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MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE

Operational Programme
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
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List of Abbreviations

ACIS - Authority for the Coordination of the Structural Instruments

CPA- Certifying and Paying Authority

CHUPIA- Central Harmonization Unit for Public Internal Audit

DTA- Directorate for Technical Assistance

ECU- Evaluation Central Unit

EDIS- Extended Decentralised Implementation System

ERDF- European Regional Development Fund

ESF- European Social Fund

GD- Government Decision

IB- Intermediate Body

IT&C- Information Technology and Communication

MA- Managing Authority

MERY- Ministry of Education, Research and Youth

MEF- Ministry of Economy and Finance

NAE- National Agency for Employment

NARMPP- National Authority for Regulating and Monitoring Public Procurement

NCC- National Coordination Committee for the process of preparation for the management of Structural Instruments

NDP- National Development Plan

NES- National Evaluation Strategy

NGO- non-governmental organization

NSRF- National Strategic Reference Framework

OP ACD- Operational Programme for Administrative Capacity Development

OLAF- European Anti-Fraud Office

OPTA- Operational Programme Technical Assistance

PIU- Phare Implementation Unit

ROP- Regional Operational Programme

SAP-Single Action Plan

SCF- Structural and Cohesion Funds

SME- Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

SMIS- Single Management Information System

SOP- Sectoral Operational Programme

SOP HRD – Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

SOPT – Sectoral Operational Programme Transport

TDCU- Training Development and Coordination Unit

Introduction

The Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OPTA) is aiming at ensuring that the implementation of the Structural Instruments¹ in Romania meets the principles and rules on partnership, programming, evaluation, communication, management, including financial management, monitoring and control on the basis of responsibilities shared between the Member States and the Commission, in compliance with the provisions laid down in the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, hereinafter referred to as General Regulation. Since it addresses needs identified for the whole system of management and implementation of Structural Instruments, sometimes common for a range of actors, the programme is by its nature horizontal.

The other Operational Programmes (OPs) can benefit from the OPTA for implementing operations useful for stakeholders of two or more OPs. At the same time, the OPTA gives enhanced support for the coordination process and the financial control and audit system.

Together with the other OPs, the OPTA will substantially contribute to the achievement of the thematic priority established in the National Strategic Reference Framework, namely “*Building Effective Administrative Capacity*”.

The OPTA strategy takes into account the commitments undertaken by the Romanian Government through the Complementary Position Paper on Chapter 21 “Regional policy and coordination of Structural Instruments” and the developments in the implementation of the *Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania (pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments)*, adopted by the Government in 2005 with the subsequent amendments. The OPTA builds upon the pre-accession projects aiming at enhancing the administrative capacity for EU funds management.

The global objective of the Operational Programme for Technical Assistance is to ensure support for the coordination and to contribute to sound, effective, efficient and transparent implementation and absorption of the Structural Instruments in Romania.

The specific objectives of OPTA are:

- 1. Ensuring support and appropriate tools for an efficient and effective Structural Instruments coordination and implementation during the 2007-2013 period and preparation of the future Structural Instruments programming period.*
- 2. Ensuring coordinated delivery of general messages related to Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund at national level and implementation of ACIS's action plan for communication in line with the National Communication Strategy for Structural Instruments.*

¹ Structural Instruments refer to: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund.

All these objectives will reflect in the overall absorption and effective use of the Structural Instruments interventions.

To achieve the set objectives, the OPTA has to ensure support for the coordination and the implementation of the Structural Instruments in Romania, to ensure a reliable management and monitoring system for these instruments and to ensure appropriate communication to the public about the financing opportunities and interventions benefiting of EU support. Hence the following Priority Axes have been identified:

Priority Axis 1 - Support to the implementation of Structural Instruments and coordination of programmes

Priority Axis 2 - Further development and support for the functioning of the Single Management Information System

Priority Axis 3 - Dissemination of information and promotion of Structural Instruments

The OPTA is one of the seven operational programmes under the “Convergence” Objective for the EU programming period of 2007-2013. It was prepared by the Ministry of Economy and Finance in agreement with other Ministries acting as Managing Authorities for the other OPs, as well as other relevant institutions. The suggested objectives, Priority Axes and key areas of intervention are horizontal, and were split between OPTA and the remaining OPs on the basis of the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity and logical coherence, with due concern for the guidelines underlying the Structural Instruments implementation system.

The technical assistance Priority Axes within the other OPs will provide specific assistance for project preparation, monitoring, evaluation and control, as well as for communication activities ensuring appropriate publicity, only with regard to specificity of each OP. This specific assistance is to be complemented with horizontal assistance tools addressing the common needs of all structures and actors involved in the management and implementation of the Structural Instruments, with the development of an effective Single Management Information System able to provide transparent information on fund absorptions, with horizontal activities aiming at general public awareness on the role of the Community support and a general understanding of the interventions of Structural Instruments. These three general areas of intervention require the preparation and implementation of a horizontal operational programme for technical assistance.

The implementation of the programme is the responsibility of the Managing Authority of OPTA, namely the Directorate for Technical Assistance within the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

It is expected that about 75% of the total technical assistance for structural policy tasks financed from the Structural and Cohesion Funds under the Convergence Objective will be allocated to TA Priority Axes within the OPs. The remaining balance of technical assistance funds will be spent on implementing interventions within OPTA.

The Priority Axes and interventions under OPTA will be entirely co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The OP’s total budget envisaged for the period 2007-2013 is approximately 212.8 mil. Euro, out of which 170.24 mil. Euro is envisaged as Community support (80%) and around 42.56 mil. Euro (20%) will come from public sources.

The OPTA was developed in line with the General Regulation. The areas to be supported through OPTA comply with the provisions laid down in this Regulation.

The Ex-ante Evaluation of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance

The *ex-ante* evaluation of OPTA was performed by an independent external evaluator, between August and January 2006, under the project Phare 2004/016-772.04.03.01.06 “Ex-ante evaluation”. The purpose of the ex-ante evaluation was to optimise the allocation of resources and to improve the quality of programming.

Two complete drafts of the programme were evaluated (April and November 2006 versions), on the basis of which the evaluator formulated conclusions and recommendations presented within two draft reports, for which two debriefing meetings were organized: on the 11th of October 2006 (discussing the analysis of the current situation, the SWOT analysis and the strategy as they were formulated in the April 2006 version of the OPTA) and on the 6th of November 2006 (discussing the external coherency, expected results and impacts and the implementation system).

The feed-back sessions have been organized, both with the participation of the staff of the OPTA Managing Authority and the members of the Technical Assistance Working Group (WG), made up by officials of MA’s for the sectoral and regional OPs, responsible for the TA Priority Axes within the specific OPs.

All the issues under debate were clarified during these two meetings and other bilateral meetings that took place between the evaluator and the representatives of the OP Managing Authority. Most of the ex-ante recommendations have already been taken into account in the current version of the OP and only a few have been retained by the evaluator in the final ex-ante evaluation report, based on the clarifications and underpinned explanations provided by the OP MA.

The ex-ante evaluation addressed the following main questions:

- *Relevance*: to what extent are the programme's objectives relevant in relation to the evolving needs and priorities at national and EU level?
- *Effectiveness*: how realistic is the programme in achieving its specific and global objectives by 2013 or earlier?
- *Efficiency*: how well are the resources (inputs) allocated with respect to outputs or results?
- *Consistence and Coherence*: are the proposed objectives and measures logically linked to the socio-economic analysis, are they mutually consistent (consistence) and are they well embedded in the regional, national and Community (e.g. Lisbon Objectives) policy objectives and interventions (Coherence)?
- *Utility*: are the expected and unexpected effects realistic and globally satisfactory in the context of wider social, environmental and economic needs?
- *Sustainability*: will the effects obtained in the proposed programmes remain, even after the end of the programme without further public funding?
- *Management and monitoring arrangements*: how they may affect the achievement of programme objectives & contribute the chosen processes to positive results?

The main conclusions of the ex-ante evaluation are the following:

- Concerning the relevance of the programme, the analysis and concept of OPTA cover the most important challenges Romania faces in relation to the coordination of the management

of the Structural Instruments, an essential element to improve the absorption capacity. Also, in a wider socio-economic context, the utility of the programme is justified by the clear need to move towards a more coordinated delivery of the programmes. Although lack of available data in certain areas slightly affects clarity of the analysis, the main issues are identified correctly and the analysis sufficiently supports the global objective of the programme;

- The proposed objectives and measures are logically linked to the situation analysis and their contribution to the global objective is clear, too. Minor amendments are proposed by evaluator to improve fit of strategy with situation in Romania, related to the proposed indicative operations;
- The strategy is coherent with the relevant national and EU legislation and policies. Its complementary nature with the TA Priority Axes in the other OPs implies an important risk of overlap that can be efficiently managed by intense coordination in the implementation phase;
- Expected results are sufficiently quantified and targets can realistically be achieved in the current programming period. Real impact depends largely on how strongly the activities of the programme can be coordinated with the TA Priority Axes of other OPs, how this coordination will be able to help MA for OPTA to provide timely and relevant assistance to the other entities of the management and implementation system and, finally, to the extent flexibility can be maintained, enabling the MA to solve upcoming systemic problems during the implementation;
- Most of the activities of OPTA contribute to the development of institutional or IT systems. The probability of lasting operation and further development of these systems (their “sustainability”) is high, given the general strong commitment of the Romanian government to increase effectiveness of public administration;
- Implementation mechanisms are simple, number and quality of staff of the MA are sufficient. Effective implementation largely depends on the efficiency of the operational coordination at Working Group level (Steering Committee proposed by evaluator). At Monitoring Committee level the extension of the partnership with stakeholders interested in increased absorption is proposed;
- As a general conclusion, the programme is regarded of sufficient quality and well prepared.

There are three main recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation report:

1. One relates to the need of strong coordination of the OPTA with TA Priority Axes of the other OPs in order to avoid loss of the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the programme. The recommendation has been considered and the Steering Committee to be organized based on the TA Working Group will be responsible for ensuring the coordination between the OPTA and the TA Priority Axes in the other OPs.

2. The second main recommendation is to improve the effectiveness of implementation by extending the partnership of the Monitoring Committee with stakeholders interested in increasing the funds absorption. The recommendation was taken into account and the composition of the Monitoring Committee has been established following the partnership principle, as described in sub-chapter 5.2.1 “Monitoring”.

3. The third recommendation is to merge Priority Axes 1 and 2 given the uncertainty of the financial allocations for these axes. While the Managing Authority has taken into account the first two recommendations, for the third one it decided to give priority to transparency principle and keep the approach of having two separate Priority Axes. SMIS is the main instrument for the management of Structural Instruments and it is to be financed exclusively out of OPTA; merging

the priorities will also unbalance the structure of the OP and impose difficulties in the management of such a large Priority Axis.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Given the nature of the technical assistance interventions, focussing on immaterial operations related to strengthening the capacity of absorption and effective use of the Structural Instruments interventions, this Operational Programme does not set the framework for operations likely to have significant environmental effects, such as infrastructure projects, especially the ones listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC as amended by Directive 97/11/EC and 2003/35/EC.

Consequently, the Managing Authority considered - and the Environmental Authority agreed - that there was no need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment of this OP under the Directive 2001/42/EC.

1. Analysis of the current situation

1.1. The institutional system for implementing EU assistance in Romania

Pre-accession assistance

Romania has benefited of 5.5 billion euro through Phare and ISPA pre-accession programmes since 1991 and in this sense has acquired an important experience in coordinating and implementing such programmes. The system for managing Phare and ISPA has been developed gradually and during the period 2005-2006 it passed through an important phase: the process of EDIS accreditation.

The initial gap assessment (phase I of the preparation for EDIS process) was performed in 2002, assessing the capacity of the National Fund and the implementing agencies to implement Phare and ISPA programmes and their stage of preparation for moving to EDIS. During 2004, an update of the initial gap assessment was done.

The gap plugging stage (phase II of the preparation for EDIS process) has been initiated in September 2002 by the National Fund and the Implementing Agencies for Phare and ISPA, and ended in 2005. The Compliance Assessment (phase III of the preparation for EDIS) has been carried out in 2005 and the compliance assessment report concluded that the pre-conditions for formal application for EDIS are fulfilled.

The main elements that needed to be addressed in order to improve the management and control systems with a view to moving to EDIS regarded: the definition of EDIS responsibilities, improvement of the manuals of procedures, ensuring of the supervision function, the verification of the eligibility of the expenditures, the irregularities, the co-financing, the forecast of cash flow, the ex-ante evaluation units, the finalization of data security policy etc. These recommendations were fulfilled and all three preparatory phases for EDIS (gap assessment, gap plugging and compliance assessment) were successfully finalised before the end of 2005.

As a consequence, the Romanian authorities sent the official request for EDIS accreditation to the European Commission in December 2005 (4th phase for EDIS). The positive decision regarding EDIS accreditation for ISPA was issued by end of June 2006 and the one for Phare in December 2006.

The management and implementation of programmes financed by Phare, ISPA and national funds contributed to acquiring useful experience for the future management of the Structural Instruments. Implementation capacities were strengthened at national, regional and local level and the monitoring skills were developed at all levels.

Moreover, the experience of EDIS preparation with emphasis on setting up an adequate mechanism of supervision of delegated tasks from the Implementing Agencies towards Implementing Authorities brought an important input for establishing a proper financial control mechanism and a sound management of Structural Instruments. The preparation for EDIS gave the institutions involved in Phare and ISPA programme management a basis for evaluating the gaps, by indicating the areas where improvements are needed, including the estimation of the necessary resources to adequately perform their future tasks.

Some experience was accumulated also on the side of beneficiaries, in terms of identifying non-reimbursable financing sources and designing projects, increasing the level of awareness about the

availability and scope of Community funding and contributing thus to the overall social and economic development. These positive aspects could be noticed in the implementation of both Phare and ISPA funded programmes.

However, progress in these areas is still needed and the degree of awareness and knowledge among beneficiaries about the opportunities of Community funding is still low. Moreover, only four entities (MA for ROP, MA for SOP Transport, MA for SOP HRD and the Certifying and Paying Authority) have been directly assessed against EDIS and had a first hand contact with EDIS accreditation process. ACIS was also involved in the EDIS process, but only in its National Aid Coordinator² capacity (coordination of Phare programming, monitoring and evaluation). All other MAs have been indirectly concerned with EDIS as Implementing Authorities and most of the IBs have acted as Implementing Authorities or Beneficiaries, a fact that reflected in differences with regard to the preparedness for implementing Structural Instruments. Such differences within the institutional system may impact on the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the system and will need to be tackled also in the implementation phase of the OPs.

Post-accession assistance

The framework for the management and implementation of Structural Instruments in Romania was created by the Government Decision No. 497/2004 with subsequent amendments and supplements³, which assigned responsibilities to the institutions and organizations involved in the coordination, implementation and management of the EU funds with a view to set up and to ensure the functioning of an appropriate institutional framework for Structural Instruments.

