observed as of 2013. At the same time, however, it takes account of the fact that actions have been taken to improve the environment for innovation activities through the draft Innovations Law and the draft Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation.

Concerning the national target in education, it says that Bulgaria carries out large-scale reforms in school and pre-school education aimed at modernisation of the model of delivering educational services to the population and at improvement in the level of education, respectively. The School and Pre-School Education Act is pending and it will provide the legal framework for the reform followed by the amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act. The process of modernisation of curricula and school programmes is ongoing. Projects for enhancing the qualification of pedagogical specialists are being implemented. Measures ensuring equal access to education of the disadvantaged groups are supported by the state budget and include provision of free textbooks to pupils with special educational needs, inclusion of children from ethnic minorities in "foster" schools, provision of free transport of pupils until the age of 16.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 9 July 2013 on the National Reform Programme 2013 and delivering a Council opinion on the Convergence Programme of Bulgaria 2012—2016 says that "*in higher education, reforms have made very limited progress. The existence of an important disparity between higher education outcomes and labour-market demand worsens structural unemployment and hampers the development of high-value, innovative sectors. The poor performance of higher education is linked to a lack of incentives at institutional level as well as to the standard of individual researchers and teachers"*.

One of the 7 recommendations made in the paper concerns the support to be granted by OPSESG, namely Recommendation 4: „*To adopt the School Education Act and pursue the reform of higher education, in particular through better aligning outcomes to labour-market needs and strengthening cooperation between education, research and business. To improve access to inclusive education for disadvantaged children, in particular Roma"*.

The 2014 Report further specifies and broadens the recommendations: "*To adopt the School Education Act and pursue the reforms of vocational and higher education in order to increase the level and relevance of skills acquired at all levels, while fostering partnerships between educational institutions and business with a view to better aligning outcomes to labour market needs. To strengthen the quality of vocational education and training institutions and improve access to life-long learning. To step up efforts to improve access to quality inclusive pre-school and school education of disadvantaged children, in particular Roma, and implement strictly the rules linking the payment of child allowance to participation in education*".

EU recommendations are quoted in the justification of thematic objectives and investment priorities.

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| ? | Coherence with the EU legislative framework |

The coherence of OPSESG with the following regulations for the following programming period has been considered:

* Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
* Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006
* Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006

Likewise, as part of the Programme's coherence with other strategic documents at national and EU level, information from the following regulations has been analysed:

* Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD);
* Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2328/2003, (EC) No 861/2006, (EC) No 1198/2006 and (EC) No 791/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 1255/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
* Regulation (EU) No 1309/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (2014-2020);
* Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal;
* Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME) (2014 - 2020) and repealing Decision No 1639/2006/EC

As a whole, the text of the Programme complies with regulations’ requirements. Specific comments have been made in separate parts of this report when commenting on the meeting of the specific requirements of the regulations.

|  |  |
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| ? | Coherence with the national legislative framework |

[Public Education Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_prosveta.pdf);

The Public Education Act regulates the structure, functions and management of kindergartens, schools and auxiliary units. OPSESG does not contradict the provisions of this Act and will be conducive to its application with regard to the opportunities for integrated education of children with special educational needs, support of children with talents, partnership with parents, supplementary learning of mother tongue, as well as additional teaching of Bulgarian language to children whose mother tongue is other than Bulgarian.

[Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_obr_minimun.pdf)

The Level of Education, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act regulates the state educational requirement for the level of education, the general education minimum and the curriculum in the system of public education.

The Act lays down that the structure of the curriculum shall comprise three types of education: compulsory, mandatorily elective and optional, which corresponds to the measures planned in OPSESG in support of measures for provision of education compliant to the individual needs.

Secondary Education Act

The Act is being drafted.

[Vocational Education and Training Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_prof_obucenieEU.pdf)

The update of the Act is due.

[Higher Education Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_vo.pdf)

This Act regulates the constitution, functions, management and financing of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria and therefore relates to the activities planned in OPSESG 2014–2020 for improvement of the systems of management of higher education establishments, improvement of the system of accreditation and rating, elaboration and introduction of models that bind financing to student realisation. The Programme does not contradict the clauses of this Act.

[Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_acad_satav.pdf)

This Act regulates academic degrees and academic positions in the Republic of Bulgaria and is not directly linked to the support from OPSESG 2014–2020.

[Scientific Research Promotion Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_nauch_izsl.pdf)

This Act settles the principles and mechanisms of implementing the state policy for promotion of scientific research in the Republic of Bulgaria and directly refers to the support granted by OPSESG 2014–2020 for scientific research. The Act lays down that scientific research is a national priority and has a strategic importance for the development of the country and regulates the granting of financial support for scientific research, promotion of international scientific cooperation, human resource development and setting up of structures that bridge the cooperation of universities, scientific organisations, and businesses. In this regard, OPSESG 2014–2020 plans support that will complement the national budget support.

[Student and Doctoral-Candidate Loans Act](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/law/zkn_kreditirane_studenti_doktoranti.pdf)

This Act regulates the terms and procedure for provision of loans to students and doctoral candidates with state financial support. In addition to that OPSESG 2014–2020 plans support to the system of student loans. The Programme does not clarify the complementarity or demarcation of the two instruments in principle.

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| ? | Coherence with other sectoral programmes |

Bucharest Communiqué of the Ministers Responsible for Higher Education: Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area (2012)

The Communiqué declares the commitment of the Ministers responsible for higher education in the 47 countries of the European Higher Education Area to secure the highest possible level of funding for higher education, drawing on all appropriate sources, as an investment. The underlying policies laid down in the Communiqué are included in OPSESG 2014–2020. These are:

*Providing quality higher education for all* – widening access to higher education which is student-centred and characterised by innovative methods of teaching, quality assurance and improved funding and governance.

*Enhancing employability to serve Europe’s needs* – improving cooperation between employers, students and higher education institutions, especially in the development of study programmes that help increase the innovation, entrepreneurial and research potential of graduates; lifelong learning; ensuring a stronger link between research, teaching and learning; further linking study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the achievement of learning outcomes in assessment procedures; developing qualifications frameworks.

*Strengthening mobility for better learning* – open higher education systems and better balanced mobility; cooperation with other regions of the world and international openness. In this regard, OPSESG does not consider any possibilities for support of the elaboration of joint programmes and degrees with other universities as some of the measures to enhance the quality and efficiency of higher education.

*Improvement of data collection and transparency to underpin political goals* - improved quality of data and information on higher education; more targeted data collection and referencing against common indicators, particularly on employability, the social dimension, lifelong learning, internationalisation, portability of grants/loans, and student and staff mobility.

Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area

The Strategy aims to promote the mobility of students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education. It envisages measures most of which have been included as measures in OPSESG 2014–2020. These are:

* Open higher education systems allowing mobility and recognition of student credit points;
* Overcoming of existing obstacles to mobility by securing financing;
* Improving the quality and transparency of this process.

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Supporting Growth and Jobs – an Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems (2011)

The Commission Communication considers the problems facing European economic growth and labour market and poses major issues to the attention of the Member States. These issues are discussed in the strategic part of OPSESG and are taken into account by the measures planned under the Programme. These are issues related to increasing the share of graduates; ensuring the graduates and researchers Europe needs; improving the quality and relevance of higher education; linking higher education, research and business; improving governance and funding.

The Bruges Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011—2020

The Bruges Communiqué lays down that Vocational and Educational Training (VET) policies need to be linked to other policies and that VET should play its part in achieving the two Europe 2020 headline targets set in the education field, namely - by 2020 - to reduce the rate of early leavers from education to less than 10% and to increase the share of 30-34-year-olds having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%. In this aspect, VET is in close connection with the objectives of OPSESG 2014–2020 which plans support measures in this field. The Communiqué proposes 11 strategic objectives, some of which are reflected in OPSESG 2014–2020. These are: making VET an attractive learning option; labour market relevance; enabling flexible access to training and qualifications; realising inclusive Initial-VET and Continuing-VET.

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: New Impetus for European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to Support the Europe 2020 Strategy

The Communication sets forth that VET in Europe by 2020 should contribute to both excellence and equity in EU lifelong learning systems and thereby to the Europe 2020 objectives of smart and inclusive growth. The following basic approaches have been defined in this regard:

* + Using *initial* VET (IVET) as an attractive learning option with high relevance to labour market needs and pathways to higher education;
  + Delivering *continuing* easily accessible VET (CVET) for people in different life situations facilitating skills development and career changes,
  + Ensuring flexible systems based on the recognition of learning outcomes, including diplomas, and supporting individual learning pathways,
  + Adequate support for those at a disadvantage, and
  + Cross-border mobility as an integral part of VET practices.

OPSESG 2014–2020 largely reflects the approaches formulated in this Communication.

Updated National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2030

OPSESG 2014–2020 addresses directly Direction 9 of the Strategy "*Increasing the general educational, spiritual and cultural level, qualification, capabilities and skills of the population of all ages*". The priority measures and priorities envisaged for Programme support take account of the following objectives of the National Demographic Strategy:

* Enabling the full coverage of children in kindergartens and pre-school forms of education;
* Ensuring equal access of all children to education in all degrees of education regardless of ethnic origin, gender, descent, belief, social status, etc.;
* Fuller coverage of pupils in mandatory degrees of education and prevention of their leaving the system;
* Overcoming the illiteracy among poor people and in the disadvantaged groups;
* Ensuring high-quality education by improvement in the learning contents and in the facilities, enhancing the qualification of teachers and providing information technologies at schools;
* Mastering hi-tech skills;
* Developing good habits for lifelong learning, provision of good conditions for constant vocational education and development and further development of the system of qualification, re-qualification and on-going training;
* Taking of measures aimed at socialising and providing for the integration of pupils with special educational needs and specific disabilities in common schools;
* Overcoming of social isolation by educational programmes.

The following is a relevant measure/objective of the strategy related to the territorial approach to provision of support which is not taken into account in the OPSESG version of May 2014:

* Provision for the cohesion between the models of education of citizens living in towns, and those living in smaller settlements, especially in lagging behind rural areas;

National Youth Strategy 2010-2020

The National Youth Strategy sets 9 strategic objectives. OPSESG 2014–2020 integrates the first objective with regard to improving the quality of secondary and higher education and informal learning and encouraging lifelong learning in accordance with labour market needs. The Programme includes measures that correspond to Strategy measures such as: strengthening the link between education and business, delivering information and advice on professional orientation and career development; fostering research interest and retaining young people in science, education and research.

[National Lifelong Learning Strategy for the Period 2014-2020](http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=476)

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy is one of the strategic documents used as a basis for OPSESG 2014–2020. The Programme includes a number of measures mostly concerning the first 6 out of 8 priorities of the Strategy. These are the priorities in the area of lifelong learning (such as: introduction of a system for validation of knowledge and competences attained through non-formal education; introduction of a credits system in VET; development and expansion of the career guidance system; elaboration and expansion of the adult literacy system; setting up partnership network between education and businesses); expanding the scope and enhancing the quality of pre-school education; reducing the share of early school leavers; enhancing the quality of school education; increasing the attractiveness and improving the quality of VET; modernising the higher education.

[National Research Development Strategy 2020](http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=708)

The National Research Development Strategy outlines some key priorities for the development of scientific research in Bulgaria by pursuing the following main objectives:

* to contribute to the transformation of Bulgaria into a knowledge-based society;
* to encourage the growth in the share of green technology in the national economy;
* to formulate the national science policy which will create conditions and outline prospects for achieving the tasks laid down in the EU 2020 strategy; and
* to contribute to establishing an integrated European research area.

OPSESG 2014–2020 largely reflects the measures aimed at achieving the two main tasks of the Strategy as set therein: (1) Enhancing the intensity, outcome and efficiency of R&D activity for the benefit of the economy and society and (2) Establishment of a sustainable education-business-science relation as a basis for development of knowledge-based economy.

[National Roadmap for Research Infrastructures](http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=624)

The National Roadmap for Research Infrastructures has been elaborated in accordance with the Council’s conclusions on “European research infrastructures and their regional dimension” and is an integral part of the vision of Europe to build an integrated European Research Area (ERA). The Roadmap covers scientific complexes and/or facilities of national importance which are located on the territory of the country and have a potential for development at national, regional or European level. The Roadmap refers to the Programme's specific objective aimed at modernising and establishing of the national scientific infrastructure by specifying the priorities for the country, including with regard to regional and partner facilities to European scientific infrastructures. In its strategic part OPSESG 2014–2020 refers to the priorities laid down in the Roadmap. The National Roadmap is being updated, which currently hinders its use for the purposes of focusing the support envisaged under the operational programme.

National Qualifications Framework adopted by CMD No 96 of 2 February 2012

The National Qualifications Framework determines the qualification levels. It has been developed following the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council for establishment of the European qualifications framework (EQF) for lifelong learning which aims to ensure a common European basis (starting point) for comparing the qualification levels of the national qualification systems. The paper relates to OPSESG 2014–2020 inasmuch as the programme concerns the support of education.

National Higher Education Strategy

The Strategy is being drafted.

National Smart Specialisation Strategy

The Strategy is being drafted.

Strategy for Prevention and Reduction of the Share of Early Leavers of the System of Education 2013–2020

The Strategy defines three types of policies:

*Prevention policies* which include: ensuring a proper educational environment, enhancing the quality of education and providing access and quality education for children from vulnerable ethnic communities and children with special educational needs.

*Intervention policies* which include: better participation and commitment of parents, individual and group mentoring, career and personal development, interest clubs, gaining professional qualification, financial assistance.

*Compensation policies* which include: – creating conditions for reintegration, a system for validation of competences attained through non-formal training.

Four of the OPSESG priorities address the policies and measures of the Strategy mentioned above – the priorities for (1) Prevention and reduction of early school leaving and promotion of equal access to high-quality pre-school, primary and secondary education, (2) Active inclusion, especially in view of improving employability (3) Integration of marginalised communities such as Roma and (4) Improving the access to possibilities for lifelong learning, improving the skills and qualification of the workforce and enhancing the adequacy of the systems of education and training towards the labour market, including improving the quality of VET and setting up and development of learning-through-working schemes and apprenticeships, such as, for instance, the dual system.

National Teaching Staff Development Strategy

The Strategy is being drafted.

Strategy for Effective Implementation of Information and Communication Technologies in Science and Education of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014–2020

The Strategy is being drafted.

National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2012-2020

OPSESG 2014–2020 integrates objectives and measures of the Strategy that are related to encompassing and retaining Roma children and pupils in the system of education and providing quality education in multi-cultural environment. One of the Programme's investment priorities is targeted at the integration of Roma children into the system of education.

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| ? | Coherence with the Partnership Agreement |

Partnership Agreement of Bulgaria for the period 2014–2020

The Partnership Agreement (PA) designates OPSESG as a corresponding programme and in partnership with other programmes as an instrument for implementation of the following thematic objectives:

1) Strengthening research, technological development and innovation;

9) Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any form of discrimination;

10) Investments in education, training, including vocational training for the acquisition of skills, and lifelong learning;

The relevant thematic objectives are taken into account when selecting the Programme's investment priorities.

The measures planned under the relevant thematic objectives of PA have been considered in OPSESG 2014–2020. They include:

* Improving the educational structure and curricula, all-day organisation of the learning process, staff qualification, early assessment of educational needs and integration of children from the ethnic minorities and children with special educational needs;
* Enhancing the quality of vocational education, system of credits and system for validation of knowledge, strengthening the link between vocational high schools and businesses;
* Introducing ICT and interactive methods of teaching;
* Strengthening of the management capacity of higher education establishments;
* Transfer of experience and good practices in the field of science;
* Improving the preparation of educational staff;
* Enhancing the quality of higher education;
* Promoting of mobility at all levels;
* Development of innovation and research infrastructure;
* Participation of Bulgaria in European technological platforms and in the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The following measures are reflected to a lesser extent:

* Establishing and enhancing of partnerships among higher education, enterprises and research;
* Strengthening of the management capacity of scientific institutes;
* Creating of possibilities for researcher traineeships in enterprises;
* Provision of incentives to educational institutions to deliver educational services beyond their infrastructure on the basis of partnership with employers, state and municipal institutions and other stakeholders;
* Developing of partnerships between business and scientists.

Position of the Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes in Bulgaria for the period 2014–2020

The position of the Commission Services on PA in the field of education says that "*investments should concentrate on reducing early school leaving (with a special focus on Roma), providing technical and business skills, promoting effective access to good-quality and non-segregated early-childhood, primary and secondary education and enhancing the quality, efficiency and openness of tertiary education. CSF funds should help improve quality of education by modernising curricula, training and professional development of teachers and higher education staff, increased use of ICT, entrepreneurship training, and introduction of quality assurance and monitoring systems. Modernisation of education and training will also require significant investments in infrastructure*".

Concerning research and innovations, it says that "*creating a high quality research and innovation system should start with a sound national strategy for R&I. This funding priority should receive much more support, both in absolute and relative financial terms in comparison to the programming period 2007-2013, and in particular significant resources need to be mobilised to achieve the EU2020 target of 1.5% of GDP"*.

OPSESG 2014–2020 takes account of the recommendations made in the position of the Commission services concerning the thematic scope. It envisages priorities aimed at reducing the rates of early school leaving, integration of the ethnic minorities into education and enhancing the access to and the quality of education. The Programme perceives a strategic approach to support for research and innovations to a much smaller extent.

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| ? | Coherence with other operational programmes |

Operational Programme Regions in Growth (OPRG) 2014–2020

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| Priority Axis 1: Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development   * 1. Support for energy efficiency, smart energy governance and use of renewable energy in public infrastructures, including public and residential buildings   2. Actions aimed at improving the urban environment, renewal of cities and towns, regeneration of brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reducing air pollution and promoting measures for reduction of sound levels   3. Investment in education, skills and lifelong learning by setting up educational end training infrastructures   4. Investment in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, decrease in the degree of health status inequality, promotion of social inclusion through better access to social, cultural and recreation services and transition from institutional to community services   5. Promotion of low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, especially urban areas, including promotion of sustainable multi-modal urban mobility and alleviation of the relevant adaptation measures   Priority Axis 2: Regional Educational Infrastructure   1. Investment in education, skills and lifelong learning by setting up educational end training infrastructures   Priority Axis 3: Regional Health Infrastructure   * 1. Investment in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, decrease in the degree of health status inequality, promotion of social inclusion through better access to social, cultural and recreation services and transition from institutional to community services.   Priority Axis 4: Regional Social Infrastructure   * 1. Investment in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, decrease in the degree of health status inequality, promotion of social inclusion through better access to social, cultural and recreation services and transition from institutional to community services.   Priority Axis 5: Regional Tourism   * 1. Conservation, protection, promotion and development of natural resources and cultural heritage.   Priority Axis 6: Regional Road Infrastructure   * 1. Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes   Priority Axis 7: Risk Prevention  7.1 Promotion of investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems. |

Table 1. Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and OPRG

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| OPRG | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| PA 1: Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development | 1.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 2: Regional Educational Infrastructure | 2.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 3: Regional Health Infrastructure | 3.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 4: Regional Social Infrastructure | 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 5: Regional Tourism | 5.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 6: Regional Road Infrastructure | 6.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 7: Risk Prevention | 7.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

Table 2. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and OPRG

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| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity**: Reflected as OPSESG support for "soft measures" equipment, furnishing and ICT for the educational and scientific sites financed by OPRG 2014–2020.  **Demarcation:** "Priority Axis 1 of OPSESG envisages the financing of scientific infrastructure by OPRG funds. OPRG shall not finance scientific infrastructure." At the stage of programming, the demarcation for similar activities related to purchasing of equipment and furnishing of buildings/premises under PA 2 "Regional Educational Infrastructure" of OPRG and PA 2 of OPSESG is at the level of beneficiaries and projects. |
| Comments | The implementation of objectives under investment priorities 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 of PA of OPSESG, as well as the investment priorities of PA 1 of the Programme is complemented by priorities 1.3 and 2.1 of OPRG which are targeted at investment in educational infrastructure.  Overlapping of activities between those set in priorities 2.1 of OPRG and PA 2, IP 1 of OPSESG concerning the introduction of ICT in schools is potentially possible. OPRG mentions "Supply and installation of equipment and furnishing of the above buildings/premises (state and municipal schools of national and regional importance) as part of their overall renovation" as an example of activities; |
| Recommendation | N/A |

Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness (OPIC) 2014–2020

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| Priority Axis 1: Entrepreneurship, Production and Export Potential   * 1. "Encouraging the investments in the scientific research and innovation activity" (technological development and innovations)   2. "Support for the increase of the capacity of SME for the increase of their contribution to the economic growth and development of innovation processes" (competitiveness and productivity)   Priority Axis 2: Green and Energy-Efficient Economy   1. "Support for the transition to resource effective and green economy" (resource effectiveness of the enterprises) 2. "Encouraging the energy effectiveness and utilization of energy from renewable sources in the enterprises" (energy technologies and energy effectiveness) |

**Table 3: Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and OPIC**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| OPIC | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| PA 1: Entrepreneurship, Production and Export Potential | 1.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 2: Green and Energy-Efficient Economy | 2.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 4. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and OPIC**

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| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity:** Both programmes complement each other with regard to the development of research, technological development and innovations by supporting various aspects of them. It is mentioned that both programmes should contribute to achieving the national R&D target of 1.5% of GDP by 2020, as well as to the implementation of the more general objective, i.e. achieving smart growth of Bulgarian economy. At the same time there are no clear frameworks of complementarity between the programmes. There are possibilities provided for coordination at the level of implementation.  **Demarcation:** It is noted that key demarcation line between the programmes will be «the various stages of development and introduction of the products of research in enterprises». OPSESG will finance the development of science to the benefit of businesses while OPIC will finance the last several stages of the joint partnerships between businesses and scientific organisations that will result in the introduction of research into production and its patents. |
| Comments | OPIC is focused on the businesses while OPSESG - mainly on education and science. At the same time, investment priority 1 of PA 1 of OPIC "Encouraging the investments in the scientific research and innovation activity" (technological development and innovations), just like the investment priorities under PA 1 of OPSESG "Scientific research and technological development", is targeted at the implementation of thematic objective "Strengthening research, technological development and innovation" as laid down in Article 9 of the General Regulation. Both programmes outline a number of activities targeted at fostering partnerships between business and scientists and activation of the "triangle of knowledge" ― (education-science-innovations) (IP 1 of PA 1 of OPIC, IP 1 and 2 of PA 1) which largely overlap. |
| Recommendation | A clearer description of both complementarity and demarcation of the programmes is needed. The spheres of supports under the two programmes should be specified clearly. It is appropriate for OPSESG to focus on resources towards promotion of the work of scientific and scientific-applied units among businesses so as to foster cooperation and further the transformation of research into commercial products. |

Operational Programme Environment (OPE) 2014–2020

PA 1: Water

1. Addressing the significant needs for investment in the water sector to meet the requirements of EU environmental legislation
2. Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems

PA 2: Waste

2.1 Addressing the significant needs for investment in the waste sector to meet the requirements of EU environmental legislation

PA 3: Natura 2000 and Biodiversity

3.1 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.

PA 4: Support for EP and CCP when implementing ESIF

4.1. Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration by strengthening the institutional capacity and the effective public administration and public services related to CF implementation.

4.2. Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration by strengthening the institutional capacity and the effective public administration and public services related to ERDF implementation in support of the actions with regard to institutional capacity and efficient public administration supported by ESF.

**Table 5: Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and OPE**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| OPE | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| PA 1: Water | 1.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 2: Waste | 2.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 3: Natura 2000 and Biodiversity | 3.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 4: Support for EP and CCP when implementing ESIF | 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 6. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and OPE**

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| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity and demarcation** – taken into account. OPSESG specifies that there is no overlapping of thematic objectives between the two programmes and the definition of demarcation lines is not necessary. It is also noted that there could be complementarity of the programmes in the implementation of scientific projects on topics related to OPE priorities and in the financing of scientific infrastructure in the area of environment. |
| Comments | There is no direct connection between the two programmes |
| Recommendation | N/A |

Operational Programme Transport and Transport Infrastructure (OPTTI) 2014–2020

PA 1: Development of Railway Infrastructure along the “Core” and “Comprehensive” Trans-European Transport Network

1. Supporting a multi-modal Single European Transport Area by investing in Trans-European transport network;
2. Developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway systems, and promoting noise-reduction measures.

PA 2: Development of Road Infrastructure along the “Core” Trans-European Transport Network

1. Supporting a multi-modal Single European Transport Area by investing in Trans-European transport network;
2. Development of railway infrastructure along the “core” Trans-European Transport Network

PA 3: Improvement of Intermodal Transport Services for Passengers and Freights and Development of Sustainable Urban Transport

3.1. Supporting a multi-modal Single European Transport Area by investing in Trans-European transport network;

3.2. Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures.

PA 4: Innovations in Management and Services - Establishment of Modern Infrastructure for Traffic Management and Transport Safety Improvement

4.1. Developing and improving environmentally-friendly, including low-noise and low-carbon, transport systems including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility;

4.2. Developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway systems, and promoting noise-reduction measures".

**Table 7. Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and OPTTI**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| OPTTI | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| PA 1: Development of Railway Infrastructure along the “Core” and “Comprehensive” Trans-European Transport Network | 1.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 2: Development of Road Infrastructure along the “Core” Trans-European Transport Network | 2.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 3: Improvement of Intermodal Transport Services for Passengers and Freights and Development of Sustainable Urban Transport | 3.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 4: Innovations in Management and Services - Establishment of Modern Infrastructure for Traffic Management and Transport Safety Improvement | 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 8. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and OPTTI**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complementarity/ Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity and demarcation**: It is noted that there is no overlapping between the two programmes |
| Comments | There is no common ground between the two programmes. |
| Recommendation | N/A |

Operational Programme Good Governance (OPGG) 2014–2020

**Priority Axis 1: Administrative Services and e-Government**

1. Improvement of the administrative services to citizens and businesses by standardisation of services, introduction of comprehensive administrative services and introduction of quality management systems
2. Creation of a competitive business environment by reduction of the regulatory burden
3. Modernisation of the administration by introduction of e-government

**Priority Axis 2: Effective and Professional Governance in Partnership with Civil Society and Businesses**

1. Enhancing of the process of strategic planning and programme budgeting
2. Modern human resource management, including by increasing the competence of staff
3. Enhancing of the access to public information and increasing the participation of civil society and businesses in governance

**Priority Axis 3: Transparent and Effective Judiciary**

1. Enhancing of the quality and speeding up of law enforcement and modernisation of the judiciary through reforms in the structure, procedures and organisation
2. Expanding the scope and enhancing the quality of training in the judiciary

**Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance for the Administrative Structures Participating in ESIF Management and Absorption**

1. Support of the horizontal structures responsible for ESIF implementation through measures aimed at capacity strengthening in accordance with the needs identified.
2. Ensuring of the functioning of MIS 2020 in accordance with the needs of CIS, CCU, the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority, the Managing Authorities of OPs, the European Commission, applicants, beneficiaries and the general public
3. Increasing public awareness of the ESIF possibilities and outcome in Bulgaria, as well as strengthening of the beneficiaries' capacity

**Table 9. Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and OPGG**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| OPGG | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| PA 1: Administrative Services and e-Government | 1.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 2: Effective and Professional Governance in Partnership with Civil Society and Businesses | 2.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 3: Transparent and Effective Judiciary | 3.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 4: Technical Assistance for the Administrative Structures Participating in ESIF Management and Absorption | 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 10. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and OPGG**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity:** It is mentioned that OPGG will be conducive to the strengthening of the capacity of NGOs which are potential beneficiaries of OPSESG.  **Demarcation:** There is a description of the demarcation lines between the two programmes where there could be potential overlapping and double financing – e-government, financing of NGOs, traineeship schemes/practices. |
| Comments | Complementarity and demarcation are well described. |
| Recommendation | N/A |

Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRD OP) 2014–2020

|  |
| --- |
| Priority Axis 1: Improving the Access to Employment and the Quality of Jobs   * 1. "Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people far from the labour market, also through local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility"   2. Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee   3. "Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation including innovative micro, small and medium sized enterprises"   4. Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences   5. "Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change" |
| Priority Axis 2: Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion |
| 1. "Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma" 2. "Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability" 3. "Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment" |
| Priority Axis 3: Modernisation of Labour Market, Social Inclusion and Healthcare Institutions |
| 1. "Capacity building of all stakeholders implementing policies in the area of education, lifelong learning, training, employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial mobilisation pacts at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms" 2. "Capacity building of stakeholders providing education, forms of lifelong learning, training, employment and social policies, including through sectoral and territorial mobilisation pacts at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms" |
| Priority Axis 4: Transnational Cooperation |

**Table 11: Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and HRD OP**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and  Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| HRD OP | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| PA 1: Improving the Access to Employment and the Quality of Jobs | 1.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 2: Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion | 2.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 3: Modernisation of Labour Market, Social Inclusion and Healthcare Institutions | 3.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PA 4: Transnational Cooperation | 4.1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4.2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 12. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and HRDOP**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation of noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity:** It is noted that by means of coordinated implementation mechanisms and "integrated operations" OPSESG will complement OPHRD initiatives, thus providing support for improving the access to education of target groups. Likewise, by means of coordinated implementation mechanisms OPHRD and OPSESG will support children's deinstitutionalisation reforms in Bulgaria.  **Demarcation:** Concerning the participation of the population in various forms of lifelong learning, it is noted that OPHRD will support only training of inactive, unemployed and employed people outside the system of formal education, while OPSESG will support the participation of the population in various forms of lifelong learning within formal education.  OPHRD plans to support initiatives providing access to education until the moment when children and pupils join the process of education. |
| Comments | Priority 1.2 of OPSESG plans "education of staff (students, pupils, doctoral candidates, young scientist, etc.) upon request and with the financial participation of businesses through vouchers". Priority 1.4 of OPHRD plans training for enhancing of the professional qualification and/or acquiring new one and training for acquiring key competences, priority 1.5 also plans in-house training. The two activities complement each other in the granting of support for ensuring high-quality staff to the businesses, with OPSESG being directed towards persons in educational and scientific institutions and OPHRD being directed to unemployed and employed persons.  Priority 2.3 of OPSESG plans support for increasing the professional qualification of employed persons in the area of education, and Priority 1.4 of OPHRD for enhancing professional qualification (in general for all sectors). Priorities 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of OPHRD also envisage training for enhancing the professional qualification and development of entrepreneurship and business skills as part of the employment measures.  Priority 3.2 of OPSESG envisages support for integration into the system of education for pupils and young people from ethnic minorities, from migrant and refugee families, thus complementing Priority 2.1 of OPHRD in the part concerning access to education of children from marginalised communities. |
| Recommendation | N/A |

Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014–2020

|  |
| --- |
| Priority 1: Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas  PA 1А - Fostering innovation, cooperation, and the development of the knowledge base in rural areas  PA 1.B - Strengthening the links between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation, including for the purpose of improved environmental management and performance |
| Priority Area 2: Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture in all regions and promoting innovative farm technologies and the sustainable management of forests |
| PA 2A:Improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernisation, notably with a view to increasing market participation and orientation as well as agricultural diversification  PA 2B: Facilitating the entry of adequately skilled farmers into the agricultural sector and, in particular, generational renewal |
| Priority Area 3: Promoting food chain organisation, including processing and marketing of agricultural products, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture |
| PA 3A: Improving competitiveness of primary producers by better integrating them into the agri-food chain through quality schemes, adding value to agricultural products, promotion in local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups and organisations and inter-branch organisations  PA3B: Supporting farm risk prevention and management |
| Priority Area 4: Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry |
| PA4A: Restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas, and in areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and high nature value farming, as well as the state of European landscapes  PA4B: Improving water management, including fertiliser and pesticide management  PA4C: Preventing soil erosion and improving soil management |
| Priority Area 5: Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors |
| PA5A: Increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture  PA5B: Increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing  PA5C: Facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by-products, wastes and residues and of other non-food raw material, for the purposes of the bio-economy  PA5D: Reducing green-house gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture  PA5E: Fostering carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry |
| Priority Area 6: Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas |
| PA6A: Facilitating diversification, creation and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation  PA6B: Fostering local development in rural areas  PA6C:Enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas |

**Table 13: Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and RDP**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| RDP | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas | 1А |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Enhancing farm viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture | 2А |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture | 3А |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry | 4А |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors | 5А |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5D |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5E |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry | 6А |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6C |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 14. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and RDP**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity:** It is noted that RDP envisages measures related to the educational infrastructure in rural areas that will complement the infrastructure support under OPRG in urban areas. OPSESG at the same time envisaged possibilities for investment in equipment related to the learning process and mostly to ICT.  Section 8 of OPSESG mentions a possible complementarity with regard to "fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas" through optimisation of the system of training in the Agricultural Academy and its structures. The last measure is not laid down in the OPSESG version of May 2014 and is therefore to be reviewed.  **Demarcation:** Concerning the provision of training, it is noted that RDP training does not include instruction or training courses which are part of any standard programmes or systems of training for secondary or higher schools. The texts referring to Article 35 of Regulation 1305/2013 are vague. |
| Comments | The implementation of the objectives of PA 1 and PA 2 of OPSESG will be complemented by RDP through sub-measure 1.1 Professional training and skill acquisition" (contributing to Priority Areas 2А; 2B; 3А; 3B; 4А; 4C; 5А; 5B; 5C; 5D; 5E) and sub-measure 1.2 "Demonstration activities and awareness activities" (contributing to Priority Areas 2А; 4B; 4C; 5А; 5B; 5D; 5E). At the same time there is a potential option for doubling of financing for beneficiaries as sub-measure 1.1 of RDP envisages "the purchase or leasing of new machines and equipment for demonstration activities implemented on a demonstration site which may be a testing ground or educational and testing ground or a laboratory of a scientific institute, university or a vocational high schools which train or make research in agriculture, food and forestry" which partially overlaps with some activities laid down in PA 1, IP2 of OPSESG.  There is complementarity of the programmes concerning educational infrastructure inasmuch as RDP will be granting financing for reconstruction, repairs, equipment and/or furnishing of educational infrastructure of local importance in rural areas (sub-measure 7.2 of RDP, contributing to priority areas 3А, 5B and 6B), while OPSESG will ensure financing through "soft measures" of educational infrastructure sites (PA 2, IP 1). Complementarity may also be found with regard to ensuring access to information technologies – RDP (Measure 7.3) plans investment for broadband infrastructure while PA 2, IP 1 of OPSESG plans activities related to the introduction of ICT in schools.  Along with the area of complementarity of the two programmes, it should also be noted that there is a possibility for potential overlapping of investment as OPSESG also plans possibilities for investment in school equipment, including rural areas, and mostly ICT (PA2, IP1).  In the area of knowledge transfer and innovation, RDP plans "financing of innovative investment projects within the local development strategies (projects directly linked to the introduction of new technologies)". This support will complement OPSESG activities for supporting applied research (PA1, IP2) |
| Recommendation | A clearer demarcation of the programmes is needed with regard to the activities aimed at investment in educational infrastructure and purchase of machines and equipment by scientific institutes/higher education establishments.  It is also necessary to make an inventory of the complementarity concerning scientific research and cooperation with businesses in agriculture, as well as to search for more complementarity options in this aspect. |

