

„Baseline Analysis of Absorption Capacity of OPTA for the Programming Period 2014 – 2020“

Executive Summary

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Report elaborated for:

Ministry of Regional Development CR

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Executive Summary

On 30 December 2013, an order was signed between the contract owner (OPTA Managing Authority Department, MRD CR) and the contractor (HOPE – E.S., v.o.s. company, EUservis.cz division) commissioning the elaboration of the study entitled “Baseline Analysis of Absorption Capacity of OPTA for the Programming Period 2014 – 2020”.

The project focuses on absorption capacity related matters of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance for the 2014 -2020 programming period. The subject matter of the study is the elaboration of baseline analysis of OPTA, with the project's objective being particularly the mapping of physical and financial requirements of respective future beneficiaries (with an emphasis laid on new beneficiaries under OPTA). Its purpose is also to assess their relevance with respect to the design of OPTA 2014 – 2020. It aims to acquire thorough information on possibilities and plans of new beneficiaries and its exploitation in the final setting of the OP. The contract shall also map the processes and procedures of OPTA administration. Hence, the output consists in recommendations to individual issues addressed under this evaluation.

Mapping the expectations and needs of new beneficiaries

Holders of integrated strategies

The Common Provisions Regulation defines the so called “integrated approach” to territorial development, the implementation of which shall be described in the Partnership Agreement (Art. 15 of the Common Provisions Regulation), and the Agreement also specifies in more detail the integrated instruments to be implemented in the CR:

- Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)
- Integrated Territorial Development Plans (ITDP)
- Integrated strategy for Community-led Local Development (CLLD)

For the purpose of setting the obligations, defining the roles and tasks, the MRD elaborated the *Methodological Guideline for the application of integrated instruments in the programming period 2014-2020* (hereinafter referred to as the MGII), whose aim is to provide all the relevant bodies with binding procedures in the process of preparation, evaluation, approval and implementation of integrated strategies of territorial development (at the time of elaboration of this output its version 2.1 is available.). The first step is the approval of MGII as such. Following its approval, the official structures can be set up and subsequently the integrated strategy will be created and implemented.

The conducted desk research and interviews resulted in the following principal findings, summed up in Chapter 3.1.1. They concern primarily the current stage of setting the integrated strategies (the drafted MGII, the published call under OPTA 2007-2013 to support the absorption capacity, the foreseen scope of support for development of integrated strategies, and the progress made in the IS preparation).

Based on the carried out research, the contractor estimated the costs that can be anticipated in the following years with respect to the integrated instruments. They relate e.g. to the preparation of strategies, building capacities, vocational training, staffing and methodology costs, etc. This list serves as a basis for articulating the recommendations, particularly for considering whether an allocation for development of IS shall be anticipated in the new OPTA. Moreover, the contractor recommends considering whether to add the organisations associating the holders of integrated strategies into the group of beneficiaries, and to calculate the costs of staffing.

Sponsors of ex-ante conditionalities

This part of analysis resulted in providing a structured description of claims, needs and expectations of sponsors as new beneficiaries under OPTA and also in identifying the weaknesses of new beneficiaries in terms of capacity and competences for the implementation of projects. In order to map the expectations and needs of sponsors of ex-ante conditionalities (EAC), one-to-one interviews were held and a questionnaire survey was launched.

The result of the survey is the main recommendation, i.e. to convene a coordination meeting of sponsors of ex-ante conditionalities due to their low level of awareness. The field survey indicates that activity PA 1 of OPTA on “Ensuring support for fulfilling ex-ante conditionalities“ is an activity vital for correct implementation of the Partnership Agreement, and the contractor recommends to provide support thereto. The contractor also recommends clarifying the position of sponsors of thematic ex-ante conditionalities as aid beneficiaries under the OPTA. The contractor regards as relevant the concerns of some sponsors associated with excessive administrative burden arising from the administration of projects. Hence, he recommends considering a development of a model project that could be used by multiple ministries and that would save staffing capacity for the development of projects. In case the final financial requirements of sponsors are rather low, the contractor recommends considering the implementation of a joint project for all the sponsors.