This GD was based on the provisions in the Chapter 21 Position Paper - “Regional policy and coordination of Structural Instruments”, but the amendments introduced in January 2006 brought it closer in line with the framework for the new Cohesion Policy reflected in the EU regulations for the 2007-2013 period. A new GD is under preparation that makes the necessary adjustments for full compliance with the provisions of the new EU regulations adopted during 2006 and outlines the following institutional system:

Operational Programme Management Bodies 2007-2013

Operational Programme	Managing Authority	Intermediate Body	Fund
SOP Increase of economic competitiveness	Ministry of Economy and Finance	- Ministry for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Trade, Tourism and Liberal Professions - Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (National Authority for Scientific Research) - Ministry of Communication and Information Technology - Ministry of Economy and Finance (Energy Department)	ERDF
SOP Transport	Ministry of Transport	-	ERDF + CF

² NAC structure fulfils the role of coordinating at national level PHARE funded programmes

³ GD No.1179/2004, GD No.2001/2004, GD No.128/2006.

Operational Programme	Managing Authority	Intermediate Body	Fund
SOP Environment	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	8 Regional IBs coordinated by MESD	ERDF + CF
Regional Operational Programme	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing	- Regional Development Agencies - Ministry for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Trade, Tourism and Liberal Professions	ERDF
SOP Human Resources Development	Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities	- National Employment Agency - 8 regional IBs coordinated by the MoLFEO - Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (Department of Education) - National Center for Development of TVET	ESF
OP Administrative Capacity Development	Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform	-	ESF
OP Technical Assistance	Ministry of Economy and Finance	-	ERDF
<i>European Territorial Cooperation Objective</i>			
OP Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) Hungary–Romania	National Development Agency (Hungary)	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing in Romania will act as National Authority	ERDF
OP CBC Romania–Bulgaria	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing	-	ERDF
OP CBC Romania – Serbia	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing	-	ERDF (transfers to IPA)
OP CBC Romania – Ukraine - Moldova	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing	-	ERDF (transfers to ENPI)
OP CBC Hungary - Slovakia – Romania – Ukraine	National Development Agency (Hungary)	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing in Romania will act as National Authority	ERDF (transfers to ENPI)
OP CBC Black Sea Basin	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing	-	ERDF (transfers to ENPI)
OP South-East European Space	Ministry of Local Government and Spatial Development (Hungary)	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing in Romania will act as National Authority and National Contact Point	ERDF
OPs for Inter-regional Cooperation : ▪ INTERREG IV C ▪ URBACT II ▪ ESPON 2013 ▪ INTERRACT II	France France Luxembourg Austria	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing in Romania will act as National Authority and National Contact Point	ERDF

The Ministry of Economy and Finance will fulfil the role of Certifying Authority for all OPs, responsible for drawing up and submitting to the Commission certified statements of expenditure and payment applications in line with the provisions of Article 61 of the General Regulation. The

Ministry will also be responsible for receiving the Structural Instruments from the European Commission and transferring the respective amounts to the beneficiaries for SOP Transport and SOP Environment and MAs paying units for the other OPs.

The Romanian Parliament approved the organisation and functioning of an independent Audit Authority, as an associated body of the Romanian Court of Accounts (Law 200/2005), in order to perform the functions according to Article 62 of the General Regulation.

All structures involved in the management of Structural Instruments are beneficiaries of assistance through pre-accession programmes with a view to programming, internal organization and procedure, training of staff, building project pipelines, purchasing equipments and functioning of the Single Management Information System.

A Phare Sectoral Interim Evaluation on Economic and Social Cohesion was performed during April-June 2006 and the following conclusions have been highlighted as concerns the projects aimed at *Preparation for structural funds*:

- Significant support is planned under Phare 2004-2006 with a view to strengthening Structural Instruments implementation capacity. At the time of evaluation only three projects had started (2 other projects have been financed outside ESC). For the rest of projects planned, preparations are well advanced.
- In general, the support that is being and will be provided under *2004 Structural Funds* is highly relevant, given its focus on the support for capacity development of the line ministries in designing and implementing Structural Instruments programmes.
- The first impacts of Phare support for the future regional Intermediary Body structures for European Social Fund support⁴ can be observed. Twinning support to the Regional Development Agencies is likely to achieve the highest global impact, by enhancing these institutions' understanding of their inter-sectoral role, based on the experience of their Member State partners.
- The support provided for capacity development in Ministry of Labour with a view to EDIS accreditation will definitely have immediate impact. Although *Ministry of Labour TA* has not been able, because of the limitations of its scope, to impact on the implementation capacity of the SOP HRD directly, its contributions to the regional consortia and in developing social partnerships will secure valuable intermediate impacts.
- The twinning support is producing significant outputs particularly in supporting the *Preparation for Structural Funds*. The *Twinning Support to the ROP* has the potential to exert a strong positive immediate and intermediate impact.
- The Twinning for MEF fulfils a critical role in providing the needed support for coordination of the preparations for the Structural Instruments in Romania. The project has been relatively successful so far – with useful input from Hungary and Poland sometimes at very senior level.
- Similarly, the *TA to Ministry of Transport* will clearly have a strong positive impact on the future success of the SOPT.
- Most of the MAs are making very good progress in achieving their staff levels required. However, due to the large influx of new people, there are relatively large imbalances in knowledge and

⁴ Note: the report refers to the regional IBs coordinated by MoLSSF for SOP HRD.

skills among MAs staff, which need to be addressed with urgency. The situation is less advanced at the level of Intermediate Bodies.

- Significant progress has been registered as regards Structural Instruments monitoring and evaluation; however the Single Management Information System (SMIS) needs to be finalized and expanded to all relevant bodies before accession.

However, the support for these structures has to continue during the early membership with a view to testing their organizations and running the programmes they prepared for.

1.2. Efforts to strengthen administrative capacity for the management of EU funds

The Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania (pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments)

The Government of Romania has started to plan the development of administrative capacity with a view to ensuring a good management of EU funds ever since 2002 when a „*Strategic Plan of Actions aiming at improving the administrative and management systems for the operation of the non-reimbursable funds granted to Romania by the European Union*” was elaborated as a conditionality for Phare 2001.

At the end of 2004, Romania has closed the negotiations on Chapter 21 “Regional Policy and the Co-ordination of Structural Instruments”, establishing the roadmap for the development of the system for the Structural Instruments management.

In July 2005, the Government adopted the *Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania (pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments)* having as purpose to improve the Romanian administration capacity to manage in an effective and efficient way and to absorb the increased flow of funds coming from the European Union during the period 2005-2006 and after Romania’s accession to the EU. The plan aimed to achieve a synergy between the preparations for the future Structural Instruments and the current and future implementation system for Phare and ISPA funds in Romania. It represented as well the insertion in a single document of the experiences and recommendations made by national and European Commission’s experts with a view to improving the functionality of the current and future systems mentioned above.

The Single Action Plan included the following specific objectives:

1. Achieving an appropriate employment level in the public administration managing and implementing programmes and projects co-financed from the EU pre-accession and Structural Instruments;
2. Accomplishing an adequate level of preparation of the administration personnel dealing with the management and implementation of programmes and projects co-financed from the EU funds, for fulfilling the envisaged tasks in an appropriate manner;
3. The establishment of appropriate organizational units within the structure of relevant ministries and offices for managing programmes and projects co-financed out of EU Structural Instruments;
4. Elaborating written procedures with a view to enabling the full management of pre-accession funds under decentralized system;

5. Elaborating procedures with a view to enabling the full application of the general principles of the Structural Instruments;
6. Establishing the National Evaluation System;
7. Creating and improving a management information system;
8. Preparing a sufficient number of projects in order to be implemented under Structural Instruments.

The Single Action Plan was elaborated by the Ministry of Economy and Finance with the support of all institutions involved in the management of EU funds. The National Coordination Committee (NCC) for the process of preparation for the management of Structural Instruments (established through the GD No.1200/2004) was designated to ensure the coordination and monitoring of the actions provided in the Single Action Plan.

The first official reporting on SAP approved by NCC was done at the end of 2005 and its conclusions highlighted considerable progress in achieving the proposed objectives. The 2005 monitoring exercises suggested that there was a need to develop a constructive, interactive approach to monitor the development of administrative capacity. The second report on the implementation of the SAP was issued at the end of 2006, when the SAP was also updated with a view to the future period.

The 2006 SAP Implementation Report was presented in the Joint Monitoring Committee in December 2006 and it revealed significant progress in terms of staff levels, internal organisation in all structures based on adequate separation of functions, elaboration of internal procedures, training delivery, evaluation, SMIS and preparation of project pipeline.

Most of the actions foreseen in the SAP have a short time horizon, and it is clear that even after their implementation, steps are still needed in order to strengthen the administrative capacity for the management of Structural Instruments. There is a need that the TA resources programming and their actual implementation will take into account of the developments in the implementation of the SAP and include activities aiming at further improving the performance in the areas identified for the period 2007-2013.

Other initiatives complementary to the Single Action Plan

Given the importance of ensuring all the necessary elements to support the attainment of a good absorption rate of the Structural Instruments, a Working Group was established at the initiative of the Prime Minister, involving all the responsible structures for the management of the Structural Instruments and including also the civil society, the academic environment, universities, research institutes, mass-media and social partners. This Working Group has elaborated an Action Plan for increase of the absorption capacity approved by the Government on the 16th of August 2006.

The Action Plan envisaged four major fields of intervention: implementing structures for Structural Instruments, human resources for these structures, instruments and systems (banking system, mass-media, information and promoting actions etc.) and financing issues (pre-financing, co-financing etc.). ACIS was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the envisaged measures.

The Action Plan implied the involvement of the highest political echelon and develops a synergy of efforts at national level needed in order to increase the absorption capacity of Romania and allow it to fully benefit from the financial support of the European Union.

1.3. Coordination of Structural Instruments and system of financial management and control

For the 2007-2013 programming period, Romania has put in place a strong national coordination system for the Structural Instruments, in which the Authority for the Co-ordination of the Structural Instruments (ACIS) will play an important role of central coordination unit.

The structure of the ACIS for the 2007-2013 programming period is envisaged as follows:

- Directorate for Analysis and Programming
- Monitoring Directorate
- Directorate for Technical Assistance (who will act as the Managing Authority for OPTA)
- System Coordination Directorate
- Evaluation Central Unit

The main tasks envisaged for the ACIS are focusing in areas such as:

- Elaboration of the National Strategic Reference Framework;
- Coordination of the programming process;
- Elaboration and revision of the legal framework necessary for the management of Structural Instruments;
- Coordination of the institutional set up for the management of Structural Instruments;
- Coordination of the procedural framework for the Structural Instruments;
- Coordination of administrative capacity development in all structures involved in the Structural Instruments management;
- Coordination of Structural Instruments implementation, monitoring, and reporting;
- Development and coordination of the information system for the management of Structural Instruments (SMIS);
- Member State Liaison Authority for SFC 2007;
- Coordination of the evaluation.

In order to strengthen the coordination of Structural Instruments, the Romanian Government decided to create a National Coordination Committee for the process of preparation for the management of Structural Instruments. The NCC was established in 2004, according to the GD no. 1200/2004. It is envisaged that the NCC will have a similar role for the period 2007-2013 as the Community Support Framework Monitoring Committee, except for the management function. The main tasks of the NCC foreseen for the 2007-2013 programming period will be as follows:

- Monitoring the institutional, legislative and procedural framework needed for implementing the Structural Instruments;
- Deciding on the strategy and action plans for building and maintaining administrative capacity for the management of Structural Instruments;
- Monitoring overall progress and performance of NSRF and OPs implementation and taking decisions to improve performance as necessary;
- Coordinating the inter-institutional relations between the structures involved in the Structural Instruments management;
- Evaluating the process of functioning of the institutional, legislative and procedural framework for implementing the Structural Instruments;
- Reporting to the Government of Romania and proposing the priority actions to be taken for functioning of the institutional framework for the Structural Instruments.

A Management Coordination Committee was set up under the NCC. With exclusive membership at the level of official Heads of the OP Managing Authorities, of the Certifying and Paying Authority

and the Audit Authority and chaired by the Head of the ACIS, this Management Coordination Committee is the main engine room of coordination and common problem solving. Only those issues which cannot be resolved in the framework of this group would be referred up to the NCC for decision.

Operational working groups have been set up under the Management Coordination Committee as and when needed for issues requiring inter-institutional coordination. At present, there are 9 working groups established and meeting regularly, with responsibilities in the following areas:

- Implementation/Manuals
- Financial Management and Control
- SMIS
- Technical assistance
- Evaluation
- Information & Publicity
- Training
- State Aid
- Monitoring

Financial management and control system

The Certifying and Paying Authority is responsible for certifying Operational Programme expenditure to the European Commission and paying back any unused funds or sums wrongly paid out.

The Certifying and Paying Authority is responsible for:

- providing payment forecast information to the Commission;
- submitting Interim Payment Applications to the Commission;
- submitting the Final Application to the Commission;
- disbursing receipts from the Commission;
- monitoring achievement of n+3/n+2 targets;
- submitting fraud and irregularity returns;
- monitoring the recovery of money wrongly paid;
- applying financial corrections;
- conducting verification checks;
- submitting financial data electronically to the Commission.

The Audit Authority is an independent body without legal personality, which functions near the Romanian Court of Accounts. This organism is responsible for auditing European Union pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments after accession. The Authority is led by a president and a vice-president, elected from the court's councillors and named by the Parliament for a three years mandate.

The Audit Authority is responsible for:

- Carrying out the verification of the effective functioning of the management and control system;
- Performing sample checks of operations to verify declared expenditure;
- Presenting to the Commission an audit strategy;
- Issuing a report and an opinion regarding the compliance of the managing and control system with the Community regulations;
- Submitting to the Commission the annual control reports.

General Implementation Procedures

Based on the guidance implementation manual drafted under the coordination of ACIS, each MA has drafted detailed implementation procedures, according to the specificity of each Operational Programme.

The ACIS has elaborated a standard agreement for delegation of tasks setting out the basic provisions to ensure that the MA remains in charge and retains final responsibility for all the delegated implementation tasks. Based on this framework, in accordance with the specificities of their respective OP, MAs have negotiated with the IBs the tasks to be delegated.

In order to ensure a coordinated approach in terms of implementation, ACIS has developed standard formats and procedures as regards the application form, the financing agreement, and the claim form. Also, at the level of MEF, a coordinated approach was developed as regards eligibility rules, co-financing, pre-financing, payment flow, public procurement and ex-ante verification etc.

The list of eligible expenditures will be established by each MA based on the GD regarding the general eligibility rules applicable to the projects funded by Structural Instruments through OPs. This GD was elaborated by ACIS in partnership with all MAs, CPA and AA and it establishes the legal framework for the Romanian national rules for the eligibility of expenditures.

The Certifying and Paying Authority has elaborated, in cooperation with all the institutions involved in the management of structural instruments, a GD regarding the allocation procedure for Structural Instruments, prefinancing and cofinancing from the state budget allocated to the above mentioned institutions (for the Convergence objective).