Maritime and Fisheries Programme (MFP) 2014–2020

|  |
| --- |
| Chapter I: Sustainable Development of Fisheries |
| 1. Innovations in fisheries |
| 2. New forms of income, diversification and job creation in fisheries |
| 3. Investments on board |
| 4. Permanent cessations of fishing activities |
| 5. Protection of and restoring marine biodiversity and ecosystems |
| 6. Added value and quality of fisheries products |
| 7. Fishing ports, landing sites and shelters |
| Chapter II: Sustainable Development of Aquacultures |
| 8. Innovations in aquaculture |
| 9. Production investments in aquacultures |
| 10. New forms of income and added value in aquacultures |
| 11. Environmental and organic production services |
| 12. Insurance of aquaculture production |
| Chapter III: Sustainable Development of Fisheries Areas |
|  |
| Chapter IV: Marketing and Processing Related Measures |
| 13. Marketing measures |
| 14. Processing of fisheries and aquaculture products |
| 15. Control and data collection |
| Chapter VI: Associated Measures for Common Fisheries Policy for Shared Management |
|  |
| Implementation of local development strategies |
| Technical assistance |

**Table 15: Connection between the Priorities of OPSESG and MFP**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Operational Programme / Priority Axis | OPSESG | PA 1: Scientific Research and Technological Development | | PA 2: Education and Lifelong Learning | | | PA 3: Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion | |
| MFP | Priority | 1.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| Chapter I: Sustainable Development of Fisheries | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Chapter II: Sustainable Development of Aquacultures | 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Chapter III: Sustainable Development of Fisheries Areas |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Chapter IV: Marketing and Processing Related Measures | 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Chapter VI: Associated Measures for Common Fisheries Policy for Shared Management |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Local Development Strategies |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

*Legend:*  *- weak connection,* - *average connection,*  *- strong connection*

**Table 16. Complementarity and Demarcation of OPSESG and MFP**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | **Complementarity**: The possibility for OPSESG to "complement MFP measures by the planned operations for optimisation of the training system in maritime, fisheries and aquacultures" has been noted.  **Demarcation**: It is stated that "all measures related to the dissemination of scientific knowledge; innovative practices; acquisition of professional skills; setting up networks, etc. related to fisheries and aquacultures, will be supported by the new MFP." It is also noted that "participation of scientific organisations in validation of the outcome of research of the influence of fishing activities on environment or on the more sustainable use of marine biological resources will be co-financed by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. |
| Comments | Investment in research and innovation in fisheries and aquacultures through Measure 1. Innovations in fisheries and 8. Innovations in aquaculture complement investment for setting up and development of scientific infrastructure through Investment Priority 1.1. of OPSESG which envisages activities for the setting up of scientific centres and modernising of scientific infrastructure.  The OPSESG possibilities for complementing of MFP with regard to optimisation of the training systems in maritime, fisheries and aquacultures are also described. |
| Recommendation | The operational programme also contains complementarity between Investment Priority 1.1. of OPSESG and measures 1 and 8 of MFP. |

ERDF-Funded Programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation Goal

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Complementarity / Demarcation noted in the OPSESG | It is noted that demarcation at the level of programming is not needed.  It is noted that "upon programme launch, there will be checks so as to avoid double financing at the level of target groups, beneficiaries, eligible activities/expenditure, results". |
| Comments | There are no draft versions of the programmes under ETC whose links to OPSESG to be considered, analysed and assessed. |
| Recommendation | When drafting the versions of the ETC programmes where under Bulgaria will be party, the wording of item 1.8 of Section 8 should be reviewed and revised, if necessary. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **?** | Meeting the conditionalities of Annex 4 to the General Regulation concerning the CSF funds |

The fulfilment of the conditionalities is monitored at national level. Concerning the meeting of the conditionalities, PA states that all conditions are to be met by 31 December 2016 at the latest, while the majority of them are to be met in the first half of 2014.

Five of the specific conditions in the area of education and science are directly related to the preparation of OPSESG 2014–2020. They are in the following thematic areas:

* Strengthening research, technological development and innovation;
* Investment in skills, education and lifelong learning.

The adoption of the Smart Specialisation Strategy and the Higher Education Strategy, as well as of the Secondary Education Act and of amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act will support meeting the conditionalities.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Some of the recommendations provided have been taken into account and as a result the synergy between the Programme and Horizon 2020 has been strengthened and demarcation from and complementarity to some of the operational programmes improved. The texts of the Programme have been updated in line with the documents' latest versions.

Attention should be paid to the following:

* To better address the territorial aspects related to quality of education in small and big settlements.
* To better reflect into the Programme the PA targets, specifically:
  + Establishing and enhancing of partnerships among higher education, enterprises and research;
  + Strengthening of the management capacity of scientific institutes;
  + Creating of possibilities for researcher traineeships in enterprises;
  + Providing incentives to the educational institutions to deliver educational services beyond their infrastructure on the basis of partnership with employers, state and municipal institutions and other stakeholders.
  + Developing of partnerships between business and scientists.
* A better synergy between the Programme and the priorities stated in the Bucharest Communiqué of the Ministers Responsible for Higher Education is possible through provision of support by the OPSESG for elaboration of joint programmes and degrees with other universities, as part of the measures aimed at enhancing the quality and efficiency of higher education.
* Demarcation from and complementarity to some of the other operational programmes, OPIC in particular, could be improved.

## Evaluation of Internal Coherence

### Analysis

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Relevance of the OPSESG Strategy |

Relevance of the Programme's Strategic Approach as laid down in Section 1.

Section 1 of OPSESG 2014–2020 lays down that the Programme is aimed at the implementation of two main tasks:

* *To be among the key instruments that support the achievement of the objectives adopted by Bulgaria within the Europe 2020 Strategy.*
* *To serve as an efficient tool for implementation of cohesion policies in accordance with the agenda at national and Community level.*

The justification of the Strategy has been built upon the following three topics:

The basic needs in the field of research include: increasing of R&D investment; development of scientific infrastructure; improved incentives, conditions and possibilities for researchers; improving cooperation between science and business and increasing of the innovative potential. The information about the state of the art is illustrated by data specifying the sources of financing (government, business, EU). Concerning the development and retaining of researchers, there are no data about the persons employed in research by age and by sector, nor there is any analysis of their entrepreneurship and mobility possibilities or possibilities for attracting foreign researchers in Bulgarian scientific institutions. The bad commercialisation of scientific work and products and the lack of supporting public policies are stated as one of the key problems concerning the cooperation between science and business. Analysis has been made of the areas with potential for developing the research into commercial products. Concerning the strategic approaches to addressing of needs, it is noted that through the financing from OPSESG supplementary effect to R&D investment will be sought. The Programme is also expected to have a complementary effect with regard to the Horizon 2020 financing. Infrastructure investment is targeted to (1) centres of excellence and competence; (2) infrastructures playing pivotal role in the European Roadmap and (3) investment in modernising scientific institutes and universities, enhancing regional economic growth and productivity. The measures for development and retaining researchers envisage enhancing of the qualification of teachers, possibilities for exchange of experience and mobility, access to international research facilities and financing of publications. The measures do not analyse any possibilities for better remuneration and enhancing career and scientific development. The measures aimed at improving the cooperation between science and business envisage fostering applied research and better coherence between research priorities and scientific advantages. The measures do not address the weaknesses identified, i.e. lack of research commercialisation and lack of supporting public policies.

Analyses of the system of higher education point to the following needs: bad structuring of the higher education system with numerous universities, low efficiency of the sector's budget financing, deteriorated quality of education and low realisation of graduates on the labour market; considering of universities mostly as educational structures and weak connection with R&D; need for enhancing of the qualification and competence of teaching staff. There is also an analysis of the needs related to the specifics of educational programmes and their suitability for the needs of the economy. The economic sectors with shortage of staff and the specialties preferred are noted. The low percentage of higher education graduates in Bulgaria compared to the rest of the EU despite the upward trend is also mentioned and the reasons for this have been analysed. The approaches to addressing the needs include restructuring and optimisation of the network of higher education structures and better management, including introduction of models linking financing to graduate realisation. Some improvement is planned of the programmes and of the methods of teaching, as well as granting scholarships for areas of economic priority. Concerning the improvement of qualification of the teaching staff, the focus is put on ICT, teachers' mobility and methodical and managerial competencies. The possibilities to improve collaboration between higher education, R&D and businesses have not been analysed as tools for enhancing the professional competences of teachers, as well as the possibilities for inclusion of students and doctoral candidates in extra-class activities, including against payment, which would at the same time address the problem with financial assistance during education. The Programme is planned to provide additional resources for student loans.

Under the topic school education, training and lifelong learning following problems have been analysed: dropping out of the system of school education due to social, ethnic and cultural reasons; chronic deficit of the system as infrastructure, learning contents and qualification and preparation of teachers; poor quality of education; missing link between education and labour market; no mindset for lifelong learning; need for adult literacy and additional education for labour force with low education and qualification. The reasons for the low qualification of teachers and the needs in this respect have been analysed. The analysis lacks information about the system of pre-school education and kindergartens. The approaches to addressing the needs include measures aimed at integration of children from ethnic communities, children with specific educational needs (SEN) and prevention of early school leaving. In order to improve the quality of education, measures are planned to introduce ICT in schools, to develop the system of external assessment, to change and adapt curricula, including in line with economic needs, to expand the possibilities for practical training and development of conditions for lifelong learning. There is no analysis of the possibilities for improvement in the process of learning by addressing the individual needs of pupils, out-of-class activities and preparation (including in the light of all-day organisation of the education) and supporting the development of the talents of gifted children and working with children with learning difficulties. The measures related to qualification of pedagogical staff include on-going preparation of specialists, incentives for staying in the profession and career development but do not address the key problem, i.e. the low remuneration.

The justification for the choice of investment priorities is given in Table 1 of the Programme. The justification has been improved by provision of an individual justification for each investment priority.

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| **?** | * Adequacy of the measures set forth in the Programme and the degree to which they will contribute to achieving its objectives |

The text below analyses, by priority axis, the link between the needs identified, the investment priorities, the activities and the indicators set. As to the indicators, the extent to which those indicators are adequate to the products and specific objectives defined has been considered without analysing the indicators themselves. The indicators are commented on in detail in Evaluation 3. The intervention logic of OPSESG by priority axis illustrates the link between needs, investment priorities, specific objectives, activities and indicators. The graphs are given in Annex 5.

PA1. Scientific Research and Technological Development

**Table 17. PA1 - Compliance between Needs, IP, Activities and Indicators**

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| **Link** | **Comments** |
| **Investment Priority 1**. *Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down into two specific objectives addressing the topics stated in the priority: (1) modernisation of existing and setting up new centres of excellence and competence centres and (2) development of research infrastructure.  The justification of the first specific objectives provides information about the existing centres and about the previous experience gained. The text needs restructuring so as to avoid the listing of all projects financed under the 7th Framework Programme. The text should be edited to summarise and analyse the work and the efficiency of the existing centres. The importance of the centres for improving the country's extremely low indicators in the area of research and their contribution to enhancing the competitiveness of the economy has been mentioned. As to the areas in which the centres will be set up, the justification refers to the National Research Development Strategy and the Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation. Furthermore, there is an analysis of the areas of importance for the country and the areas with good results. An analysis has been made of the location of research organisations on the country's territory.  The justification of the second specific objective mentions the importance of research infrastructure for economy and society. An analysis has been made of the institutions with capacity and of the areas where there is no financing but which have a development potential. The territorial distribution of existing research infrastructure has been assessed. The specific objective envisages targeted financing for modernisation and setting up of scientific infrastructure in institutes and universities, including investment in information and communication infrastructure, especially those located in less developed parts of the country. Support will also be granted to the sites identified in the National Roadmap for Research Infrastructures in view of the construction of regional partner facilities (RPF) and/or nodes of Pan-European scientific facilities. The possible participation of or partnership with the business has not been commented. |
| Needs and activities planned | Item .2.А.2.1 lists activities which correspond to the objectives set. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | Two output indicators are planned which are relevant and correspond to the common output indicators of Regulation 1301/2013:   * *Number of researchers working in improved research infrastructures;* * *Number of new researchers in the supported centres of excellence and competence centres.* |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | One result indicator has been planned:   * *Number of supported centres of excellence and competence centres;*   This indicator is rather an output indicator. No indicator concerning the second specific objective has been proposed. |
| **Investment Priority 2**. *Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down in one specific objective supporting applied research and experimental development in priority areas.  The justification is scarce in terms of facts and need identification. It is not clear how many of the Bulgarian scientific institutes and higher education establishments make experimental research in close connection with the business, what the participation of the business is, which the areas of this research are and what the needs are. Some statements are mentioned that are not supported by more information and therefore seem not sufficiently grounded and even contradicting: „*Bulgaria faces the challenges which developed EU members face"* and after that *"and this takes place in the conditions of a difficult transition after long isolation from the international research life*".  The justification also places various topics mentioned as necessary approaches which are not further developed: "*developing connections between enterprises, R&D centres and the higher education establishments*" without specifying the approaches to implementing this; "*supporting of applied research in priority areas*" without mentioning these areas; "*differentiation of educational institutions and, based on this, identification of those that will develop strong scientific activities*" without mentioning how this differentiation will be made and whether it is a precondition for granting of support. Furthermore, research activities are mentioned rather than applied research, as defined in the specific objective.  The justification should also provide information about the synergy effect anticipated from OPIC support. A thorough and clear analysis of the needs is needed which includes experience from the implementation of projects in this area under Operational Programme Development of the Competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy 2007–2013. A clear analysis is needed of the reasons why the collaboration between science and business is not sufficiently strong. |
| Needs and activities planned | There are no activities to cover the main subject of the investment priority - to develop connections between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education establishments. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | Five output indicators are planned to address the basic support activities:   * *Number of enterprises cooperating with the research institutions supported;* * *Number of enterprises that have introduced new or substantially improved products on the market and set up as a result of the supported innovations or R&D projects;* * *Number of higher education establishments that have supported or have provided access of Bulgarian scientific organisations to various European technological platforms and implemented joint technological initiatives;* * *Number of students upon request of and with the financial support from the business;* * *Number of pilot production centres set up in higher education establishments and scientific institutes.* |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | One result indicator has been laid down:   * *Private investment in R&D complementing public support in BGN/EUR*   The indicator is not clearly linked to the specific objective set and is an output indicator in accordance with Regulation 1301/2013. |

PA2. Education and Lifelong Learning

**Table 18. PA2 - Compliance between Needs, IP, Activities and Indicators**

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| **Link** | **Comments** |
| **Investment Priority 1**. *Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down in three specific objectives (SO): (1) improving of children's achievements; (2) Integration and retaining of children at school and (3) managing the quality of education.  The justification of SO1 is relevant and informative. The main problems related to children's achievements in mastering key competences, the state of the art and what has been done so far have been outlined.  SO2 is also well-grounded, with the state of the art, the objectives to be attained and the main reasons for early school leaving being described. The reasons for school leaving include the families' social status, which, among other complex reasons, is the main driver for school non-attendance and leaving. It does not mention, however, whether this problem is currently addressed and how.  The third specific objective specifies the problems and the weaknesses of the system of quality management in education. |
| Needs and activities planned | A number of activities have been planned, some of which very close in terms of contents. Uniting some of them (for instance, there are 4 ICT-related activities) and making the wording of others more precise will contribute to the improvement clarity of the text. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | The following output indicators have been mentioned:   * *Number of children aged 4 until starting school covered by pre-school education* * *Number of pupils who have received scholarships;* * *Number of pupils included in out-of-class and out-of-school activities;* * *Number of pupils included in national and regional external assessment;* * *Number of national and regional external assessments;* * *Number of pedagogical staff trained in implementation of the international pupil assessment standards;*   The forth and the fifth indicator have the same meaning, with the forth indicator not being linked to the support activities and being beyond Programme control. |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | The following result indicators have been envisaged:   * *11% at most of school leavers aged 18-24* * *Increased average PIRLS result of Bulgarian 4th graders – up to 540 points* * *Increased average PIRLS result of girls – up to 549 points* * *Increased average PIRLS result of boys– up to 531 points* * *30% at most of the 15-year-olds rated below the critical second threshold of the PISA scale in reading.* * *35% at most of the 15-year-olds rated below the critical second threshold of the PISA scale in maths.* * *30% at most of the 15-year-olds rated below the critical second threshold of the PISA scale in natural sciences.*   The envisaged result indicators are too many. In accordance with the Commission's guidelines, the number of the result indicators should be limited to 1–2 per specific objective. These indicators do not measure the achievement of the third specific objective directly. |
| **Investment Priority 2**. *Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is outlined in three specific objectives (1) improving the knowledge and skills of students and better possibilities for realisation of graduates (2) optimising the activity of universities (3) widening access to higher education.  The justification of the first specific objective identifies as major challenges the low quality of education and the low realisation of graduates on the labour market in the specialties they have graduated in and shaping of universities mostly as educational structures without carrying out any scientific activities, which is not conducive to improving the quality of education and the reputation of universities respectively. Based on the weaknesses, some problems and approaches to solving them have been stated.  The justification of the second specific objective analyses the reasons for the low quality of education, with the main reason being the inadequate funding of universities based on the number of students rather than on quality of education.  The needs analysis in third specific objective may be complemented by information about the number of students enrolled and the number of graduates and the main reasons for the low percentage of high education graduates. For some of the reasons it may be judged based on the approaches defined - scholarships, distance form of learning, but the reasons themselves are not stated and analysed. The statement that improving the enrolment models will result in a higher percentage of graduates is not convincing enough. |
| Needs and activities planned | The activities planned generally address the objectives set. Not sufficiently appropriate activities for improving the possibilities for realisation of graduated have been defined. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | The following output indicators have been envisaged:   * *Number of students trained in new curricula;* * *Number of new curricula elaborated;* * *Number of professors trained;* * *Number of higher education establishments participating in consolidation initiatives;* * *Number of students receiving scholarships and special scholarships;* * *Number of students who have been granted student loans.*   Indicators 3 and 4 do not correspond to the activities planned. |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | The following four result indicators have been envisaged:   * *Share of graduates who have started working in the first year after graduation;* * *Number of higher education establishments with an improved system of external and internal assessment;* * *Share of financing for higher education establishments increased by at least.... percentage as formed on the basis of the indicators of the system of rating;* * *At least 36 % of 30–34-year-olds with higher education.*   The second indicator is not clear or is rather an output indicator. |
| **Investment Priority 3**. *Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down in two specific objectives: (1) enhancing the qualification of those employed in education, training and science and (2) support for on-going training.  The justification of the first specific objective states the problems related to quality of pedagogical staff at schools and universities.  The justification of the needs of SO2 states some data and problems such as share of illiterates and never been to school. There is some information about the status of education. SO2 refers to a wide range of issues some of which addressed in OPHRD 2014–2020. A clear distinction is therefore to be made between the two programmes and to focus the scope of support. For instance, OPHRD 2014–2020 includes support for increasing the participation in various forms of lifelong learning, which will provide for better realisation on the labour market of the participants in such forms, and improving the social and communicative skills of young people and adults, which is also stated as area of support under OPSESG. |
| Needs and activities planned | Most of the activities are relevant against the objectives defined. Meanwhile, there are activities which are not reasoned in the justification of needs, activities which are not relevant to the objectives and activities that may be summarised and combined as they refer to the same problem in their essence. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | The following output indicators have been proposed:   * *Number of BA/MA graduates who attain a professional qualification for teachers and start working in the first year following graduation;* * *Number of young specialists participating in research partner networks, including in joint projects with businesses;* * *Number of business-applied research;* * *Number of young scientists attracted by the centres of excellence and competence centres from abroad;* * *Number of doctoral candidates, post-PhDs, post-graduate persons, lecturers in higher education establishments and researchers from foreign European universities and research centres in Bulgaria supported by mobility programmes;* * *Number of persons aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning;* * *At least 20,000 persons having received knowledge and skills validation vouchers from self- and informal education and training;* * *Number of pupils and students covered by the system of career development.*   The third and the forth indicators are not linked to the activities. The sixth indicator is not possible to measure the Programme support only as other activities and programmes will be exerting influence as well. |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | The following result indicators have been proposed:   * *At least 12 % of teachers to be aged up to 34;* * *At least….percentage of students trained in pedagogical specialties;* * *At least …. % of the persons who have attained a Master's degree who continue in PhD programmes;* * *Share of participants in various forms of mobility with improved qualification and skills and better realisation;* * *Reduced share (down to 1.5%) of illiterates aged 15-29;* * *At least 2,500 persons having received knowledge and skills validated by self- and informal education and training.*   Indicators 1, 2 and 5 do not have direct connection with the specific objectives set.  The third and the forth indicator are rather output indicators. |
| **Investment Priority 4.** *Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down in two specific objectives: (1) support for vocational training and (2) strengthening the link between vocational, higher education, science and business.  The justification of the needs of SO1 analyses problems related to the lack of a system identifying the needs of the business and feedback from the labour market. No information is delivered on the importance of VET for the labour market, including sectors where vocational education contributes directly and is important.  SO2 points to some of the main problems – not sufficiently effective link between the systems of education and businesses; lack of flexibility of the learning contents with regard to the requirements of the labour market, prevalence of theoretical to practical knowledge, small share of learning practices, poor cooperation with businesses. Fostering of education in engineering, technical and natural specialties is not well grounded, i.e. there is no data about labour market demand in this respect. No analysis has been made of the labour market dynamics and whether 5-6 years after students' training there will be demand for such specialties. Improving of the work with computer systems is not linked to the relevant specific objective but is rather a measure for enhancing the competencies of pupils and students and has already been addressed in IP1 and IP2. The justification of the specific objective does not outline any silence-related problems or measures and is therefore recommendable to consider whether the word "science" should remain in the wording of the specific objective all the more that the collaboration between science and business is addressed in PA1. |
| Needs and activities planned | Most of the activities are relevant to the objectives defined but there are activities which are vague or are not covered by justification of needs. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | The following output indicators have been proposed:   * *Number of pupils participating in flexible forms of vocational training;* * *Number of pupils and students trained in technical specialties.*   Both indicators may rather be considered as result indicators. |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | The following result indicator has been proposed:   * *Share of persons who have finished vocational high schools and have started working in the relevant profession in the first year after finishing school.*   The proposed indicator is aimed at the first specific objective but its link with it is indirect. No indicators measuring the second specific objective have been set. |

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| In August 2014 GDS SFIEP developed a draft of new SO4, which to be added to IP 2 of PA2. *Improvement of the conditions for education in cooperation with research and for development of human resources in the area of R&D*. The specific objective is presented in a separate file and is not incorporated in the text of the programme with the relevant amendments of its other parts and therefore is commented separately.  The aim is the specific objective to consolidate all the measures targeted to ensuring the linkage between the higher education and R&D. The specific objective will include some of the activities, which at the moments are part of SO1 of IP3 of PA2.  The justification of the new SO4 is based around the necessity to strengthen the linkage between the higher education and science and research and to provide support for development of human resources in the area of R&D. The planned activities include support for qualification, pre-qualification, career development and mobility in the area of science, joint programmes with the business, development of partnership networks, attraction of researchers and creation of research potential in the developed research centres, support for dissemination of scientific results and promotion of science and research. The activities support the achievement of the specific objective.  The following result indicator is planned to measure the achievement of the specific objective:   * *Scientific organisations with newly appointed researches from abroad;*   The indicator is relevant, however it covers only one of the aspects of the support.  The following output indicators are planned:   * *Attracted from abroad scientists in centres of excellence and competence centres;* * *PhD and post PhD students and researches included in mobility programmes.*   The indicators are relevant. |

PA3. Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion

**Table 19. PA3 - Compliance between Needs, IP, Activities and Indicators**

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| **Link** | **Comments** |
| **Investment Priority 1.** *Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down in two specific objectives: (1) enhancing the quality and the access to education by creating supporting environment for inclusive education and (2) setting up an educational environment fostering the potential development of each child and pupil for personal development, successful realisation and socialisation.  The two specific objectives address two major problems for inclusive education: inclusive education for children with special educational needs and the system of education that takes account of the individual needs of learners. In this aspect it is recommended that the definition of the first specific objective be reviewed. The current wording of the objective begins by "enhancing the quality and the access to education", which shift the focus off the main problem and leads to confusion as the access to and the quality of education are supported by IP1 of PA2.  The justification of SO1 gives information about what has been achieved thus far in the process of integrated training of children with SEN. The major problems are stated. There is no analysis of students with SEN and of the practices, difficulties and needs with regard to their integration in and access to higher education.  The justification of SO2 is more general, which to a certain extent can be explained by its specifics. Nevertheless, there could be some information about and analysis of the practices to address pupils' individual needs and especially of the experience and the needs to improve all-day organisation of the learning process at school. |
| Needs and activities planned | A number of activities have been stated most of which are relevant to the specific objectives defined. Some of the activities are not clearly linked to the needs specified in the justification, which requires expanding of the justification. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | The following output indicators corresponding to the activities set are stated:   * *Children and pupils with special educational needs covered by the system of education through inclusive training;* * *Number of educational institutions having ensured supporting environment for inclusive training.*   The first indicator is rather a result indicator and does not substantially differ from the proposed first result indicator. |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | The following result indicators have been proposed:   * *At least 25% of all children and pupils with special educational needs in the system of public education are covered by the process of inclusive training]* * *11% at most of the percentage of school leavers aged 18-24*   The second indicator is not linked to a specific objective. |
| **Investment Priority 2**. *Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The investment priority is laid down in one specific objective: integration of ethnic minorities into the system of education.  The justification of the specific objective points to the major problems but is not exhaustive with regard to the delivery of specific information about segregation in education, the percentage of children from Roma descent who do not go to kindergarten or school, as well the description of changes over the years, the trends and the difficulties in integrating children so as to outline the appropriate measures to address those difficulties. No possible integrated support jointly with OPHRD 2014–2020 is mentioned. It was mentioned at the meeting between the focus group and the thematic working group for Programme preparation that it would be good for the priority to be open to children of refugees and foreign citizens. Complementing of the analyses is possible in this respect. |
| Needs and activities planned | Most of the activities planned meet the requirements of the specific objective set. The table below presents some specific notes by activity. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | One output indicator has been planned:   * *Number of children, pupils, young people from Roma descent covered by educational integration and reintegration measures* |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | One result indicator has been laid down:   * *Number of persons participating in measures aimed at prevention of early drop-outs*   This indicator is similar to the output indicator proposed. |

PA4. Technical Assistance

**Table 20. PA4 - Compliance between Needs, IP, Activities and Indicators**

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| **Link** | **Comments** |
| **Specific Objective 1.** *Strengthening and enhancing of Managing Authority and the beneficiaries of the Operational Programme* | |
| Needs, investment priority and specific objective | The needs analysis outlines the main needs and the state of the art. Some information may be added about the equipment and current needs such as premises, offices, archive, computers, as well as concerning the experts – if new appointments are planned and need for training them. |
| Needs and activities planned | The activities generally address the needs. Some of them need to be defined more precisely. The table below presents some notes. |
| Output indicators and activities planned | The following output indicators have been envisaged:   * *MA staff trained;* * *OP evaluations made;* * *Information events;* * *Beneficiaries supported.*   The output indicators proposed are adequate to the activities planned. |
| Result indicators and specific objectives | The version of the Operational Programme of May 2014 does not include result indicators. |

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| ? | Adequacy of the measures set forth in the Programme and the degree to which they will contribute to achieving its objectives |

PA1. Scientific Research and Technological Development

**Table 21. PA1 – Analysis of the activities**

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| **Measures/Activities Planned** | **Adequacy** |
| **Investment Priority 1:** *Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.* | |
| Support for establishment and development of centres of excellence and competence centres, including refurbishment of premises, infrastructure and purchasing of equipment; | Adequate and will contribute to achievement of the objectives |
| Support for the modernisation of scientific infrastructure and existing research laboratories of scientific institutes and higher education establishments which carry out research in areas corresponding to the regional and national economic and social challenges; | Adequate and will contribute to achievement of the objectives |
| Establishment and development of regional infrastructures, including unique collections and archives, and of national structures partnering European scientific complexes as laid down in the European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures; | Adequate and will contribute to achievement of the objectives |
| **Investment Priority 2:** *Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.* | |
| Support for strategic research programmes in competence centres and infrastructure complexes to ensure their sustainable development and added value for national and regional economy; | There is no clear connection to the specific objective set. The specific objective points at applied research for development of the economy while activities are aimed at strategic programmes to ensure the centres' sustainable development. |
| Support for conducting applied scientific research. Financing of the research itself and activities related to the purchasing of new or modernisation of existing appliances, equipment, materials, consumables, etc. that are needed for the applied scientific research, including expenses for participants' remuneration; | Adequate and meets the specific objective set. |
| Ensuring support for access and participation of Bulgarian scientific organisations and higher education establishments to European technological platforms, joint technological initiatives and in the European Institute of Innovation and Technology; | Will contribute to the exchange of experience and the development of applied scientific research. |
| Training of staff upon request and with the financial participation of businesses through vouchers; | It is assumed that the activity envisage training of students in higher education establishments or doctoral candidates in higher education establishments and/or institutes upon request from the businesses. In this sense, the activity will be conducive to the better links between businesses and education and is therefore relevant though not to this specific objective. It would be more appropriate for the activity to be shifted to IP2 (SO1) of PA2. |
| Providing support for establishment, development and use of pilot production centres in higher education establishments and scientific institutes for scientific training, research, experimental development and prototyping. | The activity will contribute to achievement of the specific objective. |