European Territorial Cooperation

Upon agreement with the contract owner, the analysis of mapping the expectations and needs of new beneficiaries covered also the Department of the European Territorial Cooperation of the Ministry of Regional Development of the CR.

The Department of the European Territorial Cooperation should become a beneficiary under the OPTA as the Managing Authority of OP Cross-border Cooperation CR – Poland, coordinator of other operational programmes of cross-border cooperation, national coordinator of the Interregional Cooperation Programme, Central Europe Programme and other networking programmes (i.e. programmes under the objective 2 European Territorial Cooperation).

Identified as the most important need of the Department as a new beneficiary under the OPTA was the need of support from OPTA for financing human resources, financial incentives in particular, beyond the scope of index-related salaries of civil servants, and also the education of employees (training courses). The representative of the Department reckons with a fairly low required expenditure since it will concern roughly 10-20 employees. Another cost item anticipated by the Department is the support for implementation of the monitoring system that requires specific modifications in order to meet the needs of the European Territorial Cooperation.

The analysis also indicated that the need of support for the Department of the European Territorial Cooperation, coordinating the OPTA activities under Objective 2, is justified and the Department should be added as an aid beneficiary under the OPTA. The contractor only recommends that the position and role of the Department of the European Territorial Cooperation in OPTA is clarified.

Mapping the expectations and needs of existing beneficiaries

Based on the carried out analysis, the needs and expectations of beneficiaries to ensure publicity and communication of EU funds in the CR were identified. The physical, procedural and financial aspects were subject to examination. The analysis resulted in recommendations to conduct an analysis and evaluation of functioning of internal communication in a close link to the process setting, and subsequently to propose measures and tools to improve the information flows. The contractor also recommends that the problems and specific needs of knowledge and competences are identified and subsequently that a long-term, consistent and first of all sustainable system of education of implementation structure employees responsible for EU Funds publicity is proposed and implemented. Another recommendation is to propose and implement a system of consistent evaluation of efficient use of technical assistance funds of the OP for publicity (strategic planning and evaluation mechanism).

Mapping the processes and procedures of OPTA administration

For the purpose of proposing an optimal organisational structure ensuring the implementation of OPTA, the author of the analysis works with a set of key processes (activities) that have to be implemented in order to ensure optimal performance of the implementation structure and to provide for all the functions within the operational programme management. The processes are divided based on the logical sequence and powers necessary for their implementation into two major groups: main processes and other processes.

Currently, the crucial part of main processes of OPTA 2007-2013 is delegated to the Intermediate Body. The process of financial management is done outside the structure of the Managing Authority section. In such an organisational set-up there is an inherent risk of several bottlenecks that can cause inefficiency of programme implementation and increase the likelihood of problems arising during the implementation.

Based on the identified bottlenecks in the existing implementation structure of OPTA 2007-2013 (stated in Chapter 3.3), the team of investigators proposed a modification of this structure for the period 2014 – 2020 and concentration of powers (especially with respect to main processes) under a single unit – the Department of the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance. A marked change is especially the future non-involvement of the Intermediate Body and the transfer of powers (in 2007 – 2013 period delegated to the IB) to the Managing Authority.

The new set-up is introduced in Chapter 3.3.1. The proposed structure enables efficient management (especially of main processes), their logical arrangement into several units that perform the undivided activities/processes. Thus, the individual activities are not overly fragmented and proper division of powers and responsibilities among individual units (separation of functions) is ensured. In

addition, when the selected alternative of IS design is used, a considerable decrease of negative impacts can be foreseen.

As a follow-up to the proposed implementation structure, the individual units were assigned processes that, in order to follow the logical sequence and consistency of operations, should be performed by a single unit with the view to ensure efficiency of their performance. The processes were divided into several groups and illustrated through charts in Chapter 3.3.2.

Moreover, the contractor also proposed to more specifically define the involvement of individual actors in the implementation of processes, namely through the responsibility assignment matrix (RASCI matrix), see Chapter **Chyba! Nenalezen zdroj odkazů.** – Responsibility assignment matrix.