During the last quarter of 2006 specific actions were taken in creating the appropriate monitoring mechanisms for Structural Instruments. Thus, a monitoring working group was set up by ACIS with all the managing authorities, addressing the issues regarding procedures for setting up the OP Monitoring Committees (MCs), membership and eligibility criteria for membership, terms of reference for MCs, as well as a proposal for a code of ethics for these partnership structures. Shadow monitoring committees were already held for several OPs, including the OP Technical Assistance.

1.4. The current status of preparations within the Managing Authority for OPTA

The Directorate for Technical Assistance (DTA) within the MEF plays the role of Managing Authority for OPTA. The DTA is currently playing the role of Programme Implementation Unit for Phare projects aiming at strengthening the administrative capacity for EU funds management.

The DTA unit has a good track record in implementing Phare projects (since 2000) and developed its internal working procedures with a view to passing to EDIS.

The projects carried out by DTA in the pre-accession period consisted of:

- training of staff in the management of EU funds for all structures involved in such activities (see also the description in section 1.5. *Human Resources and training*);
- technical assistance for programming, monitoring and evaluation;
- financing of technical assistance for the elaboration of different studies, strategies, fiches and tender dossiers, based on applications made by the line ministries;

- financing of projects aiming at strengthening the administrative capacity of various institutions, based on applications made by the line ministries;
- creation and development of the Single Management Information System.

The DTA also acts as Coordinating Implementing Authority for the projects included in Priority E of Phare Economic and Social Cohesion (Development of administrative capacities for Structural Funds management) thus ensuring coherence among projects implemented by different managing authorities with a view to programming, internal organization and procedure, training of staff, building project pipelines, purchasing equipments.

The Managing Authority for OPTA has also benefited of other Member States experience (France, Poland and Hungary) in relation to issues in the field of programming, coordination and implementation of OPTA.

1.5. Human Resources and training

The total number of staff currently employed in the structures expected to deal in the future with the management of EU Structural Instruments was around 1,500 at the end of November 2006. This represents more than 100% increase as compared to December 2005, which implies an adequate level of staff in the institutions involved in the management of Structural Instruments and also that a large number of newly employed persons will have to be coached and trained in the next period to enable them to perform their jobs.

In order to ensure stability of the staff and attractiveness of the jobs, the Romanian Parliament approved the Law 490/2004, which provides an increase of 50 to 100% of the salaries for the staff involved in managing EU pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments.

On 9 March 2005, the Government approved the Decision no.170 regarding the methodology for applying the Law 490/2004 and established a 75% increase of salaries. The process of endorsements for the institutions and staff involved in the management of Community funding according to the Law no. 490/2004 was established at the level of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and was carried out in full force; hence, by the end of September 2006, the entire system required for the management of the Community funds after 1st January 2007 was endorsed and the personnel involved in such activities benefits of the salary increase.

Training

Starting 2001, the DTA implemented training programmes dealing mainly with PCM, as well as training aimed at improving the programming and monitoring skills of the staff in the PIUs. Starting with Phare 2002, the training projects implemented by the ACIS included also general training for the management of Structural Instruments for the staff of the MAs and IBs. The Phare 2003 and 2004 training projects cover training in the field of Structural Instruments for both the staff at central level and at regional and local level.

Also, specific training projects and training activities within the institutional building projects are available for the other MAs, the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority and a large number of staff was trained during the pre-accession period.

There is a need to continue the training during the early membership period, with a main focus on various functions and issues connected to Structural Instruments management and implementation.

During 2004 and 2005, training projects included, besides the training delivery component, a component regarding the elaboration of a multi-annual mechanism to be applied in the next period, covering also the preparation for Structural Instruments. One of the key conclusions of the Mechanism was that a Training Development and Coordination Unit (TDCU) should be set up in the ACIS. It should act as the single authority in charge with the coordination of the entire training process. This unit was established during 2004 and operates within the services of the ACIS - Directorate for Technical Assistance.

Whilst the TDCU has worked mainly on managing horizontal training actions involving different institutions, the coordination of training managed by line Ministries has been more difficult. Based on the 2005 Training Mechanism outcomes, an operational Working Group on Training Coordination was set up. This Working Group comprises permanent members from the operational staff of the TDCU and the training units of the future Managing Authorities for Structural Instruments, as well as specialised institutions, namely the National Institute for Administration (NIA), School of Public Finance and the European Institute of Romania.

A first complete exercise to establish the training needs for the whole system of entities involved in the management and coordination of the Structural Instruments was carried out in the last quarter of 2005 by TDCU in close partnership with all authorities concerned and, following this, a first comprehensive training plan was produced at the beginning of 2006, including training organized through TDCU as well as training implemented through the MAs/Certifying and Paying Authority/Audit Authority and training provided by third parties in this regard. In July 2006 a new exercise began in order to establish the training needs and to draft the training plan for 2007. Both documents have been drafted till end of 2006.

The need is to maintain this approach during the next period, with annual and multi-annual common training plans, covering the *general training* to be provided through OPTA (basic training regarding the principles of Structural Instruments, project design, management and implementation, training on common functions such as financial management and control, audit, programming etc., as well as training for Structural Instruments coordinating structures) and the *specific training* for the needs of each OP to be provided through the respective OP (training regarding their internal procedures, training in OP management, project appraisal, selection and contracting, training of the members of Monitoring Committee, training for potential beneficiaries in areas connected to the design of projects for the respective OP and its areas of intervention, as well as training of the beneficiaries in connection to the OP procedures).

1.6. Evaluation

An Evaluation Central Unit (ECU) was set up in 2004 within ACIS. ECU is mainly responsible with establishing the National Evaluation System, as included in the SAP. In September 2006, this Unit took over the management function for Phare Interim Evaluation. In parallel, ECU exercises the role of coordination at national level of the Structural Instruments evaluation.

However, the ECU tasks go beyond the establishment of evaluation practice for EU funded programmes. In this respect, under a PHARE project, ECU has drafted a National Evaluation Strategy (NES) that is currently subject to an ex-ante evaluation exercise and it is expected that ECU will be the NES main driver. The overall objective of the NES is that there will be, by 2013, a functioning national evaluation system, the parts of which reinforce each other, encompassing the public and private sector and civil society, and contributing to the effective management of all public interventions regardless of their funding sources and to the accountability of policy makers

and public managers. There shall be recognition of the importance of evidence-based policy making.

It is envisaged that the implementation of NES be funded by a number of financing sources, as follows:

- PHARE programme, supporting those types of intervention aiming at evaluation awareness raising and developing the supply side of evaluation (for external evaluations). These types of interventions will end in 2008. PHARE covers also the costs for carrying out the PHARE Interim Evaluation by the time when PHARE Programme ends, namely 2010;
- Technical Assistance Priority Axes of the OPs funded by ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD and EFF covering the costs for carrying out evaluations at OPs levels;
- Administrative Capacity Development OP covering evaluation capacity development of public institutions outside the Structural Instruments;
- OPTA aiming at strengthening the evaluation function for Structural Instruments.

Concerning the coordination of the evaluation function of the Structural Instruments, an Evaluation Working Group has been established in February 2006 with the purpose to ensure an effective system for evaluation of structural type interventions. EWG is composed of the representatives of the MAs evaluation units, chaired by the head of ACIS or ECU's head and its secretariat is ensured by ECU's staff. By now, a number of accomplishments could be pointed out in the EWG activity, such as the adoption of the evaluation standards and of the model of evaluation of the OPs during their implementation, the drafting of the evaluation procedures manual, definition of internal rules for the evaluation units, job descriptions etc. Activities aimed at training the evaluation units' members in both evaluation management and evaluation techniques have also been undertaken.

An assessment of the existing Romanian evaluation culture carried out in the summer of 2006, reveals the following: in spite of the progress achieved so far, a clear understanding of the concepts related to evaluation, of its scope for application and its vocabulary is still missing. In addition, the evaluation is still not seen as an integral part of decision-making and management and of the entire process of democratic accountability. There is a strong need to move from the existing culture of control and reporting to a culture of evaluation by learning and analyzing. Moreover, given that the evaluation methodologies and practice are continuously evolving and the people in charge with evaluation must be aware of these developments and able to adapt to the change, there is a need for continuous training in this field.

1.7. Single Management Information System

According to the GD no 497/2004 the Ministry of Economy and Finance has the overall responsibility of ensuring the accomplishment and functioning of the information system for technical and financial management of the EU funds.

The activities for the SMIS setting-up have started in the first quarter of the year 2004, being gradually implemented and aiming at ensuring the functioning of SMIS. In this regard, the following SMIS implementing dimensions have been set up:

1. Defining the SMIS concept;
2. Developing the software applications;
3. The human resource development;
4. Developing the IT&C infrastructure;
5. Developing a website for public information.

Defining the SMIS concept

SMIS was defined as a single system having three separate and independent sub-systems: one for the Phare programme (Phare-SMIS), a second one for ISPA programme (ISPA-SMIS) and a third one for Structural Instruments (NSRF-SMIS). The SMIS main feature is that it provides its users with a single mechanism in order to support them in achieving their daily tasks.

The system helps multiple users divided in a number of user groups/ roles. In this way, the user permissions are more easily organized and managed and the access to information can be thoroughly audited and logged in a flexible way.

SMIS addresses the needs of all management levels (managing authorities, intermediate bodies, Certifying and Paying Authority, Audit Authority, beneficiaries, applicants) and of all the life-cycle stages of the programme (programming, tendering, contracting, implementing, auditing and control, monitoring and evaluation). Moreover, SMIS is built on an open architecture which maximizes further development possibilities, as well as the connections with the existing IT systems, databases and IT applications.

Development of the software application

The user's requirements analysis regarding the SMIS functionalities was finalized (in a first stage) throughout 10 sessions coordinated by the contracted consultants within the PHARE 2002 programme in an interactive cooperation with the core-users group, helping them to determine the information fields and the requested specifications for the system development. The analysis exercise has allowed the setting up of a common terminology to be used for describing the various attributes of the SMIS. The analysis for the NSRF module was based on previous experience in managing pre-accession instruments, experience of other Member States in developing such systems, as well as the requirements according to the provisions of the General Regulation for the period 2007-2013.

Three Oracle web software applications have been developed on the basis of the requirements analysis (one for Phare, one for ISPA and one for Structural Instruments). The core SMIS-NSRF is generally completed and only some small adjustments are still needed in order to better meet the requirements of the Regulation (EC) No. 1828/2006 (the Implementation Regulation), especially those regarding the categorization of interventions and the five dimensions. In this moment, SMIS is generally capable to fulfil all the relevant functions, namely the programmes' definition and management, projects' approval and modification, monitoring and evaluation, audit and funds flow management.

In the process of preparation for the further development of the software application, a **SMIS-NSRF Working Group** was set up in May 2006 by ACIS with representatives from all MAs, the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority. This Working Group is responsible for collecting, disseminating and pipelining the needs concerning the improvement of the system on one hand and for the upkeep of the integrity and uniformity of the procedures followed in the implementation of Structural Instruments measures.

The SMIS Working Group has met frequently since May 2006. Among the issues addressed during the WG meetings, the definition of the types of parameters and the financial reports (as the first group of reports that the system will provide) are to be mentioned. The members of the Working Group (SMIS coordinators) have been intensively trained during November and December 2006

under the 2nd contract (see below) and are now playing a key role in providing quality input for the development of SMIS.

A 2nd contract regarding the further development of the system was signed at the beginning of November 2006 and covers the following activities:

1. further development of SMIS

- parameterization and user rights;
- development of software application – new features (new requirements, adjustments of the sub-system with respect to the final EC regulations and directives, Cross Border Cooperation Regulations requirements, State Aid, terminology and procedures requirements);
- SFC2007 compliance;
- studies and technical specifications for further development;
- interface with Treasury IT system.

2. support to start-up phase of the Structural and Cohesion Funds module

- help desk support;
- expert training;
- data validation;
- training of 360 users for SMIS-NSRF.

This 2nd contract is the last contract to be financed under Phare for financing SMIS developments and improvement and is supposed to last until November 2007. The contract should also deliver the technical specifications for further development of SMIS with e-governmental functions. These developments will be financed under the OPTA.

Also under this contract, new developments are planned as regards the management functions. In addition, the implementation phase of Structural Instruments will bring new needs in terms of functionalities and reports, which should be addressed within OPTA.

Framework for SMIS functioning

In order to have a clear presentation, this section is structured below by activities as follows:

1) *The training* for the SMIS-NSRF sub-system use has initially been provided in April 2006 for approximately 50 people within ACIS, managing authorities and large intermediate bodies. Future trainings for approximately 360 users will be provided during 2007 under Phare 2004 contract.

2) *SMIS procedure manuals* are the main guidance for the SMIS user in its daily activity. These manuals establish the SMIS user-groups and their roles according to the system's windows and levels, explain the type of information which should be filled in the system and the source which provides that information and give orientation regarding the best moment for entering the information into the SMIS. The elaboration of the updated procedure manual for SMIS-NSRF is in progress.

3) *The SMIS central unit*

The SMIS Central Unit will be responsible for the management of SMIS and its digital network, specifically for SMIS implementation, management and maintenance, and support to the SMIS users. SMIS Central Unit will operate within the ACIS in the Ministry of Economy and Finance. It has currently a limited number of employees. Further contests to occupy the open positions will be

held in 2007. However, the SMIS operation, given the nature of the activity and the specialized knowledge needed will rely mostly on contractual staff. According to the experience of other MS, this staff will need to be paid from TA.

The SMIS Central Unit structure should mirror the basic functions of unit's competency:

- System management: strategy and policy introduction and implementation (parameters, access rights, security etc.);
- System operation (administration of system, databases and digital network, web page administration);
- User support (help desk, training);
- Unit management.

The Central Unit personnel will be dedicated to the following fields of responsibilities:

- **Training:** training new or existing users of SMIS;
- **System Administration** for any technical aspects regarding the operation and further development of SMIS and digital network;
- **Web site maintenance:** maintenance and further development of the SMIS web site and the publication of the systems results to the Internet;
- **Help Desk:** assisting SMIS users with the use of the system.

Besides the SMIS Central Unit described above, a SMIS co-ordinators network has been set up, in charge of assisting the system's users in the field. The implementation of this function is essential for the good functioning of the system. Indeed, given the extent of the foreseen system and the variety of stakeholders, it is necessary to delegate a certain number of responsibilities at the relevant level.

Among the SMIS Coordinators' tasks and responsibilities, the following can be mentioned:

- To act as an interface between OP MA and ACIS concerning SMIS issues;
- To collect and disseminate information from and within the institution they represent;
- To be the first line of help desk function;
- To be in-house trainers of users, including for the new employees.

This function involves a certain proximity to the users because it is necessary to have a mutual cooperation and trust climate between co-ordinators and the users' network. Co-ordinators must have the capacity to visit the departments whenever it is necessary in order to be as close as possible to the users.