PA2. Education and Lifelong Learning

**Table 22. PA2 – Analysis of the activities**

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| **Measures/Activities Planned** | | **Adequacy** |
| **Investment Priority 1:** *Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training* | | |
| Activities aimed at improving the key competences of pupils focusing on literacy, foreign language communication skills, digital competence, social and civil competences. | The measure meets the first specific objective but is too general and may include many of the below activities. | |
| Expansion and improvement of the application of the system of assessment (external and/or internal) of the pupils' education at national, regional and school level; | The activity will contribute to achievement of the specific objective. | |
| Measuring of pupils' achievements in the field of reading, mathematics and natural sciences, including activities related to participation in national and international research, including training of pedagogical experts to apply the international pupil rating standards; | The activity will contribute to achievement of the third specific objective. | |
| Introduction of modern technologies and interactive methods and means in the process of education, including e-contents; | The measure will support enhancing the quality of education and will thus contribute to achieving SO1 and SO2. | |
| Elaboration, update and evaluation of the efficiency of curricula; | The measure is adequate as far the assessment of curricula efficiency is concerned and will contribute to improving the management, hence the quality of education and will thus contribute to achieving the three specific objectives set. The elaboration and update of curricula is part of the obligations of the relevant experts in the system of education and Programme support will not therefore have any added value. An appropriate measure would rather be a measure that would result in an improvement in the processes of elaboration and update of curricula. | |
| Establishment of a modern protected educational environment at schools based on modern ICT for education. | The activity is adequate and will enhance the quality of education and retaining pupils at school. | |
| Ensuring of ICT tools for presentation of the learning material in general cabinets and for support of specialised cabinets (physics, chemistry, etc.), as well as introduction of smart interactive systems of communication with parents and society; | The activity will contribute to improving the quality of education, communication with parents and their inclusion in the process of education and retaining pupils at school. | |
| Setting up of a modern, secure, flexible and scalable cloud environment for general and specific ICT educational services and contents and ensuring of a reliable communication access of education and science users to it. | The activity will be conducive to improving the management in the area of education. | |
| Modernisation of the process of learning by introduction of ICT solutions for distance learning and teaching, provision of specialised equipment for on-line cooperation and joint projects between institutes/higher education establishments/schools, etc.; | The activity will contribute to improving the quality of education, improving the access to education and career orientation of students in higher classes. It will also contribute to improving the cooperation between education and science. | |
| Improving the management of institutions and the processes in the system of pre-school and school education, including in the field of inspections; | The activity contribute to improving the management in the area of education. | |
| Elaboration of standards ensuring the quality of pre-school education with the participation of all stakeholders (including parents) and elaboration of curricula and learning contents that are appropriate for the development of children and favour the acquisition of cognitive and non-cognitive skills; | The justification states that the following are being elaborated: (1) institution inspection standards in the system of pre-school and school education , (2) standard for organisational development and quality management, and (3) educational efficiency indicators. It is not clear how much the standards proposed in this activity vary from those that are being elaborated. | |
| Introduction, application and assessment of the efficiency of the standardised procedure for assessment of school readiness; | The activity will support the achievement of SO3. | |
| Securing conditions for all-day organisation of the educational process at schools. | The activity is particularly important in view of the educational reforms and allowing for parents' all-day employment but is not directly linked to the specific objectives set. It is not well grounded in the justification. | |
| Support of pedagogical innovations which increase the chances of children and pupils for attaining better educational results; | It will contribute to achievement of SO1. | |
| Ensuring of possibilities for training compliant with the individual needs of children and pupils, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship; | It will contribute to achievement of SO1 and SO2. Activities targeted at the individual needs of children and pupils are supported by IP1 of PA3 and therefore it is possible to have overlapping of support. | |
| Enhancing of the interest and motivation of children and pupils by modernising the system of granting scholarships; | It will contribute to achievement of SO2. | |
| Elaboration of family support programmes to promote parents' participation in the process of education; | It will contribute to achievement of SO2 and SO1 indirectly. | |
| Support for the elaboration and implementation of school policies and programmes for prevention of violence and aggression among children as a prerequisite for setting up a favourable environment for the development of children and educational excellence; | It will contribute to achieve SO2. | |
| Support for development of the network of schools and enhancing of the quality of education in small settlements to cover those in mandatory school age; | Adequate and will contribute to addressing the problem with poorer results of pupils in smaller settlements. | |
| Promotion of the participation of pupils in the process of school management and decision making, as well as development of forms of pupils' self-government; | Adequate and will contribute to attaining the three specific objectives. | |
| Ensuring possibilities for development of the creative capabilities and performance of children and pupils through out-of-class and out-of-school activities. | Relevant to SO1. | |
| **Investment Priority 2:** *Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups* | | |
| Improvement of the management system of higher education; | | The activity will contribute to achievement of SO2. |
| Improvement of the accreditation system by urging the flexibility and transparency of external and internal rating of the quality of higher education and scientific organisations; | | The activity will contribute to achievement of SO2. |
| Maintenance and improvement of the elaborated rating system of higher education; | | The activity will contribute to achievement of SO2. |
| Elaboration and introduction of models that link the financing of higher education to education results and student realisation; | | The activity will contribute to achievement of SO2. |
| Improvement of the forms of teaching and the methods of assessment of students and doctoral candidates, modernisation of curricula in higher education (including foreign language ones), support for development of curricula with integrated contents and up-to-date market orientation; integration of the sustainable development issues in the learning contents and implementation of inter-disciplinary programmes for improving students' knowledge and skills concerning the issues of sustainable development and climate change. Setting up of a national system for assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences of graduates in each professional area of higher education with the participation of employers; | | The activity is relevant and will contribute to achieving SO1.  Some additional and more appropriate activities may be defined to improve the possibilities for realisation of graduates than the elaboration of a national system of assessment with the participation of the businesses. Such activities are for instance improved cooperation of the career centres to higher education with the business, student fairs with business participation, staff training upon request of the businesses. |
| Promotion of student participation in various forms of additional training such as student scientific clubs, research schools, etc.; | | The activity will contribute to achievement of SO1. |
| Improvement of the mechanisms for recognition of higher education and periods of education passed in foreign higher education establishments; | | The activity will be conducive to achievement of SO1 and SO3. |
| Granting of student scholarships, including promotion of education in priority areas of the economy, as well as scholarships for special scientific excellence, engineering and technical activities, innovations and entrepreneurship, art, culture and sports (in a competitive way); | | The activity is appropriate and will contribute to achievement of SO3. |
| Support of the system of student loans; | | The activity is generally appropriate as it will improve the access to education but the needs for student loans are not well justified and included in the analysis. |
| Improvement of the models of enrolment in higher education ; | | It is not clear how the activity will contribute to increasing the number of graduates. |
| Optimisation of the activity of higher education establishments by: - improving the model of financing  - optimising the network of higher education establishments. | | The activity addresses SO2. In the part concerning improvement in the model of financing, it overlaps with the above activity: „Elaboration and introduction of models that link the financing of higher education establishments to education results and student realisation". The two activities may therefore be united. It is not clear what is understood by "optimising the network of higher education establishments". |
| Support for the application of flexible models of training that allow easier combining of learning with personal/family engagements and/or work (including distance learning); | | The activity is relevant and will support achievement of SO3. |
| Development of partner networks between Bulgarian and foreign students and their organisations for conducting research. | | The activity indirectly will support the attainment of SO1 but in general is not one of the core activities supporting the specific objectives set. Activities for setting up networks and cooperation among different universities, including among their students, are more relevant. |
| **Investment Priority 3:** *Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences* | | |
| Support for qualification, on-going training and career development of those employed in the sphere of education, training and science; | | The activity is adequate and will support achievement of SO1. |
| Development of the capacity of and creating incentives for motivation and retaining of young specialists in the system of pre-school and school education for instance by granting scholarships to young pedagogical specialists employed in the system of pre-school and school education willing to continue their education by doing a PhD degree in pedagogical sciences; | | The activity is adequate and will support achievement of SO1. The needs for it are not clearly outlined in the justification, though. |
| Setting up of a professional profile model for each position from the career development of pedagogical specialists to determine the competences needed as a sum total of knowledge, skills and relations; | | The activity is relevant and will support career development in education and training and enhancement of the qualification of pedagogical specialists. |
| Improving of the conditions for development and acquisition of new personal and professional knowledge and skills, including by development of partner networks; | | The activity is adequate only if it concerns those employed in education and science. |
| Development of the capacity and motivation of young specialists – PhD students, post-PhD persons, post-graduate persons and young scientists in the scientific sector and higher education, including by joint programmes with businesses; | | The activity is adequate and support the achievement of SO1. |
| Support for the development of PhD students who do PhD study in priority areas of science and economic sectors; | | The activity does not meet directly any of the specific objectives defined. It is rather relevant to SO1 of IP2 of PA2. |
| Development of partner networks between Bulgarian and foreign scientists, researchers, PhD students, post-PhD persons, post-graduate persons, young scientists and teachers for conducting research; | | The activity is relevant but largely reiterates the above activity "Improving of the conditions for refinement and acquisition of new personal and professional knowledge and skills, including by development of partner networks" |
| Setting up, maintenance and application of a (international) system of assessment of the impact of introduction and implementation of strategic programmes and measures for promotion of research and introduction of mandatory periodic international rating of organisations that finance and do research, development and innovations along with the system of regular monitoring and analysis; | | The activity is not relevant to any of the specific objectives and should be referred to PA1. |
| Creation of research potential in the established centres of excellence and of favourable conditions for research, career development and mobility, including possibilities for attracting scientists from abroad or opening positions for Bulgarian scientists who have worked in foreign scientific organisations. | | The meaning of support, as far as the qualification of human resources is concerned, has already been addressed by the above activity: "Support for qualification, on-going training and career development of those employed in the sphere of education, training and science". The other meanings of support are not relevant to this IP. |
| Supporting of the process of dissemination of scientific results, including supporting of the organisation of national and international scientific fora (conferences, seminars, symposia, congresses, summer schools, competitions) | | The activity is relevant to SO1. |
| Support of trainee-teachers by financing of traineeship practices from the practical preparation of students in higher education; | | The activity is relevant to SO1. |
| Promotion of flexible lifelong learning paths for the persons not covered by the traditional system of education by broadening the range of learning possibilities, including adult literacy, courses for learning the contents of the various levels of education and for acquisition of vocational qualification levels. | | The activity addresses SO2. |
| Support of activities for improving the coordination of stakeholders and setting up mechanisms for interaction in the planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment of lifelong learning policies; | | The activity addresses SO2 but is not well grounded in the justification of needs. |
| Creation of conditions for the elaboration of sectoral qualification frameworks in the system of vocational education and training and higher education in the context of the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria; | | The activity addresses SO1 but is not well grounded in the justification of needs. |
| Support for activities under the National Qualifications Framework and under the sectoral qualifications frameworks | | The activity is vague as the National Qualifications Framework does not mention any activities. It is not well grounded in the presentation of the needs. |
| Widening of the range of research, analyses and impact assessments in the formation of adequate policies for education and lifelong learning; | | The activity addresses SO2 but is not well grounded in the justification of needs. |
| Development of the system of career orientation (information and counselling, advice, competence assessment, mentoring, legal advice, training for decision taking, mastering career management skills) for pupils and students in the system of education; | | The activity is relevant to SO2 but is not well grounded in the justification of needs. |
| Creation of conditions for information support of the processes of the lifelong learning system. | | The activity addresses SO2 but is not well grounded in the justification of needs. |
| Setting up of a functional national system of validation of informal education results and self-learning and fostering its use by all age groups above 16 years; | | The activity is relevant to SO2. |
| Promotion of lifelong learning among the population as a factor for personal development, sustainable employment and social inclusion; | | The activity is relevant to SO2. |
| Through integrated measures with the Erasmus + Programme the following activities will be implemented:  Mobility aimed at practice of students, PhD students, post-graduate persons and young scientists, including as supplementary financing from other EU mobility programmes;  Mobility aimed at practice of pupils from vocational high schools, including as supplementary financing from other EU mobility programmes;  Mobility aimed at acquiring key competences of pupils from general education, including as supplementary financing from other EU mobility programmes;  Mobility aimed at exchange of experience of PhD students, post-PhD persons, post-graduate persons, professors in higher education and researchers, including as supplementary financing from other EU mobility programmes;  Mobility of doctoral candidates, post-PhD persons, post-graduate persons, lecturers in higher education establishments and researchers from foreign European universities and research centres in Bulgaria;  Mobility aimed at exchange of know-how of staff in schools and vocational education, including as supplementary financing from other EU mobility programmes. | | The activity is relevant to SO1. |
| Investment Priority 4. Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes. | | |
| Support for activities related to the application of the credit transfer system in vocational education; | | The activity is relevant to SO1. |
| Introduction of flexible forms of training in vocational education such as module training for acquiring professional qualification and documentation elaborated in cooperation with business representatives; | | The activity is relevant to SO1. |
| Support for the activities of learning and training (centres) and/or other forms of learning and training companies; | | The activity is relevant to SO1. Some proofreading is needed as it seems that a word has been omitted. |
| Support of activities introducing or modernising the systems of distance and digital training in school education; | | The activity relates to SO1 with regard to on-going adult training. |
| Fostering ICT training and certification by the application of internationally accepted standards and certificates; | | The justification does not give a clear idea of the needs for training and even more so for certification in the area of ICT. |
| Maintenance of a national "science-education-business" platform. | | The activity is relevant to SO2 but is too vague. It is not grounded in the needs. |
| Support for setting up systems of planning of training depending on the labour market needs at national and regional level; | | The activity is relevant to SO2. |
| Fostering of education in engineer and technical sciences and natural sciences as well as in the professions of priority areas of the economy; | | The activity may be relevant to SO2 but this does not become clear from the justification of needs. |
| Update of curricula in the vocational training with the participation of employers; | | The activity is relevant to SO1 and SO2. |
| Development and implementation of learning-through-working policies and measures and support for effective practical training in real working environment for pupils from vocational high schools, students and PhD students. | | The activity is relevant to SO1 and SO2. |
| Improving of the practical training of pupils form vocational high schools by traineeships in companies. | | The activity is relevant. It has already been taken into account in the previous activity. |

PA3. Educational environment for active social inclusion

**Table 23. PA3 – Analysis of the activities**

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| **Foreseen measures/activities** | **Adequacy** |
| **Investment priority 1*:*** *Active inclusion, inter alia with a view to promoting equal opportunities, active participation and better employability.* | |
| Introducing a model of early assessment of the educational needs of children at pre-school age and of prevention and early interventions focusing on their learning difficulties; | The activity will help in identifying the individual needs and in undertaking early preventive measures addressing the learning difficulties, thus contributing to the attainment of the two specific objectives. |
| Putting in place of a functional model of support to the inclusive education process by involving and utilizing the capacity of the special schools for students with sensory disabilities and mentally retarded ones. | The activity corresponds to and will contribute to achieving SO 1. |
| Ensuring conditions and resources for building and developing enabling environment in kindergartens and schools for inclusive education by: raising the capacity of the pedagogical specialists and promoting team work; introducing flexible training forms; ensuring specialized teaching aids and books; rendering individual support to education and development of the children and students in accordance with their specific needs, etc.; | The activity is in concordance with and will contribute to the achievement of SO1. |
| Creating specialized consulting rooms for work with the children and students in kindergartens and schools; | The activity corresponds to the two specific objectives. |
| Ensuring conditions for support to be rendered to young people with disabilities to apply for enrolment in higher educational institutes; | The activity will contribute to achieving SO1. |
| Assistance to students with deviant behaviour to continue their education and achieve social inclusion; | The activity will help in achieving the two specific objectives |
| Support to the education of undergraduate, graduate and PhD students with disabilities; | The activity will help in achieving SO1. |
| Ensuring conditions for creating positive public attitudes to the inclusive education process in kindergartens and schools; | The activity supports indirectly the achievement of SO1, but the causes and problems it addresses are not specified in the justification of needs. |
| Support for the inclusive education process and for social inclusion by optimizing the network of special kindergartens and schools; | The activity supports SO1, causes and problems it addresses are not specified in the justification of needs. |
| Implementing alternative models of work with students with deviant behaviour in order to assist their education and social inclusion; | The activity is relevant, but to big extent it overlaps with the above mentioned activity: „Assistance to students with deviant behaviour to continue their education and achieve social inclusion “ |
| Providing assistance to children included in the deinstitutionalization process; | The activity is adequate and it will assist in achieving the specific objectives. |
| Creating conditions for active partnership with the parents at the kindergarten and school level; | The activity is adequate and it will assist in achieving the specific objectives. |
| Creation of conditions for full-day organization of the education. | The activity will contribute to achieving SO2. |
| **Investment priority 2:** *Socio-economic integration of marginalized communities, such as the Roma community.* | |
| Additional education in Bulgarian language for children and students for whom the Bulgarian is not the mother tongue; | The activity is appropriate for achieving the specific objective. |
| Raising the capacity of the pedagogical specialists to work in a multi-cultural environment; | The activity is appropriate for achieving the specific objective. |
| Ensuring an appropriate educational environment for inclusion of the Roma children from the segregated kindergartens and schools by gradually moving them to schools outside the Roma neighbourhoods; | The activity is appropriate for achieving the specific objective. |
| Rendering support to the process of educational integration and social inclusion by optimizing the network of kindergartens and schools; | The activity is not clear. |
| Rendering support to the Roma families to enrol their children in kindergartens at the age of 3 years with a view to their early socialization; | The activity is relevant, but it is not clear what exactly the support will be. The problems need to be better tackled in the justification of the specific objective, and the integrated measures with OPHRD should be referred to. |
| Rendering support to the students to continue their education at the high school and university level; | The activity is appropriate for the specific objective. |
| Support for building and preserving the cultural identity of the children and students from the ethnic minorities, including by creating conditions for studying their mother tongue; | The activity is appropriate for the specific objective. |
| Ensuring conditions and resources for encompassing the children from the ethnic minorities in the full-day organization of the educational process; | The activity is not clear. Given that it is foreseen to desegregate them, and given that the full-day organization of the school process is ensured for all students in grades 1 through 4, then why should we include a specific activity for the children from the ethnic minorities? |
| Establishing the inter-cultural education as an inseparable part of the process of modernization of the educational system in Bulgaria; | The activity is too general and is not clear. |
| Promoting the participation of parents in the educational process; | A similar activity is foreseen in IP 1 of PA2. It is not clear therefore why such a specific activity for parents from the ethnic minorities has to be foreseen, once they are also included under IP1, unless it is some kind of more specific support and integrated projects with OPHRD that are envisaged. |
| Overcoming of the negative public attitudes, based on ethnic background and cultural identity. | The activity is appropriate, but it is not covered in the justification of the needs. |

PA4. Technical assistance

**Table 24. PA4 – Analysis of the activities**

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| **Foreseen measures/activities** | | **Adequacy** |
| **Investment priority 1:** *Raising and strengthening the administrative capacity of the Managing Authority and the beneficiaries of the Operational Programme* | | |
| Logistic support to the management structures of OPSESG, purchasing of office equipment, motor vehicles, repair works and renting of office premises, training of staff and beneficiaries in the processes of evaluation and selection of project proposals, contracting, monitoring and management of OPSESG, of the activity of the Monitoring Committee of OPSESG; | The activity includes a lot of sub-activities and should be better split into several activities. Some of the listed sub-activities are included in some of the other activities. | |
| Developing and putting in place of information systems for the purposes of the management and monitoring of OPSESG; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Carrying out communication activities and dissemination of information for the purpose of raising the awareness and transparency of the activities under OPSESG; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Organizing public events, seminars, conferences, working groups, round tables; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Ensuring material and technical support for the awareness and publicity activities. | This activity substantially overlaps with the above mentioned activity: “Carrying out communication activities and dissemination of information for the purpose of raising the awareness and transparency of the activities under OPSESG”. | |
| Conducting analyses of the capacity of the staff of the MA and of OPSESG; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Provision of training, work visits and internships for the staff in the management structures of OPSESG.; | This activity overlaps with the first activity: „training of staff and beneficiaries “ | |
| Ensuring internships for university students at the MA of OPSESG; | It is not appropriate, given the specific objective. It may be covered by activities for internship of students organized at the administration and businesses. | |
| Performing analyses of the capacity and awareness of the potential beneficiaries. | The activity is adequate. | |
| Conducting training for the beneficiaries for the purpose of strengthening their project management capacity; | The activity overlaps with the first activity: „training of staff and beneficiaries“. | |
| Preparing evaluations, expert reports, statistic data, analyses and studies, connected with OPSESG, including on-going and follow-up evaluations of OPSESG; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Ensuring the financing of labour remuneration, social insurance contributions, taxes and other payments under the existing legislation, as well as fringe benefits for the staff working at the management structures of OPSESG; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Preparation for the next programming period 2021 – 2027 – ensuring the material, information and technical resources for the activities of programming under EU funds; | The activity is adequate. | |
| Carrying out communication activities and dissemination of information with a view to raising the awareness and transparency of the activities under OPSESG; | The activity overlaps with a foregoing activity. | |
| Organizing public meetings, seminars, conferences, working groups, round tables; | The activity overlaps with a foregoing activity | |
| Preparation, translation and dissemination of official documents, relating to the overall management of the Operational programme; | The preparation of documents is part of the work of the experts at the MA and is therefore already supported through the activity: „Ensuring the financing of labour remuneration, social insurance contributions, taxes and other payments under the existing legislation, as well as fringe benefits for the staff working at the management structures of OPSESG“. The translation and dissemination are also ensured through the following activity: „Ensuring material and technical support for the awareness and publicity activities “ | |

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| ? | Adequacy of the defined eligible beneficiaries and target groups; |

PA1. Scientific research and technology development

**Table 25. PA1 – Analysis of beneficiaries and target groups**

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| **Investment priority** | **Eligible beneficiaries (Comment)** | **Target groups (Comment)** |
| **Investment priority 1:** *Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest* | The beneficiaries specifies here are: public and private research organizations, institutes, laboratories, enterprises for RIA (including the Bulgarian Academy of Science – BAS – and the Agricultural Academy), higher institutes and/or their main units, excellence centres, competence centres, MES and second-level budget executors, the Executive Agency Electronic Communication Networks and Information Systems (EA ECNIS).  It is not clear why MES and second-level budget executors, the Executive Agency Electronic Communication Networks and Information Systems are included among the beneficiaries  The remaining beneficiaries are relevant to the objectives set and the foreseen activities. | The target groups are specified as follows: Researchers, entrepreneurs, innovators, professors, PhD students, and young scholars, participants in scientific research, university and students.  The target groups are appropriately defined, except for the students which are not a main target group. Indirectly in certain cases of cooperation between universities or scientific institutions with high schools, the students there could also benefit from the extended assistance. |
| **Investment priority 2:** *Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.* | The following beneficiaries have been specified: *Scientific organizations (including BAS and AA), scientific institutions, higher schools and/or their units, excellence centres, competence centres, MES.*  The beneficiaries are adequately specified. Only regarding MES it is not clear what needs and activities it covers. | The target groups are specified as follows: *researchers, professors, PhD students, post-graduate students, young scholars, and university and high school students.*  The target groups are adequately specified. |

PA2. Education and lifelong learning

**Table 26. PA2 – Analysis of beneficiaries and target groups**

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| **Investment priority** | **Eligible beneficiaries (Comment)** | **Target groups (Comment)** |
| **Investment priority 1:** *Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training.* | The beneficiaries are specified as follows: *MES and its second level budget executing units, other ministries which provide financing to schools, SACP, kindergartens, schools, resource centres, community culture centres, organizations operating pursuant to the Not-for Profit Legal Entities Act (NPLEA)*.  The beneficiaries are adequately specified. | The target groups include: *children, students, adults beyond the compulsory school age, parents, pedagogical specialists, psychologists, directors*.  The target groups are adequate except for “adults beyond the compulsory school age” because it is not clear how they will be included in the activities under the investment priority. |
| **Investment priority 2:** *Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups.* | The beneficiaries are specified as follows: *MES and its second level budget executing units, higher educational establishments and/or their main units, nationally representative organizations of workers and employees and employers, professional organizations, representative student organizations, registered under NPLEA*.  The beneficiaries are adequately defined given the foreseen activities. In connection with the extending of student loans, it should be considered whether the banks (and other financial institutions) should be also included among the beneficiaries. | The following target groups have been specified: *students, candidate students, young people, PhD students, graduate students, university professors*.  The target groups are adequate It is not clear why the group “young people”” was added, since the two groups – students and candidates students – are supposed to cover all young people who are expected to benefit from the programme. |
| **Investment priority 3:** *Improving the equal access to opportunities for lifelong learning for all age groups, in formal, informal and non-formal forms, to updating the knowledge, skills and competences of the labour force, as well as promoting flexible forms of education, including through professional counselling and validation of acquired competences.* | The beneficiaries are specified as follows: MES and its second level budget executing units including the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), other ministries which provide financing to schools, higher education establishments and/or their main units, schools, research organizations (including BAS and AA), scientific institutes, nationally representative organizations of workers, employees and employers, professional organizations, youth organizations, student organizations, registered under the law, organizations operating under NPLEA, municipalities.  The beneficiaries are adequate to the defined scope of support. | The following target groups have been specified: children, young people, university students, PhD students, post-graduate students, young scholars, pedagogical specialists from the system of pre-school and school education, scholars, researchers, professors and staff of higher educational institutes and organizations professional consultants, psychologists, persons who have no education, unemployed and illiterate persons.  The target groups are adequately defined. |
| **Investment priority 4.** *Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes..* | The beneficiaries are specified as follows: *MES and its second level budget executing units including the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET), other ministries which provide financing to schools , higher education establishments and/or their main units, kindergartens, school, scientific organizations (BAS and AA scientific institutes, nationally representative organizations of workers, employees and employers, professional organizations, youth organizations, student organizations, registered under the law, organizations operating under NPLEA, municipalities*.  Except for the kindergartens, the beneficiaries are adequate to the defined scope of support. | The following target groups have been specified: *children, young people, university students, PhD students, post-graduate students, young scholars, pedagogical specialists from the system of pre-school and school education, scholars, researchers, professors and staff of higher educational institutes and organizations professional consultants, psychologists, persons who have no education, unemployed and illiterate persons*.  The target groups are adequately defined, except for: children, professional consultants and psychologists. |

PA3. Educational environment for active inclusion

**Table 27. PA3 – Analysis of beneficiaries and target groups**

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| **Investment priority** | | **Eligible beneficiaries (Comment)** | **Target groups (Comment)** | |
| **Investment priority 1:** *Active inclusion, inter allia with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation and better employability.* | The beneficiaries are specified as follows: *MES and its second level budget executing units, other school financing ministries, SACP, higher schools, scientific organizations and institute, kindergartens, schools, municipalities, resource centres, organizations under NPLEA.*  The beneficiaries are specified adequately with a view to the specified scope of activities. | | | The following target groups have been specified: *children, high school students, young people, university students, PhD students, post-graduate students, parents, teachers, resource teachers, pedagogical specialists, psychologists, directors*.  The target groups correspond to the set objectives. |
| **Investment priority 2:** *Social and economic integration of the marginalized communities, such as the Roma community.* | The beneficiaries are specified as follows: *MES and its second level budget executing units, other school financing ministries, the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM kindergartens, schools, municipalities, and organizations under NPLEA*.  The beneficiaries are appropriately specified. | | | The following target groups have been specified: *children, high school students, and young people from the ethnic minorities and from other vulnerable groups, teachers, parents, pedagogical specialists, mediators, directors.*  The target groups include the groups which will benefit from the assistance. |

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| ? | Relevance of the proposed forms of assistance; |

To answer this question, we analysed:

* The leading principles underlying the selection of operations;
* The forms of assistance, whether grants, direct negotiating or some degree of co-financing and utilization of financial instruments.

Leading principles for selection of operations

The leading principles in the selection of operations are presented and analysed in the tables below:

Table 28. Principles referred to as leading in the selection of operations

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Leading principles for the selection of operations** | **PA 1** | | **PA 2** | | | | **PA 3** | |
| **IP 1** | **IP 2** | **IP 1** | **IP 2** | **IP 3** | **IP 4** | **IP 1** | **IP 2** |
| Thematic concentration |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Efficiency of investment for the best achievement of the objectives of OPSESG |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Complementarity with other financing sources |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Satisfaction of the specific needs of the target groups |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Horizontal principles |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Transparency, partnership and objectivity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Integrated approach |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Table 29. Analysis of the principles referred to as guiding principles in the selection of operations

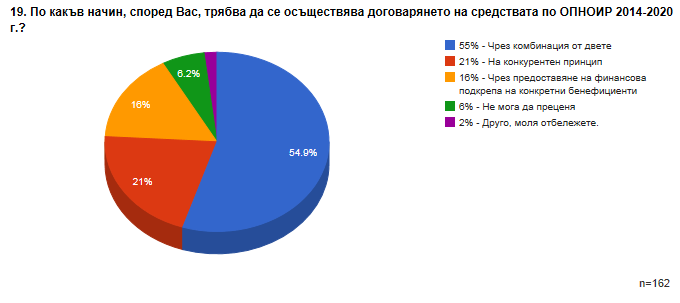
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Principle and Priority Axis | Relevance | Recommendation |
| Thematic concentration | The principle is the same for all investment priorities and it indicates that the foreseen activities and financing are concentrated on the implementation of Thematic objectives 1 and 10 of the General Regulation.  The principle is of informative nature and cannot be applied in the selection of operations because the IP already selected, are as a whole within the scope of the thematic objectives. | Remove the principle. |
| Efficiency of investment achievement of the objectives of OPSESG | The principle is the same for all investment priorities and it indicates that the measures must contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the programme and that the most appropriate ways of provision of assistance and reduction of the administrative burden of beneficiaries will be chosen.  The principle is appropriate and feasible to implement. | None |
| Complementarity with other financing sources | The principle is the same for all investment priorities and it indicates that maximum efficiency of the measures proposed for funding is to be achieved, complementarity with other programmes, financed with EU and state budget funds, has to be sought.  The principle is appropriate and feasible to implement in practice. | None |
| Meeting the specific needs of the target groups | The principle means that the funding of the specific measures will take place solely on the basis of needs of the target groups identified in strategic and analytical documents. It is the same for all investment priorities, except for IP of PA1 and PA2, where it is further specified that the financing of scientific research is limited only to the areas of research defined as priority in the National Strategy for Scientific Research or in the Innovations Strategy. This restriction is not appropriate for the investment priorities of PA2. | Remove the limitation concerning scientific research and investment priorities under PA2. |
| Horizontal principles | The principle is the same for all investment priorities and it indicates that special attention will be paid to ensuring the observation of the principles of sustainable development, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and gender equality. The observation of the horizontal principles is a necessary and compulsory condition and in this sense the introduction of this principle in the selection of operations will have no added value. | Remove this principle |
| Transparency, partnership and objectivity | The principle is the same for all investment priorities and it indicates that maximum transparency and objectivity will be guaranteed in the selection of operations and partnership with and representation of all stakeholders will be sought in programming the operations.  The principle is appropriate and feasible. It will result in improving the quality of programming. | None |
| Integrated approach | The principle is laid down only for IP3 of PA2 and for the investment priorities of PA3, the idea being that integrated operations will be sought in certain directions with a view of achieving the effect of synergy. These are: career counselling in the educational system (OPSESG) and outside it (OP HRD) for IP3 of PA2; support for children taken out of institutions, jointly with OPHRD for IP1 of PA3 and integrated projects for the Roma population, again jointly with OPHRD for IP2 of PA3.  The principle is appropriate and feasible. It will help in increasing the effect of the operations. | None |

Forms of financing and financial instruments

The text of the programme provides no information about the forms of financing. Given the foreseen measures, it is expected that a portion of the assistance will be rendered on the basis of the competitive principle, but it is also possible to have direct provision of assistance for already determined priority investment or interventions.

Such are the expectations of most of the respondents of the on-line survey as well (Figure 3).

**19. In what way, in your opinion, should the contracting of funds under OPSESG 2014-2020 be arranged?**



55% - Through a combination of the two

21% - On a competitive basis

16% - Through the provision of financial support to specific beneficiaries

6% - I cannot answer

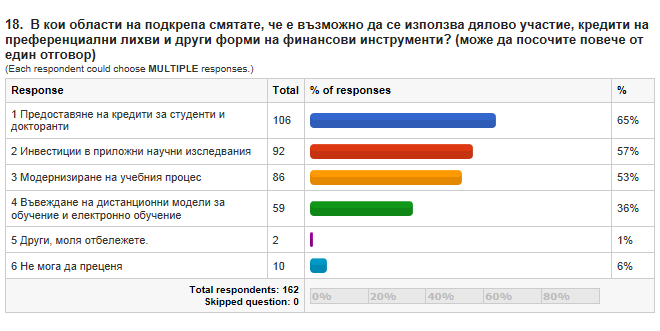
2% - Other, please specify.

*Source: On-line survey of potential beneficiaries of the Programme, members of the Working group for preparation of the Programme and experts of MA.*

Figure 3: Approaches to the provision of the funds under the Programme

The May 2014 draft of the Programme does not foresee the utilization of financial instruments. Given the types of activities proposed for loans to be extended for higher education, as well as the possibilities for joint initiatives of business-science and business – higher education it is recommendable to analyse the opportunities and advantages of using financial instruments.

The respondents of the on-line survey are of the opinion that the utilization of financial instruments is appropriate: in the extending of loans to undergraduate, post-graduate students and PhD students; in cases of investing in applied science research; for the purpose of promoting the relations between higher schools and businesses; for technical and technological equipment of higher schools; for the purpose of modernization of the educational process and introduction of the models of distant and electronic training (Fig. 4).

*Source: On-line survey of potential beneficiaries of the Programme, members of the Working group for preparation of the Programme and experts of MA. (preliminary results as at 10 April 2014)*

1. Extension of loans to students and PhD students

2. Investing in applied science research

3. Modernization of the educational process

4. Introduction of models of distant and electronic education

5.Others, please specify

6. Cannot answer

**18. In which areas of assistance do you think it is possible to use equity participation, loans at preferential interest rate and other forms of financial instruments? (You may indicate more than one answer)**

Figure 4: Possible areas for application of financial instruments

Even though financial instruments have been foreseen neither in the current draft of OPSESG, nor in the ToR for the procurement for “*Developing a preliminary evaluation of the application of financial instruments under the national OPs during the programming period 2014-2020”* of the Ministry of Finance, financial instruments could be used in the sphere of education and science. Several exemplary financing schemes are listed below, which were successfully utilized in the period 2007-2013 in EU and on the basis of which we could develop our national financial instruments, for financing for example the scientific activity of the universities, or for the provision of student loans.

Table 30. Examples of financial instruments in the area of science and education

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Financial instrument | Period of application | Type of the instrument, relevant to the activities under OP SERIG | Description | Budget |
| Pilot project for technology transfer | 2007–2013 | Investment in venture capital and other investment options | It finances activities relating to technology transfers to the universities, research organizations or SMEs through EIF. The focus of interventions is on commercialization of the intellectual property. | EUR 2 million (per year) |
| Erasmus for all | 2014–2020 | Loans | This Programme ensures support to students in MA programmes to finance their education abroad through cheap loans. | Planned budget EUR 880 million |
| „Horizon 2020“ | 2014–2020 | Loans and share holding | This programme uses debt and shareholding, the aim of which is to support SMEs, start-ups with small or medium capitalization, as well as universities participating in research and development and innovation activities. |  |

*Source:* [*http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/495870/IPOL-REGI\_ET%282013%29495870\_EN.pdf*](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/495870/IPOL-REGI_ET%282013%29495870_EN.pdf)

The following studies were conducted in addition to the above mentioned analyses:

* The experience in the implementation of the Operational programmes from the previous programming period 2007-2013, where measures similar to the ones expected to be financed under OPSESG 2014-2020 were implemented;;
* Analysis of the information received at the consultations held in a focus group with representatives of the working group set up for the preparation of OPSESG 2014-2020 and from the on-line survey of potential beneficiaries of the programme.

Experience in the implementation of the Operational programmes from the previous programming period 2007-2013, where measures similar to the ones expected to be financed under OPSESG 2014-2020 were implemented

Measures similar to the ones expected to be financed under OPSESG, were supported under the following programmes:

* OP Administrative Capacity 2007–2013 – one project for raising the administrative capacity of institutes from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences was supported. The project included training of the staff of the institutes and on the whole was not connected with the measures to be supported under OPSESG 2014–2020;
* OP Development of the Competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy 2007–2013 – was focused on the development of innovations and ensuring better relations between science and business. The supported projects were aimed at introducing innovative products and measures for the improvement of the innovative infrastructure, including for creating offices for technology transfer, and the development of applied science research by the scientific research organizations. The interim evaluation of the implementation of the procedures of provision of grants, performed in 2011, focused mainly on the issues of administrative and managerial nature and the recommendations were entirely in these directions. This was partially due to the fact that the implementation was at a very early stage and there were no results from the activities yet. That is why the report did not contain recommendations that could be used for improving the programming of OPSESG 2014–2020.
* Under PA1 OP Regional Development 2007–2013 rendered support for investments in the improvement of the infrastructure of higher schools, which improvement was mainly aimed at the energy efficiency of the buildings. That is the reason why this programme does not allow us to make use of the experience in programming OPSESG. Through IP1 Operational Programme SESG will support the construction of scientific research infrastructure.
* Under PA3 and PA4 the Operational Programme HRD 2007–2013 contained projects aimed at improving the quality of education (PA3) and the access to education (PA4).

