

Thematic Evaluation of the EU Structural Funds - Evaluation of the implementation the activities of the Single Programming Document (hereinafter referred to as SPD) Objective 1 Programme 2004-2006 Latvia

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SYMMARY

Following the results of the open tender (ID FM 2005/ERAF-5.2.3.-2), the Contracting Authority, the Ministry of Finance, concluded a Service Contract with COWI A/S (Denmark) on implementation of EU Structural Funds Thematic Evaluation which included elaboration of three evaluation reports:

- Report No.1 "Evaluation of the Monitoring Indicators System of the EU Structural Funds"
- Report No.2 "Evaluation of Implementation of the Single Programming Document's Activities": 1) activities being actively implemented (project applicants show high activity and interest); 2) activities, whose implementation are delayed (no calls for projects have been announced); 3) activities, in which project applicants show little interest;
- Report No.3 "Evaluation of Impact of the EU Structural Funds on Regional Development in Latvia".

Service was provided by a consortium of three consulting companies: COWI A/S (Denmark), "DEA Baltika, Ltd." and "PKC, Ltd." (Latvia).

This Final Report of the Report No.2 "Evaluation of Implementation of the Single Programming Document's Activities" contains the following information:

- Objectives and aims of the thematic evaluation,
- Reached results,
- Evaluation questions,
- Detailed description of the activities,
- Detailed time schedule,
- Conclusions and recommendations.

Main objective is to provide qualitative technical evaluation of the priorities, measures, and activities of the Single Programming Document in order to evaluate efficiency of their implementation in the time period between 01.05.2004 and 01.01.2006., as well as to elaborate conclusions and recommendations for improving efficiency of structural funds administration.

The reached result of the evaluation is an elaborated thematic evaluation report on the following theme: "Evaluation of Implementation of the Single Programming Document's Activities".

The analysis, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation have been directed to answer the following questions formulated in the terms of reference:

- *significance*: are the activities defined in the SPD and PC relevant and actual to the existing situation and identified problems described in the analytical part of the SPD;

- *effectiveness*: how successful have the activities of the measures been defined in the SPD and PC, why do project applicants show big interest in some activities, whereas very little interest – in others, aren't the conditions for project implementation and requirements for project applicants too favourable for some activities and/or too strong – for others;
- *efficiency*: how efficiently have the activities been enforced, what are obstructive and coefficient factors for enforcement of the activities, will it be possible to achieve the defined goals and desirable results in the most efficient way by applying the defined activities;
- *impact*: what impact will enforcement of the activities of the SPD have on planning regions and Latvia on the whole;
- *sustainability*:: will enforcement of the SPD and PC activities promote sustainable development of Latvia.

The evaluation was carried out between December 20, 2005 and May 26, 2006.

The main activities of the evaluation process have been the following:

- Evaluation planning and management;
- Elaboration of the evaluation methodology;
- Elaboration of the Inception Report;
- Collection and analysis of documents and statistics;
- Organisation of the interviews with the main stakeholders of the SF management and implementation and, selectively, with the final beneficiaries;
- Elaboration of the Evaluation Report;
- Elaboration of the Final Report.

The service providers concluded that the most positive aspects of evaluation process have been effective cooperation with the Ministry of Finance as well as with the 1st and 2nd level intermediary bodies and grant scheme administrators, professional and timely feedback on the results of the thematic evaluation reports from the direct beneficiary and opportunity to be involved in a challenging and interesting process in the SF evaluation in Latvia.

The factors, which impeded the evaluation process, are the following:

- Absence of a unified data base for monitoring the implementation of the financial performance of the Single Programming Document's Activities,
- Broadly defined Terms of Reference and evaluation criteria,
- Necessity to incorporate conceptual changes in the evaluation reports after submission of the 1st draft.

In order to improve the evaluation process for the European Union Structural Funds in the future, the service provider suggests the following:

- To define evaluation criteria that are practically applicable in terms of data availability and that results of the evaluation correspond to the actual phase of the programming period;

- Avoid requesting additional outputs to those defined in the Terms of References in the process of carrying out the service, as it jeopardises the evaluation process and affects the timeliness and quality of the defined outputs;
- Service provider and beneficiary agrees on the format of the evaluation report in the Inception phase, in order to avoid the conceptual reworking of the final draft of the report;
- To foresee following steps in the review and acceptance of the draft evaluation reports: (i) development and acceptance of the methodology, (ii) development, review and acceptance of the concept of the report, (iii) presentation and discussion of the interim results of the evaluation, (iv) development, review and commenting of the draft evaluation report, (v) development and submission of the final evaluation report.