Development of SMIS Infrastructure

As concerns the infrastructure needed for the operation of SMIS, the situation is the following:

- In November 2004, a supply contract of 1.07 Meuro was concluded for providing the SMIS basic infrastructure at the level of Ministry of Economy and Finance as a location where the information from all institutions involved in the administration of Structural Instruments will be centralised. This infrastructure provides confidentiality and reliability, minimum latency, integrity and guaranteed bandwidth for communication, as well as confidentiality, integrity, reliability and availability for information stored in the SMIS databases and business continuity solution.
- Phare 2005 programme provides approximately 4.5 Meuro for equipment to be purchased by the Managing Authorities for ROP, SOP Economic Competitiveness, SOP Transport, SOP

Environment and SOP HRD. The necessary equipment for the operation of SMIS (servers, routers, switch etc.) as well as equipment necessary for ACIS have been purchased under Phare 2002 supply contract and are installed at the ACIS headquarters.

Part of the IT equipment has been also procured under different Phare projects (for the Certifying and Paying Authority, for example), but it is difficult to assess the level of coverage with appropriate equipment for the operation of SMIS at the level of all future SMIS users. Therefore, an assessment of the needs shall be carried out to ensure a coherent programme of purchasing and upgrading of the IT equipment.

The SMIS success and its acceptance by the users mostly depend on the quality of the communication infrastructure. In this regard, a study was made in order to develop the SMIS communication infrastructure. The study reveals that there are several aspects which affect the infrastructure characteristics, such as: the system expansion, usability forecast, sizing parameters, workload estimations, technology changes and the market supply for internet connecting services. The tender dossier for the SMIS communication infrastructure to be financed out of Phare 2004 (1.34 m euro) was drawn up based on this survey. This infrastructure will be functional by the end of May 2007.

Development of a website for public information

In order to raise the public awareness regarding the programmes co-financed by the EU with updated information about the status of implementation and the progress registered, a website will be created, its source of information being a reduced copy of the main SMIS database which, for security and performance reasons, will be installed on a separate computer from the SMIS central servers. The SMIS website will be linked to the dedicated web page for Structural Instruments in Romania.

1.8. Publicity and Information

The objective of information and publicity actions, applied to all key areas of intervention under the OPs, according to Article 69 of the General Regulation is to provide information and to publicize co-financed programmes and operations to the European citizens, to the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, so that the role of the Community is highlighted and transparency of funding opportunities is ensured.

In order to ensure the **information and promotion** for the National Development Plan and the Structural Instruments, the Ministry of Economy and Finance created a *logo* for the NDP and the Structural Instruments and registered it as a trademark. This translates into an efficient means for both the internal promotion of the NDP and the Structural Instruments, as well as the external representation at the level of the EU of the national strategic planning and financial programming documents with regard to the management of the Structural Instruments. The logo is used both by MEF and MAs and IBs in promoting Structural Instruments.

The promotional leaflets are a communication tool that is efficiently used in order to inform about and promote the NDP 2007-2013. The MEF developed and published 5,000 promotional leaflets aimed at sending out key information with regard to the importance of the National Development Plan, its content and the process of drafting this document in partnership. The leaflets were distributed mainly through delivery to the County Councils, Prefectures and Regional Development Agencies, given the closeness of these to other potential beneficiaries, as well as during the national

and regional seminars organised by MEF for promoting the NDP and the Structural Instruments. Moreover, all county councils around the country received racks and posters in order to create within their headquarters an “information area on the National Development Plan and the Structural and Cohesion Funds.”

With Phare support, in 2005, the brochure “Structural Instruments and Development Opportunities for Romania” was prepared, published in 14,000 copies and distributed to the MAs, IBs, prefectures, county councils and Chamber of Commerce and Industry – national and county offices. An update of this brochure has been produced and published with financing from the national budget in 5,000 copies, at the end of 2006. Copies of this are used at seminars and information campaigns.

In July 2005, the Ministry of Economy and Finance through ACIS launched the information campaign “*The 2007-2013 National Development Plan and the Structural Instruments*”. The campaign aimed at disseminating information on the National Development Plan and its priorities as well as the requirements to be met for the management of the Structural Instruments in view of achieving the maximum absorption rate for the funds and the development of viable projects by potential beneficiaries of Structural Instruments. The campaign was implemented in the form of seminars held in the eight development regions of the country, with the involvement of the representatives of both the ACIS and the MAs for the OPs. Almost 1,000 relevant regional and local participants took part in the seminars: representatives of the local public institutions, NGOs, of the business environment, employees of research centres, as well as representatives of the local press. Personalized materials bearing the logo of the Structural Instruments and of the NDP were disseminated during the seminars (posters, folders, leaflets, pens, CDs).

Moreover, approximately 25 conferences, forums and seminars were organized by different economic and social partners, local or central authorities who invited the representatives of the ACIS to either make general presentations about the NDP and the Structural Instruments, or specific presentations on the relevance and impact of the funds on the specific fields of interest for the respective groups.

ACIS developed within the web page of the MEF a section dedicated to the EU funds (www.mfinante.ro/fonduriUE). The section includes general and specific information with regard to the institutional framework that will manage these funds, the current legislation in force in the field, the description of the European Union’s Structural Instruments, the process of developing the National Development Plan, the National Strategic Reference Framework, and the Operational Programmes. The specific section of the webpage dedicated to the National Development Plan was updated with information and the graphic elements were reviewed so that it may be identified with a suggestive image and it may be as attractive and as useful as possible for the users.

There is a strong need to continue the information campaigns and the communication actions both with regard to the general aspects concerning the Structural Instruments, as well as for specificities in implementation, project development. The actions will have to be complemented with the actions of the MAs for their areas of interventions and the focus needs to be changed to issues such as detailed information about opportunities, project development, appraisal, project management etc.

In order to assure the coordination of communication and publicity initiatives, an Information and Publicity Working Group has been established, coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Finance and composed of representatives responsible with communication within the MAs and IBs.

The working group had several meetings so far and aims at coordinating communication at central level with communication at sectoral and regional level.

A National Communication Strategy for Structural Instruments is currently under elaboration. Also the preparation of specific communication plans for each OP is ongoing. The coordination of the process of elaboration will be assured by the Information and Publicity Working Group.

During the pre-accession period, several social studies were completed by different organizations regarding the level of knowledge, attitude and expectations with regard to the non-reimbursable funds available to Romania from the EU.

As for the pre-accession funds, the Delegation of the European Commission commissioned in 2004 a study “What do the Romanians think about the EU funds and what is their perception on the EC Delegation in Romania”. The study revealed, among other things, that *the Romanians are convinced that the allocation of the European funds is linked to fraud and corruption. Their opinion is based on the information given by the mass media and on their own day-by-day personal experience linked to corruption. And the hunches insofar as fraud in the allocation of funds is caused by the fact that people do not trust the Romanian institutions involved, such as ministries, SAPARD Agencies, city halls, county councils, prefectures and RDAs.*

Another study in the field is the one done by IMAS institute entitled “How prepared are the Romanian institutions and companies to enter the EU.” One of its sections focuses on the perception on the Structural and Cohesion Funds. The level of knowledge on Structural Instruments is higher for the institutions; similarly, the percentage of EU funds accessed by such organisations is higher in comparison to the funds accessed by companies. It is interesting to note the fact that both the institutions and the companies place on the first place the *Internet* as a source of information on the Structural Instruments.

According to the data collected through a survey performed in August 2006 by the Gallup Organization for the Ministry of Economy and Finance, 83% of the urban population has no knowledge about the funds that will become available starting from 2007, although more than 60% are interested in the information concerning projects that could be co-financed by EU funds. The study also revealed the reduced level of information among private companies – only 20% know the programmes and institutions responsible for the management of EU funds. On average, approximately 85% of the persons/institutions questioned manifested their intention to access EU funds in the next 2 years. 64% of the population considers that EU funds are not distributed in a transparent way and more than half believe that there are frauds in managing and implementation of EU funds, especially for the funds managed by the public administration.

In conclusion, the level of knowledge on the post-accession funds is low and the general opinion is that it is difficult to access the EU funds due both to bureaucracy and the needed co-financing, but also to the suspicions on the corruption of the public institutions involved. The National Communication Strategy for Structural Instruments and the subsequent information actions need to take into account these issues and to include pro-active actions.

1.9. Absorption capacity

Eligibility for assistance from the EU Structural Instruments will not necessarily guarantee success for Romania on its own. The key to success will be Romania’s capacity to co-finance and absorb

the EU funds effectively, whilst observing all of the conditions set out in the regulations regarding the Structural Instruments.

Besides the administrative capacity of the MAs and IBs, it is of utmost importance to develop capacities at local level for developing and implementing projects financed out of the Structural Instruments. Whilst acknowledging the important progress made, the EC Country Monitoring Report (CMR) issued on 16th May 2006 notes that “*enhanced efforts are still required to address the following outstanding issues:[...], strengthen cooperation between national and regional levels and cross-sectoral coordination at regional level, continue project pipeline preparation and training for final beneficiaries [...]*”.

Along with building capacity for their own staff through training, the MAs included in their projects financed by Phare 2004-2006 training sessions for potential beneficiaries and applicants. The Ministry of Economy and Finance has also implemented a training programme in 2006, aiming at providing general knowledge of the Structural Instruments system, which focused on training the potential beneficiaries at local level, especially the local authorities that need to be aware of the responsibilities they will have as regards the Structural Instruments.

However, taking into consideration the low level of knowledge at local level about the Structural Instruments and the weak project management skills, there is a need to create a critical mass of persons at local level that will have the necessary skills for promoting and effectively managing the projects. It was estimated that at least 1,000 persons/year should be trained/informed about project preparation, project cycle management, financial management monitoring and reporting.

In the course of implementation of the Structural Instruments there will also be a need for discussion and exchange of views on the progress and the effectiveness of the absorption system and actions will be planned to this target. The suitable flow of information also draws attention to the level of preparation of the structures of the state administration and the transparency of the implementing procedures and control of the structural support.

1.10. Lessons learned from pre-accession assistance

Romania has been preparing for managing the structural instruments since 2004 using Pre-accession Funds, twinning, technical assistance and investments. However, the system set up for this purpose still needs support in the following years to ensure an effective absorption of the post-accession funds.

The experience of the Phare projects managed has contributed to the design of the OPTA as an instrument of support for the management and implementation system of Structural Instruments.

The Special Actions Facility support provided for the Romanian public administration has proved popular with line ministries and has been considered as a very useful tool for rapid plugging of gaps that emerge in the preparations for meeting accession commitments. Given the positive effects of such a programme, a similar *flexibility and efficiency* will be looked for as regards the support provided by the OP to the institutions designated in the framework of the structural instruments (MAs, IBs, CPA, AA, ACIS).

The project preparation facility ensured support for the line ministries to prepare Phare funded projects, but also policy papers and strategies, and has only to a limited extent developed the internal capacity for programme preparation. Therefore, the experience showed that it is of utmost

importance that OPTA include also training for the potential beneficiaries in the field of ***project design, management and implementation***.

Given the need for training in the management of EU funds noticed in the pre-accession period and the various training programmes implemented, in order to have a coordinated approach and to avoid overlap, MEF developed with Phare support the ***training coordination mechanism*** that will be further improved under OPTA.

A properly functioning IT system is essential to implementation of the Funds, but, as Phare projects management proved, it should be a system that will be used for ***making timely management decisions*** and not just a bureaucratic and reporting tool.

Given the results of the studies undertaken on the perception of Romanians regarding EU pre-accession funds, and the importance of ensuring a ***transparent use of the Structural Instruments***, it is obvious the need to focus on information actions in order to increase the level of public awareness regarding the EU Structural Instruments and to promote the opportunities created by these funds.

2. SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- set up of the Structural Instruments management system, build upon the experience in managing PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD programmes;
- the experience acquired during the process of EDIS accreditation for Phare and ISPA programmes;
- existence of coordination mechanisms, both at inter-ministerial and management level, benefiting from significant experience from Phare and ISPA;
- existence of the „*Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania (pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments)*” and of the “*Absorption*” Action Plan which are very useful instruments for targeting actions for enhancing the capacity for Structural Instruments implementation;
- the experience at the level of the Directorate for Technical Assistance within the MEF in implementing projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Romanian administration for the management of EU funds;
- existence of an appropriate level of staffing in the structures involved in the management of Structural Instruments, as a consequence of the negotiations on Chapter 21 and of the measures undertaken according to the Government’s Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania;
- 75% increase in the salaries of the staff assigned for EU fund management following the application of the Law No. 490/2004, creating good conditions for employing new staff and ensuring the stability of the staff;
- good level of knowledge and skills of part of the staff within the MAs and IBs due to the training projects financed through PHARE;
- existence of a coordination mechanism for the training in EU funds management, including methods for performing training needs assessment, developing training plans, programming, monitoring and evaluating training sessions;
- high level of relevance and appreciation of the training delivered by such training projects among MAs and IBs;
- analysis of user requirements for SMIS thoroughly done, taking into account the Member States experience and in close cooperation with the future users;
- Central Evaluation Unit created and benefiting from Phare projects for capacity building.

Weaknesses

- weak cooperation between the national and the regional level as well as the cross-sectoral cooperation at regional level;
- activities of the established working groups heavily relying on external experts input;
- weak and heterogeneous capacity for the management of the EU Structural Instruments, especially at regional and local level;
- lack of experience among most of the MAs and IBs in the area of financial management and control (they have been mainly involved in the technical implementation of the pre-accession funds);
- large deficit of knowledge in the practicalities of implementing the Structural Instruments;
- significant number of newly employed within the system for managing Structural Instruments, lacking experience and knowledge necessary for carrying out their jobs;

- SMIS current version developed mainly taking into account the pre-accession experience and the experience of other EU Member states, according to the 2000-2006 regulations, therefore subject to further adjustments and developments;
- small number of civil servants assigned for further development and maintenance of SMIS;
- the level of knowledge on the post-accession funds is low;
- few materials published concerning the Structural Instruments;
- updated information concerning progress made in the preparation of Structural Instruments implementation hard to find;
- insufficient access to the information on the specific procedures of implementing SCF.

Opportunities

- increased awareness and knowledge about the Structural Instruments;
- improved procedures at the level of the MAs and better skills of the personnel of the institutions involved in the management and implementation of Structural Instruments;
- opportunity to use the experience of the foreign experts and practitioners in implementation of the SCF's in the Member States;
- existence of national training institutes for civil servants which could build their capacity to deliver training in the area of Structural Instruments management;
- progressive development of the information society, and thus more effective reception of the information on the SCF's via internet and other media;
- incorporating in the SCF implementation process socio-economic partners in order to discuss and exchange experiences, views and opinions on the effective use of the EU funds;
- availability of media channels and public relation companies for the promotion, information and publishing the information on the Structural Instruments.

Threats

- high degree of complexity of the Structural Instruments implementation system;
- insufficient development of the local training market for management of Structural Instruments;
- staff turnover;
- insufficient increase of the awareness related to the usefulness of the evaluation process;
- insufficient expansion of the local capacity for conducting evaluation;
- low absorption;
- lack of public acceptance or low level of public awareness regarding Structural Instruments in Romania;
- public perception about EU funds as being incorrectly managed and the perception of fraud and corruption in the system;
- possible overlaps of OPTA with the other OPs during implementation, regardless of the quality of programming;
- decommitments of funds;
- infringements during the implementation.