The implementation has been commented and reported in the annual progress reports and in the following performed evaluations and studies:

* *Special study aimed at establishing baseline data for the indicators contained in Chapter 6: Areas of Activities relating to the Roma Community of OP HRD, 2012, conducted by Prime Consulting.*
* *Evaluation of the progress achieved under 6 schemes of OP HRD 2007-2010, conducted by FIIAPP.*
* *Evaluation of the achievement of the strategic goal and specific objectives of OP HRD 2007-2010, 2013, conducted by Corporate and Public Management Consulting Group and Partners.*

The recommendations to the topics, which are in the scope of OPSESG 2014–2020, which are relevant to the programming of the programme, are commented in the table below:

Table 31. Recommendations on the topics which are in the scope of OPSESG 2014–2020

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Recommendations** | **Comments and application in OPSESG 2014–2020** |
| *Evaluation of the progress made under 6 schemes of OPHRD 2007-2010* | |
| A number of recommendations were made, referring to the administrative capacity for implementation and reduction of the administrative burden, including for simplification of procedures, electronic documents, for development of clear guidelines and rules; | The recommendations are applicable with a view to raising the capacity for programme management and implementation. |
| The specificity of the scientific areas should be taken into account and scientific experiments with technical applicability should be encouraged to a greater extent; | It is relevant and was taken into account in OPSESG by offering support that encourages applied science research. |
| The programme should continue encouraging the involvement of PhD students in scientific research; | It is relevant. The January 2014 draft of the programme does not contain clearly defined activities encouraging the involvement of PhD students in scientific research. |
| The transfer of knowledge and skills should continue and research tasks performed jointly by Bulgarian and international research centres, as well as the participation in international conferences should be supported. | It is relevant and is reflected in the support foreseen under OPSESG. |
| Needs assessments should be conducted with a view to including the children and students from ethnic minorities in the educational process in the settlements where they live and with view to integrating children at the pre-school age. | It is relevant. OPSESG foresees measures for social integration of children from the earliest pre-school age. The Programmes make no analysis of needs by settlements and regions. |
| *Evaluation of the achievement of the strategic goal and specific objectives of OPSESG 2007-2010* | |
| Introduction of innovations in the qualification and education of the teachers, career development for teachers. The training must be bound with teacher career development and with the system for human resources management in education. | OPSESG contains activities for qualification and career development of the people employed in education. |
| Career orientation of the students must be supported. | The recommendation is relevant and it will contribute to the better career orientation of the students to the opportunities at the labour market according to their personal preferences and attitudes. The support for career development of the students is foreseen in IP3 of PA2 of the Programme. |
| Increasing the attractiveness of RIA and improving the conditions for the development of such activities. | It is relevant and has been reflected through the support under PA1 of the Programme. |
| Increasing the concentration and capacity for R&D outside Sofia. | It is relevant in view of the objectives for balanced territorial development. In the draft of May 2014 OPSESG contains analyses in this aspect. |
| Validation of the informal education and training. | It is relevant because the opportunities for acquiring qualification and education will be increased. It is foreseen in OPSESG. |
| Providing support to the education and additional classes in Bulgarian language for children from the minority groups. This will support their integration in the receiving schools. Besides, the involvement of parents and the work of specialists with them and their children will further step up their successful integration, the adequacy and quality of the educational services. | It is relevant. OPSESG foresees support for additional classes in Bulgarian language as well as measures encouraging the participation of parents in the educational process. |
| The support to the building of capacity of the teachers, instructors, school managers and staff must continue, systems must be put in place to ensure quality control, the content of education must be improved, by applying ICT, the skills for creative work must be enhanced and the struggle against gender stereotypes in education must continue. | The problems specified in the recommendation have been taken into account in the process of preparation of OPSESG, which contains measures addressing them. |
| For the purpose of raising the quality of education and binding it with the labour market demand, the employers and their professional organizations must be directly involved in the preparation of the curricula, especially in the post-graduate programmes. | The recommendation is appropriate particularly regarding the profile-oriented and vocational education, as well as in certain cases – some post-graduate programmes. OPSESG foresees support to be rendered for the updating of the curricula and syllabuses in the vocational education jointly with the employers. |
| Opportunities must be planned for the new programming period for financing projects for joint curricula and internships, as well as forums for joint initiatives of the higher educational institutes and the employers or their associations for employment of the graduates from a specific educational level. | The recommendation is relevant and will promote the ties between the educational institutes and the real economy. OPSESG foresees assistance through “training by working „for students in the vocational high schools, at the universities and PhD students. |
| It will be useful to continue the financial support for the students through student scholarships and rewards during the next programming period. | OPSESG foresees this support to continue through the student scholarships. |
| New schemes could be laid down for the next programming period, which will support PhD students in the following areas, important not only for Bulgaria: nanotechnologies, alternative energy sources, anti-earthquake construction, struggle against climate change and global warming, organization of public healthcare, application of ICT in all public services. | The recommendation is relevant, so long as the targeted support for definite areas is well justified. OPSESG foresees support to PhD students in the priority areas and economic sectors for the country. |

Analysis of the information obtained at the conducted consultations in the focus group with representatives of the working group set up to prepare OPSESG 2014–2020 and from the on-line survey of potential beneficiaries of the Programme.

The focus group discussed the needs and priorities in the following areas: (1) science and applied research; (2) higher education; (3) school education.

Regarding science and applied research the main conclusions from the discussions point out to the necessity of dualism in the approach to science and scientific research: on one hand, what is needed is investment in excellence, and on the other hand – investment in competences and applied research. Currently there is no clear vision on the areas in which the centres of competence will be develop. This is largely due to the still missing “Innovations Strategy for Smart Specialization” which is being prepared. The need for a reliable evaluation of the capacity of the organizations to make use of the provided assistance for the development of such centres was underlined. At the same time it was pointed out how important it was to consider the regional aspect of the provision of support for the development of the centres for the purpose of developing the regions. With respect to the optimization of the work of the scientific organizations, it was pointed out that the major lever should be the binding of the financing (including from the budget) with the outcomes.

The importance of ensuring a complementing effect with the programme for scientific research and innovations “Horizon 2020” was pointed out, as well as with other OPs in Bulgaria for the next programming period, such as RDP, MFR, OPIC, including by implementing integrated projects. The integrated projects with OPIC and greater clarity on their nature are essential. The effect of synergy with OPIC will create opportunities for strengthening the ties between science and business. The offices for technological transfer offer a good opportunity for making the applied research widely known in the business circles and they are instrumental especially as intermediary units. An opinion was voiced that the place where such centres should be given support was OPSESG, not OPIC. Presently however this idea has not been given enough attention.

Regarding higher education, it was pointed out that the reforms in the higher education system must be based on financing that is bound with quality of education and student performance at the labour market. In this respect the project for creating a rating system for the higher educational establishments is a big step forward, because this increases the transparency of the higher education system. It was pointed out that additional work is still needed in this respect that the schemes for financing science development in the higher education system need to be further optimized. The management of higher schools needs to be improved and opened“ to stakeholders, which is another important reform that depends to a great extent on the currently developed Higher Education Strategy.

The need to improve the higher education – public sector relations must be addressed if the needs of the local communities are to be taken account of. A better concordance is needed therefore between OPSESG and OPGG.

The experience from implementation of projects in the current programming period shows that the small projects do not provide big value added, especially in the area of development of human resources – by supporting PhD students, under-graduate students, internships, scholarships. The effect of the consolidation of projects at the national level has yielded better results.

Regarding school education there is a distinct need for reform and prioritization of investment, while at the same time decentralizing the support of the schools through the local authorities. A major emphasis should be laid on improving the quality of education and modernizing it. The regional problems that school and pre-school education and kindergartens are faced with have to be considered and addressed. The current draft of the Programme is too detailed with respect to the support; while the opinion of the participants in the focus group is that the Programme should address the priorities above all and should not dissipate resources in activities, which are basically the obligation of the administration – such as updating of curricula and syllabuses.

The integration of marginalized communities in the education system should not be confined to the Roma community only. The increasing migration flow to the country calls for addressing the problem in a broader aspect, including for the purpose of solving demographic problems.

The career development support for teachers may be more efficient if it builds on the existing career development mechanisms, including by ensuring teacher mobility.

With respect to human resources the main problem in all areas is labour remuneration – a problem which is not considered and analysed and for which the Programme foresees no solutions.

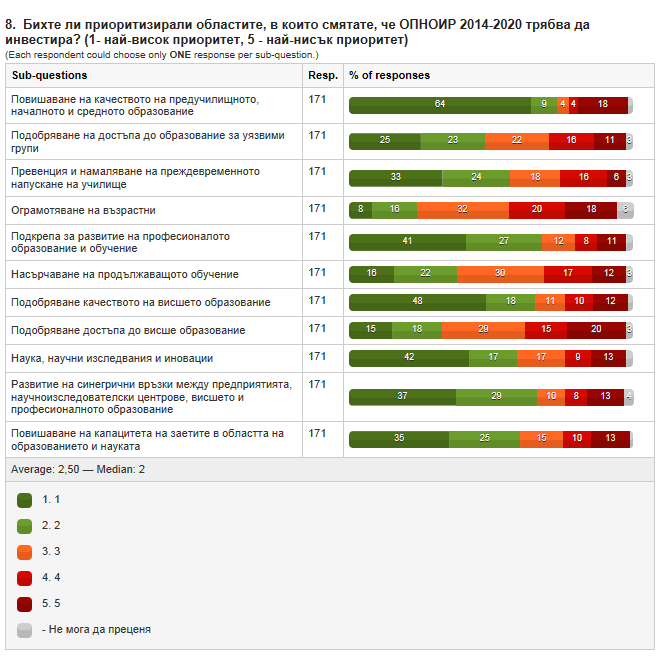
The following additional recommendations were made:

* The cooperation of the specialized directorates of MES should be sought for improving the analyses in the Programme;
* The topics and activities should be consolidated;
* The indicators should be made more precise.

The information obtained from the on-line survey confirms to a great extent the views expressed at the focus group discussion.

The problems identified as basic ones that need to be addressed with priority are the ones pertaining to the quality of school, higher and vocational education, followed by the problems of development of science and research and building of synergy between business, science and education (Figure 5).

The responses to the on-line questionnaire are presented in Appendix 4 to this Report.

*Source: On-line survey of potential beneficiaries of the Programme, members of the Working group for preparation of the Programme and experts from the MA.*

1. Raising the quality of pre-school, basic and secondary education
2. Improving the access of the vulnerable groups to education
3. Prevention and reduction of early school leaving
4. Liquidation of illiteracy among adults
5. Support for the development of vocational education and training
6. Promotion of continuing education
7. Improving the quality of higher education
8. Improving the access to higher education
9. Science, research and innovations
10. Development of synergy between the enterprises, scientific research centres, higher and vocational education
11. Raising the capacity of the employed in the sector of education and science

Cannot answer

****

Figure 5: Priority areas of support according to the conducted on-line survey

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **?** | Evaluation of the integration of the horizontal principles  Analysis of the extent to which the principle of equality and non-discrimination has been laid down in the programme document and the extent to which it is really present in the different parts of the Programme:;  Evaluation of the potential contribution of the Programme to the promotion of equal gender opportunities and non-discrimination; |

Horizontal principles underlying the main regulations for the period 2014–2020

The horizontal principles specified in the main regulations for the programming period 2014–2020, as well as in the draft for the Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the European Commission, are systematically listed in Table 32.

Table 32. Horizontal principles, laid down in the regulations for the period 2014-2020 and in the Partnership Agreement

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Regulation laying down the common provisions[[4]](#footnote-4)** | **ESF Regulation[[5]](#footnote-5)** | **Partnership Agreement** |
| * Partnership and multi-level governance * Promotion of equality of men and women and non-discrimination * Sustainable development | * Partner participation * Promotion of equality of men and women * Promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination * Social innovations * Trans-national cooperation | * Partnership * Promotion of equality of men and women and non-discrimination and accessibility * Sustainable development |

Art. 55 of the Regulation laying down the common provisions foresees the ex-ante evaluation to appraise:

*(l) the adequacy of planned measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women and to prevent any discrimination, in particular as regards accessibility for persons with disabilities;*

*(m) the adequacy of planned measures to promote sustainable development.*

In addition, Article 96 (7) points out *that each operational programme, except those where technical assistance is undertaken under a specific operational programme, shall include a description of*:

*(a) the specific actions to take into account environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management, in the selection of operations;*

*(b) the specific actions to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, design and implementation of the operational programme and in particular in relation to access to funding, taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination and in particular the requirements to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities;*

*(c) the contribution of the operational programme to the promotion of equality between men and women and, where appropriate, the arrangements to ensure the integration of gender perspective at operational programme and operation level.*

Following these requirements, the European Commission form for presentation of the Operational programmes in Section 11 requires a description of the following horizontal principles:

* Sustainable development (*description of the specific activities, undertaken to satisfy the requirements relating to protection of environment, resource efficiency, mitigation of the consequences of and adaptation to climate change, sustainability against natural disasters and risk prevention*);
* Equal opportunities (*description of specific actions of promotion of equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination*);
* Equality of men and women (*description of the contribution to promoting gender equality)*.

Besides, in describing the interventions and activities under the selected priorities, the format of the Operational Programme allows to point out the leading principles, underlying the selection of operations in a way that will ensure activities of higher quality, contributing to the achievement of the objectives. The Programme will thus incorporate specific principles, directly relating to and supporting the achievement of the objectives and implementation of programme activities.

All data referring to the common indicators for output and results of ESF, according to REGULATION (EU) No 1304/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 must be presented broken down by gender.

Analysis of the adequacy of presentation of the principles in the different parts of the Programme and opportunities for monitoring

The horizontal principles in OPSESG 2014–2020 referring to sustainable development, equal opportunities of men and women and prevention of discrimination are laid down in Section 11 of the Programme

The principle of partnership is discussed particularly in p. 7.2 “Actions undertaken for Partner Participation”. The conducted analysis of stakeholders shows that the opinion of the main groups of stakeholders has been presented in the process of programming. The results of the on-line survey also demonstrate that a large majority of respondents (87%) are of the opinion that the existing mechanisms of information and consultations allow the opinion of their organization to be taken into account in the process of preparation of the Programme. The main reason for dissatisfaction is quoted to be the fact that opinions are recorded, but not actually taken into consideration or that no feedback is received on whether the proposals have been included in the Programme. The respondents point out that their preferred channels for presentation and reception of information are MES’ web-site, information campaigns and focus groups. An additional information means they see in the letters and written information sent to specific stakeholders. The thematic working group is also quoted as an appropriate instrument for consultations.

Most of the respondents are of the opinion that the Thematic Working group for the preparation of the Programme includes the main stakeholders (only 2% do not share this opinion). There are proposals to make the composition of the Working group better balanced by including more representatives of organizations other than the administration, as well as by optimizing the number of participants in order to make the work at the meetings more efficient.

The comparison of the horizontal principles laid down in the main regulations on the assistance under ESIF and the Partnership Agreement (see the Table below) shows that the main horizontal principles laid down in these documents are also underlying OPSESG 2014-2020.

Table 33. Comparison of the horizontal principles laid down in the Regulations on the assistance under ESIF in the period 2014-2020 and the Partnership Agreement

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Principles laid down in the main regulations and in the PA** | **Document** | **The draft of OPSESG** |
| Partnership is multi-level governance | Regulation on the common provisions  ESF Regulation  Partnership Agreement | In p. 7.2. and under the leading principles in selecting operations |
| Promotion of equality of men and women and non-discrimination | Regulation on the common provisions  ESF Regulation  Partnership Agreement | In Section 11. |
| Sustainable development | Regulation on the common provisions  Partnership Agreement | In Section 11. |
| Social innovations | ESF Regulation | In activities under IP1 of PA2 and PA3 |
| Transnational cooperation | ESF Regulation | In activities supporting mobility and joint research and projects. |

An analysis of how the horizontal principles of sustainable development, equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination and equality of men and women, contained in Section 11 of the programme, is presented in the Table below.

Table 34. Analysis of the way the horizontal principles are laid down in OPSESG

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Principle** | **Reflection in the Programme** | **Monitoring of the implementation of the principle** |
| Sustainable development | It is pointed out that the principle will be reflected through the following priority axes:  PA1 – by giving priority to projects targeting environment protection innovations, technologies of energy efficiency and utilization of renewable sources, organic agriculture and organic food;  PA2 – by adapting the educational content and developing new curricula and syllabuses where ecological education will be included; | No mechanisms for monitoring the application of the principle have been foreseen. |
| Equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination | It is pointed out that the principle will be reflected through:  PA3 – by targeting disadvantaged groups for which special support is envisaged;  PA2 – it contains measures addressing the needs of vulnerable groups through measures for prevention of early school leaving, measures for student loans, for qualification of teachers to work with children at risk;  Introduction of ICT in education and of distance learning forms, thus facilitating the access to education;  Besides, rules will be applied in the selection of projects which will guarantee the availability of physical conditions for work of disadvantaged participants: | Most generally, monitoring is foreseen to take place in the form of specialized checks and of monitoring specific indicators.  The introduction of specialized checks would result in increasing the administrative burden. It would therefore be more appropriate to collect information on the implementation of the principle through the monitoring system. |
| Equality of men and women | It is pointed out that the principle will be reflected by:  Creating conditions for equal opportunities of men and women in the management of the projects;  Guaranteeing adequate representation in the target group;  Modelling the educational content in order to shift the focus in presenting the traditional roles of men and women and to encourage changes in the attitudes. | It is not specified how the implementation of the principle will be monitored.  According to the requirements of the ESF Regulation, the data for the indicators must be collected by gender, which will allow to measure the support rendered to men and women. |

### Conclusions and recommendations

The justification of the selection of investment priorities (table 1) was improved in the course of work, and so were the strategic goals in the area of science. The added information illustrates the needs relating to some specific objectives under all priority axes. The structuring of the exemplary activities in the area of education was also improved.

What is still needed is a more comprehensive presentation of the problems relating to some specific objectives, a more precise and summarized presentation of the activities, an analysis of the possibilities to use financial instruments and a more precise defining of the methods of monitoring the implementation of the horizontal principles.

## Evaluation of the system of indicators

**Analysis**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Assessment of the relevance and clarity of the system of indicators |

The assessment of the relevance and clarity of the system of indicators is explicitly referred to as a responsibility of the ex-ante evaluation in Article 55(3)(e) of the Regulation on the common provisions (1303/2013).

In the draft „Technical paper on possible programme-specific indicators” of DG Employment, Social issues and inclusion it is pointed out that:

*”The justification used to define common indicators is that they will allow data from all member states to be collected and summarized for the purpose of reporting at the EU level. The number of the common indicators is limited to the minimum of most important information necessary to report the main scope of the support from ESF in the context of Europe 2020 Strategy.* ***Thus, the common indicators are the minimum set of indicators for each OP. They may be complemented with programme-specific indicators****, which may be financial indicators, product or result indicators*.”

The draft of Guidelines of DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion on the monitoring and evaluation for the period 2014-2020 also highlights the important role of the ESF common indicators for all OPs supported by ESF (regardless of whether they are financed from one fund or more) which have to report on the common indicators. The review of the system of indicators of OPSESG shows that the ESF common indicators have not been included in the logical framework of the Programme to date.

In August 2014 DG SFIEP has submitted a table with a new system of indicators, including with proposed baseline and target values. These indicators have not been yet incorporated in the text of the operational programme.

The new result and output indicators are defined under investment priorities and are not divided by specific objectives. The comments provided below reflect the modifications made in the system of indicators. However , considering the fact that these have not been incorporated in the text of the programme, the analyses based on the prior version of the system of indicators has been preserved for consistency of the texts with the internal coherence analysis and with the intervention logic.

The review of the system of indicators of OPSESG shows that as of this moment, as well as in the prior version, in the logical framework of the programme common ESF indicators have not been used due to the specifics of the programme, but the logic of accounting the support granted to persons has been followed.

According to the Guidelines for the ex-ante evaluation[[6]](#footnote-6), the result indicators relate to the changes sought in the specific objective, which the member states strive to achieve with the assistance from the EU funds. Accordingly, the aim of the result indicators is to help in establishing whether any progress in achieving the specific objectives has been made. Depending on the indicator, factors which are external to EU assistance may influence the results and the assessment whether the specific objective has been achieved. Each priority axis must include at least one result indicator.

It should be borne in mind that the indicators of ERDF and ESF have different rationale. According to the Guidelines for the Ex-ante Evaluation, the indicators of ERDF and the Cohesion Fund must be aimed at measuring the change in the condition of the member-state, region, area, sector, population to which the programme is targeted. Therefore, the indicators must not be confined to the supported people only. As for the ESF indicators, they must be targeted at capturing the effects on the supported persons and institutions. Additional global effects on the situation in a country or region for example, must be assessed through evaluations. The result indicators in the Logical Framework of OPSESG do not follow these guidelines, i.e. the result indicators under ERDF do not measure global effects, while the indicators of ESF are aimed at measuring effects on a country-wide scale – as for example share of early school leavers or share of university graduates. Having in mind the nature of the programme, however, the evaluator does not consider this as a significant problem.

One of the requirements of the European Commission, set out in the Guidelines for the Ex-ante Evaluation, is the number of the result indicators to be limited, and the use of a single indicator is recommended for each investment priority and specific objective under ERDF. This requirement has been observed with respect to ERDF, but for some of the specific objectives under ESF, the number of foreseen result indicators is too big.

Table 35. Evaluation of the relevance and clarity of the system of indicators

| **Specific objective** | **Output**  **indicator** | **Relevance** | **Clarity** | **Result**  **indicator** | **Relevance** | **Clarity** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1. Scientific research and technology development** | | | | | | |
| Modernisation of existing excellence centres and competence centres in priority areas and targeted development of new such centres based on their potential to contribute to knowledge base and innovation capacity in priority areas. | 1) Number of researcher employed at improved research infrastructures.  2) Number of new researchers at the assisted excellence centres and competence centres in priority areas | 1) The indicator is relevant (common indicator from Regulation 1301/2013)  2) The indicator is relevant (modified common indicator from Regulation 1301/2013) | 1) The indicator is clear  2) The indicator is clear but it is not recommended to modify the wording of the common indicator | Number of supported excellence centres and competence centres | This is an output indicator. The indicator should measure the effect of the assistance for the excellence centres and competence centres. | |
| Maintenance and development of scientific infrastructure with the aim to maintain the universities and scientific organisations as regional knowledge and technology and/or distributary nodes in support to realisation and sustainability of pan European research facilities. | See above | See above | See above | No result indicator was specified. | - | - |
| Assistance for applied research and experimental development in priority areas, assisting the economic development. | 1) Number of enterprises cooperating with the supported research institutions.  2) Number of enterprises which have introduced new or significantly improved products at the market, created as a result of the supported innovations or R & D projects.  3) Number of higher schools, which have assisted or ensured access for Bulgarian research organizations to different European technological platforms, and have conducted joint technological initiatives.  4) Number of students trained upon request of and with the financial participation of the business  5) Number of created pilot production centres at higher schools and research organizations. | General comment: too big number of indicators has been defined for this specific objective, and that, given the fact that the funds foreseen for some of the activities are rather limited. It is recommended to reduce the number of indicators.  1) The indicator is relevant (modified common indicator from Regulation 1301/2013)  2) The indicator is a modified common indicator from Regulation 1301/2013, but it is not fully relevant, because the Programme does not exercise direct control on this indicator  3) The indicator is relevant  4) The indicator is relevant  5) The indicator is relevant | 1) The indicator is clear  2) It is difficult to track the connection between the Programme activities and the achievement of this indicator.  3) It needs to be clarified what the phrase: “European technological platforms” stands for and the same applies for “joint technological initiatives”  4) The indicator fiches should specify the training that should be reported in the framework of the indicator.  5) The indicator fiches should also specify what is meant by pilot production centres. | Private investment in R&D complementing the public assistance in BGN/EUR | According to Regulation 1301/2013, this is a performance indicator. Other indicators should be developed to measure results. | |
| **2. Education and lifelong learning** | | | | | | |
| Improving the achievements of children and students in acquiring key competences at the pre-school and school educational level. | Number of children aged 4 -6 years enrolled in pre-school education. | The indicator is relevant, however it has a character of a result indicator. It is not fully in the scope and under control of the programme. | - | 1) At the most 11% early school leavers (ESL) of the persons aged 18-24г.  2) Increased PIRLS average score for the Bulgarian 4-grade pupils – up to 540  2.1) Increased PIRLS average PIRLS score for **girls** under PIRLS **–** up to 549  2.2) Increased PIRLS average score for **boys –** up to 531 | 1) 1) The indicator is relevant to the activities, but it is not directly bound to the specific objective – it is more appropriate for the next specific objective. It is a national objective as per Europe 2020 Strategy. It should be borne in mind that other EU-funded programmes will contribute to its achievements, as well as the national budget. Therefore to establish the contribution of ORSESG additional evaluation will be needed.  2) The indicator is relevant, but it must be clearly stated in the specific objective and the activities that they are targeted at pupils up to grade 4 inclusive. | 1) The indicator is clear  2) The indicator is clear. |
| Enrolling and retaining the children and students in the educational system by raising the motivation for learning and the attractiveness of the educational institutions. | 1) Number of students who have been granted scholarships  2) Number of students included in extra-class and extracurricular activities. | 1) The indicator is relevant  2) The indicator is relevant. | 1) The indicator is clear  2) - | 1) At the most 11% ESL of persons aged 18-24.  2) Increased PIRLS average score for Bulgarian 4-grade pupils – up to 540.  2.1) Increased PIRLS average score for girls – up to 549  2.2) Increased PIRLS average score for boys – up to 531 | 1) See above  2) The indicator is more appropriate for the above specific objective | 1) See above  2) See above |
| Managing of the quality of education by perfecting the system of appraisal of the results of education and developing and putting in place an efficient monitoring system. | 1) Number of student who appeared for national and regional external evaluation.  2) Number of conducted national and regional external evaluations.  3) Number of pedagogical specialists trained in implementing the international standards for student evaluation | 1-2) It should be clarified to what extent these indicators are products or outcomes from the implementation of the Programme.  3) The indicator is relevant | 1-2) The indicators are clear, but it is recommended to consider the possibility to use % instead of number.  3) The indicator is clear | 1) At the most 30% of 15-year-old students with skills assessed to be below the second critical threshold in the cognitive area – “reading „on PISA scale.  2) At the most 35% of 15-year-old students with skills assessed to be below the second critical threshold in the cognitive area – „, mathematics „on PISA scale.  3) At the most 30% of 15-year-old students with skills assessed to be below the second critical threshold in the cognitive area – „natural science“ on PISA scale. | 1-3) The indicators are not bound to the specific objective and the activities which are rather confined to improving the assessment system than improving the quality of education. | - |
| Improving the knowledge, skills and opportunities for realization of university graduates | 1) Number of students studying under the new curricula and syllabuses  2) Number of developed new curricula and syllabuses.  3) Number of higher school professors trained. | 1) The indicator is relevant  2) The indicator is relevant  3) The indicator is not directly bound to the activities. | 1) The indicator is clear but it is recommended to consider the possible use of % instead of “number”.  2) The indicator is clear.  3) - | Share of the university graduates who started work during the first year after graduating. | The indicator is relevant. | The indicator is clear. |
| Optimizing the activities of the higher schools. | Number of higher schools involved in consolidation initiatives. | The indicator is not directly bound to the foreseen activities. | The indicator is not clear. | 1) Number of HS with improved internal and external assessment systems.  2) The share of financing of higher schools, which is formed on the basis of the rating system is increased by at least ……. per cent. | 1) The indicator has the nature of a product indicator rather.  2) The indicator is relevant. | 1) The indicator is clear.  2) The indicator is clear. |
| Improving the access to higher education and increasing the number of persons with higher education in the age between 30-34 years up to 36% by 2020. | 1) Number of students recipients of scholarships and special scholarships.  2) Number of students recipients of student loans. | 1) The indicator is relevant  2) The indicator may be relevant if student loans are to be extended under the Programme. If loans are not to be extended, then it could be used as a result indicator. | 1) The indicator is clear, but the meaning of “special scholarships” should be explained.  2) The indicator is clear. | At least 36 % of 30-34-year-old people with higher education | The indicator is relevant and it corresponds to the national objective of the Strategy Europe 2020. | The indicator is clear. |
| Developing the capacity and raising the qualification of the people employed in the areas of education, training and science. | 1) Number of undergraduate/postgraduate students who acquire professional qualification teacher and start working during the first year after graduating.  2) Number of young specialists participating in partner networks for scientific research. Including in joint projects with the business.  3) Number of scientific research results implemented in the businesses.  4) Number of young researchers attracted from abroad to work with the excellence centres and competence centres.  5) Number of PhD students, post-graduate students, professors at higher schools and researchers from foreign European universities and research centres in Bulgaria included in mobility programmes. | General comment: too many indicators have been foreseen for this specific objective and in case that the funds foreseen for some of the activities are not enough; it is recommendable to reduce the number of indicators.  1) The indicator has the nature of an result indicator.  2) The indicator is relevant.  3) It is recommended to drop out this indicator because it has the nature of a result indicator.  4) It is recommended to drop out this indicator, since it is not a direct product of the activities.  5) The indicator is relevant | 1) The indicator is clear.  2) It should be clarified what “young specialists” and “partner networks” mean.  3) –  4) –  5) It should be clearly specified which researchers from foreign European universities will be taken account of. | 1) At least 12 % of the teachers should be 34 years of age.  2) At least ….per cent of the students studying in pedagogical specialties  3) At least …. % of persons awarded MA degree who continue in PhD programmes.  4) The participants in mobility programmes who have improved qualification and have better realisation | 1) The indicator is relevant, but it is not directly associated with the specific objective.  2) The relation between activities/specific objective/indicator is hard to track. The indicator may be substituted with another indicator recording the PhD students in pedagogical sciences.  3) The indicator is relevant.  (4) The indicator is relevant. | 1) The indicator is clear. (it should be specified whether by pointing 34-year olds, this means inclusively).  2) –  3) The indicator is clear.  4) It should be clarified what “increased qualification, skills and better realization” mean. |
| Rendering support for the continuing education and creating conditions for acquiring and building on knowledge, skills and competences. | 1) Number of persons in the age bracket 25-64 years, who participate in lifelong learning.  2) Vouchers for validation of knowledge and skills acquired through informal and non-formal education awarded to at least 20 000 persons.  3) Number of high school and university students covered by the system of carrier orientation. | 1) The indicator is too broad and is not the product only of the activities under OPSESG. If data is available, it could be used as a result indicator.  2) The indicator is too specific and is not directly connected with the foreseen activities.  3) Depending on the scope of activities, this indicator could be a result indicator. | 1) The scope of the indicator is too broad.  2) It should be specified whether there will be any age limits for the voucher schemes.  3) It should be explained what “covered” means.“ | 1) The share of illiterate persons reduced to 1.5% in the age group 15-29 years.  2) At least 2500 persons with validated knowledge and skills from non-formal and informal education. | 1) It is recommended to drop out this indicator because it is not bound with the specific objective and the activities.  2) The indicator is relevant. | 1) –  2) It should be specified whether there will be any age limits for the voucher schemes. |
| Raising the attractiveness and improving the quality of vocational education and training. | Number of students participating in flexible forms of vocational education. | The indicator is relevant | It is should be clarified hat “flexible forms of education” mean. | Share of persons graduating from vocational high schools who have started exercising the respective profession during the first year after graduating. | The indicator relevant  . | The indicator is clear |
| Promoting cooperation between professional education and training and higher education, science and business. | Number of students studying technical specialties. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | A result indicator is not specified. |  |  |
| **3. Educational environment for active social inclusion** | | | | | | |
| Raising the quality and improving the access to education by creating supportive environment for inclusive education. | 1) Children and students with special educational needs covered by the system of inclusive education.  2) Number of educational institutions which have ensured supportive environment for inclusive education. | 1) The indicator is relevant, but it has the character of a result indicator rather.  2) The indicator is relevant | 1) It should be clarified what “inclusive education” means.  2) It should be specified what “inclusive education” means | At least 25% of all children with special educational needs in the system of public education are involved in the process of inclusive education. | The indicator is relevant. | It should be clarified what “covered by the process of inclusive education” means. |
| Building an educational system, which encourages the realization of the potential of every child and student for personal development, successful realization and socialization. | Number of children and students included in extracurricular and out-of-school activities. | The indicator is relevant, but depending on the assistance, it has the character of a result rather. | It should be clarified what “included in extracurricular and out-of-school activities” means | 1) At the most 11% ESL in the age break of 18-24 years.  2) Share of children with high achievements in different areas of science, culture, arts and sports. | 1) The indicator is not bound with the specific objective.  2) The indicator should be used only if there is sufficient data to measure it. | 1) –  2) - |
| Efficient integration in the educational system of children, students and young people from the ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups. | Number of children and students and young people of Roma background included in the measures of educational integration and reintegration. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | Number of persons participating in measures of prevention of early school leaving. | The indicator is similar with the proposed output indicator. | The scope of the indicator should be specified. |

Table 36. Comments on the new system of output indicators

| **Specific objective** | **Output indicator** | **Relevance** | **Clarity** | | **Measurement unit** | | | **Value** | | | **Comment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Baseline** | **Milestone 2018** | **Target**  **2023** |
| **PA 1 - Scientific Research and Technological Development** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **IP1.** *Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Modernisation of existing excellence centres and competence centres in priority areas and targeted development of new such centres based on their potential to contribute to knowledge base and innovation capacity in priority areas.  SO2. Maintenance and development of scientific infrastructure with the aim to maintain the universities and scientific organisations as regional knowledge and technology and/or distributary nodes in support to realisation and sustainability of pan European research facilities. | New researchers employed at improved infrastructures for scientific research | The indicator is relevant (common indicator from Regulation 1301/2013) | The indicator is clear | | Number | | | 0 | 0 | 80 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind that it I expected that the researchers will be employed after the support to the infrastructures it is relevant not to specify a milestone for 2018. The target value seems achievable having in mind the expected number of the centers to be supported – 17 in total. |
| **IP2.** *Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Assistance for applied research and experimental development in priority areas, assisting the economic development. | Number of enterprises cooperating with the supported research institutions. | The indicator is relevant (common indicator from Regulation 1301/2013) | The indicator is clear | | Number | | | 0 | 15 | 30 | The text of the programme does not provide information what is the number of the companies that use services and collaborate with research institutions. Specification of milestone is risky as the collaboration is expected to happen as a result of the support to the research institutions - probably to the end of the programme. |
| Research competences in the priority areas listed in the Strategy for Smart Specialisation | The indicator is unclear and therefore its relevance cannot be commented | The indicator is clear | | Number | | | 0 | 150 | 200 | The indicator is unclear |
| Higher schools, which have assisted or ensured access for Bulgarian research organizations to different European technological platforms, and have conducted joint technological initiatives | The indicator is relevant | The meaning of “European technological platforms” and “joint technological initiatives” has to be clarified | | Number | | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| Researchers employed at improved infrastructures for scientific research | The indicator is more relevant to the IP1. (it is a common indicator listed in Regulation 1301/2013) | The indicator is clear | | Number | | | 0 | 150 | 300 | The operational programme envisages support to 9 research infrastructures. This provides for average employment of 33 researches pre infrastructure which seems realistic. It is recommended as for the result indicator – research infrastructures built – to revise the milestone value because building of infrastructures requires time for preparation and for establishment and is seems unrealistic up to 2018 to have 5 research infrastructures built. |
| Request for access to research infrastructures Заявки (including electronic) | The indicator is unclear and therefore its relevance cannot be commented | It is necessary to clarify what are these requests | | | Number | | 700000 | 1000000 | 1700000 | The indicator is unclear |
| Young researchers involved in partnership networks for research including joint projects with the business | The indicator is relevant | In the indicator fiches the meaning of “young researchers” “partnership networks” should be clarified | | | Number | | 0 | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| **PA 2. Education and Lifelong Learning** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **IP1.** *Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1 Improving the achievements of children and students in acquiring key competences at the pre-school and school educational level.  SO2 Enrolling and retaining the children and students in the educational system by raising the motivation for learning and the attractiveness of the educational institutions.  SO3. Managing of the quality of education by perfecting the system of appraisal of the results of education and developing and putting in place an efficient monitoring system | Children aged 4 -6 years enrolled in pre-school education. | The indicator is relevant, however has a character of a result indicator. It is not fully under control of the programme | The indicator is clear | | | % | 87,8 | | 88,5 | 90 | The values set are clear. The target value seem realistic having in mind the envisaged support under the programme as scope of activities. The funds allocated however might be insufficient for carrying out the planned reform if the rain no support from the state budget. |
| Students included in extra-class and extracurricular activities. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | 20 | | 20 | 20 | It is unclear why an increase of the share of students included in extra-class activities is not planned having in mind the support from the programme. |
| Group net coefficient for enrolment in kindergartens | The indicator is relevant, however has a character of a result indicator. It is not fully under control of the programme | The indicator is clear | | | % | 83,6 | | 85 | 87 | It is recommended to revise the indicators as they are not fully under control of the programme and are rather result indicators. |
| Net coefficient of enrolment of the population aged 3 to 23 in the educational system | The indicator rather a result indicator. It is not fully under control of the programme | The indicator is clear | | | % | 81,7 | | 82,5 | 84 |
| **IP2.** *Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1 Improving the knowledge, skills and opportunities for realization of university graduates  SO 2. Optimizing the activities of the higher schools.  SO 3 Improving the access to higher education and increasing the number of persons with higher education in the age between 30-34 years up to 36% by 2020. | Higher schools with improved management system including internal evaluation. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 65 | 75 | 85 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| The share of the funding for higher schools that depends on the results of the rating system. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 4 | 5 | 20 | The indicator depends on political decisions and requires regulative changes. |
| Number of higher school professors trained. | The indicator is not relevant to the specific objectives of IP2 | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 10 | 25 | 50 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem too optimistic. |
| Number of higher schools involved in consolidation initiatives. | The indicator is not bound to the activities | The indicator is not clear | | | Number/% | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| Students -recipients of scholarships and special scholarships. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 20 | 20 | 20 | It is unclear why an increase of the share of scholarships is not planned having in mind the support from the programme. |
| Number of students and PhD students recipients of student loans | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | Number | | 14 681 | 26 000 | 34 000 | In the OPESSG it is stated that the programme will support the increase of the guarantee for provision of loan. It is also noted that the interest to the loans increased between 10 and 20% in the period 20011-2013. Having in mind this information the indicator values seem realistic. |
| **IP3.** *Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Developing the capacity and raising the qualification of the people employed in the areas of education, training and science.  SO2. Rendering support for the continuing education and creating conditions for acquiring and building on knowledge, skills and competences | Students that study in the area of pedagogical science | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 7,7 | 10 | 15 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| MSc graduates that continue their studies as PhD students | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | Number/% | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| The participants in mobility programmes who have improved qualification and have better realisation | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is not sufficiently clear. It is unclear how the improved qualification will be measured. It is more appropriate to measure only the persons included in mobility programmes. | | | % | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| Persons who attended literacy courses and courses for studying the educational material of the pre-high school level. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | Number | | 15000 | 25000 | 40000 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic |
| Persons that validated their knowledge, skills and competences. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | Number | | 0 | 1500 | 2500 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| Persons in the age bracket 25-64 years, who participate in lifelong learning (in the last four weeks prior to the survey) | The indicator is too broad and is not the product only of the activities under OPSESG. | In the indicator fiche it should be clarified what is the meaning of lifelong learning. It is unclear the percentage of what is measured. | | | % | | 1,7 | 2,5 | 3,5 | It is recommended the indicator to be excluded from the system of indicators as the text indicator covers it meaning. |
| Persons in the age bracket 25-64 years, who participate in informal education | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 24,4 | 26 | 28 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| Number of undergraduate/postgraduate students who acquire professional qualification teacher and start working during the first year after graduating | The indicator is relevant. However it has a character of result indicator. | The indicator is clear | | | Number | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| Number of PhD students, post-graduate students, professors at higher schools and researchers from foreign European universities and research centres in Bulgaria included in mobility programmes. | The indicator is relevant | It should be clearly specified which researchers from foreign European universities will be taken account of. | | | Number | | 4 643 | 7 000 | 13 000 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| Pupils covered by the system of carrier orientation. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | | % | | 25 | 40 | 50 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| **IP4.** *Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Raising the attractiveness and improving the quality of vocational education and training  SO2. Promoting cooperation between professional education and training and higher education, science and business. | Pupils participating in various forms of vocational education (modular or on the job training) | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | Number | | | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| Pupils trained in the vocational education in the areas of the economy specified in the Strategy for smart specialization. | The indicator is relevant | It is necessary to specify the areas. | % | | | | 63 | 65 | 68 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| Number of students studying in technical bachelor or master programmes. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | % | | | | 19,2 | 22 | 25 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| **PA 3. Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **IP1.** *Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Raising the quality and improving the access to education by creating supportive environment for inclusive education  SO2. Building an educational system, which encourages the realization of the potential of every child and student for personal development, successful realization and socialization. | Children and students with special educational needs covered by the system of inclusive education. | The indicator is relevant | In the indicator fiches it should be clarified what “inclusive education” means. | Number | | | | 1600 | 1800 | 2000 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |
| **IP2.** *Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Efficient integration in the educational system of children, students and young people from the ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups | Children and students and young people of Roma background included in measures of educational integration and reintegration. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | Number | | | | 166 456 | 200 000 | 320 000 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Having in mind the envisaged support the values seem realistic. |

Table 37. Comments on the new system of result indicators

| **Specific objective** | **Result indicator** | **Relevance** | **Clarity** | **Measurement unit** | | | **Value** | | | **Comment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Baseline** | **Milestone 2018** | **Target**  **2023** |
| **PA 1 - Scientific Research and Technological Development** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **IP1.** *Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Modernisation of existing excellence centres and competence centres in priority areas and targeted development of new such centres based on their potential to contribute to knowledge base and innovation capacity in priority areas.  SO2. Maintenance and development of scientific infrastructure with the aim to maintain the universities and scientific organisations as regional knowledge and technology and/or distributary nodes in support to realisation and sustainability of pan European research facilities. | Number of supported excellence centres and competence centres | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | Number | | | 0 | 0 | 8 | In the operational programme 6 priority areas for investment in excellence centres have been identified. Having this in mind the target value seems realistic. It has not been specified what exactly will be supported therefore the planned financial resources could not be bound to the number of the centres to be supported. It is reasonable not to plan milestone target having in mind the fact that these are big projects which will require time for preparation and implementation. |
| Research infrastructures built | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | Number | | | 0 | 5 | 9 | The operational programme does not identify potential research infrastructures. It is expected the support to be provided on competitive basis. The setting up of a milestone poses a risk for achievement having in mind that the projects are big and their preparation and implementation requires time. The MES started a procedure for preliminary selection of project ideas. However it is recommended to revise or at least decrease the milestone value for 2018. |
| **IP2.** *Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies.* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Assistance for applied research and experimental development in priority areas, assisting the economic development. | Private investment in R&D complementing the public assistance | The indicator is relevant. However it has been listed as an output indicator in Regulation 1301/2013 | The indicator is clear | % | | | 0 | 10 | 20 | The statistical data for the period 2005-2009 show increase of the private investment in R&D of above 20, although their share is relatively low (National strategy for development of scientific research). In the period 2009-2012, however the investments decrease and in 2012 reach the level before the crisis (NSI). Having this in mind the milestone and target value seem realistic in the view of the expected slow recovery of the economy and the support from the programme. Measurement of the indicator will in all cases require a baseline value in the form of quantitative value (leva/euro) in order to measure the increase of the investments. Therefore it is relevant to revise the measurement units in order to set up a baseline value. |
| Executed orders from the business for research activities И | The indicator is relevant, however is not fully under control of the programme | The indicator is clear | Number | | | 0 | 10 | 35 | It is recommended to exclude the indicator from the system of indicators because it is not fully under the control of the programme and because there are too many result indicators set. It is impossible to comment the values set as it is unclear how they have been calculated. |
| New research products developed | The indicator is not fully relevant because it envisages research products in general but the specific objective is targeted to applied research | The indicator is clear | Number | | | 0 | 20 | 40 | It is recommended to exclude the indicator from the system of indicators because it is not fully relevant and because there are too many result indicators set. It is impossible to comment the values set as it is unclear how they have been calculated. |
| Increased share of patents as a result of research in the excellence centres and competence centres. | The indicator is relevant | It is unclear percentage of what is measured (from all patents?) | % | | | 0 | 10 | 50 | Issuing of patents in the period 2000-2008 decreases significantly compared to the period before 1990 and is still low. However an increase of about 20% is observed in the export of high technology (National strategy for development of scientific research). Based on the available information the targets set cannot be commented. An increase of 50% in the patents as a result of the research developments in the supported centres seems too ambitious target and requires clear justification. Measurement of the indicator will in all cases require a baseline value in the form of quantitative value in order to measure the increase of the patents. Therefore it is relevant to revise the measurement units in order to set up a baseline value. In order to simplify the measurement it is also recommended to measure the share of the patents from the supported research and not the increase of the share. |
| **PA 2. Education and Lifelong Learning** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **IP1.** *Reducing and preventing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for reintegrating into education and training* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1 Improving the achievements of children and students in acquiring key competences at the pre-school and school educational level.  SO2 Enrolling and retaining the children and students in the educational system by raising the motivation for learning and the attractiveness of the educational institutions.  SO3. Managing of the quality of education by perfecting the system of appraisal of the results of education and developing and putting in place an efficient monitoring system | Share of early school leavers from the population aged 18 - 24 г. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | % | 12,7 | | 11,5 | 11 | The indicator is national objective as per Europe 2020 Strategy. It should be borne in mind that other EU-funded programmes will contribute to its achievements, as well as the national budget. Therefore to establish the contribution of ORSESG additional evaluation will be needed. |
| Share of children aged 15 with low results in the area of reading, mathematics and natural science | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | | % | 41 | | 38 | 35 | The results in the last few years show minor changes in the values of the indicator. The changes that are expected will require time before having impact on the final result. Therefore the targets set seem ambitious. |
| **IP2.** *Improving the quality and efficiency of, and access to, tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels, especially for disadvantaged groups* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1 Improving the knowledge, skills and opportunities for realization of university graduates  SO 2. Optimizing the activities of the higher schools.  SO 3 Improving the access to higher education and increasing the number of persons with higher education in the age between 30-34 years up to 36% by 2020. | Percentage of 30-34-year-old people with higher education | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | % | | | 26,9 | 30 | 36 | The indicator is national objective according to Europe 2020 Strategy. The statistical data (NSI) shows continuous increase of the share of the people with higher education and the average annual increase is about 3%. If the trend continues and in addition to the support from the programme the milestone and target values set are fully achievable. |
| Students studying under updated learning plans and programmes | The indicator does not correspond to the specific objectives | It is assumed that the educational plans and programmes will be updated with support from the OPSESG | % | | | 1 | 5 | 10 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. |
| **IP3.** *Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce, and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Developing the capacity and raising the qualification of the people employed in the areas of education, training and science.  SO2. Rendering support for the continuing education and creating conditions for acquiring and building on knowledge, skills and competences | Teachers up to 35 years old | The indicator is relevant, however does not correspond to the specific objectives | The indicator is clear | % | | | 7,7 | 10 | 15 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Based on the low baseline value and the envisaged support under the programme the values set seem realistic. |
| Illiterate persons in the age 15-29 | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | % | | | 2 | - | 1,65 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. Based on the envisaged support under the programme the target value seems realistic. |
| **IP4.** *Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes.* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Raising the attractiveness and improving the quality of vocational education and training  SO2. Promoting cooperation between professional education and training and higher education, science and business. | Persons graduating from vocational high schools who have started exercising the respective profession during the first year after graduating. | The indicator is relevant | The indicator is clear | % | | | Not specified | Not specified | Not specified | There are no values |
| **PA 3. Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **IP1.** *Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Raising the quality and improving the access to education by creating supportive environment for inclusive education  SO2. Building an educational system, which encourages the realization of the potential of every child and student for personal development, successful realization and socialization. | Number of educational institutions which have ensured supportive environment for inclusive education. | The indicator is relevant | In the indicator fiches it should be specified what “inclusive education” means | Number | | | 84 | 100 | 120 | There is no information on the methodology how the indicator values have been calculated. The target values seem realistic having in mind the support planned to be provided for inclusive education. |
| **IP2.** *Socio-economic integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma* | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO1. Efficient integration in the educational system of children, students and young people from the ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups | No result indicator was specified |  |  |  | | |  |  |  | There is no indicator specified |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Assessment of the feasibility of the quantitative measurement of the baseline and target values of the indicators |

In August 2014 DG SFIEP has submitted a new table with the system of indicators, including new baseline and target values, which still has not been incorporated in the text of the Operational programme. These indicators, as well as their baseline and target values have been commented above, in tables 36 and 37.

The EC guidelines[[7]](#footnote-7) with regard to the values of the indicators suggest that baseline values for the result indicators should be present, which has not been the case for all proposed indicators.

According to the information provided by DG SFIEP, baseline and target values, as well as milestones are calculated following the experience with similar measures in program period 2007-2013 under OP HRD, as well as according to estimates of the specialized directorates within the Ministry of Education. DG SFIEP did not provide the methodology for calculating these indicator values, which makes the assessment of their rationale rather difficult. Because of this reason, the comments presented in tables 36 and 37 are based on the available information of prior experience of implementation of similar measures, the proposed budget of the programme, the existing administrative capacity and the information within the programme itself regarding the nature of the activities and the objectives, which the indicators will measure.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Relevance of the defined targets by stages |

The Section cannot be developed at this stage because the indicators to be included in the performance framework have still not been identified.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The system of indicators was made more precise and significantly improved as compared to its initial draft. Still, some editing is to be done with respect to certain indicators.

In August 2014 a new system of indicators with baseline and target values has been elaborated, which still has not been incorporated in the text of the operational programme. The evaluation report includes a review of the proposed new system of indicators, incl. of their proposed values. This review, however, met some difficulties, as a methodology for their calculation has not been presented. Milestones also have not yet been defined.

Specific recommendations were given on the indicators, as well as on the baseline and target values, for each priority axis.

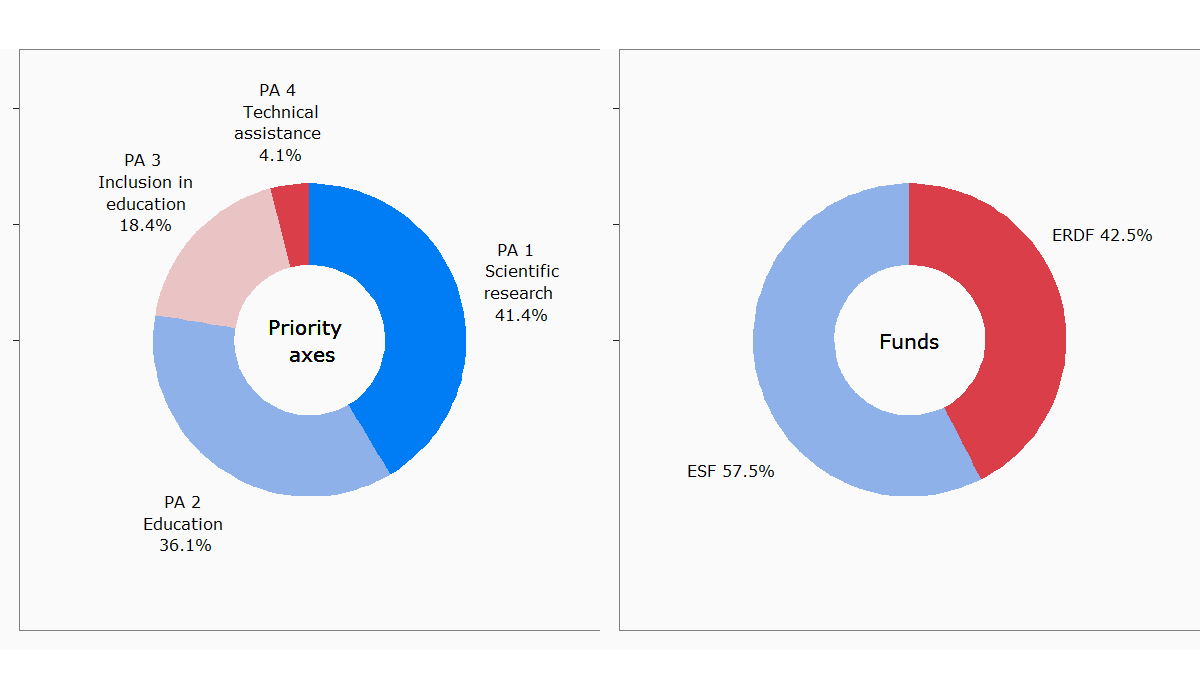
## Evaluation of the Programme budget

**Analysis**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Consistency and justification of the allocation of budget funds against the Programme objectives |

Structure of the financial framework by investment priorities and comparisons with the financing of similar activities during the 2007-2013 programming period

The Programme document for OPSESG 2014-2020 envisages EU financing in the amount of EUR 596 000 681, to which national co-financing of 15% is added to reach a total financing of the Programme standing at EUR 701 177 271.

***Source***: OP “Science and Education for Smart Growth”, own calculations

**Figure 6: Structure of the budget of OPSESG 2014-2020 by priority axes and funds**

In broader terms, the budget of OPSESG is allocated among education and lifelong learning, including inclusion in education (under PA2 and PA3) and scientific research and technology development (PA1), where the total budget for education is slightly higher than the one for research and innovations. Some 4% of the financial resources are allocated to technical assistance. With respect to technical assistance, two important changes are introduced in this version of the OP NOIR as compared to previous versions - financing is provided for technical assistance both from ESF and ERDF and, thus, the total amount under PA 4 is increased. The evaluator supports this change, thought it exceeds the 4% limit on the technical assistance by fund in view of the fact that the OPSESG is a newly established operational program and, as its total budget is not very high, there is a need for a higher proportion of technical assistance in it to ensure the successful programming, implementation and monitoring of the program.

Under Priority Axis 1 investments will be supported mainly for upgrading the scientific infrastructure, for the competence centres and excellence centres and laboratories. Special attention will be attached to the financing of applied science research. From the comparative Table below it is evident that in the 2014-2020 period the resources allocated to investment of this type will be almost 6 times higher in nominal terms, which is directly connected with the objectives of the Strategy Europe 2020 for smart growth and with the significant challenge to achieve the target for expenditure on research and development activities of 1.5% of GDP in 2020.

Table 38. Comparison of the budget of OPSESG 2014-2020 with the budget for similar activities in the 2007-2013 programming period under Priority Axes

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority Asix** | **Fund\*** | **Budget commitments** | | **% of total budget** | | **Percentage difference compared to 2007-2013** | |
| **2014-2020** | **2007-2013** | **OPSESG 2014-2020** | **Similar activities 2007-2013** | **in nominal value** | **in real value** |
| **PA 1: Scientific research and technological development** | ERDF | 237 212 225 | 35 251 901 | 40% | 4% | 573% | 521% |
| **PA 2: Education and lifelong learning** | ESF | 219 310 520 | 200 619 311 | 37% | 21% | 9% | 1% |
| **PA 3: Educational environment for active social inclusion** | ESF | 115 700 695 | 200 970 328 | 19% | 21% | -42% | -47% |
| **PA 4: Technical assistance** | ESF and ERDF | 23 778 241 |  | 4% |  |  |  |
| Total amount under comparable items |  | 572 223 440 | 436 841 540 | 100% |  | 31% | 21% |
| **Total amount** |  | 596 000 681 |  |  |  |  |  |

*Source*: UMIS OPSESG 2014-2020, own calculations.

Allocations for improvement of education and lifelong learning (PA 2) are approximately 37% of all the funds currently foreseen for the Programme. The EU funding of over EUR 200 million aims at improving the key competences of children in the pre-school and school institutions, at retaining and raising the motivation of children in schools, at managing the quality of the educational system, improving the share and quality of people with higher education and at optimizing the system of higher education and at promoting lifelong learning.

Given the high priority attached to education for the achievement of smart growth in the long run, the increase of 9%, which, in real terms, is practically only 1% increase, seems to be insufficient. The evaluator however cannot recommend it to be increased, since the total amounts allocated by funds for OPSESG are determined at the level of Partnership Agreement, and the resources under ESF for PA3 and PA4 should not be decreased.

The allocation of the funds under PA2 among the whole variety of activities covered by this Priority Axis is another major issue, for which there is no information available at this stage. It will probably be possible to evaluate this allocation after the preparation of the investment strategy and the justification of the financial allocations, which should provide information as to how the requirement for concentration of at least 60% of ESF funds in no more than 5 investment projects will be met in practice.

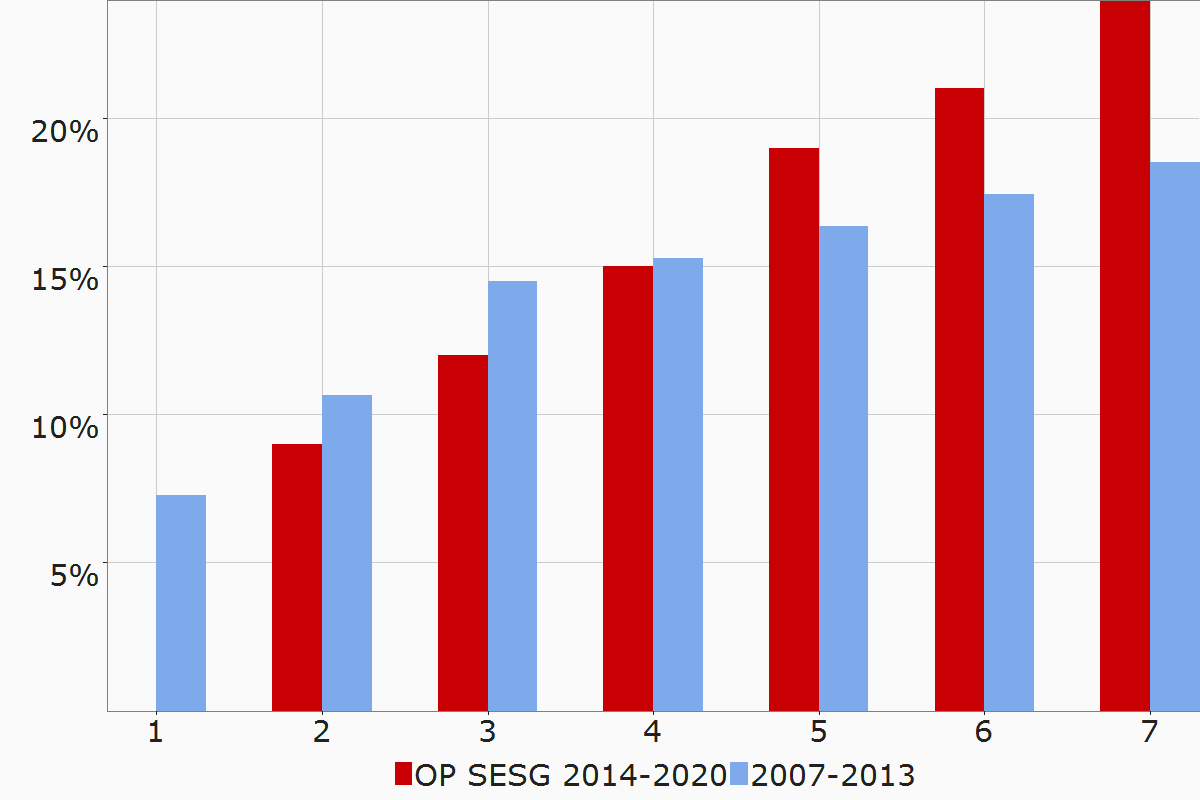
A number of measures for improving access to education for vulnerable groups of the society, for people with disabilities, socially weak, etc., as well as for students with deviant behaviours and ethnic minorities are foreseen in the framework of priority Axis 3 ”Educational environment for active social inclusion”. The main objective will be to develop to the maximum the potential of every child, pupil or student.

The amount allocated for the achievement of the set objectives aimed at inclusion in education is EUR 116 million EU funding. This resource is significantly smaller than the financing of similar activities under OPHRD 2007-2013. Here again, it is impossible to recommend the resource for PA3 to be increased, given the insufficient general financing from ESF, allocated to OPSESG.

Priority Axis 4 dedicated for technical assistance. Its scope covers the logistic and technical support for MA of OPSESG, communication activities, development of the information system, etc. In view of the fact that OPSESG is a newly established operational programme, these almost EUR 24 million allocated for technical assistance could have a high value added for the achievement of the objectives of the Programme, if spent effectively and efficiently.

Comparing the allocation of budget for similar activities by years compared to the programming period 2007-2013.

The financial allocation under OPSESG was assessed from the viewpoint of the foreseen profile of budget commitments by years.



Source: UMIS, Partnership agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria, own calculations

Figure 7: Break-down of budget commitments by years – OPSESG 2014-2020 - compared to comparable investment in 2007-2013

The budget allocation by years established in the Programme, does not seem ambitious, assuming that less than 1/5 of the financial resources will be certified by the end of 2020. During the first years of the OPSESG 2014-2020 lower budget commitments are set at the expense of the subsequent years when certification is expected to accelerate significantly, thereby gradually increasing budget commitments throughout the programming period.

In order to make a general check of the adequacy of the budget allocations by years, the profile of certifications of comparable funds to date from the 2007-2013 period was estimated with a logistic regression. Several assumptions were also made:

* The pre-financing of the programme by the European Commission during the next programming period is assumed to be as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Initial pre-financing | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Annual pre-financing |  |  | 0.02 | 0.02625 | 0.0275 | 0.02875 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.03 |

* With the reconciliation of accounts at the end of each year, it will not be necessary to return part of the annual pre-financing to the European Commission.
* For the purposes of the evaluation of the automatic loss of funds, the performance reserve, amounting to 6% of the funds under the Programme, will be accounted for at the end of the programming period.
* The results of the analysis are illustrated in the Charts below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| Figure 8: Absorption during 2007-2013 | Figure 9: Absorption during 2014-2020 |

Source: UMIS, Partnership agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria, own calculations

The figures above show that the specified in the current version of the OPSESG 2014-2020 profile of the budgetary commitments and under the assumption that the implementation of the program will be similar to the one under priority axes 3 and 4 of the OP HRD 2007-2013, there will be risk of automatic decommitment in 2018-2019.

Therefore the evaluator proposes non-linear, but constantly increasing with time distribution of the annual financing, as in the first periods of the implementation of OPSESG 2014-2020 lower budget commitments are set. As an example of such distribution, for the purpose of the evaluation, we have calculated the minimum permissible profile of the budget of OPSESG that does not allow for automatic decommitment of financial resources in case programme implementation follows the one of priority axes 3 and 4 of OP HRD 2007-2013.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Distribution according to OP SESG 2014-2020  Alternative distribution | 0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%  80%  90%  100%  2014  2015  2016  2017  2018  2019  2020  2021  2022  2023  Certification  N+3 (  alternative) |
| Figure 1: Alternative distribution of annual budget allocations of OPSESG 2014-2020 | Figure 10: Risk of automatic decommitment of funds under the alternative distribution of the budget of OPSESG 2014-2020, per year |

Source: UMIS, Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria, own calculations

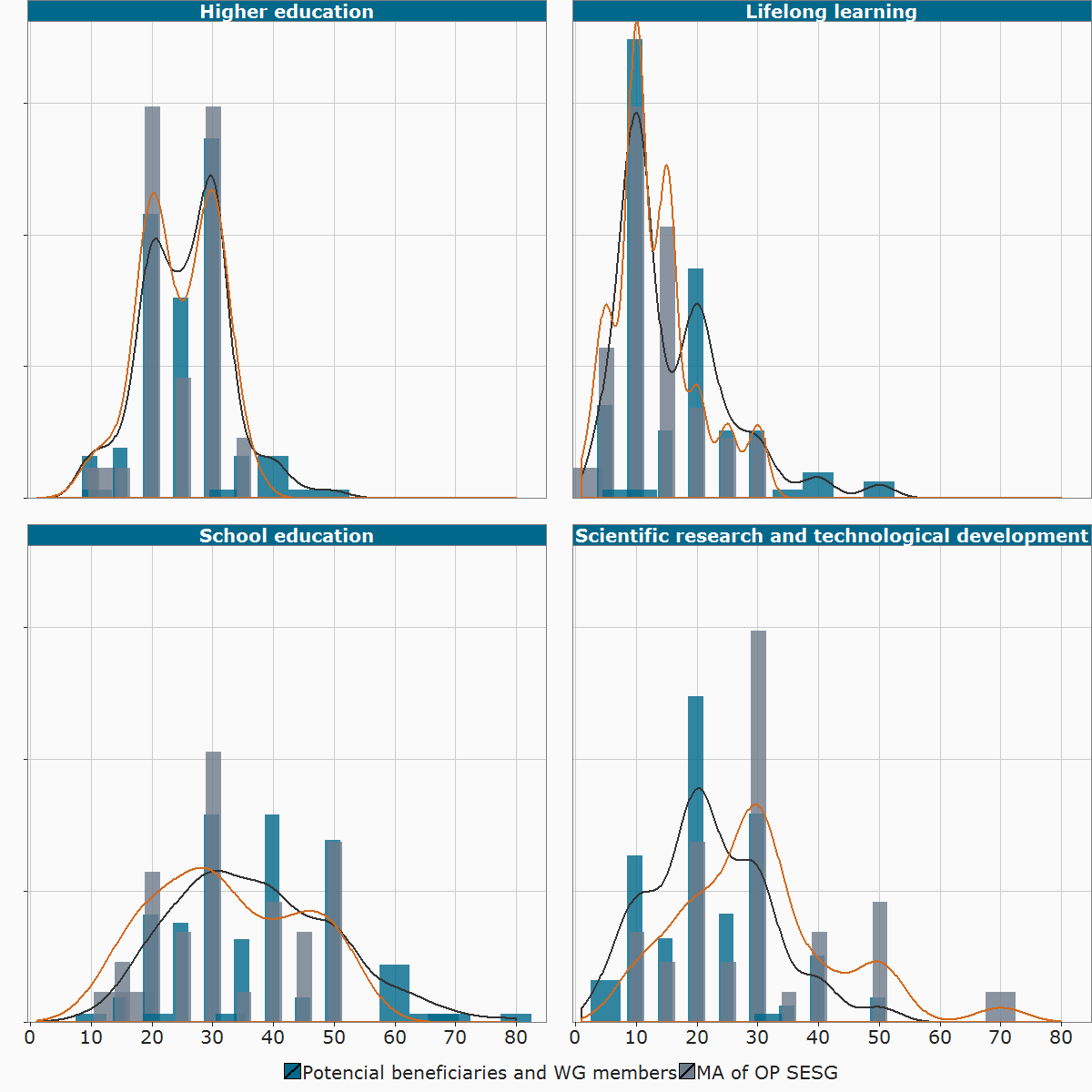
Through redistribution of the budgetary commitments from the initial years towards the following ones, and under the assumption that programme implementation will be similar to that of priority axes 3 and 4 of OP HRD 2007-2013, the risk of loss of funds will be present only at year 2023. As this risk cannot be eliminated by changing the profile of the budgetary commitments, but through more effective and efficient implementation of the programme, we can conclude that through the implementation of a more conservative approach towards the preparation of the annual financial allocations under OPSESG 2014-2020, to the largest possible extent the risk of loss of funds should be minimized.