3. Strategy

In order to ensure the use of Structural Instruments in the most efficient way, in compliance with the Community *acquis* and the relevant policies, each Member State has the obligation to monitor, evaluate and control Structural Instruments expenditure, as well as to inform about and publicise this financial assistance and its implementation system. To this aim, the OPTA will complement the TA Priority Axes within the SOPs and ROP and will act as a tool for the coordination of the Cohesion Policy thus ensuring general coherence and common approach.

The Operational Programme for Technical Assistance was prepared by the Ministry of Economy and Finance in agreement with other Ministries acting as MAs for the other OPs. The suggested objectives, Priority Axes and key areas of intervention are horizontal, and were split between the OPTA and the remaining OPs on the basis of the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity and logical coherence, with due consideration to the guidelines underlying the Structural Instruments implementation system.

The technical assistance Priority Axis within each OP will support the provision of specific assistance for project preparation, monitoring, evaluation and control, as well as for communication activities ensuring appropriate publicity, with regards to specificity of the respective OP. This specific assistance is to be complemented with horizontal assistance tools for the common needs of all structures and actors involved in the management and implementation of the Structural Instruments, developing an effective single management information system able to provide also transparent information on funds absorption, with activities aiming at general public awareness on the role of the Community support and an overview understanding of the interventions of Structural Instruments. These three general areas of intervention require the preparation and implementation of a horizontal operational programme for technical assistance.

The OPTA is aiming at ensuring that the implementation of the Structural Instruments in Romania meets the principles and rules on partnership, programming, evaluation, management, including financial management, monitoring and control on the basis of responsibilities shared between the Member States and the Commission, in compliance with the provisions laid down in the General Regulation. OPTA will also support the implementation of the priorities laid down in the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy.

The objective of the Technical Assistance Operational Programme (OPTA) at national level is to ensure support for the coordination and the implementation of the Structural Instruments in Romania, to ensure reliable managing and monitoring system for these instruments and to ensure a coordinated delivery of general messages related to Structural Instruments. All these objectives reflect in the overall absorption and effective use of the Structural Instruments interventions.

Together with the other OPs, the OPTA will substantially contribute to the achievement of the thematic priority established in the National Strategic Reference Framework, namely “*Building Effective Administrative Capacity*”.

The OPTA strategy is based on the current situation analysis as set out in Chapter 1 and summarized in the SWOT analysis.

The table below summarizes the link between the SWOT analysis and the needs underlying the objectives and Priority Axes structure of OPTA.

SWOT: Weaknesses	NEEDS
Significant number of newly employed within the system for managing Structural Instruments, lacking experience and knowledge necessary for carrying out their jobs	General Training and training on common functions across the Structural Instruments management system, share of experience, information
Lack of experience among most of the MAs and IBs in the area of financial management and control	Support to the implementation of Structural Instruments (financial management and control) and exchange of experience => coordination of different MAs
Large deficit of knowledge in the practicalities of implementing the Structural Instruments	Tools and information towards MAs, IBs and potential beneficiaries Timely identification of bottlenecks
Weak and heterogeneous capacity for the management of the EU Structural Instruments, especially at regional and local level	Coordination of different MAs, Training Tools and information towards MAs, IBs and potential beneficiaries
SMIS current version developed mainly taking into account the pre-accession experience and the experience of other EU Member States, therefore subject to further adjustments and developments;	Further development of SMIS
Small number of civil servants assigned for further development and maintenance of SMIS	Support for strengthening the central unit for SMIS in terms of staffing, as well as the coordinators network
Few materials published concerning the Structural Instruments	Dissemination of information towards potential beneficiaries
Insufficient access to the information on the specific procedures of implementing Structural Instruments	Dissemination of information towards potential beneficiaries
SWOT: Threats	Needs
High degree of complexity concerning the Structural Instruments implementation system	Support to coordination function, horizontal support to all institutions Development of standardized procedures
Insufficient development of the local training market for management of Structural Instruments	Preparation of highly qualified staff and of local trainers on management of Structural Instruments
Staff turnover	Employment of contractual staff for specific positions difficult to be filled in with civil servants
Insufficient expansion of the local capacity for conducting evaluation	Developing a common „culture of evaluation”
Insufficient increase of the awareness related to the usefulness of evaluation process	Support to coordination function and information and awareness on evaluation
Low absorption	Horizontal support to financial management, monitoring and control and technical support to SMIS as an absorption monitoring tool Training of potential beneficiaries Support to project promoters
Lack of public acceptance or low level of public awareness regarding Structural Instruments in Romania	Publicity and dissemination of information towards general public

SWOT: Threats	Needs
Possible overlaps of OPTA with the other OPs during implementation, regardless of the quality of programming	Support to coordination through support given to the work of the different working groups
Infringements during the implementation	Support for coherent guidelines and manuals, support to financial control and audit

According to the diagnostic and as reflected also in the SWOT analysis, the most important needs identified are the following:

- Need of coordination and networking;
- Need of training actors in all functions regarding the management of Structural Instruments;
- Need of further developing the management and monitoring system;
- Need of dissemination of information.

The OPTA will be set up as a specific tool at the national level aiming to address all of these needs. This programme will target with priority the EU funds managers but also projects managers and the general public, according to the identified needs.

The OPTA strategy takes into account the commitments undertaken by the Romanian Government through the Complementary Position Paper on Chapter 21 “Regional policy and coordination of Structural Instruments” and the developments in the implementation of the *Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania (pre-accession funds and Structural Instruments)*, adopted by the Government in 2005.

3.1. Objectives

The **global objective** of the Operational Programme for Technical Assistance is **to ensure support for the coordination and to contribute to sound, effective, efficient and transparent implementation and absorption of the Structural Instruments in Romania.**

The main objective of the Programme will be achieved by **two specific objectives**:

- 1. Ensuring support and appropriate tools for an efficient and effective Structural Instruments coordination and implementation during the 2007-2013 period and preparation of the future Structural Instruments programming period.*

As results also from the analysis, the assessment of the current situation points out the fact, that in the implementation of the specific requirements related to different stages and functions (related to the management and implementation of the Structural Instruments) potential difficulties might be encountered, especially taking into consideration the level of funding allocated to Romania and the fact that a significant number of the staff is either newly employed or has very limited experience in dealing with some of the attributions imposed by the Structural Instruments regulations.

These weaknesses will be addressed by OPTA through various types of guidance and training for the purposes of achieving an efficient management of Structural Instruments.

The present Operational Programme will ensure the tools and financial means for the needs of all actors involved in the management, implementation, monitoring, certifying, audit activities and evaluation of Structural Instruments. Moreover, it will aim to ensure a smooth management and implementation of Structural Instruments in Romania.

It is also essential to ensure that Structural Instruments support is used correctly and the outputs achieved will be of a permanent nature thus contributing to improvement of the conditions for growth and employment, of the quality of investment in physical and human capital, to the development of the innovation and knowledge-based society, to the protection and improvement of the environment as well as to the administrative efficiency within Romania. In this respect, OPTA role, given its first specific objective, is to ensure a smooth management and implementation of Structural Instruments in Romania.

As a common tool for all actors involved throughout the entire implementation and monitoring process of Structural Instruments, the Single Management Information System (SMIS) will be supported by the OPTA. The system will certainly need further development and maintenance, to cover the management and monitoring needs derived from the implementation of Structural Instruments.

Furthermore, the OPTA will allow a multiplication at national level of particular issues and practices. While the project pipeline development support is mainly the focus of the other OPs, OPTA will complement their efforts by ensuring networking and exchanges of information and best practices focused on this issue.

This specific objective will be achieved by implementation of the following Priority Axes:

- **Priority Axis 1** – Support to the implementation of Structural Instruments and coordination of programmes
- **Priority Axis 2** – Further development and support for the functioning of the Single Management Information System.

2. Ensuring coordinated delivery of general messages related to Structural Instruments at national level and implementation of ACIS's action plan for communication in line with the National Communication Strategy for Structural Instruments

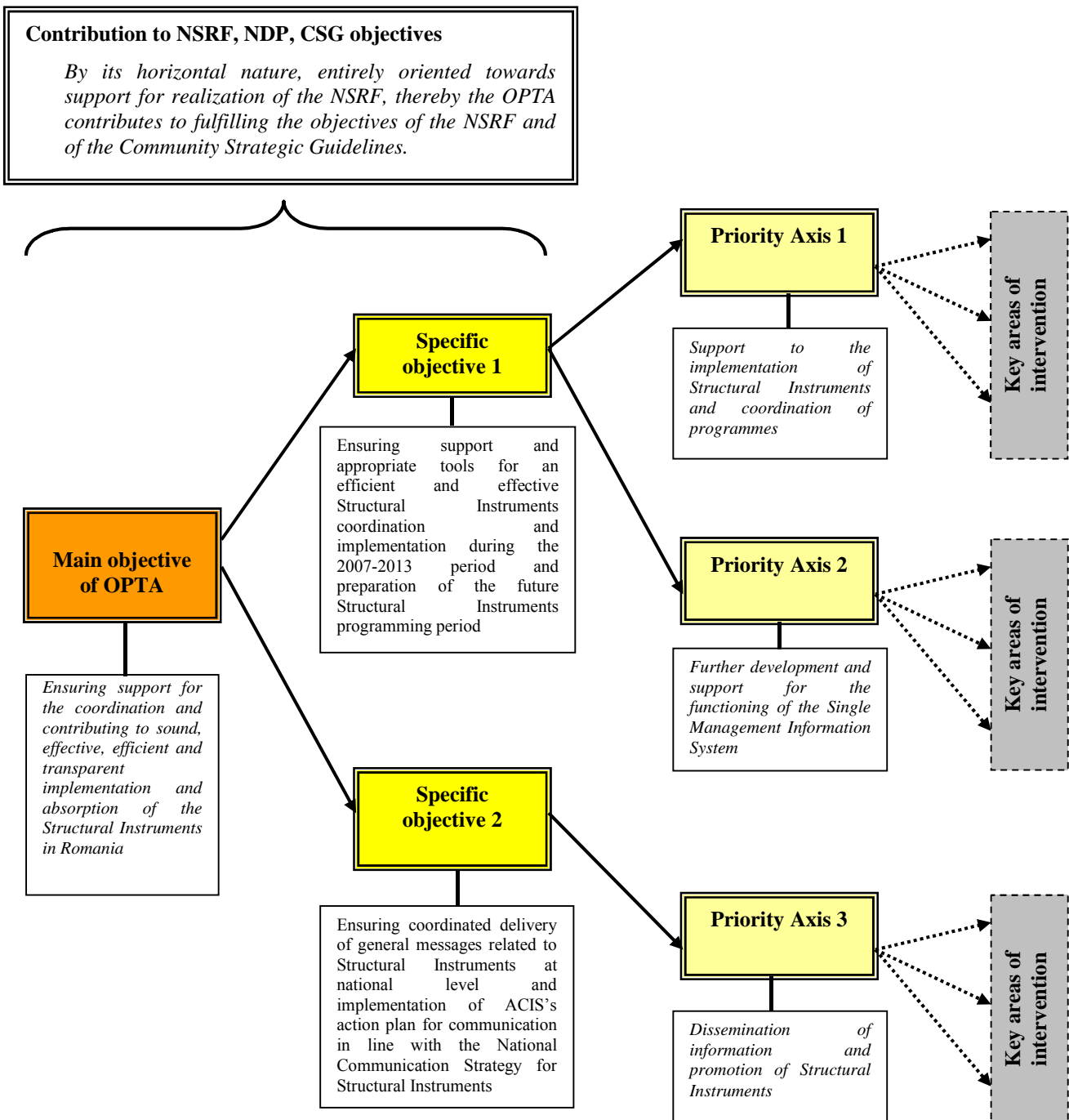
Ensuring a proper level of public awareness about the Structural Instruments as well as providing information on opportunities of EU support is crucial for assuring an adequate supply of high quality projects which are necessary to achieve full absorption of available funds.

All the measures under this specific objective are consistent with the EU requirements concerning information and publicity of Structural Instruments operations and are meant to reach an appropriate level of general knowledge on Structural Instruments and of the possibility of the EU financial support availability among potential beneficiaries.

The coordination of information and publicity measures regarding Structural Instruments is essential in order to ensure a coherent and balanced approach to information and communication. To this aim, the OPTA will seek to ensure a coordinated delivery of general messages related to Structural Instruments and will support the publicity and awareness activities according to the ACIS action plan, in line with the National Communication Strategy for Structural Instruments.

This second specific objective will be achieved through the implementation of the **Priority Axis 3** – Dissemination of information and promotion of Structural Instruments.

The suggested objectives' system structure is presented below:



- *All of the activities planned below will be organised in relation with the actions done in the framework of technical assistance Priority Axes within the other OPs.*
- *Good practices identified in the OPs could be transferred to other MAs through OPTA.*
- *One of the roles of OPTA will be to centralise and to disseminate collected information.*

3.2. List of Priority Axes

According to the diagnostic and needs mentioned above and according to the objective of creating the best conditions for EU funds adequate absorption and to be as much operational and clear as possible, the programme will be organized into three Priority Axes:

- **Priority Axis 1:** Support to the implementation of Structural Instruments and coordination of programmes
- **Priority Axis 2:** Further development and support for the functioning of the Single Management Information System
- **Priority Axis 3:** Dissemination of information and promotion of Structural Instruments

3.2.1. Priority Axis 1: Support to the implementation of Structural Instruments and coordination of programmes

Objective:

The objective of this Priority Axis is to strengthen the overall coordination of Structural Instruments implementation and building appropriate capacities and capabilities of the system by actions aimed at setting a common level of knowledge and experience among different actors.

This Priority Axis seeks to achieve the following:

- ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of the process of programming, monitoring, financial management, control and internal audit of the Structural Instruments;
- developing a common „culture of evaluation” among the structures involved in the management of Structural Instruments over the whole programming period;
- preparation of highly qualified staff, capable of efficient and effective implementation of Structural Instruments;
- ensuring successful (effective and efficient) implementation of the OPTA;
- ensuring appropriate functioning of the structures involved in ensuring the coordination of Structural Instruments implementation and organisation of NCC and working groups meetings.

Rationale

In order to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the Structural Instruments, it is necessary to co-ordinate all actions undertaken in relation to the management, monitoring and control of the Operational Programmes. Whereas the TA Priority Axes in the other OPs will provide support for the management of the specific OP, the OPTA will provide common standards and guidelines and will enable exchange of experience and streamlining of good practices.

Regardless of the technical assistance provided within each OP, the managers will certainly need general information and guidance. As well, horizontal surveys or studies supporting the

management could be extremely useful for the functioning of the whole system. Moreover, unitary and common information is essential to the functioning of the system and this requires a national coordination to give the managers involved in the implementation of Structural Instruments the right tools at the right time to maintain a global coherence along the process.