Responses to the online survey concerning the allocation of the budget of the Programme

The opinion of the potential beneficiaries, members of the working group for elaboration and the MA of OPSESG 2014-2020, on the allocation of resources was sought through an online survey. Given the broad range of respondents, their opinion on the financial allocation was recorded only by main investment priorities.

The distribution of responses on the financial importance of the main investment priorities is presented in the Figure below, where the responses of the MA and the ones of potential beneficiaries and members of the working groups have been differentiated in separate charts.

As a whole, the result shows a smaller share for science and technological development (PA1) and higher total share of funds for education and lifelong learning. In the programme document the ratio between PA1 and PA2 is 1:1, while the averaged results of the survey show a ratio of 1:3.



Source: On-line survey of potential beneficiaries, members of the working group and representatives of MA of OPSESG

**Figure 11: Distribution of responses on the share of financing under the PAs**

The respondents have given relatively unanimous responses on the share of financing for higher and school education, assessing the necessity to allocate funds for these priorities respectively as 25% and 36% of the Programme budget.

Regarding the assessment of the share of funds that have to be allocated to finance research and technological development, the responses vary in the range between 5% and 70% of the Programme budget. On the whole, the surveyed representatives of MA of OPSESG are of the opinion that the financing of this type of investment should be higher. Similarly, regarding lifelong learning the range of responses is between 2% and 50%, however in this case the potential beneficiaries and the members of the WG for OPSESG 2014-2020 give higher importance on the necessity of investment after the completion of formal education, as well.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Consistency and justification of the allocation of budget funds versus the requirements of the Regulations (integrated approach, focusing on interventions, financial engineering, etc.) |

Extent to which the formal requirements have been observed in describing the financial framework in the Programme document and co-financing

According to the EU Common Strategic Framework (Article 96(2)(d), the financial plan for each operational programme must contain as a minimum two tables:

1. Table of financial commitments by years for each of the funds under which the operational programme is financed, in accordance with Article 60, 120 and 121 of the Common Provisions Regulation, taking into account the performance reserve as well. According to the Regulation, the rate of co-financing under the respective priority axes of the OPs is set by the European Commission. In the case of OPSESG it may not exceed 85% (for the less developed regions of the member-states which have GDP per capita for the period 2007-2009 lower than 85% of the EU-27 average for the same period, as well as for the outermost regions). In the case of OPSESG 2014-2020 however, provided that a decision is passed that the Programme may make use of the provided opportunity, the following derogation shall be applicable:

* According to Article 11 (2) of the ESF Regulation the maximum co-financing rate for a priority axis may be increased by ten percentage points, but lower than 100% where the whole of a priority axis is dedicated to social innovation or to transnational cooperation, or a combination of both.

Such a table is already included in OPSESG 2014-2020. The evaluator analysed the distribution of the budget commitments by years is proposes alternative distribution to minimize the risk of automatic decommitment of funds.

2. Tables specifying, for the whole programming period, for the operational programme and for each priority axis, the amount of the total financial appropriation of the support from each of the Funds and the national co-financing, identifying the amounts related to the performance reserve. For priority axes, which concern several categories of region, the tables shall specify the amount of total financial appropriation from the Funds and the national co-financing for each category of region.

For priority axes, which combine investment priorities from different thematic objectives, the table shall specify the amount of total financial appropriation from each of the Funds and the national co-financing for each of the corresponding thematic objectives.

Where the national co-financing is made up of public and private co-financing, the table shall give the indicative breakdown between the public and the private components. It shall show, for information purposes, the envisaged participation from the EIB.

These tables are included in the current draft of the Programme.

Assessment of the financial justification of OPSESG

The programme document of OPSESG 2014-2020 as of August 2014 does not contain a financial justification.

Analysis of the share of the financial resource vis-à-vis the proposed thematic concentration

With the changes in the financial framework for the next programming period at Europe-wide level, more importance is attached to a number of thematic areas of intervention, associated with the objective of achieving smart and inclusive growth.

A summary of the main texts of the European regulations (the Regulation on ESIF, ERDF and the ESF Regulation) is presented below, because the evaluator is of the opinion that these are the documents which have a bearing on the evaluation of the budget of OPSESG 2014-2020.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Short description of the most important European priorities and requirements relevant for OPSESG 2014-2020***  *With a view to achieving the main goal of EU for growth and employment, the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) for ESIF introduced requirements for thematic concentration with the aim of ensuring efficiency of the investment made with EU funds. Article 18 of the Common Regulation on ESIF requires concentration of EU-funded support on interventions that bring the greatest added value for the achievement of the targets set in the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth taking into account the key territorial challenges of the various types of territories and making efficient use of the potential of the regions taking into account the national and regional needs*  *Article 96, (2) (d) of the CPR also defines the* ***minimum content of the plans for financing the operational programmes****. These requirements are presented in summary above in the part concerning the formal requirements to the content of the tables for the financial allocation of the funds under OPSESG 2014-2020.*  *The CPR also introduces a limit for the maximum amount of appropriations for* ***technical assistance****, which, in accordance with Article 119 of the Regulation should not exceed 4% of total appropriations, allocated for the operational programmes by categories of regions for the objective of growth and employment.*  *Article 22(1) of the CPR postulates the allocation of a* ***performance reserve****, amounting between 5% and 7% for each priority axis of the operational programmes, with the exception of those, related to technical assistance or the programmes that concern financial instruments under article 39. The total amount of the reserve should amount to 6% for each fund and category of region in the operational programme.*  ***ESF******Regulation 1304/2013*** *provides for further requirements referring to the thematic concentration of the assistance financed from the Fund. Article 4 of the Regulation sets out minimum threshold for the financing of certain thematic objectives, as well as requirements with respect to the concentration of funds on a small number of priorities, as defined in Article 3(1) of the ESF Regulation. More specifically, the Regulation contains the following requirements:*   * *Article 4(2): At least 20% of the total ESF resources in each Member State shall be allocated to the thematic objective "promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination"* * *Art. 4(3)(в): For less developed regions, Member States shall concentrate at least 60% of the ESF allocation to each operational programme on up to five of the investment priorities set out in Article 3(1).* * *Art. 4(4): The priority axes referring to transnational cooperation and social innovations (Article 11(1) of the ESF Regulation) shall be excluded from the calculation of the percentages specified in paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Article*. * *Art. 11(2): The maximum co-financing rate for a priority axis shall be increased by ten percentage points, but shall not exceed 100% where the whole of a priority axis is dedicated to social innovation or to transnational cooperation, or a combination of both.*   ***ERDF Regulation 1304/2013*** *sets out additional requirements for thematic concentration of the assistance financed under the fund. Article 4 of the Regulation sets out minimum threshold for financing of certain thematic objectives, which differ for the more developed regions and regions in transition of EU on one hand, and for the less developed regions, on the other hand. Since all regions in Bulgaria currently belong to the less developed regions, the requirements applicable to them are less restrictive in view of the fact that these regions are confronted with a number of challenges in their development and should have more freedom to determine their priorities for funding. The Regulation requires in less developed regions:*   |  |  | | --- | --- | | *(i)* | *at least 50 % of the total ERDF resources at national level to be allocated to one or more of the following thematic areas:* |   *(1)* *Strengthening research, technological development and innovation;*  *(2)* *Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT;*  *(3)Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs;*  *(4)Supporting the shift to a low-carbon economy in all sectors.*   * *At least 10% of the total ERDF resources at national level shall be allocated to the fourth thematic objective, i.e. transition to a low-carbon economy.* |

The above box describes the specific restrictions of the types of activities and the opportunities provided for ESF financing in every member state depending on the level of development of its regions. Since the budgets of the operational programmes and the allocations under the other OPs to be financed from ESF and ERDF are not known yet, the current evaluation of the observance of the specific thresholds and minimum values, set out in the Common Regulation and the ESF and ERDF Regulations, has only an indicative character.

* *The maximum amount of funds for technical assistance must not exceed 4% of the total funds,* allocated for the operational programmes for each category of regions of growth and employment. Within the framework of OPSESG 2014-2020, the financing of technical assistance accounts for 5.3% of the funds from ESF and 2.5% of the ERDF resource, or 4.1% of the programme budget in total. The evaluator considers that the resource for technical assistance, although slightly surpassing the indicative 4% value, should be retained taking into account 2 factors: 1. OPSESG is a newly established programme and therefore it requires more resources for technical assistance and 2. The total budget of the Programme is not very high compared to most of the other operational programmes, which means that less funds in nominal terms remain for technical assistance. At the same time, the need for funds for technical assistance is not in direct proportion to the budget of the operational programmes, but is a fixed amount to a great extent.
* *Allocation of performance reserve at the amount of 6% for each fund and category of region*, where such a reserve is not set aside only for technical assistance and financial instruments. In the current version of the financial plan of the OPSESG performance reserve is allocated also for the technical assistance, which should be dropped and the reserves for some of the other priority axes should be increased by the same amount, so that the total reserves by funds are exactly equal of 6%.
* *At least 20% of the total amount of funds from ESF in each member state must be allocated to the achievement of thematic objective 9*. With respect to OPSESG 2014-2020 the allocation or thematic objective stands at 19%, while at the ESF level the satisfaction of this requirement should be ensured basically by OPHRD 2014-2020.
* *At least 60% of the resources from ESF in each operational programme must be allocated to maximum 5 investment priorities,* defined in Article 3(1) of the ESF Regulation. Currently the Programme document contains no financial justification, which does not allow for an evaluation of the implementation of this requirement.
* *The maximum amount of EU co-financing may be increased by 10 percentage points* (not exceeding 100% however)where the entire priority axis is dedicated to social innovations, transnational cooperation or a combination of the two. This opportunity could be taken into account in developing OPSESG 2014-2020, by considering the possibility to define a separate priority axis for transnational cooperation.
* *At least 50% of the overall amount of ERDF funds at the national level must be allocated to one or more of the first four thematic areas*. In this respect OPSESG 2014-2020 should have a high input in the achievement of the thematic objective for research and innovations.
* *At least 10% of the overall amount of ERDF funds at the national level must be allocated to the fourth thematic area*. OPSESG is not directly related to the fulfilment of this objective.

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| ? | Analysis of the share of the financial resource allocated to areas of strategic importance and of the extent to which the funds channelled directly to the needs and challenges identified in the socio-economic analysis |

The areas of strategic importance for Bulgaria, for which OPSESG could provide financing, are defined mainly in several strategic national and European documents:

* Europe 2020 – EU Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth;
* National Reform Programme of Bulgaria in implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy, updated in 2014;
* Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria outlining the assistance from the EU structural and investment funds for the period 2014-2020;
* Opinion of the Commission services on the development of the Partnership Agreement and programmes in Bulgaria for the period 2014-2020;
* National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2020;
* Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund;
* Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006  of the European Parliament and of the Council.

In general, only few of the strategic documents listed above contain evaluation of the financial value of the identified needs and proposed areas of intervention. The Partnership Agreement sets out the allocation of financial resources under ESIF by thematic objectives and operational programmes, which reduces significantly the possibility for reallocation of the budget under OPSESG 2014-2020. The reason for this is the fact that each axis of OPSESG 2014-2020 corresponds to one thematic objective, and in the case of PA1 – to a separate fund as well.

It is difficult to make a direct comparison of allocation by thematic objectives that has been laid down in the Programme document of OPSESG 2014-2020 and in the Partnership Agreement with the financial value of the priorities of the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2020 (NDP: BG 2020). The reason for that is that under these priority areas for interventions, significant investments are planned also under other operational programmes, mainly under OPHRD and OP Innovations and Competitiveness.

Within the framework of NDP: BG 2020, OPSESG is related mainly to the achievement of the following priorities of NDP: BG 2020:

1. Improving the access to and raising the quality of education and training and of the quality characteristics of the labour force.

2. Reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion.

5. Supporting innovations and investment activities for raising the competitiveness of economy.

The financial allocation in the Partnership Agreement, which determines to a great extent the one in OPSESG (the funds allocated under OPIC should be also taken into account under TO1), envisages a total of 23% of all EU funds to be allocated to TO 1, 9 and 10, which is lower, but comparable with the total of 28% envisaged for the analogous priorities in NDP: BG 2020.

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| Areas of intervention | OPSESG  2014-2020 | Partnership Agreement | NDP: BG 2020 |
| 1. Enhancement research and technological development and innovations | 41% | 5.4% | 5.5% |
| 9. Promotion of social inclusion and struggle against poverty | 18% | 12.7% | 7.9% |
| 10. Investment in education, skills and lifelong learning | 36% | 5.1% | 14.5% |

Source: OPSESG 2014-2020 г.”, Partnership Agreement of Bulgaria and NDP: BG 2020.

With regard to the financial resource allocated for inclusion in education (PA3), it should be noted that it formally relates to thematic objective 9, but actually addresses problems pertaining to the inclusion of vulnerable groups and people with SEN in education and does not pursue social objectives, which are basically addressed in OPHRD 2014-2020.

A number of other strategies also define the policy in the area of scientific research, innovations, education and social inclusion. Part of them includes information on the financing of the measures foreseen in the respective strategies as well. **Many of these strategies however contain only a general formulation that the funds for implementation will be provided from the state budget, the EU structural funds, financial resources from non-government organizations and other international (external) sources**. Listed below are the strategies and documents where information of their financing is contained.

* ***Innovation Strategy for Intelligent Specialization of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020***: The financing sources during the last five years have been analysed, but no financing sources for the next programming period have been identified. A financing model was developed with the aim of monitoring the degree of achievement of the national target for the share of R&D in GDP of 1.5%.
* ***National Strategy for the Development of the Pedagogical Specialists***: The Strategy provides only a general framework of the financing sources and among them are: the state budget, municipal budgets, OPHRD and OPSESG, own funds of MES, etc.
* ***The draft of a strategy for prevention and reduction of the share of drop-outs and early school leavers (2013-2020)***: The strategy contains only most general information about the financing sources.
* ***National Youth Strategy (2010-2020)***: The Strategy gives only most general information about the financing sources. OPSESG is not mentioned as a financing source.
* ***National Strategy for Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014 – 2020***: The Strategy provides only most general information that financial resources for it fulfilment will be provided from the state budget, the EU funds and Erasmus+ Programme, as well as from donations, sponsorship and other sources. The budget and financing sources are to be identified in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.
* ***National Roadmap for Science Infrastructure***: It contains a detailed break-down of the financing sources.
* ***National Strategy “Vision for Deinstitulization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria”***: The vision contains a more detailed quantitative break-down of the financing sources, but OPSESG is not among them.
* ***Updated National Strategy for the Demographic Development of the Population in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 - 2030)***: The financing sources are mentioned only most generally in the Strategy.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

The allocation of the Programme budget needs further elaboration. Attention should be paid to the following:

* The amounts specified in OPSESG and in the Partnership Agreement should be made consistent;
* A more conservative approach towards the annual budgets allocations should be applied, so that the risk of automatic decommitment of funds in the next programming period is minimized;
* Information on the satisfaction of the requirement for allocation of at least 60% of the Programme budget to maximum 5 investment priorities needs to be added;
* The performance reserve, allocated for technical assistance, should be dropped and redistributed to the other priority axes of the programme to avoid conflict with Art. 22 (1) of the CPR.
* The MA should consider the possibility of defining a separate priority axis for the activities under ESF relating to transnational cooperation, if there is interest and sufficient amount of financing allocated for them.

## Evaluation of the Administrative Capacity, Management Monitoring and Evaluation of OPSESG

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| ? | Adequacy of the management structure |

During the programming period 2007 – 2013, DG Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes (SFIEP) performed the functions of Intermediate Body under OPHRD 2007-2014, and DG European Funds, International Programmes and Projects of MLSP – was the Managing Authority of OPHRD. With CMD No 792/17.12.2013 the directorate was assigned with the functions of Managing Authority of OPSESG 2014-2020. The new functions and responsibilities of the directorate necessitated changes in its structure, in order have the additional tasks, pertaining to the new functions, introduced and distributed.The adequacy and management structure is one of the three major elements of the evaluation of the administrative capacity[[8]](#footnote-8), which also include adequacy of human resources, availability of systems, instruments, guidelines, manuals and procedures which guarantee the efficient and proper implementation of the programme. The human resources, systems and procedures are discussed in the next sub-point of this analysis.

The following new structure of SFIEP as a MA of OPSESG was introduced in May 2014:

1 Director General, 2 Deputy Directors General and 6 departments, one of which is divided into two sectors:

* Programming and Contracting Department;
* Monitoring and Evaluation Department;
* Verification Department;
* Risk Management and control Department;
* Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments Department;
* External European Programmes Department.



**Figure 12: Organizational chart of DG SFIEP**

Source: DG SFIEP

The structure presented reflects the functions of the Directorate as MA and shows the new units, which will assume the additional responsibilities, part of the functions of the MA..

A Programming and Contracting Department is created to cover the functions of preparation of the Programme, the development and conduct of the grant awarding and contractor selection procedures. This department will also implement tasks relating to publicity and communication activities under the Operational Programme.

The Programme monitoring, the preparation of annual reports and the evaluation at the Programme level will be performed by a new department for Monitoring and Evaluation.

With a view to optimising the structure and functions, the departments responsible for technical and financial verification, as well as the regional coordinators are united in one department Verification with two sectors – Technical Verification and Financial Verification.

The Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments Department as well as the External European Programmes Department report directly to the Director General of the Directorate, and the management of the other 4 departments is divided between the two Deputy Directors General.

The structure presented above covers the implementation of all functions and responsibilities of the MA and meets the requirements for the delineation of functions. Therisk management and control department, which includes the irregularities officer, should report directly to the Director General of DG SFIEP, not to the Deputy Director General in order to guarantee the independence of the officer in charge of irregularities.

Currently, the Directorate is preparing the Programme Implementation Manual, where the tasks and responsibilities of each department will be specified..

The main comments on the strengthening and improvement of the structure of MA, made by the employees of the Directorate at the interviews and in the on-line questionnaire, concerned mainly the improvement of the coordination between the departments. 62 % of the respondents in the on-line questionnaire pointed out that one of the main areas where strengthening is necessary, if more efficient management and implementation of OPSESG is to be achieved, is the better structuring of the Programme management at the central level – directorates/units/departments. 56% noted that a better allocation of the work between the central and the regional levels would contribute to strengthening the administrative capacity of the MA. The experts from the directorate are of the opinion that the monitoring (86% of respondents) and the verification (50 % of respondents) of projects can be fully delegated to the regional offices of the Directorate, because they are in the closest contacts with the beneficiaries and this is the reason why such structures are maintained in the first place. The functions which should not be delegated to the regional structures according to the respondents are the grant awarding procedures (76%) and the ex-ante control of the sub-contracting procedures (50%) because the main capacity for performing these activities is concentrated at the central level. The opinion of the employees of the MA is that if the regional structures are to take on new tasks, their capacity must be enhanced through intensive training, and they have to be technically equipped for the purpose.

Based on the above, it may be concluded that the following should be taken into account when developing the management and control systems of OPSESG 2014-2020:

* There must be clearer delineation of the tasks and responsibilities between the departments of the MA to avoid possible duplication of functions;
* The obligations and workload must be evenly distributed among the departments and experts;
* Better coordination of the tasks fulfilled by different departments in order to prevent accumulation of work;
* Building team work and better communication within the departments and between them.
* Delegating to a large extent the functions of monitoring and verification to the regional level structures in order to facilitate the work at the central level and to achieve better efficiency, but for this purpose the capacity of the regional offices must be strengthened.

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| ? | Adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity for programme management |

*Human resources*

The number of employees of DG SFIEP is 88 persons, and the distribution of occupied positions[[9]](#footnote-9) is as follows:

* 11 managerial positions – Director General of Directorate and two Deputy Director General and 6 Heads of departments and two Heads of Sectors (12.6%)
* 7 state experts (8%)
* 8 chief experts (9%)
* 30 senior experts (34.5%)
* 8 junior experts (9%)
* 3 chief assistants (3.4%)
* 17 senior assistants (19.5%)
* 2 chief specialists (2.3%)
* 1 vacant position of deputy director

The distribution of the experts provides the necessary ”backbone” of experts with significant experience (state, chief, senior). Those with less experience are less numerous and most of the departments actually have no junior experts.

The number of experts in the directorates is presented in the table below.

Table 39. Distribution of the experts by departments of SFIEP

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| Department | Number of employees | % of the total number of employees |
| Programming and Contracting | 6 | 7,0 |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | 5 | 5,8 |
| Verification | 52 | 60,5 |
| Risk Management and Control | 10 | 11,6 |
| Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments | 6 | 7,0 |
| External European Programmes | 7 | 8,1 |

Source: DG SFIEP

As evident, the largest number of employees is concentrated in the Verification Dept. because they will be responsible for the control, the operative and the financial monitoring of the beneficiaries.

This distribution of human resources among the departments could create certain risks for the successful implementation of the OP. Department Programming and Contracting will have a significant workload, because it will perform functions pertaining to evaluation of offers and project proposals within rigidly defined deadlines, preparing contracts and orders and filling in the contracts in UMIS. In addition to these tasks, the department will also perform functions relating to publicity and communications and will have responsibilities relating to possible changes of OPSESG 2014-2020. The 5 employees foreseen for this department are not enough to ensure quality performance of the foreseen functions of this department.

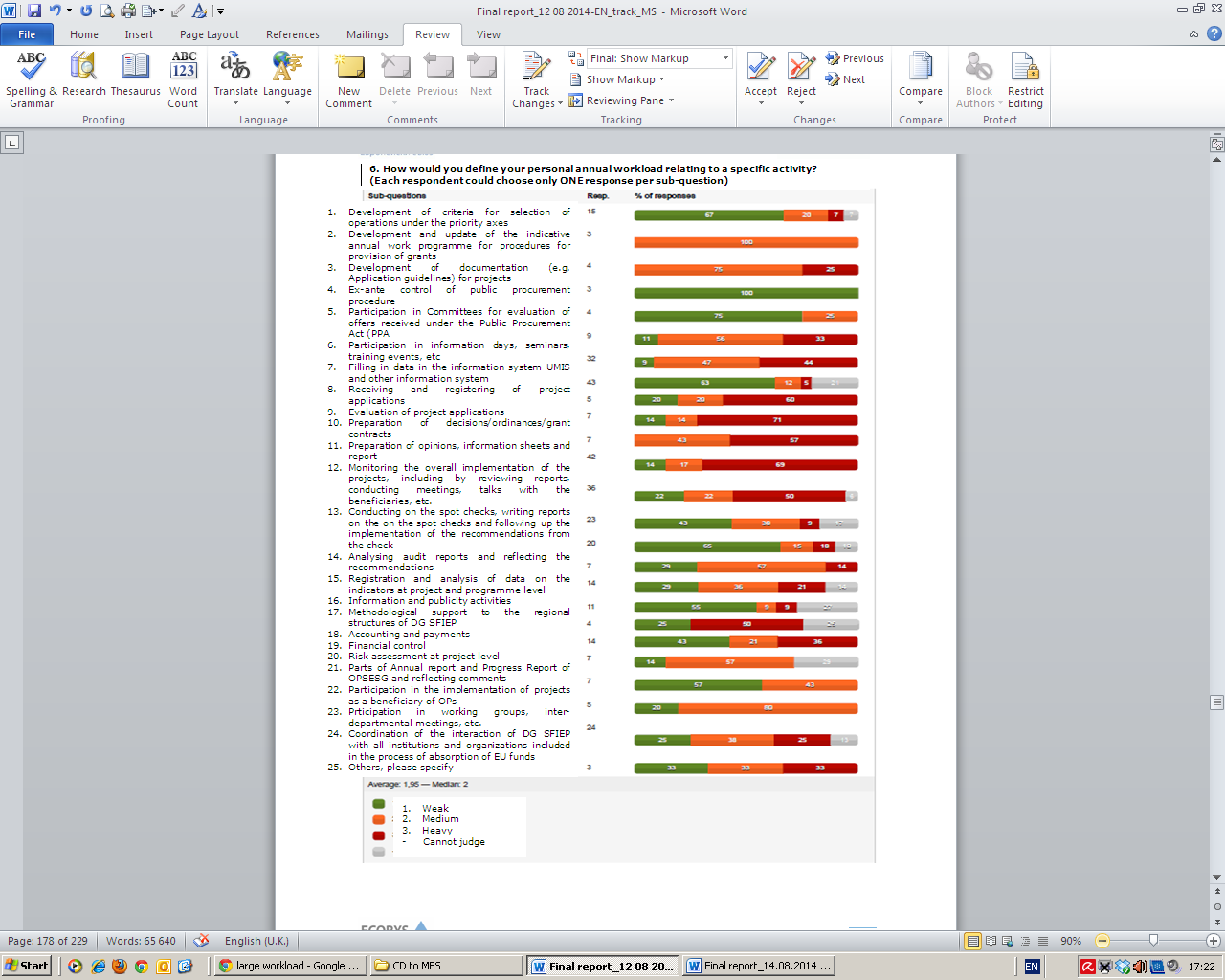
This is also confirmed by the responses given by the employees of MA in the on-line questionnaire regarding their annual workload relating to each activity they have to implement (see the Figure below).

An objective of the survey was to identify the most time-consuming and resource-intensive activities for the employees and to make recommendations for optimizing the processes or for redistribution of the human resources during the next programming period in order to avoid the excessive workload of the employees and to guarantee high quality and timely performance of all responsibilities in the management of OPSESG 2014-2020.

As evident, the activities with the largest annual workload in this programming period shall be:

* Preparation of decisions, ordinances, grant contracts (71%)
* Monitoring of the overall implementation of the projects, including by reviewing reports, conducting meetings, holding talks with the beneficiaries, etc. (69%)
* Evaluation of project proposals (60%)
* Preparation of opinions, information sheets and reports (57%)

Six employees are envisaged for department Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments and they will not be enough, because there is a strict delineation of functions relating to the preparation of payments, confirmation of payments and accounting for, where each one of these tasks must be performed by a different expert. The envisaged number of employees will not be enough for the prompt and correct performance of all functions of the department.



**6. How would you define your personal annual workload relating to a specific activity?**

**(Each respondent could choose only ONE response per sub-question)**

**Figure 13: Workload of the employees of DG SFIEP**

Source: on-line questionnaire

According to the information received from the interviews, the department Risk Management and Control will have the task to conduct ex-ante and follow-up check of the procedures of selection of contractor, carried out in relation with the grant contracts with the beneficiaries. In addition the department will be responsible for risk management, state aid, irregularities and training for the staff of the directorate. The ex-ante and follow up checks are time-consuming and engage large human resource. With the foreseen 10 experts in the department, which number includes the officer for irregularities, these tasks will create heavy workload. Bearing in mind the experience and capacity which the beneficiaries have already accumulated in the preparation and conducting of these procedures, it should be considered whether the ex-ante control of the tender documentation could be abolished, or a threshold to be introduced over which such control should be exercised , which would in turn reduce the work burden in the department.

On the whole, 56 % of the respondents in the on-line survey are of the opinion that additional employees should be engaged at the central level in order to strengthen the administrative capacity for the implementation of the Programme.

The on-line questionnaire also showed that the employees of DGSFIEO are of the opinion that the human resources are not enough for the fulfilment of all responsibilities as a Managing Authority. The areas they identify in demand of more human resources are as follows:

* Management of the independent evaluations of the Programme;
* Management of the document flow and of the archive of the MA;
* Management of the budget, budget projections, indicative financial plans under OPSESG;
* Programme accounting;
* Risk assessment at the Programme level;
* Coordination of the MA interaction with all institutions and organizations involved in the process of EU fund absorption, including the European Commission.

The obtained results show that the increase of human resources should be considered in order to guarantee the proper implementation of the new functions of the Directorate as a Managing Authority and in order to fill in the new structures.

Increase of human resources is especially needed in Programming and Contracting and Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments dDepartments. The number of experts, and the way the number of employees is to be increased (through internal experts or the hiring of additional experts in the peak periods of evaluations, or through outsourcing activities to external contractors) will depend on workload and the management and control systems that will be set in operation.

*Experience and training*

The experts at DG SFIEP have experience in the management of projects and programmes financed under the Structural Funds and pre-accession programmes. 38 % of them have professional experience of over 5 years work with EU funds; the experience of another 33 % is 3 to 5 years.

The practical experience at DG SFIEP in its capacity of IB or MA of OPHRD 2007 – 2013 is also significant, and 22% of the respondents pointed out that they have been employed with the Directorate for more than 5 years, 43 % for 3 to 5 years. The results show that many of the experts have acquired knowledge and experience in their work at the IB of OPHRD 2007 – 2013 and possess the necessary experience for the quality implementation of the new OP.

Most of the experts of DG SFIEP have undergone 1 or 2 long-term trainings in the country (90%) and 1-2 long-term trainings abroad (96%). They have also participated in 2-5 short-term training events, both in the country (68%), and abroad (49%). The results indicate that the employees of the Directorate have been provided with the opportunitiy to raise their qualification.

According to the responses, the prepared annual plans as a whole correspond to the needs – 38% of the respondents are satisfied, and 40% - partially. There are 11% however who think that the annual plans correspond to their needs to a small extent, which shows that there is room for improvement in this respect.

To the question what type of training they need, the experts express the opinion that they would mostly benefit from working visits for exchange of experience (71%), or from short-term seminars (71%).

These results repeat the results of a similar type of surveys of other MAs, including the declared need for more practical orientation of the training as well as trainings of the type “Exchange of foreign experience”. This should be taken into account in the planning of the trainings for the next programming period, which should include exchange of experience with similar structures in the country on the activities which will be new to the Directorate .

The employees of the Directorate are of the opinion that their qualification in the following areas needs to be enhanced:

* Better knowledge and skills in the area of organizing, conducting and control of public procurement (65%);
* Better knowledge of the national and European legislation, strategies and policies of EU funds management (58%);
* Improved team work (53%);

Again, in connection with the new functions as a MA, the employees believe that they will need training in the area of state aid, risk assessment at institutional and project level and monitoring and verification of the projects under PA1, financed under ERDF.

The identified areas show very close percentage, which indicates that there are no specific areas identified as a weakness in the skills of the experts, but the employees realize rather what needs they have in terms of strengthening the administrative capacity.

*Systems, procedures and technical support*

The experts of DG SFIEP have gained experience in developing management and control systems and procedures manual, since part of them have participated in the development of these documents under OPHRD 2007 – 2013. In the process of development of the manual for the new OP simplification of procedures, should be applied and to great extent the possibilities for introducing electronic procedures. Well-developed rules and procedures will increase the administrative capacity for management of the Programme according to 62% of the respondents.

UMIS is the information system used for the management of all operational programmes during the programming period 2007–2013. It will be used during the next programming period as well, under the name of UMIS 2020. Significant upgrades and changes are foreseen, which will allow the system to be used as a functional instrument, decreasing the bureaucracy . Currently the experts of DG SFIEP are of the opinion that the new functionalities of the system will allow them to manage the programmes and projects in a flexible and timely manner.

One of the main problems that have been identified is the technical equipment needed for the day-to-day work of the employees. The problematic areas specified by the respondents are technical equipment (87%), lack of specialized halls (80%), lack of specialized software (73%) and of working space (67%). A public procurement procedure for the supply of equipment is currently underway.

An important issue relating to the technical support is ensuring an archive and assigning employees who will manage it.

Regarding the work satisfaction, the employees generally express medium satisfaction with their work in DG SFIEP. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 shows the highest satisfaction and 1 – the lowest, the average received from the results is 3,22, with a median of 3. The respondents indicate that they are mostly satisfied with their interaction with their colleagues (55 %), the opportunities to travel abroad (44 %) and the opportunities to raise their qualification and professional satisfaction ( both with 40%). They are least satisfied with the social package and social benefits (57%). On the whole, the turnover of staff is very low and should not create problem to the implementation of OPSESG 2014 – 2020.

Based on the above, the following main tasks could be formulated:

* Increasing human resources in departments Programming and Contracting and Financial Planning, Accounting and Payments;
* Developing a detailed analysis of the training needs relating to the new role of the Directorate;
* Earliest possible start of the trainings relating to the new responsibilities as a Managing Authority;
* Removal of the ex-ante control of the procedures for selection of contractors under the contracts of the beneficiaries, or introducing a threshold above which ex-ante control shall be performed; Ensuring the necessary technical equipment for the management and implementation of the Programme.

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| ? | Capacity of Programme beneficiaries and measures envisaged to enhance it |

The capacity of the beneficiaries to develop, implement and report on the projects is of key importance for the successful Implementation of OPSESG 2014-2020. It is for this reason the Partnership Agreement stress the need of further strengthening of the beneficiaries’ capacity by familiarizing them with the best practices established in the period 2007-2013 and introducing new measures and methods during the new programming period aiming to enhance their knowledge and competences. It is also important to guarantee sustainability of the existing capacity and to make efforts to overcome the existing problems and weaknesses.

The potential beneficiaries of OPSESG 2014 – 2020 are divided into several main groups:

* State institutions;
* Scientific organizations ( incl. BAS and AA), research institutes, higher schools and/or their main structures;
* Kindergartens, schools, community culture centres, resource centres;
* Municipalities;
* Businesses;
* NGOs.

Before each of the above mentioned groups lies specific challenges in the absorption of provided funds, there are common problems, associated with their capacity to develop and implement projects. The specific characteristics of each group of beneficiaries are presented below:

**State institutions** – insufficient skills to plan and identify measures and policies which needs support under the Operational Programme; lack of skills for project preparation, which results in unrealistic selection or quantification of results and indicators ; heavy workload of the employees who have to perform their tasks as employees of the respective institutions in parallel with additional tasks such as coordination and implementation of project activities, for which they do not receive adequate remuneration; poor knowledge of the legal framework for project implementation, including rules on reporting and verification of expenses; lack of experience in the preparation and implementation of procedures for selection of contractors, which often results in termination or extension of the procedures and causes delays in the overall implementation of the projects.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Scientific organizations, scientific institutes, higher schools and/or their main structures** will be among the main beneficiaries of OPSESG 2014 – 2020. During the current programming period the scientific organizations have accumulated significant experience since some of their structures have implemented over 10 projects, financed under different OPs. These institutions have sufficient experience of preparation and implementation of projects, since they take part in different national (Fund Scientific Research) European (Seventh Framework programme, Competitiveness and Innovations, etc.) and international funding programmes. Due to their participation in other programmes these organizations could compare between the rules for application and implementation of projects and they consider that the rules for the operational programmes in Bulgaria are too bureaucratic, constantly subject to change , given deadlines are not met , the project managers at the financing institution do not provide clear opinions, the project activities should be reported too often, which does not lead to more efficient management of the projects, on the contrary – creates difficulties. The internal organization and rules quite often create difficulties for these organizations to actively participate in the absorption of funds, because it takes more time to take the decisions and coordinate project activities between the different units of the scientific organizations.

**Kindergartens, schools, community culture centres (“chitalishte”) and resource centres** are the other main group of beneficiaries under OPSESG 2014 – 2020. They have also actively participated in OPHRD 2007 – 2013 and have accumulated experience and capacity in project development and implementation. The main difficulties which they have identified is the excessive amount of time spent on evaluation of project applications, which has a significant impact on project activities, since the school year has specified time limits which cannot be extended . The advance payment should be larger and the final payment should not be delayed, because this engages too much resource of the working funds of the beneficiaries and they do not have enough finance for their core activity. The monthly reporting also creates additional workload and engages human resource.

**Municipalities** have the same problems like state institutions. A problem for them is also the lack of enough competences for strategic planning and of financial resource for payments under the projects.

**The business** is a specific beneficiary which finds it difficult to accept and understand the rules for preparation and implementation of projects, and considers them to be cumbersome, lengthy and bureaucratic and not assisting the development of their business activities. A major difficulty which they report is the co-financing of project activities[[11]](#footnote-11) and the conducting of sub-contracting procedures. The capacity building of this group is additionally hampered by the fact that entrepreneurs rarely have personnel designated to be in charge of the project and usually use consultant services for that.

**NGOs** are the group of beneficiaries which have the greatest capacity for project development and implementation and they have accumulated significant experience in this area. The main problems they are faced with are the need to ensure pre-financing for the implementation of activities and the lack of human resources for the implementation of projects.

During the focus group with the OPHRD 2007-2013 beneficiaries was discussed the administrative capacity of beneficiaries. The main administrative burdens at different stages of the project cycles, highlighted in the discussion, are as follows:

**Project preparation**

The first and one of the main recommendations made by the participants in the group, especially by the representatives of scientific organizations, was to introduce the European practice of announcing the annual programmes at least two years in advance. This will allow the beneficiaries to get ready and identify most appropriate partners, which is very important for the development of projects in the area of science.

The established procedure for popularizing the measures under the Programme and the information days, was assessed as useful. It is only necessary to organize the information days earlier or immediately after the grant schemes are announced, in order to leave more time for project development.

The participants unanimously agreed on the recommendation that set deadlines should be observed – for the evaluation and ranking of projects and the conclusion of the contracts. The schools and universities are faced with specific problems with projects delayed over time – the children complete the respective educational level, the set indicators change, there is no opportunity to conduct activities outside the academic year – September - June.

The beneficiaries also expect greater transparency of the procedures for the award of grants – notice, committees, meetings, protocols, ranking, appeals, contracts, implementation, financing/sanctions under the contracts and they suggest that the entire information on these issues be posted on the Web-site of the Programme. They also think that the indicators for evaluation of projects should be more precise, especially the ones for scientific research where the European experience of conducting international evaluations and engaging foreign evaluators should be applied.

The scientific institutions have experience and as a whole they prefer the electronic submission of the project proposals and reporting on the activities.

**Implementing and reporting on projects**

The frequent changes made in the manuals and guidelines and in the respective templates impede the implementation of the projects and create problems in reporting on the activities and costs. There must be a clear documentation, which does not change throughout the process - call for proposals, submission of projects, approval, implementation of contracts and reporting.

The Managing Authority must maintain an up-to-date data base of the contacts of the administration and the functional characteristics of each employee, so that it is known the themes they cover and the issues they are in charge of. Responses should be provided within definite time-limits, as correctly as possible, including by e-mail, which should be regarded as an official response to the beneficiaries. The divergent opinions on one and the same issue, expressed by the experts from the financing organization create difficulties, especially when it comes to eligibility of costs and delay in answers. . The proposal is to create a “contact point” under the project, i.e. to designate an employee to be responsible for the project – administration and verification – who will be able to provide answers to questions relating to project implementation promptly and competently.

The participants in the focus group shared the opinion that there must be control over the implementation, but they recommended change in the reporting periods – the monthly reports should become at least quarterly reports, and for the scientific projects –6-month reports. The performance indicators for the Programme, schemes and individual projects have to be refined taking into consideration both the experience to date and the impossibility to apply some of them to all beneficiaries and schemes. The indicators should be defined by schemes and the sources for measuring them should be specified more precisely.

There is a distinct requirement for simplification of the financial reports – beginning with the requirement for enclosing copies of all primary financial documents, in which respect the recommendation is to follow the European practice where no copies are required, only a list of the documents, and the original documents are kept by the beneficiaries for checks.

Another difficulty in project financing is posed by the low level of advance payments, which turn out to be insufficient for covering current expenses on some of the activities while waiting for the first payments. A different solution, supported by the scientific institutes is to apply instruments for obtaining interest-free or low-interest loans for pre-financing the project activities. Support is also expressed for the introduction of a methodology of simplified costs – the costs on project management.

According to representatives of the beneficiaries the preparation and conducting of public procurement does not impose difficulties..

**The main difficulties the beneficiaries are confronted with,** may be summarized in the following list:

* Untimely launch of the schemes to be financed;
* Untimely conduct of the information campaigns;
* Delay in the evaluation of the project application;
* Non-transparent evaluation procedures;
* Small amount of advance payment;
* Need for borrowing for the purpose of project implementation;
* Frequent amendments to the guidelines and manuals;
* Divergent opinions and delay of the replies of the experts from the financing organization on questions of the beneficiaries relating to the implementation of the projects;
* Long period of time from the date of filing of payment requests till the actual payment to the beneficiaries is made.

The employees of DG SFIEP are of the opinion that the administrative capacity of the beneficiaries must be further strengthened with respect to all stages of the project cycle – preparation, implementation, sub-contracting and reporting. The greatest need of the beneficiaries for capacity building is reported in the area of preparation and conducting of public procurement (75 %), raising the skills for reporting and accountability for the implementation (69 %) and project management (65 %).

The needs relating to the administrative capacity, identified by the potential beneficiaries of the Programme are: clearer guidelines (69%), better access to direct assistance (51%) and training in project management (51%).

The answers of the two groups – employees of DG SFIEP and potential beneficiaries differ with respect to the needs – while the employees of the future MA think that the training of beneficiaries would raise the administrative capacity, the beneficiaries also added that it was necessary to receive cleared guidance and direct assistance from the MA.

The measures for reducing the administrative burden targeting the beneficiaries supported by OPSESG also overlap with the requirements and proposals of the beneficiaries, namely: electronic reporting on project implementation (80%), electronic submission of project applications (73%), and unification of the rules for project implementation (69%), development of a national methodology for simplified costs (56%).

Based on the above, the following measures and activities for raising the capacity of the beneficiaries and reducing the administrative burden could be summarized for the next programming period:

* Publication of the indicative programmes for launching the financing schemes at least 1 year in advance;
* Introduction of electronic application;
* Maximum use of UMIS in the communication with the beneficiaries – in reporting on the results and indicators, presenting reports, payment request, verification of costs, etc.;
* Continuation of the practice of conducting information days and awareness campaigns on the support schemes;
* Avoid the frequent change of rules and guidelines in the process of project implementation and if needed, the beneficiaries should be informed in an appropriate way (by e-mail) about changes and would be given additional explanations where necessary;
* Organization of training on the implementation of projects and correct spending of the funds;
* Introducing a “contact point” for the beneficiaries in the Manual on Project Management, with clearly defined persons, responsibilities and deadlines for responding to questions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Appropriateness of the milestones from the viewpoint of the administrative capacity (relating it to the analysis of the milestones) |

Currently the milestone values of the Programmer are in a process of development. To have them achieved, the following should be ensured:

* Timely launch of the Programme;
* Compliance with the timelines for project selection, implementation, reporting and verification;
* Clearly defined indicators at the project and Programme level;
* Putting in place of an efficient monitoring system, which will track and analyse the achievement of the indicators.

All these conditions are associated with the administrative capacity of the MA and of the potential beneficiaries of the Programme. The risks relating to the administrative capacity are presented below[[12]](#footnote-12).

In the risk assessment we have followed the provisions of ISO 31000:2009. The risk assessment is implemented in the following steps:

1. *Establishing the context* –the context of the external environment has been established on the basis of the European legal framework, the national legal framework for the period 2014-2020 and the organizational framework of the MA for the new programming period. The scope of the risk factors was defined;
2. *Identifying the risks associated with the administrative capacity* – Having defined the context in the first step of the risk analysis, the second step was to identify the causes and sources of risk and the areas of impact.
3. *Risk analysis and assessment*– the third step of the risk assessment includes analysis and evaluation of the identified risks and their parameters. More information on the types of risk is presented below.

The categorization of risks helps in analysing them and developing specific measures.

The risks are divided in the following groups by **source**:

* **External risks** – these are risks associated with externalities, which are beyond the control of MA and therefore the MA can undertake only reactive measures with respect to them;
* **Internal risks** –these are the risks directly connected with the activity and functions of the MA, which the MA can control and therefore can undertake both pro-active and reactive measures.

According to their **occurrence,** the risks are divided in the following way:

* Risks at project level – they are influenced by the activity of the MA at the project level and they lead to a cumulative impact at the programme level;
* Risks at the programme level – Connected with the activity of MA at the Programme level and do not necessarily have implications at the project level.

In defining the scope of the risk, the risk factors must be assessed vis a vis the elements of the project/programme cycle: а) Programming; b) Development of project proposals/the programme; c) project selection /Ex-ante evaluation of the Programme; d) Contracting /Approval of the Programme; e) Implementation and monitoring of the project/programme; f) Evaluation of the implementation of the project/programme, including evaluation of sustainability.

With respect to their **scope**, the risks are categorized as follows:

* Partial risks – which have a bearing on one or more elements of the project/programme cycle;
* Overall risks – having a bearing on the whole project/programme cycle.

A main objective of the risk analysis is to define risk intensity with respect to the administrative capacity. The method applied for the analysis of the identified risks is the expert evaluation using two factors:

* **Probability** of the risk;
* **Impact** of the risk if it occurs.

This is presented in the table below, where the probability and impact relating to each risk are evaluated on a scale of 1(small) to 5 (very big):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Probability** | **Impact** | **Evaluation** |
| Very big probability | Very big impact | 5 |
| Above medium probability | Above medium impact | 4 |
| Medium probability | Medium impact | 3 |
| Below medium probability | Below medium impact | 2 |
| Small probability | Insignificant impact | 1 |

The values of probability and impact for all risks are then multiplied and risk intensity is obtained. Risks are arranged in a descending order based on their intensity. On this basis that the table below with assessed risks was drawn up.

Table 40. Risks related to the administrative capacity of OPSESG 2014-2020

| **Goals** | **Risks** | **Source** | **Occurrence** | **Scope** | **Probability** | **Impact** | **Intensity** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Timely launch of OPSESG 2014-2020 implementation | * 1. Delay of EC approval of the programme | External/ Internal | Programme | Overall | 3 | 4 | 12 |
| * 1. Delay in the accreditation of control and management systems | External/ Internal | Programme | Overall | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| 1. Ensure interest in the programme and availability of sufficient number of high-quality project proposals | * 1. Poor quality information campaign on the launching of the programme | Internal | Project | Limited | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| * 1. Lack of beneficiaries’ administrative capacity for preparing project proposals | External/ Internal | Project | Limited | 3 | 5 | 15 |
| * 1. Poor programming and design of the support schemes | Internal | Project | Limited | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| 1. Ensure correct and speedy process of evaluation of submitted project proposals in conformity with the national and European rules | * 1. Poor quality of evaluation by the evaluation commissions | Internal | Project | Limited | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| * 1. Lack of qualified evaluators | External | Project | Limited | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| * 1. Lack of funds for payment to external evaluators | Internal | Project | Limited | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| * 1. Lack of technical means for ensuring normal work of the evaluation commissions (rooms, computers) | Internal | Project | Limited | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 1. Ensure appropriate contract implementation by the beneficiaries in conformity with the national and European rules | * 1. Lack of project management and implementation knowledge and skills of beneficiaries | External/ Internal | Project | Overall | 3 | 5 | 15 |
| * 1. Project implementation rules are too burdensome and clumsy | Internal | Project | Limited | 3 | 5 | 15 |
| * 1. Lack of familiarity with /infringement of the selection rules and procedures in public procurement | External | Project | Limited | 3 | 5 | 15 |
| * 1. Delay of the project implementation process | External/ Internal | Project | Limited | 3 | 5 | 15 |
| 1. Ensure efficient functioning of OPSESG 2014-2020 control and management systems | * 1. Lack of qualified personnel | Internal | Programme | Overall | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| * 1. Failure to comply with audit recommendations | Internal | Programme | Overall | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| * 1. Staff turnover | External/ Internal | Programme | Overall | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| 1. Prevent decommitment of funds, observing the n+3 rule | * 1. Insufficient administrative capacity of MA in terms of numbers and skills | External/ Internal | Project | Overall | 3 | 5 | 15 |
| * 1. Financial corrections | External | Programme | Limited | 2 | 5 | 10 |
| 1. Attain the goals and achieve the target values of OPSESG 2014-2020 indicators | * 1. Poor programme monitoring procedures | External/ Internal | Programme | Limited | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| * 1. Difficulties in collecting necessary data for monitoring and evaluation | Internal | Programme | Limited | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| * 1. Difficulties in achieving the target values of the indicators | External/ Internal | Project | Overall | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| * 1. Difficulties in achieve the milestones set | External/ Internal | Project | Overall | 3 | 3 | 9 |

1. *Suggestions for treatment of risks.* The suggestions for treatment of risks have been prepared based on the risk tolerance levels, taking average values (3/3) and suggesting measures for treatment of risks of intensity 10 and above.

Figure 14: Risk assessment

The table below shows the risks of intensity 10 and above and the respective measures to be undertaken for treating each risk. The suggested risk treatment measures are included in the evaluation recommendations.

Table 41. High-intensity risks and their treatment

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risks** | **Probability** | **Impact** | **Intensity** | **Risk treatment** |
| 2.2          Lack of beneficiaries’ administrative capacity for preparing project proposals | 3 | 5 | 15 | * Organize training courses; * Undertake measures to reduce the administrative burden. |
| 4.1          Lack of project management and implementation knowledge and skills of beneficiaries | 3 | 5 | 15 | * Organize training courses; * Undertake measures to reduce the administrative burden; * Establish a Helpdesk for beneficiaries, with clearly specified persons, responsibilities and time limits for responding to questions, and announce it in the project implementation manual . |
| 4.2          Project implementation rules are too burdensome and clumsy. | 3 | 5 | 15 | * Simplify the project implementation rules; * Organize training courses for beneficiaries on project implementation; * Simplify the rules of accounting and verification. |
| * 1. Lack of familiarity with/infringement of the selection rules and procedures in public procurement | 3 | 5 | 15 | * Simplify the project implementation rules; * Organize training courses for beneficiaries; * Raise the thresholds of conducting tender procedures |
| 4.4          Delay of the project implementation process | 3 | 5 | 20 | * Simplify the project implementation rules; * Undertake measures to reduce the administrative burden; * Undertake measures to develop the beneficiaries’ capacity. |
| * 1. Insufficient administrative capacity of MA in terms of numbers and skills | 3 | 5 | 15 | * Improve the capacity by means of training courses, systems and procedures for work facilitation and clear and effective allocation of responsibilities; * Undertake measures to motivate the staff. |
| 1.1          Delay of EC approval of the programme | 3 | 4 | 12 | * Prepare a high-quality strategic document; * Active collaboration with the rest of the administration and with stakeholders |
| 6.2 Financial corrections | 2 | 5 | 10 | * Improve the administrative capacity of MA; * Improve the capacity of beneficiaries; * Compliance with the verification rules and procedures |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Relevance of the procedures for programme monitoring and for collecting the data necessary to carry out evaluations |

According to Article 125 of Regulation 1303/2013 the functions of MA related to monitoring of OPSESG 2014-2020 are as follows:

* *draw up and, after approval by the monitoring committee, submit to the Commission annual and final implementation reports;*
* *establish a system to record and store in computerized form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data about individual participants in operations, where applicable;*
* *ensure that the data referred to in the previous point is collected, entered and stored in the system, and that data on indicators is broken down by gender where required by Annex I of the ESF Regulation.*

The responses of experts from the online survey show that OPSESG 2014-2020 monitoring system should be strengthened in the following aspects: quality of information provided at project level (67 %); quality of processed information at scheme/priority axis level (possibility for data and information aggregation)( (53 %); use of data collected by the monitoring system for making analysis of the programme implementation (49 %).

From the point of view of indicators as a main tool for programme monitoring the main difficulty is the unclear reporting of project-level indicators by the beneficiaries (76 %). The results show that the main difficulties are related to beneficiaries’ understanding of indicators and the way beneficiaries apply, valuate and report them; therefore it is recommended that MA develops more detailed guidelines for indicators application, and includes them in the application package under each scheme.

*Monitoring system*

An efficient monitoring system shall monitor the following elements:

* The achievement of results and their contribution to achieving the objectives of the operational programme;
* The financial progress;
* The quality of the management mechanisms – i.e. the monitoring system should be able to identify system errors as well as irrelevant procedures and controls.

The monitoring system shall gather regular information, establishing the actual progress compared to the planned, and enable timely detection of faults and weaknesses which risk the achievement of objectives. At the same time the gathered information shall be used where necessary for taking decisions for changes in the programme management and implementation. In the recent years stronger relation is sought between monitoring and evaluation[[13]](#footnote-13) in order to enable taking management decisions in a timely manner.

Furthermore the monitoring systems shall ensure that:

* All elements in the system are covered, including that the monitoring mechanisms are included in the beneficiary application forms and the guidelines with them;
* The application forms specify indicators which are closely related to the indicators set in the operational programme;
* Providing of information for implementation monitoring purposes is stipulated in the contracts with beneficiaries.

Below is presented an analysis of the information needs for monitoring of the operational programme, based on the monitoring system of HRDOP 2007 – 2013, as both the beneficiaries and General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” (GD SFIEP) already have experience in using that system.

The monitoring system shall include the following points:

* what information is gathered;
* how to gather information;
* who gathers information;
* who aggregates information.

What information is gathered

*Information about target groups/end users*- according to the requirements of a questionnaire developed on the basis of Annex XXIII of Regulation 1828/2006.

Filling in such questionnaires shall continue also in implementation of contracts financed by ESF in the period 2014-2020. That requirement is stipulated in Regulation 1304/2013 on the European Social Fund. As the information from questionnaires will be used also for evaluation purposes, it is recommended that they include, in addition and beyond the requirements of the Regulation, contact data of end users, including address, telephone and email. The information thus gathered will enable MA to create a database of the programme end-users, and that database would facilitate quantitative examinations of the implementation of OPSESG 2014-2020.

In the current programming period there have been no particular difficulties in providing the required information in the questionnaires. A problem is only the provision of personal information like ethnos, disabilities – which is provided only after obtaining the person’s consent. That problem cannot be overcome but its significance can be reduced by reporting about target groups by characteristics which are not personal information, making quality generalizations and drawing conclusions based on additional information – for example in a scheme targeting marginalized communities we could presume that the target groups are of such communities.

Contract level information:

* Conducted subcontracting procedures and concluded subcontracts;
* Physical progress, including summarized information from questionnaires filled in by end-users, as well as achievement of contract level output indicators and result indicators;
* Financial performance;
* Reporting of irregularities;
* Reporting on information and publicity measures.

The following data shall be collected at *grant scheme* level and at *direct grant contract level:*

* achievement of output indicators and result indicators on monthly basis;
* achievement of financial indicators at grant scheme level / direct grant contract level;
* a summary table as per the requirements of Annex XXIII of regulation 1828/2006 at grant scheme level/ direct grant contract level on monthly basis.

Information at *specific objective and investment priority level:*

* achievement of output indicators and result indicators
* integrated information about the financial performance per investment priority.

At priority axis level MA can gather integrated information to be used in examining and assessing the effect of the programme on various target groups. On that basis general information about the programme implementation is obtained.

Major components of the monitoring system are the programme indicators as well as the obtaining of additional qualitative information. Such information can be used to explain the reasons for achievement or failure to achieve the objectives set and enable further understanding of the implementation efficiency. A major problem in gathering and reporting of information on the indicators in some cases is the lack of common understanding of the meaning of the indicators.

In this report the programme indicators are discussed in details in Evaluation 3 – “Analysis of the system of indicators”, and it is also envisaged that detailed indicator fiches are developed, which shall be the basic part of the monitoring system. Indicator fiches shall provide a definition of each programme indicator so as to guarantee unambiguous interpretation and understanding by all stakeholders of the target value of an indicator and the methods of calculating that value. The fiches shall also provide guidelines on the methods of calculating an indicator value, the necessary frequency of reporting an indicator and the sources of information for its reporting.

How to gather information

A key factor for successful monitoring is the selection of an appropriate methodology, which includes a set of monitoring tools and ensures balance between:

* data received in hard copy and by electronic means of communication;
* feedback by beneficiaries;
* validation of obtained data.

The methodology selection depends also on the capacity and available resources for receiving and processing of sufficient amount of exhaustive information, which would enable formulation of correct conclusions, analyses and recommendations.

The basic rules of good information gathering and reporting practices include:

* Collecting only information that is really necessary. Collecting of unnecessary data encumbers the system.
* Avoiding to collect twice information that has already been collected. A good monitoring system should enable summarizing data from one level to another without gathering additional information.
* The program monitoring system should have a hierarchical structure, involving data processing, summarizing and verification before delivering it to the following level. Data shall be collected and reported in the following hierarchical sequence:
* at end-user level;
* at contract level;
* at grant scheme / direct grant contract level;
* at investment priority and specific objective level;
* at PA or programme level.

Who gathers information and who aggregates information

The diagram below illustrates the idea of the Contractor’s team for data collection and aggregation in a monitoring system. The diagram follows the EC guidance document on monitoring and evaluation of ESF.

According to the guidance document “Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy, European Social Fund”[[14]](#footnote-14) the programme monitoring is built on three types of indicators:

* financial indicators;
* output indicators;
* result indicators.

Primary information on the progress shall be collected at grant contract level by the programme beneficiaries. The beneficiaries shall report on implementation by achieved results and achieved values of output indicators.



Figure 15: Data collection and aggregation system

Source: Ecorys, based on good practices of monitoring systems

It is recommended that there is possibility to enter in UMIS all numerical values of indicators when a respective grant contract is concluded, and the system sums up the achieved indicator values for the next reporting level. It is very important that there is good coordination between departments as regards data collection and aggregation, and it should be clear which department collects which indicator data, which department aggregates it, and which one summarizes and analyses the achieved values.

The aggregated data at grant/ activity level shall be analysed, and its contribution to the achievement of financial indices and common result indicators shall be evaluated. The aggregated values of result indicators will show the achievement of the specific objectives of investment priorities.

Based on aggregated values of result indicators MA shall correlate the achieved results with the measures of the National Reform Programme, Strategy Bulgaria 2020, the Partnership Agreement and other national strategic documents.

Depending on the time limits, set for reporting to the national authorities responsible for management of ESIF, CA, AA, MC and EC and the evaluation timeframe indicated in the evaluation plan, MA shall specify the frequency of reporting by beneficiaries and for preparing reports by the MA departments responsible for the programme monitoring.

Data about achievement of the target values of longer-term result indicators is usually collected through investigations and evaluations and not through the established monitoring system.

*Data necessary to carry out evaluations*

The main data source for carrying out of evaluations will be the program monitoring system, including administrative, quantity and quality data like:

* Indicators data;
* Data about the financial progress;
* Administrative data about concluded contracts, completed contracts, time limits for review and assessment of project proposals, time limits for verification and payment;
* Programme documents and manuals;
* Annual reports on the programme and reports to the MC;
* Final reports at scheme level;
* Intermediate and final reports on contracts.

Additional data will also be necessary for carrying out the evaluations; such data shall in most cases be collected by the evaluation team and shall include data from investigations, on-site visits, interviews, and administrative data obtained from other institutions. In the current programming period, based on the experience from carrying out evaluations under HRD OP 2007-2014 where MES was an intermediate body for the measures in the area of education, difficulties have been experienced with providing data for evaluation purposes, mostly regarding data which would enable the evaluators to gather additional information from end-beneficiaries.

MA should be ready to provide qualitative and quantitative data from the monitoring system and envisage the need for obtaining additional information, providing support for the team of evaluators for the purpose. That means that, besides the matters discussed above, the monitoring system shall be designed in such a way as to provide the necessary contact details of end-beneficiaries.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ? | Adequacy of the evaluation plan and formulation of recommendations |

The OPSESG 2014-2020 evaluation plan has not been drawn up yet. It is envisaged that the plan will be developed after completing the work under the operational programme and in the time limits specified under art. 114 (1) of Regulation 1303/2013 (general provisions). That is why it was impossible to review the evaluation plan within the ex-ante evaluation.

In order to meet the contracting authority’s technical specification and make the ex-ante evaluation useful in the preparation process of the OPSESG 2014-2020 evaluation plan, below are presented guidelines on the plan preparation, based on the requirements of regulations for the period 2014-2020, EC guidance on monitoring and evaluation, and on development of evaluation plans[[15]](#footnote-15).

*Requirements of the regulations for the programming period 2014-2020 regarding development of operational programmes evaluation plans*

The regulatory requirements for the period 2014-2020 regarding evaluations in the programming period, related to OPSESG 2014-2020 evaluation plans, are specified in regulations 1303/2013 (general provisions) and 1304 (the ESF regulation). Like for the previous programming period, possibility is provided for flexibility of planning of evaluations in the course of programme implementation depending on the needs.

Art. 54 (1) of Regulation 1303 stipulates that „*Evaluations shall be carried out to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes, as well as to assess their effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The impact of programmes shall be evaluated, in the light of the mission of each ESI Fund, in relation to the targets under the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and, having regard to the size of the programme, in relation to GDP and unemployment in the programme area concerned, where appropriate.*

*Member States shall provide the resources necessary for carrying out evaluations, and shall ensure that procedures are in place to produce and collect the data necessary for evaluations, including data related to common and where appropriate programme-specific indicators* (Art. 54 (2))

The same article under (3) provides that *“Evaluations shall be carried out by internal or external experts that are functionally independent of the authorities responsible for programme implementation. The Commission shall provide guidance on how to carry out evaluations, immediately following the entry into force of this Regulation.”*

According to art. 54 (4) *All evaluations shall be made available to the public*.

Art.56 (3) of the same regulation stipulates that *“During the programming period, the managing authority shall ensure that evaluations, including evaluations to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact, are carried out for each programme on the basis of the evaluation plan and that each evaluation is subject to appropriate follow-up in accordance with the Fund-specific rules. At least once during the programming period, an evaluation shall assess how support from the ESI Funds has contributed to the objectives for each priority. All evaluations shall be examined by the monitoring committee and sent to the Commission.”*

According to the EC guidelines an evaluation plan should include the following[[16]](#footnote-16):

* an indicative list of evaluations to be undertaken, their subject and rationale;
* methods to be used for the individual evaluations and their data requirements;
* provisions that data required for certain evaluations will be available or will be collected, including for long-term result indicators, if data is provided through investigation;
* a timetable for evaluations;
* a strategy to ensure use and publicity of evaluations;
* human resources involved;
* the indicative budget;
* a training plan (an option).

*Recommendations regarding the OPSESG 2014-2020 evaluation plan*

The recommendations below refer to the content of the evaluation plan concerning evaluations in the course of programme implementation. EC has the responsibility to carry out ex-post evaluation, but member states are encouraged to carry out their own ex-post evaluations (art.57 and art.114 of Regulation 1303/2013)

The evaluation plan should meet the needs for information and evaluation, which are expected during the programme implementation. Evaluations should provide to the management authorities information, which will be used for management purposes.

In the first years of the programme implementation it is of particular importance to obtain information to what extent the established systems are efficient and operative and how appropriate the design of the support is. Towards the middle of the programme implementation period it is important to know how objectives set[[17]](#footnote-17). Towards the end of the period it is already important to know what the impact would be in order to undertake last corrective actions for achieving a maximum impact. In this relation we can provisionally divide the programme implementation period and the necessary information into three parts as shown below:



Considering the above the following recommendations can be made regarding the content of the evaluation plan:

With regard to the indicative list of evaluations with their subject and rationale and a schedule for implementation of the evaluations

It is recommended that in the initial years of the programme implementation (2014-2015) evaluations are planned which would provide information and answers to questions related to the relevance and implementation efficiency, like for example:

* Adequacy of the management and control systems;
* Adequacy of the monitoring systems;
* Adequacy of the design of procedures;
* Adequacy of the available administrative capacity;
* Efficiency of the grant provision.

That would enable improvement of the design of the schemes – i.e. their relevance as well as eliminate faults connected with the programme management and implementation.

With the progress of the programme implementation (2016-2018) it is appropriate to undertake evaluations which would provide information about actual achievement/failure to achieve objectives in order to enable undertaking of timely and adequate measures to correct the planning of spending of funds and the programme implementation so as to ensure achievement of objectives set in accordance with the requirements. Therefore in the period 2016-2018 evaluation of the following would be appropriate:

* Contribution of the support from ESIF for achieving the objectives of each investment priority (art.56 (3) of Regulation 1303 /2013);
* Efficiency and effectiveness of application of horizontal principles;
* Effectiveness of achievement of milestones and assessment of the likelihood of achievement of the targets.

In the last years of the programme implementation period evaluations should be oriented to evaluating the achievement of objectives and the expected impact, in terms not only of an overall assessment of the Programme implementation, but also summative and thematic evaluations that may have a direct contribution to the development of the next OP because this is the period in which work for the following programming period begins. Appropriate evaluations are:

* Contribution of the programme to achievement of the strategic goals of Bulgaria 2020 / Europe 2020;
* Thematic evaluations of interest for the programming of the next operational programme.

The scope of the evaluation plan shall correspond to the capacity of MA to effectively manage and use the results from the evaluations, and to the need to use resources efficiently, without overlapping of subjects and evaluations. For greater flexibility of the plan it would be appropriate to envisage possibilities and resources for carrying out unplanned (ad hoc) evaluations, in case for example specific information is needed in order to take management decisions, or the operational programme needs to be amended.

As regards methods to be used in each evaluation and the data needs for carrying out evaluations

The evaluation methods will depend on the type and the objectives of the evaluations and on the data that is or is expected to be available. EC guidelines on evaluation EVALSED[[18]](#footnote-18) provide detailed directions about evaluation methods and their application, including on the selection of evaluation methods and techniques.

In terms of planning how the necessary data will be provided or will be obtained

For each evaluation, depending on its type and subject, the main data necessary for carrying it out needs to be specified, the data source, and whether the data is expected to be available from the programme’s monitoring system or from other sources, or needs to be provided additionally. If the latter is apply, it shall be indicated whether the data is expected to be provided in the course of evaluation by the evaluators – as that would affect both the duration of evaluation and its budget.

As regards the strategy for ensuring the use of the evaluation results and publicity of evaluations

According to art. 54 (4) of Regulation 1303/2013 all evaluations shall be made available to the public. That involves publishing the evaluations in the programme’s website.

As regards the strategy for using the results from evaluations - it should describe how recommendations from evaluations would be discussed and adopted, and their implementation – monitored, reported and accounted for.

Also it should be specified how the results from evaluations would reach the stakeholders and how the possible actions would be discussed with them.

As regards the need for human resources

It is important to allocate responsibilities and determine whether establishing a specific working/coordination group is envisaged (for each evaluation).

As regards the indicative budget

It is recommended that an indicative budget is determined for each evaluation, based on the envisaged duration, methods of carrying out the evaluation, and on whether or not it is envisaged to collect additional data apart from the available, because that enables more precise planning. At the same time some reserve funds may be allocated or a budget for non-planned evaluations, which, if not used, would be redirected to other activities within the technical assistance priority axis.

As regards a Training Plan (optional)

Depending on the needs, training can be envisaged of the human resources responsible for evaluations planning/implementation/management. As OPSESG is a new programme, that possibility should be considered in the light of activities for improving the capacity of MA experts. Part of that training can be implemented by the evaluators.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

The conclusions and recommendations refer not to texts of the report but to the programme implementation and management. The following recommendations are made:

* The risk management and control department, which includes the irregularity officer, should be directly subordinate to the director general of GD SFIEP and not to a deputy;
* Adequate resources shall be provided to the “Programming and Contracting”, “Financial Planning, Financial Reporting and Payments” and “Risk Management and Control” departments considering their responsibilities;
* The necessary technical means for programme management and implementation shall be provided;
* Training courses related to the new responsibilities as MA shall start as soon as possible;
* An attractive incentives and remuneration package for the staff shall be developed so as to improve their motivation;
* Points of contact for beneficiaries shall be specified in the Project Implementation Manual, with clearly indicated persons, responsibilities and time limits for response to questions.