Given that the Member State is responsible for the implementation of Structural Instruments, the national level must be able to provide actors and the European Commission with accurate and timely specific data about the implementation of SCF. Specific tools have to be developed at national level to fulfil this obligation.

Reliable and early preparation of Structural Instruments intervention for the subsequent programming period after 2013 shall allow the possibility of fast commencement of implementation of the new programming documents resulting in better and faster use of available resources.

Evaluation shall be used as an instrument in order to adapt or change orientation of programmes if needed. Evaluation reports must give an overview on the European intervention and on its consistency with public policies, to measure the efficiency of the European interventions. This Priority Axis will support the development of a common „culture of evaluation” among actors involved in the implementation of the priorities in the NDP and NSRF.

The Priority Axis addresses the capacity building at the level of the whole system for the management of Structural Instruments and therefore training shall be included as a means to ensure uniform, basic level of knowledge among the staff and managers of different OPs and other institutions involved, as well as appropriate dissemination of best practices and guidelines in relation to the management of Structural Instruments.

Key areas of intervention

Four key areas of intervention have been identified within this Priority Axis:

- Support to the management and implementation of Structural Instruments;
- Support for evaluation;
- Horizontal training in the field of the management of programmes/projects;
- Support for the functioning of OPTA, ACIS, the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority.

Indicators

Indicator	Unit	Baseline	Baseline Year	Source	Target (2015)
Output					
Elaborated surveys, analysis, studies, methodological and technical information materials	No.	43	2006	ACIS	135
Number of people trained	No.	1500	2005	ACIS, TDCU	14000
Events focused on exchanging experience on fund implementation and meetings of relevant committees and working groups	No.	25	2006	ACIS	141
Result					
Training effectiveness assessment based on the participants evaluation	%	-	-	ACIS, TDCU	80
Quality of documents prepared for the National Committee for	Assessment by the NCC	-	-	ACIS	4

Indicator	Unit	Baseline	Baseline Year	Source	Target (2015)
Coordination and its subcommittees	members (scale of evaluation: 1-5)				
Activities of the ACIS, CPA, AA appreciated by the managing authorities	scale of evaluation: 1-5	-	-	ACIS	4

3.2.1.1. Support to the management and implementation of Structural Instruments

The interventions under this key area of intervention will focus on ensuring the common standards, tools and information necessary for effective management and implementation of the Structural Instruments. The aim is to provide assistance for carrying out the major functions of the Structural Instruments system: financial management, monitoring, programming, control and internal audit. Special attention will be paid to horizontal issues, such as public procurement and state aid, in order to provide the framework for ensuring full compliance with the EU and national rules in these fields.

In order to ensure efficiency of procedures, and thereby enhance efficiency of the management, monitoring and control processes as well as a proper preparation for the future Structural Instruments interventions, the use of expert assistance will be essential. Expert support will also be needed to clarify and interpret procedural rules in case of doubt, and adjust them according to the European Commission recommendations, and needs of each OP, as well as for the preparation for the future Structural Instruments interventions.

Technical assistance will be supplied in order to better assess available information (choice of indicators, sources, updates, etc.), to detect the gap of information to be filled and define adequate indicators – that, for any reasons, were not adequately exploited by statistical information – in strategic sectors.

The key area of intervention will support the completion of surveys (either ad hoc or other type) with a view to obtain better information with a view to improve Structural Instruments management and implementation. The elaboration of various studies in connection to the programming or implementation at the level of all OPs (NSRF) and NDP will also be supported.

Also these interventions will support the exchange of experience and multiplication of management methods with a view to an effective and efficient implementation of Structural Instruments, via regular meetings and workshops. Activities enhancing cooperation among actors and exchange of information, as well as publication of best practices brochures and guidelines are essential for multiplying the positive aspects of the implementation.

Organisation of meetings and events dealing with key thematic issues (such as: sustainable development, equal opportunities, information society, SMEs development etc.) is envisaged in order to highlight the positive contribution of Structural Instruments (through various OPs), as well as to identify future actions to improve performance in these areas.

Indicative operations

- reviews on the systems and general procedures linked to certain areas of management and monitoring, certification and payment system, as well as control, based on weaknesses and needs identified at the level of all OPs;

- development of common standards and guidelines for the MAs;
- elaboration and distribution of reports of activities and guidelines with best practices for all institutions involved in the management of Structural Instruments;
- support for analyses and studies concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of the systems put into place for the implementation of Structural Instruments;
- studies regarding policies relevant for Structural Instruments and studies concerning the impact of Structural Instruments such as macro-economic modelling, links between Structural Instruments and macroeconomic factors;
- extensive support to the process of preparation for the future Structural Instruments interventions;
- support for the events and activities connected to exchange of experiences and information at national and EU level;
- support for meetings and events related to key thematic issues (such as: sustainable development, equal opportunities, information society, SMEs development etc.).

3.2.1.2. Evaluation

OPTA has a key role to play in supporting the development of a common „culture of evaluation” in the system of EU funds management by training people in charge of evaluation in each institution involved in the Structural Instruments system, by networking them, publishing results and improving the quality of evaluation reports throughout the period.

This key area of intervention will support evaluations in relation to OPTA and NSRF interventions, as well as in relation to the NDP. The following types of activities are to be supported:

- the ex-ante evaluation for the next programming period;
- ongoing evaluations of OPTA, NSRF and NDP which will feed into the mid-term evaluation and the ex-post evaluation;
- ad hoc and strategic evaluations proposed by ECU and approved by the National Coordination Committee or, as the case may be, by the OPTA Monitoring Committee. All evaluations will be commissioned by the Evaluation Central Unit under the general control of the OPTA Monitoring Committee.

The results of the evaluations will be published, presented to Monitoring Committees and provided in order to inform on any adjustment to be made to the NSRF/NDP and the OPTA.

Indicative operations

- implementation of a methodological specific assistance and training sessions for people in charge of evaluation in each MA to give them common tools;
- implementation of a methodological assistance on project evaluation;
- elaboration of grouping evaluation reports (meta evaluations) at the national level;
- elaboration of specific evaluation reports on specific items;
- publication of the evaluation reports and dissemination of evaluations results;
- the ex-ante evaluation for NDP, NSRF and OPTA for the next programming period;
- ongoing evaluations of OPTA, NSRF and NDP;
- ad hoc and strategic evaluations proposed by ECU and approved by the National Coordination Committee or, as the case may be, by the OPTA Monitoring Committee;
- support to the Evaluation Central Unit and its activity especially connected to the evaluation working group and evaluation steering committees (staffing, training, administrative costs related to the organisation of the meetings, etc.).

3.2.1.3. Horizontal training in the field of the management of programmes/projects

The horizontal training for Structural Instruments comes as a continuation of the training programmes implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Finance aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Romanian public administration to manage the pre-accession instruments. The strategy will support regular training for the civil servants in the institutions involved in the Structural Instruments system, covering issues in the fields of programming, implementation, monitoring, communication and evaluation of EU Structural Instruments, in order to ensure the effectiveness and correctness of such processes as well as the compliance with the EU regulations.

According to the Training Mechanism, the Training Development and Coordination Unit (TDCU) inside the DTA will act as the authority in charge with coordinating the entire training process in the area of Structural Instruments management. The TDCU is assisted by a working group created for this purpose composed of representatives from the training units in the other MAs and the Certifying and Paying Authority. The TDCU, with the support of the institutions involved in the management of the Structural Instruments will perform on annual basis a training needs analysis and will draft a common annual training plan.

The TDCU will oversee the creation and update of the database for the planning and monitoring of the training in EU funds management and will organize training delivery as mentioned below:

- A training package shall be developed and implemented on a permanent basis for the new comers in the system with basic information about the Structural Instruments, the NSRF, the OPs, the institutional system for the Structural Instruments and the implementation mechanisms;
- The training will also cover functions that are similarly carried out regardless of the OP, such as financial management and control, audit, programming etc., as well as horizontal issues, such as public procurement, state aid etc.;
- The organisation of specific training sessions for the coordination level (ACIS, Certifying and Paying Authority, Audit Authority) will also be supported;
- Basic training in project design, management and implementation for the potential beneficiaries (with priority given to the local authorities) will also be supported through OPTA.

Complementary to the horizontal training, addressing basic common needs across the structures involved in the management of the Structural Instruments, each MA will finance and will implement, through the TA Priority Axis within the OP, specialized training programmes tailored according to the specificity of each Operational Programme (training regarding the internal procedures, training in OP management, project appraisal, selection and contracting, training of the members of Monitoring Committee, training for potential beneficiaries in subjects connected to the design of projects for the respective OP and its areas of intervention, training of the beneficiaries in connection to the specific OP).

The decisions about the selection of a training project within this key area of intervention will be taken based on the annual training plan agreed by all actors.

Indicative operations

- support for the activities of the working group for the coordination of training in this field;
- creation and update of the database for the planning and monitoring of the training in the management of EU funds;

- organization of training events, including training of trainers, training sessions delivery and elaboration of training materials;
- elaboration of training reports of activities and guidelines with best practices;
- review activities regarding the impact of the trainings.

3.2.1.4. Functioning of OPTA, ACIS, the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority

The key area of intervention will support both the functioning of the coordination structures which do not receive any support from the Technical Assistance in the other operational programmes – such as ACIS, the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority - as well as the functioning of the structures involved in the management of OPTA.

These interventions will finance the human resources employed for ensuring the NSRF management, monitoring and control process within the ACIS, the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority, as well as the eligible administrative expenditure related to the functioning of such institutions.

The National Coordination Committee established for coordinating the preparations related to the management of Structural Instruments will develop as an instrument for enhancing coordination and transparency of the Structural Instruments interventions. It will normally meet twice a year or more often if necessary. Costs associated with the preparation for and hosting of these meetings and other administration costs of the Committee will be supported by the strategy under this key area of intervention.

In order to ensure the coordination at all levels, the National Coordination Committee may rely on different working groups and/or (sub)committees on cross cutting issues among OPs that may arise during implementation. The costs associated with the preparation for and hosting of these structures and other administration costs could be supported under this key area of intervention.

This key area of intervention will aim at supporting the efficient management and implementation of OPTA, carrying out preparatory, selection, evaluation, communication and monitoring activities arising during the implementation of the programme. One of the important elements in OPTA operation is to ensure efficient functioning of the Monitoring Committee and selection committee for the Operational Programme Technical Assistance. Establishment of these bodies is a duty of each Member State and should warrant efficiency and quality of implementation of the Structural Instruments in general and within each OP. The administrative costs of handling the above Committees' work will also be supported.

Indicative operations

- employment of contractual staff by ACIS, OPTA Managing Authority, Certifying and Paying Authority and Audit Authority to support their functioning in connection to the management and control of Structural Instruments;
- support for carrying out the activities of ACIS, of the Certification and Paying Authority and of the Audit Authority (running expenses, organization of meetings and events, supplies, equipment, etc.);
- OPTA management (including organisation of Monitoring Committee meetings and other relevant meetings, preparation, publication and distribution of materials essential for the programme management and implementation process, costs of preparation, selection and checking of assistance, etc.);

- organisation and functioning of NCC and its related (sub)committees and support for the coordination between their representatives including preparation of specific documents needed for their work;
- expertise and advice to improve the functioning of the OPTA MA, ACIS, Certifying and Paying Authority and Audit Authority.

3.2.2. Priority Axis 2: Further development and support for the functioning of the Single Management Information System

Objective

The objective of this Priority Axis is to ensure SMIS smooth operation, organisational and functional development and the ongoing expansion of the system so as to allow prompt access to data in all institutions involved in the process of Structural Instruments and to contribute to a sound and effective management of the operational programmes.

There are three aims defined within this Priority Axis:

- To ensure effectiveness and efficiency of SMIS for the whole programming period;
- To assure coordination and the necessary human resources for the deployment and implementation of the IT system and its digital network;
- To provide the necessary equipment for the correct and timely operation of the system.

Rationale

The objective of setting up the SMIS is to guarantee a sound effective management of European programmes, in compliance with national and European regulations. This instrument must be operational during the whole period of programmes implementation, meaning 10 years including closing time. The experience gained during this period will be capitalized for the development of the IT system in the next programming period.

Building such an integrated system to be used by all programmes, requires a strong co-ordination among project stakeholders.

A single IT system will lead to better harmonization of the administrative work and of the procedures among the different institutions involved in the implementation of Structural Instruments. Thus SMIS will reinforce the common understanding and further development of the implementation system. Moreover, the efforts made in implementing SMIS will contribute to a better efficiency of interventions and the system will provide more visibility on the results of policies, and will also guaranty transparency and quality of controls.

In order to ensure the functioning of the system throughout the whole programme period, several phases can be identified within the life of the system: *an initial deployment phase* making SMIS fulfilling basic needs of institutions involved in the Structural Instruments system, *an increasing phase* that will address additional needs and therefore further development, *a constant phase* when the system is as stable as possible, and *a closing phase* that may again request additional elements for the system. These four phases are directly linked to the life cycle of the European programmes.

All the activities related to SMIS (training, human resources, support to the users, digital communication) will be implemented according to these development phases.

The SMIS is currently passing through the initial deployment phase (as mentioned in the Analysis chapter, SMIS is generally capable to fulfil all the relevant functions for the programmes' definition and management, projects' approval and modification, monitoring and evaluation, audit and funds flow management), which will probably continue during the first year of Structural Instruments implementation. During the next few years, the SMIS will go through the increasing phase and it is expected that by the end of the programming period the system will become stable, unless new regulations will be in place, bringing important changes.

Besides further development, an important operation to be implemented will be the maintenance of the system. The maintenance aims at ensuring the good functioning of the system throughout the whole programme period and the quality of its digital network.

Project support is essential for effective functioning of the system. Its operation within evolving organisational structures must be associated with support instruments or actions to the benefit of the different stakeholders, at central or local level. Moreover, technical support instruments should be available for the everyday use of the system, such as: procedures guide (as above) conveying the EU programmes functioning in the system philosophy, as well as up to date user's guides clearly describing the system's intrinsic functions.

The second support level is directly related to users. It is essential that the users can be supported by a co-ordination mechanism that takes account of the context and everyday activities of the users as well as of the different tasks to be accomplished. These co-ordinators must function as an interface between the IT systems, the authorities in charge of the programmes and all the users. Therefore, the operation of such a co-ordinating team at an appropriate level is of absolute necessity.

The third support level consists in creating a common centralised support structure for the whole mechanism. This structure must ensure the link between the project management team (monitoring committee, project manager) and the users. The role of this structure is to operationally implement the orientations given by the monitoring committee as concrete actions.

The centralised support structure must guarantee the quality of the system, its functionality, which means making sure that it is perfectly adapted to the needs of good management and effectiveness. It must also guarantee an optimal use of the system (co-ordination mechanism).

Users' training is essential since it conditions the quality of the data registered in the system. All the users must be trained as quickly as possible when the programmes start and initial training should be updated on a cycle basis of 2 to 3 years. It is also necessary to arrange specific training when new functions are delivered.