# IV. Conclusions and recommendations

## Conclusions

As regards external coherence

OPSESG 2014-2020 reflects to a great extent the goals and priorities indicated in major European and national strategic documents in the field of science and education, including the goals of strategy Europe 2020 in that field.

At the same time some basic national strategic and regulatory documents are currently being developed or updated, and that hampers to some extent the focusing of the support envisaged under this operational programme.

Taking into consideration some of the recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation resulted in improving the synergy between this programme and Horizon 2020 and to clearer demarcation and complementarity with some other operational programmes. The texts of the programme have been updated in accordance with the latest versions of documents.

The programme does not yet address sufficiently the territorial aspects as regards the quality of education in small and large settlements.

It is possible to better reflect even in the text of the programme the goals specified in PA concerning partnership between higher education institutions, enterprises and research and concerning improvement of the management capacity of scientific institutes.

Distinguishing from and complimenting some other operational programmes has to be made more precise, in particular related to OPIC.

As regards internal coherence

The programme’s strategy is based on the problems in three major areas – science, higher education and school education. The analyses identify the main existing problems and possible approaches for their solution. Including of supplementary information would improve the analyses and could lead to formulation of better targeted measures for addressing the problems. Not all of the identified problems have been addressed with concrete approaches for solving them.

The programme’s intervention logic is built in three priority axes, comprising the country‘s major problems in the field of science and technology development, school education and higher education, and social inclusion of vulnerable groups into education.

The specified investment priorities are adequately selected and in general well focused by means of the set specific goals. The needs analyses and presentation can be improved, in particular as regards the specific objectives concerning the connection between science, education and business (IP2 of PA1, IP4 of PA2).

The activities under most of the priorities are relevant. Not sufficient number of adequate activities, addressing the need for better cooperation between science and business, have been envisaged. The activities under PA2 are too many in number and can be integrated.

The beneficiaries and target groups are in general appropriate and correspond to the set goals and activities.

The programme does not specify approaches for providing the assistance. The expectations are that those approaches would include direct funding and support as well as grants provided based on the principle of competitive selection. The programme does not envisage using of financial instruments. Considering the envisaged activities for providing credits to higher education, and the possibilities for joint business – science and business – higher education initiatives it is recommended to analyse the possibility of using financial instruments in some of the operations.

The programme reflects the main horizontal principles – “partnership”, “sustainable development”, “equality and prevention of discrimination” and “gender equality”. It is necessary to add information on monitoring the application of the “sustainable development” and “gender equality” principles. It is recommended that applying the “equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination” principle is monitored by means of the monitoring system and not through additional inspections as the latter would increase the administrative burden.

As regards financial allocation

The financial allocation under the programme is in line with the requirements of EC regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period and the distribution of funds indicated in the PA.

The financing is directed to the attainment of the national strategic goals concerning science, innovations and education. Indirectly it is expected to have an effect also on the labour market, social inclusion and economic development.

The amount of allocated funds as a whole is insufficient. The distribution of the funds by year is ambitious and there is a risk for automatic loss of funds in the first years of implementation.

The May 2014 version of the programme does not provide a financial justification, and that makes it impossible to assess the observance of the thematic concentration requirement.

As regards indicators

The indicators system was made more precise and was considerably improved compared to the initial version. Yet further editing of some indicators is expected. No all result indicators have baseline values. Most of the target values seen realistic based on the information currently available. The performance framework has not been elaborated yet and therefore evaluation of the milestones has not been carried out.

Recommendations have been made regarding the indicators for each priority axis.

As regards administrative capacity

The new structure of GD SFIEP is relevant to the new responsibilities of the directorate as MA of the programme. New departments have been formed to take the additional functions. “Risk Management and Control” department should be directly subordinate to the director general in order to ensure independence of the irregularity officer.

As a whole the envisaged human resources are adequate. Problems due to insufficient human resources could arise in “Programming and Contracting” department, “Financial Planning, Financial Reporting and Payments” department and in “Risk Management and Control” department. The first two of those departments need additional staff, who could be ensured also through rearranging the staff within the directorate or by external support. To reduce the load on “Risk Management and Control” department it is recommended that the ex-ante control of beneficiaries’ public procurement in not carried out or a threshold value is introduced over which such control would be exercised.

The staff has experience in EU funds management and can receive training. It has experience also in drawing up of procedures and manuals. The work for setting up the management and control systems has started.

A significant problem for the programme implementation proves to be the insufficiency of technical equipment at the directorate’s disposal. A procurement procedure has already been launched for providing of equipment.

In general the staff are satisfied with working in GD SFIEP but their better motivation would improve the capacity of the directorate.

A large number of the potential beneficiaries of the programme already have capacity, built due to implementation of projects in the current programming period. Yet support is necessary also in this programming period.

It is expected that the main problems as regards the monitoring system would refer to the quality of information provided at project level; the quality of information processed at scheme /priority axis level (possibility for data and information aggregation); using the data collected by the monitoring system for analysing the programme implementation, and efficient use of the indicators for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

The evaluation plan of the operational programme has not been drawn up yet. That is why it was not possible to examine it within the ex-ante evaluation.

## Recommendations

As regards external coherence

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| **Conclusion** | **Recommendation** |
| “Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020” sets as a common goal “territorial cohesion for a more harmonious and balanced state of Europe”, including cohesion within countries and intra-regional cohesion within regions.  Regarding the field of education the National Demographic Strategy of the republic of Bulgaria envisages “*Creating conditions for bringing closer the models of education of the inhabitants of big cities and the people residing in small towns and villages, especially the ones in poor rural regions”*  The problem of the lower quality of education in small towns and in villages has been mentioned in OPSESG but it has not been addressed clearly. | Seek a greater contribution of OPSESG 2014-2020 to territorial cohesion as far as difference in the quality of education in small towns and villages and in big cities is concerned. |
| OPSESG 2014-2020 as a whole corresponds to the goals and priorities declared in the Bucharest Communiqué of ministers responsible for higher education | As a response to the approaches emphasized in the communiqué OPSESG could analyse possible support for development of joint programmes and degrees with other universities, as part of the measures for improving the quality and efficiency of higher education |
| OPSESG as a whole is in harmony with the framework determined by PA. The following measures are reflected to a lesser extent or unclearly:   * Establishing and strengthening of partnerships between higher education institutions, enterprises and research institutes; * Improving the management capacity of research institutes; * Creating of opportunities for internships of research workers in enterprises; * Motivation of education institutions to provide education services beyond their own infrastructure, based on partnerships with employers, government and municipal institutions and other stakeholders; * Development of partnerships between the businesses and the scientific circles. | Seek possibilities for better reflection of the mentioned measures discussed in the PA |
| Section 8 of the programme indicates the complementing of and distinguishing between OPSESG and the other operational programmes for the period 2014-2020. Specific recommendations are made concerning some of the programmes. | Take into consideration the specific recommendations indicated in tables 2-16. |

As regards internal coherence

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| **OPSESG section** | **Conclusion** | **Recommendation** |
| Section 1, point 1.1.2 А. Research activities | The analysis of human resources in the field of science can be supplemented with data about the people employed in the area of research, by age and by sectors – their enterprise and mobility. The problems of low remuneration and career growth opportunities have not been discussed among the problems and measures for attracting and retaining of scientists and researchers | Expand the analysis in the aspect of conditions and needs in the area of human resources in research |
| Section 1, point 1.1.2 А. Research activities | As regards the relationship between science and business the envisaged measures do not address the identified weaknesses: lack of commercial realization of scientific research and developments and lack of supporting public policies. | Envisage measures for addressing the identified needs |
| Section 1, point 1.1.2 B. Higher education | As regards the improvement of lecturers’ qualifications no analysis has been made of approaches aimed at establishing a closer relationship between academia, science and research, and business, which can contribute to improving the professional competence of lecturers. Possibilities for involvement of graduate and post-graduate students in extracurricular research projects and activities, including for payment, have not been considered; and that would at the same time address the problem of financial support for studies. No analysis has been made of the role and efficiency of the career centres with higher education institutions in improving the relationship between higher education and business. | Expand the analyses, adding information about the possibilities for improving the relationship between academia and research work on the one hand and applied research for the business – on the other, including the involvement of graduate and post-graduate students in research and applied research projects.  Add an analysis of the role of career centres and of the connection between possible support under the programme and strengthening the academia – business relationship. |
| Section 1, point 1.1.2 C. School education and life-long learning | There is no information about the preschool education system and kindergartens in the analysis. | Add the lacking analyses |
| Section 1, point 1.1.2 C. School education and life-long learning | The measures related to the teachers’ qualification do not address the main problem – low salaries | Add an analysis of the possibilities to address the problem of low teacher salaries |
| Section 1, point 1.1.2 C. School education and life-long learning | The problem of relatively lower quality of education in small and distant towns and villages and the ways to overcome that have not been analysed. | Add an analysis of territorial differences in the quality of education. |
| PA1, IP2 | The justification of needs can be improved. No information has been provided about possible synergy effect with OPIC | Extend the justification regarding needs taking into consideration the comments in table 17 of this report. |
| PA2, IP2 | The justification of needs under the second and the third specific objectives can be improved, providing more information about the present state, measures undertaken and achieved results. Illustrating the needs with numbers would make the justification more convincing. | Supplement the needs justification and make it more precise in accordance with the comments in table 18 of this report. |
| PA2, IP3 | The texts in the justification of SO2 need to be made more precise in order to avoid the impression of double support with OP HRD 2014-2020 | Revise the needs justification in accordance with the comments in table 18 of this report. |
| PA2, IP4 | The justification of needs under the second specific objective can be improved. | Supplement the needs justification in accordance with the comments in table 18 of this report. |
| PA3, IP1, SO1 | The present formulation of the objective starts with “improve the quality of and access to education”, which diverts the focus from the main problem – inclusive education, and creates confusion as the access to and the quality of education are supported by IP1 of PA2. | It is recommended that the title of the specific objective is reformulated. |
| PA3, IP1 | The justification can be supplemented with an analysis of the access of disabled people to higher education, practices addressing students’ individual needs and their efficiency. | Supplement the justification in accordance with the comments in table 19 of this report. |
| PA3, IP2 | The justification of the specific objective indicates the major problems but does provide sufficient data to illustrate the problems. Possible integrated support together with OP HRD2014-2020 has not been discussed. | Supplement the justification of the specific objectives in accordance with the comments in table 19 of this report. |
| Activities under all priority axes | Most of the suggested activities are relevant to the set specific objectives. In some cases the activities can be integrated or formulated in a better way. There are activities which have not been sufficiently covered in the justification of specific objectives and also such activities which are not very relevant to the specific objectives, Concrete recommendations have been made. | Improve the formulation of activities under the specific objectives of all axes, taking into consideration the recommendations in tables 21, 22, 23 and 24 of this report. |
| Beneficiaries and target groups | The beneficiaries and the target groups have been adequately identified. In some cases there is ambiguity about some of the groups. Respective recommendations have been made. | Make the necessary amendments and define more accurately beneficiaries and target groups in accordance with the recommendations in tables 25, 26 and 27 |
| Guiding principles for selection of operations | Most of the defined guiding principles for selection of operations are relevant and will contribute to efficient use of funds and improvement of the selection of projects. Comments have been made regarding three of the suggested principles for selection of operations. | Take into consideration and reflect the comments in table 29 of this report. |
| Financial instruments | The May 2014 version of the programme does not envisage using of financial instruments | Considering the envisaged activities for providing of credits in higher education and the possibilities for joint business-science and business-higher education initiatives it is recommended to analyse the possibilities for and advantages of using financial instruments. |
| Horizontal principles | The programme reflects the main horizontal principles defined in the applicable regulations and in the Partnership Agreement. Monitoring of the application of the “equal opportunities and non-discrimination” principle is envisaged to be performed through specialized inspections and monitoring of concrete indicators. It has not been indicated how the application of the “sustainable development” and “gender equality” principles will be monitored. | Introducing of specialized inspections would lead to increasing the administrative burden. It would be more appropriate to provide information regarding the implementation of the “equal opportunities and non-discrimination” principle through the monitoring system.  Add information on the manner in which application of the “sustainable development” and “gender equality” principles will be monitored. |

As regards financial allocation

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| **OPSESG section** | **Conclusion** | **Recommendation** |
| Financial plan | This version of OPSESG does not provide information about the programme budget allocation by years. In the opinion of the evaluator the allocation envisaged in the PA suggests relatively fast contracting and payment in the beginning of the programming period, and according to our evaluation creates the risk of automatic loss of funds in 2018-2019. | Plan a more conservative allocation of the budget by years, which would minimize the risk of automatic loss of funds in the next programming period. |
| Financial plan | The allocation of OPSESG budget by years does not correspond to the financing under the programme, envisaged in the Partnership Agreement. | Make the amounts in OPSESG and in the Partnership Agreement equal. |
| Financial justification | This version of OPSESG does not provide financial justification, and that makes it impossible to evaluate how the thematic concentration requirements of ESF are met. | Add information on the observing of the requirement for concentration of minimum 60 % of the programme budget in maximum 5 investment priorities. |
| Investment strategy | The ESF regulation provides a possibility for increasing of EU financing by 10 percentage points for trans-border cooperation when the activities are separated under a particular priority axis. | Provided there is interest and there are sufficient funds allocated for those activities, MA should consider the possibility of separating in a particular axis the ESF activities referring to trans-border cooperation. |

As regards indicators

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| **OPSESG section** | **Conclusion** | **Recommendation** |
| The system of indicators under PA1, IP 2 | Two of the output indicators are unclear and one is more relevant to the IP 1.  For result indicators have been proposed for one specific objective, which does not correspond to the guidance for limiting the result indicators to 1-2 per specific objective. | To revise the output and result indicators according to the comments in tables 36 and 37 of this report. |
| The system of indicators under PA2, IP 1 and IP2 | Some of the output indicators are more suitable to measure results achieved rather than the direct outputs of the implementation.  The proposed result indicators are adequate. | To revise the output indicators according to the comments in table 36. |
| The system of indicators under PA2, IP3 | One of the output indicators is too general and does not measure only the support under the programme. The indicator could be excluded from the system as the following indicator could replace it and because there are too many indicators proposed under this IP.  One of the two proposed result indicators does not correspond to the specific objective. | To exclude from the system of indicators one of the proposed output indicators as commented in table 36.  To consider defining another more relevant result indicator. |
| The system of indicators under PA3, IP2 | There is no result indicator under IP2 of PA3 | To define result indicator to measure the achievement under IP3 |
| Baseline and target values | Not all result indicators have target values. Most of the values set seem realistic based on the available information. In tables 36 and 37 comments have been made for all of the indicator values. | To set up baseline values for the result indicators. To revise/justify some of the proposed target values. |

As regards administrative capacity

The recommendations regarding administrative capacity do not refer to any texts of the programme but to the programme implementation and management in future.

The recommendations regarding administrative capacity do not refer to any texts of the programme but to the programme implementation and management in future.

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| **OPSESG section** | **Conclusion** | **Recommendation** |
| The management structure | A new structure ofGD SFIEP was adopted in June 2014. The structure envisages that the directorate performs all functions and responsibilities as MA and meets the division of functions requirements.  The conducted online survey shows that it is possible to allocate responsibilities more efficiently both at central level and in the regional structures of GD SFIEP. | The Risk Management and Control department, which includes the officer dealing with irregularities, should be directly subordinate to the director general of GD SFIEP and not to the deputy director.  Clear allocation of the functions of departments, including delegation of monitoring and verification functions to the regional structures;  Clearer differentiation of the responsibilities and tasks of departments within MA to avoid confusion and overlapping of functions or overloading some departments. |
| Adequacy of human resources and administrative capacity for managing the programme | GD SFIEP experts have considerable professional experience in managing and implementing of projects and programmes financed from EU structural funds and pre-accession programmes.  It is very likely that the human resources allocated to three of the departments prove insufficient considering the responsibilities of those departments.  In general the experts are satisfied with working in GD SFIEP but if they are better motivated that would improve the administrative capacity of the directorate.  There is lack of equipment and systems for the work of GD SFIEP experts – like halls, applied software, digital archive, etc. | Provide resources adequate to the responsibilities of “Programming and Contracting”, “Financial Planning, Financial Reporting and Payments” and “Risk Management and Control” departments.  Provide the technical resources and equipment necessary for the programme management and implementation.  The experts should continue to have access to regular and ad hoc training, including working visits to exchange experience.  As soon as possible start conducting training courses on the new responsibilities of MA.  Develop an attractive incentives and remuneration package so as to improve the staff motivation. |
| Capacity of the programme beneficiaries and measures envisaged for strengthening it | The programme beneficiaries will need support although many of them already have project implementation experience from the previous programming period. | MA should provide support for improving the capacity of OPSESG 2014-2020 beneficiaries, including continuing the practice of holding information days and information campaigns on the support schemes.  In addition the following measures would respond to some of the difficulties most common for the beneficiaries:   * Avoid changing the rules and instructions in the course of projects implementation, and in case that is necessary, inform the beneficiaries in an appropriate manner (by mail) about the changes, and provide additional clarifications where necessary. * In the project implementation manual specify points of contact for beneficiaries with clearly indicated persons, responsibilities and time limits for response to questions. |
| Adequacy of the programme’s management, monitoring and evaluation procedures and procedures for collection of data about the programme implementation | The monitoring system shall provide regular information about the achieved results and their contribution to achievement the objectives of the operational programme. It shall provide timely data about the financial progress by schemes, investment priorities and at programme level. The monitoring system could identify system errors – i.e. it should monitor the quality of management mechanisms. | The new monitoring system should build on the existing one, keeping the good practices and models and addressing the identified weaknesses of the system.  Build a system for collecting and aggregating of indicator data, in which the tasks and time limits are specified for all monitoring levels (beneficiary, concrete beneficiary, MA departments). |

# V. Annexes

## Annex 1: List of used documents

1. Draft Version of Operational Programme “Science and Education for Smart Growth“ <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/985>
2. Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth -<http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/flagship-initiatives/index_bg.htm>
3. Flagship Initiative Innovation Union -<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0546:FIN:EN:PDF>
4. Flagship Initiative Youth on the Move - <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=950>
5. Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era - <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/industrial-competitiveness/industrial-policy/files/communication_on_industrial_policy_en.pdf>
6. An Agenda for new skills and jobs: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:776df18f-542f-48b8-9627-88aac6d3ede0.0003.03/DOC\_1&format=PDF
7. Digital Agenda for Europe - <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/>
8. A resource-efficient Europe - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0021:FIN:EN:PDF>
9. Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area, Ministers’ Bucharest Communiqué (2012) <http://mail.nacid.bg/newdesign/bg_eu/att_files/2012_Bucharest-komjunike_en.pdf>
10. Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (2012) http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/2012%20EHEA%20Mobility%20Strategy.pdf
11. Beyond the Bologna Process: Creating and connecting national, regional and global higher education areas Statement of the Third Bologna Policy Forum (2012) , http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Bucharest-BPF-Statement.pdf
12. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems (2011), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0567:FIN:EN:PDF>
13. Danube Region Strategy, <http://www.danube-region.eu/>
14. The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf>
15. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy, <http://mail.nacid.bg/newdesign/bg_eu/att_files/07_2010_VET_EN.pdf>
16. National qualifications framework of the Republic of Bulgaria -<http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=719>
17. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, <http://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j9vvik7m1c3gyxp/viv0td15o9zy>
18. ERASMUS FOR ALL (2014-2020)http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2012/474543/IPOL-CULT\_NT(2012)474543(SUM01)\_EN.pdf
19. Commission Recommendation of 20.2.2013 Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage, <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/c_2013_778_en.pdf>
20. National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2020, <http://www.eufunds.bg/en/page/873>
21. Europe 2020: National Reform Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2013 Update, http://www.minfin.bg/en/page/867
22. Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 – 2015), <http://www.minfin.bg/en/page/868>
23. National Strategy of Scientific Research 2020, http://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDgQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fobservatory.euroris-net.eu%2Feuroris%2Ffiles%2Fdownload%2F174-181&ei=GE\_SU\_WhNYPNygP9m4KABA&usg=AFQjCNFBdJpZaOh7-vrI7hRhjpq26paPWg&sig2=TK2r\_EOIWyfLqluMTsC7aw&bvm=bv.71778758,d.bGQ
24. National Strategy for Lifelong Learning (lll) for the period 2008 – 2013, http://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=5&ved=0CD8QFjAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Frefernet.hrdc.bg%2Fwebsite\_uploads%2FFile%2Ffiletracking%2FLLL%2520strategy\_eng\_\_revised.pdf&ei=6E\_SU\_GkLKWGywOLmYG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNF5b\_h7ocE\_Oc0ZTbcgJ0c30dHfhQ&sig2=UNowf02uZ09T1jVnrpkecg
25. National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=880>
26. School and Pre-school Education Development National Programme (2006-2015), <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00006616/01/Ministry-of-education_School-and-pre-school-education-development-national-Programme_2006-2015.pdf>
27. National Youth Strategy 2010 – 2020, <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Youth/Bulgaria/Bulgaria_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf>
28. National Roadmap for Research Infrastructure - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=624>
29. Strategie for Integration of Children and Students from EthnicMinorities2004**-**2015 - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=396>
30. National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 - 2020) – <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf>
31. Framework Programme For Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society 2010-2020 - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=609>
32. National Action Plan Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015 – <http://www.romadecade.org/article/decade-action-plans/9296>
33. National Strategy for promotion of Gender Equality for the Period 2009-2015 – <http://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mlsp.government.bg%2Fequal%2Fequalen%2Fbglaw.asp%3Fid%3D286&ei=zVjSU8O2EqT8ygPNgIKAAg&usg=AFQjCNF4U-Wggu17ITIY7nS5snnYCBmf7w&sig2=fYlMS4xIDjGqIEVJ_UIIeA>
34. Updated National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=778> - no link for EN text
35. National Strategy for Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008-2015 - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=445> - no link for EN text
36. National Regional Development Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria – <http://old.europe.bg/htmls/page.php?id=2231&category=264&translation=en>
37. National strategy for protecting the child (2008 – 2018) - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=464> - no link for EN text
38. National Strategy “Vision for Deinstitutionalization of the Children in Bulgaria” - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=601> - no link for EN text
39. National Programme for Guaranteeing the Rights of Children with Disabilities 2010-2013 - <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=657>
40. Concept of state policy in the field of justice for children - <http://www.strategy.bg/Publications/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=117>
41. Draft national strategy for pedagogical staff development - <http://www.mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileId=3419>
42. Innovation strategy for smart specialisation
43. “Draft Strategy for Preventing and Reducing the. Share of Dropouts and Early School Leavers (2013-2020)" <http://www.esc.bg/en/activities/resolutions/item/1632-resolution-pspndopnos>
44. Draft strategy for effective use of information and communication technologies in education in the Republic of Bulgaria (2014–2020) - <http://www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1185> -
45. REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 – <http://www.espa.gr/elibrary/EC1303_common_20122013_L347_EN.pdf>
46. REGULATION (EU) No 1301/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0289:0302:EN:PDF>
47. REGULATION (EU) No 1304/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0470:0486:EN:PDF>
48. REGULATION (EU) No 1302/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0303:0319:EN:PDF>
49. REGULATION (EU) No 1300/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006 – http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0281:0288:EN:PDF
50. REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:347:0259:0280:EN:PDF>
51. National Education Act – <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
52. Educational degrees, General Education Minimum and Curriculum Act - <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
53. Vocational Education and Training Act – <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
54. Pre-School Education and School Education Act - <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/14397/>
55. Higher Education Act - <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
56. Law on the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria - <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
57. Encouragement of the Scientific Research Work in Bulgaria Act - <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
58. Lending Undergraduate and Graduate Students (student's and PhD's credits) Act - <http://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=57>
59. Financial Management and Control in the Public Sector Act – http://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bulnao.government.bg%2Ffiles%2F\_en%2FFinancial\_Management\_and\_Control\_in\_the\_Public\_Sector\_Act.doc&ei=T1zXU8S\_DYWc0QXGlYDYCA&usg=AFQjCNFjAu16k6KRfDR\_BtvefcMl0kRJ9w&sig2=BxRRIGQXaWgGEkxt8MeQKg
60. Decree No.70 of the Council of Ministers of 14.04.2010 on coordination of the management of EU funds - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/119>
61. Decree No.5 of the Council of Ministers of 18 January 2012 on development of strategic and programming documents of the Republic of Bulgaria for the management financial resources provided from EU common strategic framework funds for the programming period 2014-2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/119> -
62. Decision No.668 of 6 August 2012 for approval of a list of actions, time limits and responsible institutions for meeting the prerequisites concerning European Union funds for the programming period 2014-2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/37>
63. Decision No.102 of the Council of Ministers of 14.02.2013 on amending and supplementing of Decision No.668 of the Council of Ministers of 2012 for approval of a list of actions, time limits and responsible institutions for meeting the prerequisites concerning European Union funds for the programming period 2014-2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/37>
64. Decision No.328 of the Council of Ministers of 25 April 2012 for approval of a list of thematic goals, which are to be included in the Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria for the programming period 2014-2020, a list of programmes and leading administration for the development of each programme - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/37>
65. Operational programme “Regions in growth” 2014–2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/989>
66. [Operational Programme Human Resources Development](http://www.rbb.bg/en/careers/operational-programme-human-resources-development/) – ophrd.government.bg/view\_file.php/3226
67. Operational Program "Good Governance" 2014–2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/1022>
68. Operatopnal program on Transport 2014–2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/en/page/12>
69. Operational Programme „Innovation and Competitiveness 2014–2020 – [www.eufunds.bg/document/6217](http://www.eufunds.bg/document/6217)
70. Operational Programme Environment 2014–2020 - http://www.eufunds.bg/en/page/13
71. Rural Development Programme 2014–2020 - <http://prsr.government.bg/index.php/bg/sections/l2/101> -
72. [Programme for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries](http://ope.moew.government.bg/files/useruploads/files/Programirane/20130416_presentazii_sreshta/op_fish_en.pdf)  2014–2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/983>
73. European territorial cooperation program 2014–2020 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/982>
74. Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria for Partnership with the EU in the period 2014-2020 – <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/993>
75. Position of the Commission Services on the development of the Partnership Agreement and Programmes in Bulgaria for the period 2014-2020 - <http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/pdf/partnership/bg_position_paper_bg.pdf>
76. Concept for programming the development of the Republic of Bulgaria - <http://www.saveti.government.bg/web/guest>
77. Methodology for Strategic Planning in Bulgaria - <http://www.strategy.bg/Publications/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=90>
78. - Program for the activity of the Center For Educational Integration Of Children And Students From Ethnic Minorities for the period 2013 – 2015 – <http://coiduem.mon.bg/en/page.php?c=4>
79. COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT Accompanying the document Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 – <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/eudocs/ID/17911>
80. Summary of the Impact Assessment (Commission Staff Working Paper) Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 – <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&f=ST+15451+2011+ADD+1>
81. Analysis of the Centre for Information Support for Education
82. Analysis of the National Centre for Information and Documentation for social and economic analysis of OPSESG target sectors
83. The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report – <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/138EN.pdf>
84. [Draft Guidance Fiche Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)](http://www.eufunds.bg/document/5138) - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/884>
85. [Fiche on the constitution and the allocation of the performance reserve](http://www.eufunds.bg/document/5136) - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/884>
86. Link between thematic concentration and articles 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 - <http://www.eufunds.bg/bg/page/884>
87. Monitoringand Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy European Social Fund - <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7884&langId=en>.
88. Guide on ex-ante evaluation - <http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information/evaluations/guidance_en.cfm#1>
89. Draft Guidance on the performance framework review and reserve in 2014–2020 - <http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information/evaluations/guidance_en.cfm#1>
90. The Programming Period 2014–2020,Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund –2013, Concepts and Recommendations - <http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf>
91. Analysis of the condition of research in Bulgaria, MES - <http://s2b.mon.bg/i/analyse_researches_bg.pdf>
92. Information provided in the website of MES, eurfunds.bg and the websites of the other operational programmes
93. Ranking of the higher education institutions in Bulgaria, 2013

## Annex 2: List of participants in the meetings with focus groups

**Meetings held**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Institution** |
| Ivan Krastev | Deputy Minister of Education and Science |
| Ivan Modev | Director General, General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |
| Stoyan Tsonev | Head of “Analyses, Planning and Provision of Grants” department, General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |
| Nikolay Nikolov | Chief expert in “Analyses, Planning and Provision of Grants” department, General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |
| Metodiy Kirov | Government expert in “Analyses, Planning and Provision of Grants” department, General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |
| Ivana Radonova | Chief expert, “Higher Education” directorate, Ministry of Education and Science |
| Yana Yotova | Senior expert, “Higher Education” directorate, Ministry of Education and Science |
| Valentina Deykova | Head of “Life-Long Learning” department, “Policies Formulation, Analysis and Evaluation” directorate |
| Genoveva Zhecheva | Head of “Transnational Research Initiatives” department, “Science” directorate |
| Metodi Kirov | Head of “Monitoring and Evaluation” department |
| Stefka Pileva – Malinovska | Head of “Verificaiton” department |
| Dimitar Nichev | Head of “Technical Verification” section in “Verification” department |
| Blagovesta Hadzhipetkova | Head of “Financial Verificaiton” section in “Verification” department |
| Borislav Parvanov | Senior Research Fellow in “Risk Management and Control” department |
| Tsvetanka Ficheva | Head of “Financial Planning, Financial Reporting and Payments” department |
| Lyudmila Tozeva | Head of “Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Operational Programme” department, GD “European Funds for Competitiveness”, Ministry of Economy and Energy |
| Daniela Malhasyan | Deputy Director General of GD “European Funds for Competitiveness”, Ministry of Economy and Energy |

**Participants in a focus group with representatives of TWG for preparation of the programme**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Institution** |
| Hristian Daskalov | National representation of student committees |
| Nikolay Naydenov | Council of Ministers, “Monitoring of EU Funds” Directorate |
| Vesela Karayaneva | Chief Expert, “Vocational Qualification and Licensing” Directorate, NAVET |
| Antoaneta Katsarova | Bulgarian Industrial Association |
| Kiril Zhelyazkov | Bulgarian Industrial Association |
| Nikolay Denkov | Sofia University |
| Lyubomir Dobrev | Administrative Director, University Complex of Humanitarian Studies, Sofia University |
| Veselka Ivanova | National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria |
| Desislava Froloshka | Association of Industrial Capital in Bulgaria |
| Georgi Raychevski | GIS – Transfer Center Foundation and Joint Innovation Centre of BAS |
| Metodiy Kirov | MES, General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |
| Nikolay Nikolov | MES, General Directorate “Structural Funds and International Educational Programmes” |

**Participants in a focus group with representatives of potential beneficiaries**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Institution** |
| Lalka Momchilova | Vocational School “Vaptsarov” |
| Lyudmila Pikova | Vocational School “Vaptsarov” |
| Yavor Shopov | Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” |
| Kiril Stoychev | BAS |
| Yanka Alexandrova | Savremennost Foundation |
| Aneta Karaivanova | IICT – BAS |
| Asen Petrov | MES |
| Ivanka Germanova | RIE Sofia City |
| Maria Tsvetkova | NBU |

## Annex 3: Results from the online survey among potential beneficiaries of the programme, the future MA and members of the Working Group for the programme preparation

Only in Bulgarian.

## Annex 4: Results from the online survey among GD SFIEP experts

Only in Bulgarian

## Annex 5: Intervention logic of the programme

Only in Bulgarian

## Annex 6: Indicator fiches

Only in Bulgarian.

Only on electronic carrier.

1. The funds allocated under Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness should be reported to Thematic Objective 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Save those under EAFRD and EMFF for which there is no financial allocation in absolute terms yet. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Digital Agenda for Europe, Innovation Union, Youth on the Move, Resource Efficient Europe, An Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era, An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, European Platform Against Poverty [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Regulation (EU) № 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. REGULATION (EU) No 1304/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Guidelines for the Ex-ante Evaluation in the programming period 2014-2020, ERDF, CF and ESF, ‘DG for Regional and Urban Policy and DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Programming period 2014-2020, Guidance document on monitoring end evaluation, ERDF, CF and Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of ESF [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Key indicators for Candidate Countries to Effectively Manage the Structural Funds, NEI, 2002

   EU-8 Administrative Capacity in the New Member States: The Limits of Innovation?, WB, 2006 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The distribution was made on the basis of the list of employees from the site of DG SFIEP [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The draft of the Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria outlining the assistance under ESIF for the period 2014 – 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The draft of the Partnership Agreement of the Republic of Bulgaria outlining the assistance under ESIF for the period 2014 – 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The risk analysis was made on the basis of the methodology developed under the project Assessment of the risk in the management of OP Administrative Capacity (OPAC) and assessment of the risk in the implementation of projects under OPAC, implemented by ERCORIS CIU for the Ministry of Finance. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. ЕС Working Paper No 5. Indicative Guidelines on Evaluation Methods [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Programming Period 2014-2020, „Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy, European Social Fund“, Guidence Document, January 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The Programming Period 2014-2020, Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, ERDF and CF and Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation of ESF; Draft Guidance document on evaluation Plans, EC, March 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The Programming Period 2014-2020, Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, ERDF and CF and Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation of ESF [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The Programming Period 2014-2020, Guidance document on Monitoring and Evaluation, ERDF and CF [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. http://ec.europa.eu/regional\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/guide/guide\_evalsed.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-18)