Because the SMIS will cover a large number of users, certain information activities are needed, such as presentation seminars, regular meetings for explaining the developments, etc. The organisation of regular meetings allows the sharing of good practices and it also allows the project management team to become aware of the possible problems encountered in the field.

In order to ensure appropriate operation of SMIS, maximum security and back-up solutions have to be provided for the system, along communication and equipment. An assessment of the needs shall be carried out to ensure a coherent programme of purchasing and upgrading the IT equipment.

Key areas of intervention

Four key areas of intervention have been identified within this Priority Axis:

- Development and maintenance of the SMIS and its digital network;
- Functioning of the SMIS Central Unit and coordination network;
- Training of the users, distribution of user guides and information activities related to SMIS;
- Supply of IT&C goods and services.

Indicators

Indicator	Unit	Baseline	Baseline Year	Source	Target (2015)
Output					
SMIS updated versions	No.	1	2006	SMIS Central Unit	7
Procedural guides elaborated and disseminated	No./version	1	2006	SMIS Central Unit	1
SMIS training sessions	No.	-	-	SMIS Central Unit	500
Units equipped or reequipped	No.	-	-	SMIS Central Unit, MA for OPTA	50
Result					
User's satisfaction index for SMIS	%	-	-	SMIS Central Unit	80
Unplanned downtime of SMIS	Hours/month	-	-	SMIS Central Unit	Less than 15
SMIS users have adequate IT&C conditions for appropriate use of SMIS	%	-	-	SMIS	100
Network availability	%	-	-	SMIS	≥ 99
Packet loss percentage	%	-	-	SMIS	≤ 1
Latency for 1,000 packets	ms	-	-	SMIS	≤ 100

3.2.2.1. Development and maintenance of the SMIS and its digital network

The interventions will cover the whole range of activities focused on further development of SMIS, such as studies and analyses, elaboration, testing and installation of new versions of SMIS, as well as transfer of data from one version to another.

Future development of the SMIS will be coordinated by the SMIS Central Unit within the System Coordination Compartment of ACIS based on studies and analyses performed by external experts and the system solutions identified for the problems perceived during the functioning of the software, as well as the additional needs raised by the users.

The software development will be entrusted to external companies based on open competition. It is expected to develop at least one version of the SMIS system per year, especially in the first years of use. Each version will be tested by the SMIS Central Unit with the support of a core user group and/or external testers, formed of the representatives of all main actors. New procedural guides and/or user manuals will be produced in order for everyone to be aware of his/her role and of the elements necessary to ensure an optimal use of the system, providing references to stakeholders for actions to be performed within the system. In order to be fully operational and therefore used by all

the stakeholders, these guides must be drafted in partnership with all user departments, given the need to adapt such guides to all the restrictions (role, organisation, team size etc.).

Besides further development, system maintenance will also have to be implemented. This maintenance aims at ensuring the good functioning of the system throughout the whole programme period.

Indicative operations

- elaboration of studies and analyses regarding the functioning of SMIS and its digital network in order to identify the needs for future development;
- elaboration, testing and installation of new versions of SMIS, including transfer of data from one version to another;
- elaboration of procedural guides;
- performance of maintenance activities for the functioning of SMIS and its digital network.

3.2.2.2. Functioning of the SMIS Central Unit and coordination network

This key area of intervention will support employment and retaining of technical staff at central and regional level with responsibilities in handling, servicing and administration of the SMIS IT system. These interventions are aimed at ensuring the continuous operation of the system and the efficiency of management, monitoring, evaluation and control of Structural Instruments at programme and individual project levels. The functioning of a help desk within the SMIS central unit will also be supported. Since it is difficult to employ and retain as civil servants the staff with the relevant skills for these tasks, the SMIS operation will rely mostly on contractual staff to be paid from TA.

Also, the interventions will support the functioning of the SMIS Central Unit operating within the ACIS - Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as the network of coordinators.

Indicative operations

- employment of contractual staff for SMIS Central Unit and coordination network;
- support to carrying out the activities of SMIS Central Unit (running costs, administrative costs related to the organisation of meetings, supplies etc.);
- expertise and advice to support the SMIS Central Unit.

3.2.2.3. Training of the users, distribution of procedural guides and user manuals and information activities related to SMIS

Training is an essential element of the system implementation strategy. All the users must have enough knowledge in order to be able to work with the system during the whole programme period.

A multi-annual training plan will be designed for training in SMIS and will indicate the training levels and the target groups.

The interventions will support the organization of training sessions for all users of SMIS. A rough estimation of the number of users is around 3,500 users (staff of the MAs, IBs, the Certifying and Paying Authority, the Audit Authority, etc.) at central, regional and local level. Even if most of the users will be trained in the early years of implementation, still there is a need for regular training. For example, a trained user needs an update of the training after 2 to 3 years. Also there is a need to train the users whenever a new module or functionality is introduced in the system. The training should be organized in specific modules at different levels (beginners, advanced, expert). In order

to ensure appropriate functioning of the system and the efficiency of the training, some of the users will be trained as trainers. The training materials and the guides will be widely disseminated.

This key area of intervention will also finance the elaboration and distribution of users guides updated for each new version of the system, with clear description of the system's intrinsic functions. These guides, that will be available in paper and electronic format (CD ROM, Format MS Windows Help or Flash multimedia, for example) must be easy to access, readable and operational, in order to translate in real reference materials for the users.

Drafting a questions/answers guide on the functional aspects may also be considered. This document could be made available on an intranet accessible to all the users and must be regularly updated.

Given the fact that SMIS will cover a large number of users, certain communication activities are needed, such as presentation seminars, regular meeting explaining the developments, etc. The organisation of regular meetings allows the sharing of good practices but also the passing on to the project management team of the possible problems encountered in the field.

Indicative operations

- organisation of SMIS training events, including elaboration and distribution of training materials;
- training of SMIS trainers;
- elaboration and distribution of user guides;
- elaboration of questions/answers guide on the functional aspects of SMIS;
- organisation of regular meetings and presentation seminars.

3.2.2.4. Supply of IT&C goods and services

The intervention will serve to procure and install IT&C equipment and licenses, as well as IT&C services required for the correct operation of the SMIS system. This should apply to hardware, software used by the institutions involved in the Structural Instruments system, and IT&C services.

Regardless of the various levels of endowment, renewal of the equipment is generally needed at least every 5 years because it is becoming obsolete. Such interventions will allow a guarantee of continuity that the equipment must provide (availability, recovery time etc.).

SMIS infrastructure will provide confidentiality and reliability, minimum latency, integrity and guaranteed bandwidth for communication, as well as confidentiality, integrity, reliability and availability for information stored in the SMIS databases and business continuity solution.

The equipment needed at the level of end user organisations will be purchased based on applications made by each entity (which will become Beneficiary) and appraisal made by the SMIS Central Unit. It is reasonable to estimate the purchase of a number of pieces of equipment at least equal to double of the current endowment plus the purchase of equipment foreseen in Phare 2004 and 2005, given that the endowment with equipment is rather scarce especially at regional level. An assessment of the needs shall be carried out to ensure a coherent programme of purchasing and upgrading of the IT equipment.

Indicative operations

- assessment of the IT&C needs;
- endowment with hardware, software used by the institutions involved in the Structural Instruments system, and IT&C services for SMIS operation.

3.2.3. Priority Axis 3: Dissemination of information and promotion of Structural Instruments

Objective

The objective of this Priority Axis is to ensure coordinated delivery of general messages related to Structural Instruments at national level and to implement ACIS's action plan for communication in line with the National Communication Strategy for the Structural Instruments.

Implementation of this Priority Axis will serve the following aims:

- To inform the potential applicants about the opportunities in terms of EU co-financed projects;
- To contribute to supporting project promoters in preparing and implementing good quality projects;
- To promote greater public awareness of the objectives and achievements of the Structural Instruments and the National Development Plan and to ensure recognition of the role of the EU Structural Instruments.

Rationale

This third Priority Axis is mainly dedicated to the general public but it also targets potential beneficiaries. Its interventions are complementary to the actions described within the first Priority Axis in terms of national coordination of the communication and of support to the trainings organized in this field.

Information actions will focus on the following objectives: providing adequate and sufficient information for applicants and beneficiaries; ensuring recognition of the role of the EU Structural Instruments; promoting greater public understanding of the objectives and achievements of the Structural Instruments and the National Development Plan in Romania.

A specific mechanism at local level can be developed under this Priority Axis to support the project promoters, in complementarity with the systems that the MAs and IBs may establish.

Article 69 of the General Regulation provides that *“the Member State and the Managing Authority for the operational programme shall provide information on and publicise operations and co-financed programmes. The information shall be addressed to European Union citizens and beneficiaries with the aim of highlighting the role of the Community and ensure that assistance from the Funds is transparent”*.

Even if each OP sets up a communication plan, communication operations must be planned also at national level to ensure the publicity of the global action of the EU. It is necessary to have a central coordination of the communication actions regarding the Structural Instruments in order to ensure a coherent and balanced approach to communication, to avoid duplication of actions or delivery of contradictory information, as well as to cover communication gaps. As well, a focal point where citizens and potential applicants can obtain information will be made visible.

Given the complexity of Structural Instruments interventions and procedures and the fact that the general public opinion that EU funding is hard to access, a strong and well structured public information program is needed. The program will aim both at orienting and supporting potential beneficiaries in drafting the projects, and at leveraging the general suspicions and the perceptions with regard to the lack of transparency.

In order to deliver correct and uniform messages about Structural Instruments in Romania, it is absolutely stringent to have an integrated information campaign targeting well-defined target groups in order to make sure the message is received.

The draft National Communication Strategy highlights that the public information activity is structured in three categories which have the role of channelling the interest of the citizens towards developing projects, as a real „funnel” and to improve the perception of Romanian citizens on the transparency of EU funds implementation. These are:

- I. the **mass information campaign** (through the mass-media);
- II. the **central point** that all potential beneficiaries interested in funding will contact: website and information/ call center (single phone number);
- III. dissemination of the information and assistance provided to potential beneficiaries by **the MAs and the IBs.**

In order to generate projects, it is essential for all these three elements to operate in such a way so that the flow of information is not interrupted.

Key areas of intervention

The following two key areas of intervention are foreseen:

- Dissemination of general information and publicity activities regarding the Structural Instruments allocated to Romania;
- Operation of the Structural Instruments Information Centre.

Indicators

Indicator	Unit	Baseline	Baseline Year	Source	Target (2015)
Output					
Copies of all publications, brochures and information leaflets produced under OPTA	No.	19,000	2006	ACIS	1,000,000
Supported events (conferences, seminars, workshops) promoting Structural Instruments interventions	No.	10	2006	ACIS	70
Campaigns	No.	1	2006	ACIS	14
Opinion polls	No.	1	-	ACIS	7
Number of visits on the Structural Instruments website	No.	-	2006	ACIS	1,000,000
Number of inquiries received by the Information Centre	No.	-	2006	ACIS	40,000
Result					
Level of overall public awareness about EU Structural Instruments	%	5	2006	ACIS	+15

3.2.3.1. Dissemination of general information and publicity activities regarding the Structural Instruments allocated to Romania

This key area of intervention will support the implementation of the communication action plan to be developed by ACIS. The mass information campaign shall be designed based on the results of the social studies (including essential information, formulating major messages, identifying the best communication channels, drafting the campaign's implementation and evaluation plan). A major element of the campaign will be to advertise the website address and the single phone number of the Structural Instruments Information Centre.

Indicative operations

- organization of campaigns and events (seminars, conferences) to be undertaken in order to promote a greater understanding of the EU funds and the implementation and monitoring arrangements in Romania;
- preparation, publication, translation and distribution of materials (publications, brochures, folders, CDs and other possible formats) with information and promotion of the Structural Instruments;
- publicity actions and publication and dissemination of materials connected to OPTA;
- carrying out opinion polls;
- supporting national information campaigns on TV, radio or other media;
- analysis of impact and most effective means for the promotion and publicity activities.

3.2.3.2. Operation of the Structural Instruments Information Centre

According to the draft National Communication Strategy for the Structural Instruments for the programming period 2007-2013, the central element of the public information process is represented by the Structural Instruments Information Centre. This will be a central point that all interested persons can contact following the campaign(s) and where they can find answers to the general questions or be directed toward other specialized organizations in accordance with their special interest.

The Structural Instruments Information Centre will be represented by a single website, a call centre and a classic information centre (helpdesk) within the ACIS. The website and the call centre will have national coverage. Regional/local information points will function under the coordination of the information centre forming a network that provides uniform and reliable information on all programmes and opportunities offered by the Structural Instruments. The information points will act also as resource and support service points to local project promoters for preparing and implementing projects.

Besides the role of central point insofar as directing the information, the Centre will also provide feedback on the realities in the field, based on the analysis of the information requests received that may indicate possible bottlenecks/success stories of the different programmes.

The Centre will function as a resource centre for collecting, processing and disseminating relevant information materials and studies, as well as best practices of interventions and projects. It could also organise events connected to its activity.

Indicative operations

- remuneration of staff operating the Information Centre;
- purchasing books and materials for the Information Centre;

- communication about the Centre and its services;
- construction and maintenance of the web page;
- functioning and remuneration of staff for the information points;
- organisation of events connected to the activity of the Centre.

3.3. Coherence and compliance with the national and Community policies

3.3.1. Coherence with Community policies

According to Article 9 of the General Regulation, the assistance from the Structural Instruments and the Member States has to be consistent with the activities, policies and priorities of the Community and the operations financed by the funds shall comply with the provisions of the Treaty and of acts adopted under them.

The OPTA will be implemented by observing the Community and national policies, especially the regulations regarding public procurement.

Sustainable Development

The projects that are implemented within Priority Axes of OPTA will respect the European Union horizontal policies regarding Sustainable Development. It is however envisaged that, taking into account the specificity of the Operational Programme Technical Assistance, the activities that are undertaken within its key areas of intervention will usually have a neutral influence on this horizontal theme.

Where relevant, the positive impact on horizontal policies will be sought.

Equal opportunities

MA for OPTA will promote and apply the principle of gender equality according to the provisions of the Law No 202/2002 and the Community provisions in the field on equality between men and women. In this respect, all the projects involving employment of contractual staff at MA has been done giving equal opportunities to men and women and the future competition will obey the same rules.

The equality principle will be applied for ethnic minorities, as well. The beneficiaries/ contractors will be obliged to comply with the legal provisions on gender equality and ethnic minorities, ensuring equal opportunities in job competition for all, without any kind of discrimination.

Competition policy and State Aid

This Operational Programme has been developed having regard to the Community rules on State aid. The provisions of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty in relation to state aid rules will be fully respected. Any public support under this programme must comply with the procedural and material State aid rules applicable at the point in time when the public support is granted.

Acting according to its competence set out in the national legislation, as the national State aid authority⁵, the Competition Council, has provided support to the OPTA Managing Authority and in respect of State aid applicable rules and it is providing on-going operational advice and guidance, including the process of drafting normative or administrative acts by which state aid measures are instituted.

The Competition Council, acting as the Contact Point as regards State aid, between the European Commission on one side and Romanian authorities, State aid's grantors and beneficiaries on the other side, shall ensure the strict observance of the notification requirements. With regard to the block exemption regulations all information required by the relevant regulations will be provided.

Notifications of state aid measures, respectively information on state aid measures subject to block exemptions, are submitted for consultative opinion to the Competition Council. Subsequently, the Competition Council will submit this notifications/information to the European Commission, through Romania's Permanent Representation to the European Union. Authorities, grantors and state aid beneficiaries are obliged to provide to the Competition Council all the required information, in order to be sent to the European Commission. For those operations where the public financing constitutes aid does not fall under the above mentioned categories (e.g. "de minimis aid"), the relevant authorities will ensure compliance with the state aid regulations and procedures.

Within the programming period, the schemes designed by the granting authorities and / or ad hoc aid will be submitted to the Commission, whenever the EC rules request an ex-ante approval from the Commission. Specific obligations with regard to individual notification of aid granted under aid schemes will be respected. The Competition Council cooperates with the authorities, other state aid grantors and beneficiaries and supports them towards an adequate implementation of the acquis communautaire.

The MA will have the full responsibility to ensure compliance with State Aid rules in the context of Structural and Cohesion Funds. The actual implementation will be the responsibility of the MA. Questions demanded of applicants, the guidance given, as well as the provisions of the financing agreement will ensure that the applicants understand the limitations on assistance given and provide sufficient information to highlight any potential problems and corresponding obligations. Procedures will ensure that compliance is checked during claim checks and on the spot checks during verification and certification.

The OPTA Annual Implementation Report will detail the measures undertaken in order to ensure the compliance of all operations with State Aid rules with respect to the provisions of block exemptions (referring to: small and medium-sized enterprises, employment, training Services of general economic interest and transparent regional investment state aid), "de minimis aid" and other types of state aid under notification obligation (such as: research, development and innovation state aid, regional state aid, risk capital, environmental state aid etc.), should the case be. In addition, any information required by the Commission and by the World Trade Organization regarding state aid schemes, individual state aids or "de minimis aid" shall be provided according to the applicable rules.

⁵ Competition Law no. 21/1996, republished and the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 117/2006 on State aid, republished.

Public procurement

The procurement of all contracts financed through the Structural and Cohesion Funds and corresponding national co-financing shall be done in compliance with EU legislation and primary and secondary national legislation implementing the EU provisions on public procurement.

In order to ensure coherence with EU procurement policies, the Romanian authorities transposed the Directives No 17/2004/EC and No 18/2004/EC, by adopting the Law No 337/2006 for approving the Emergency Government Ordinance No 34/2006 on awarding of the public procurement contracts, public works concession contracts and services concession contracts. This legislation also takes into account the provisions of the Commission interpretative Communication on concessions under Community law of 29 April 2000 and the Commission interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contracts awards fully or not fully subject to the provisions of the public procurement directives of 1 August 2006. The secondary legislation was also adopted.

To enforce the legal provisions, the National Authority for Regulating and Monitoring Public Procurement (NARMPP) was set up. This body has the role to develop public procurement strategies, ensure coherence with Community acquis, ensure conformity in the application of legislation, fulfil EU Directive obligations, monitor, analyse and evaluate the methods used for awarding public contracts, as well as advise and train personnel involved in procurement activities. The NARMPP has set up the framework for Romanian national procurement methodologies and is providing advice and support.

All public procurement contracts will be awarded in compliance with the new harmonised national legislation. The principles applied in contracting are: non-discrimination, equal treatment, mutual recognition, transparency, proportionality, efficiency of used funds and accountability.

The general procedures for concluding public procurement contracts are the open and the restricted tender. Only as exceptions, the competitive dialogue, the direct negotiation or offer request, the framework agreement, the electronic auction and the dynamic purchasing system are foreseen by the law. The General Inspectorate for Communication and Information Technology is the operator of the electronic system for public procurement (ESPP).

The contracts are published in the ESPP, in the national media and, where the relevant thresholds under Community Directives are applicable, in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

The eligibility and selection criteria make reference to the personal situation, the ability to exercise the professional activity, the economic and financial situation, the technical and/or professional capacity, quality assurance and environmental standards. The awarding criteria are: the most economically profitable offer or, exclusively, the lowest price.

The NARMPP provides training, courses and seminars for the main purchasers from central and local level, including institutions involved in the management of the SCF and potential beneficiaries.

The ex-ante control system in the public procurement field has become functional through the Emergency Government Ordinance no 30/2006 and the Government Decision no 942/2006 for approving the methodological norms for EGO no 30/2006. In this respect, the Unit for Coordination and Verification of Public Procurement (UCVPP) within the Ministry of Economy and Finance has

been appointed as the body responsible for ensuring ex-ante verification of public procurement procedures, including those carried out under the Structural and Cohesion Funds programmes.

UCVPP works together with the NARMPP the Managing Authorities and with any other public institution in the field of public procurement.

In order to improve the quality of the public procurement system and to ensure the compliance with the national legislation in the field, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, through its specialized structures at central and territorial level, verifies the process of contract awarding based on risk analysis and on a selective basis. For performing the task of verification, UCVPP shall appoint observers during all stages of the public procurement procedure. The observers will issue activity reports and if they detect inconsistencies during the procedure they will give a consultative opinion. The opinion will be sent to the NARMPP as well as to the authority hierarchically higher to the contracting authority. In case of projects financed through Structural and Cohesion funds, the opinion and the activity reports are sent also to the competent Managing Authority.

The contracting authority has the responsibility for the decisions made during the process of awarding public procurement contracts. The decisions made by the contracting authority are sent to the NARMPP and UCVPP.

This established system on the ex-ante verification procedure, as part of the entire management system of the SCF, is ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of the Funds by guaranteeing the compliance of the public procurement procedure with the national legislation and with the EU directives.

3.3.2. Coherence with national policies

The technical assistance for the implementation and management of all Operational Programmes provided under OPTA will be fully consistent and will complement the national and regional policies.

In the OPTA implementation, special attention will be paid to ensuring consistency with the National Governing Programme, sections related to: Romanian institutional capacity development on procedures for Structural Instruments; home affairs, environment, transport, regional development sectors – public institutional building on managing national and EU financial resources.

The implementation of the OPTA will also complement the measures of the Single Action Plan, Section 2 - “Developing the capacity to manage the Structural Instruments”, as presented in the Analysis section.

3.4. Complementarity with other Operational Programmes

Besides the support for the management and implementation of Structural Instruments at the national level provided under OPTA, technical assistance will be also supported under the Sectoral Operational Programmes and the Regional Operational Programme. However, unlike the OPTA, Technical Assistance Priority Axes in the SOPs and the ROP are designed for providing the respective MAs and IBs with the necessary means for ensuring a proper implementation of the programmes. Technical assistance under SOPs and the ROP is strongly oriented on covering the needs of each specific programme and is restricted by the institutional framework of the

programme's implementation system. The aim is to ensure consistency as well as complementarity and synergy between the TA Priority Axes in SOPs and the ROP, and the interventions under OPTA.

During January 2006, a common description was agreed with the other MAs as concerns the TA Priority Axes in SOPs and ROP, including two key areas of intervention, as follows:

- Support to OP management and evaluation;
- Support for promotion and communication.

Also, a paragraph concerning the correlation between the TA Priority Axes and the OPTA was provided to the MAs.

The OPs follow in general the structure agreed at national level as presented above. However, there are different degrees of detail in the description of the TA Priority Axes but in principle they do not change the complementarity principles as described above.

The complementarity and synergy will be further strengthened during implementation through the "cross-OP" level coordination mechanisms for technical assistance as described in chapter 5. In practice, there are a number of issues that will need increased coordination during implementation:

- Potential complementarities of the operations supported in the field of *evaluation* under OPTA with assistance to be provided by the sectoral and regional OP's to evaluate "their own" OP will be exploited in the implementation phase by ongoing coordination, as well as the potential to provide useful input to the implementation of the National Evaluation Strategy, planned to be supported by OP ACD and by domestic resources. This will be achieved mainly through the works of the Evaluation Working Group;
- The potential complementarities and risk of overlap with *training* assistance to be provided by the sectoral and regional OP's to "their own" institutions and beneficiaries will be addressed in the implementation phase by ongoing coordination, to be managed by TDCU and training working group. Possible synergies with training programmes on "non-structural policies and interventions" provided by OP ACD will be exploited, too and risk of overlap reduced.
- As MAs of sectoral and regional OPs might equip themselves and "their own" IBs with *IT equipment*, coordination between the TA Priority Axes and the Key Area of Intervention "Supply of IT&C goods and services" under OPTA is necessary and will be addressed in the implementation phase, mainly through SMIS Central Unit and the TA Working Group.
- Potential complementarities and risk of overlap with *information dissemination activities* provided by the sectoral and regional OPs to "their own" beneficiaries will be addressed in the implementation phase on the basis of the communication plans as well as the targeting of messages and information: direct applicants and clearly sectoral stakeholders are targeted by SOPs and ROP, general public and potential beneficiaries by OPTA.

All these issues will also be subject to coordination during TA Working Group works.

4. Financial plan

General considerations

The financial plan of OPTA has been elaborated in correlation with the financial plan of the Romanian National Reference Strategic Framework 2007-2013. It is expected that about 75% of the total technical assistance for structural policy tasks financed from the Structural Instruments and national funds will be allocated to TA Priority Axes of sectoral operational programmes and ROP. The remaining balance of technical assistance funds, approximately 212.8 mil. Euro, will be spent on implementing interventions within the OPTA.

The split of financing between OPTA and the Technical Assistance Priority Axes in the sectoral and regional OPs combines two approaches:

- the top-down approach resulted from the types of intervention financed through the respective programme and TA Priority Axes, as follows:
 - the OPTA covers the needs of the coordination structures, of the Certifying and Paying Authority and the Audit Authority, which currently account for around 14% of the staff involved in the management of Structural Instruments;
 - At the same time, OPTA covers horizontal actions and needs for the whole system, which accounts for at least 75% of the allocation;
 - In order to finance the horizontal actions, approximately 1.5% for each OP was added to OPTA allocation.
- the bottom-up approach resulted from estimation of projects and needs expressed in each OP vis-à-vis technical assistance.

The interventions planned under the Operational Programme Technical Assistance will be entirely co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The contribution from ERDF to the Programme over the period 2007-2013 is approximately 170.24 mil. Euro, which accounts for 80% of the financing of the Operational Programme for Technical Assistance. The national co-financing for the Programme over the period 2007-2013 will be 20%, i.e. approximately 42.56 mil. EURO.

The proposed ERDF allocation by Priority Axis is:

Priority Axis 1: 48.64%

Priority Axis 2: 31.36%

Priority Axis 3: 20.00%

The rationale for the allocation is:

- The first two Priority Axes represent the substance of the support granted under OPTA, aiming at ensuring a management system that will act based on common standards and procedures, in a coordinated way, with trained staff and appropriate IT system. The third priority supports mainly the increase of awareness as regards the Structural Instruments and contributes to dissemination of information to potential beneficiaries, with positive effects on the absorption capacity. These interventions covered by the first two Priority Axes are very complex, covering both the conceptual part (development of standards, methodologies, development of staff core knowledge and skills) and the development and implementation of a management information system, which by its nature involves a high degree of expenditure.
- The financial allocation per Priority Axis in OPTA takes also into account the experience gained in implementing similar type of activities financed through the Phare projects.

Financing Plan of the OPTA giving the Annual Commitment of Each Fund in the Operational Programme

Operational programme reference (CCI number): 2007RO161PO005

Year by source for the programme, in EUR:

- Current prices -

	Structural Funding (ERDF) (1)	Cohesion Fund (2)	Total (3) = (1)+(2)
2007	16,979,328	0	16,979,328
2008	18,401,347	0	18,401,347
2009	20,977,535	0	20,977,535
2010	24,775,573	0	24,775,573
2011	27,568,456	0	27,568,456
2012	30,463,144	0	30,463,144
2013	31,072,407	0	31,072,407
Grand Total 2007-2013	170,237,790	0	170,237,790

Note: All funding are for regions without transitional support

Financial plan of the OPTA giving, for the whole programming period, the amount of the total financial allocation of each fund in the operational programme, the national counterpart and the rate of reimbursement by Priority Axis

Operational programme reference (CCI number): 2007RO161PO005

Priority Axes by source of funding (in EUR)

- Current prices -

	Community Funding (a)	National counterpart (b) (= (c) + (d))	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a)+(b)	Co-financing rate* (f) = (a)/(e)	For information	
			National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d)			EIB contributions	Other funding
Priority Axis 1 ERDF	82,792,695	20,698,174	20,698,174	-	103,490,869	80.00%	-	-
Priority Axis 2 ERDF	53,390,279	13,347,570	13,347,570	-	66,737,849	80.00%	-	-
Priority Axis 3 ERDF	34,054,816	8,513,704	8,513,704	-	42,568,520	80.00%	-	-
Total	170,237,790	42,559,448	42,559,448	-	212,797,238	80.00%	-	-

*The co-financing rate for all Priority Axes is calculated on a public cost basis.

The annual breakdown has taken into account both the experience gained in project management within pre-accession instruments and the issues related to the absorption capacity of funds. Thus, a cautious approach of the funds distribution has been considered for the first years after accession with an increasingly trend reaching a maximum peak in 2013.

Categorisation

OPTA contains the indicative breakdown of funds allocation by categories (Annex 1 of OPTA), in line with the provisions of Article 37, par.1 (d) of the General Regulation and according to the Commission Regulation No 1828/2006. The categorization represents the ex-ante estimation on how the funds allocated under OPTA are intended to be spent according to the codes for the dimensions 1 (Priority Theme), 2 (Form of finance) and 3 (Territory type) of the Annex II of the

Commission Regulation No.1828/2206. This information will help the Managing Authority to monitor the programme implementation by investment categories and to provide to the Commission uniform information on the programmed use of the Funds in the annual and final implementation report (ex-post information), according to Art. 67 of the General Regulation.

According to the NSRF, Romania is committed to contributing to the achievement of Lisbon goals and regards the principle of Lisbon earmarking as an important tool for monitoring at national and Community level the actual performance in gearing Structural and Cohesion Funds towards Lisbon-related areas of intervention.

Based on the categories listed in Annex IV of the Council Regulation No 1083/2006, the OPTA expenditure does not directly count for achieving the Lisbon goals. Nevertheless, as acknowledged in NSRF, increasing the capacity of public and central authorities in relation to the management and control of the Structural Instruments is a top priority for Romania, that needs to be addressed in the present programming period and which will unquestionably have a positive impact on the creation of jobs and fostering of economic growth, contributing thus to the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.

Therefore, the Romanian authorities have complemented the list of categories of Annex IV with the expenditure related to the strengthening of administrative capacity and consider that OPTA contributes 100% to the achievement of Lisbon objectives since it is designed to ensure the efficient implementation of the Structural Instruments.

5. Implementation

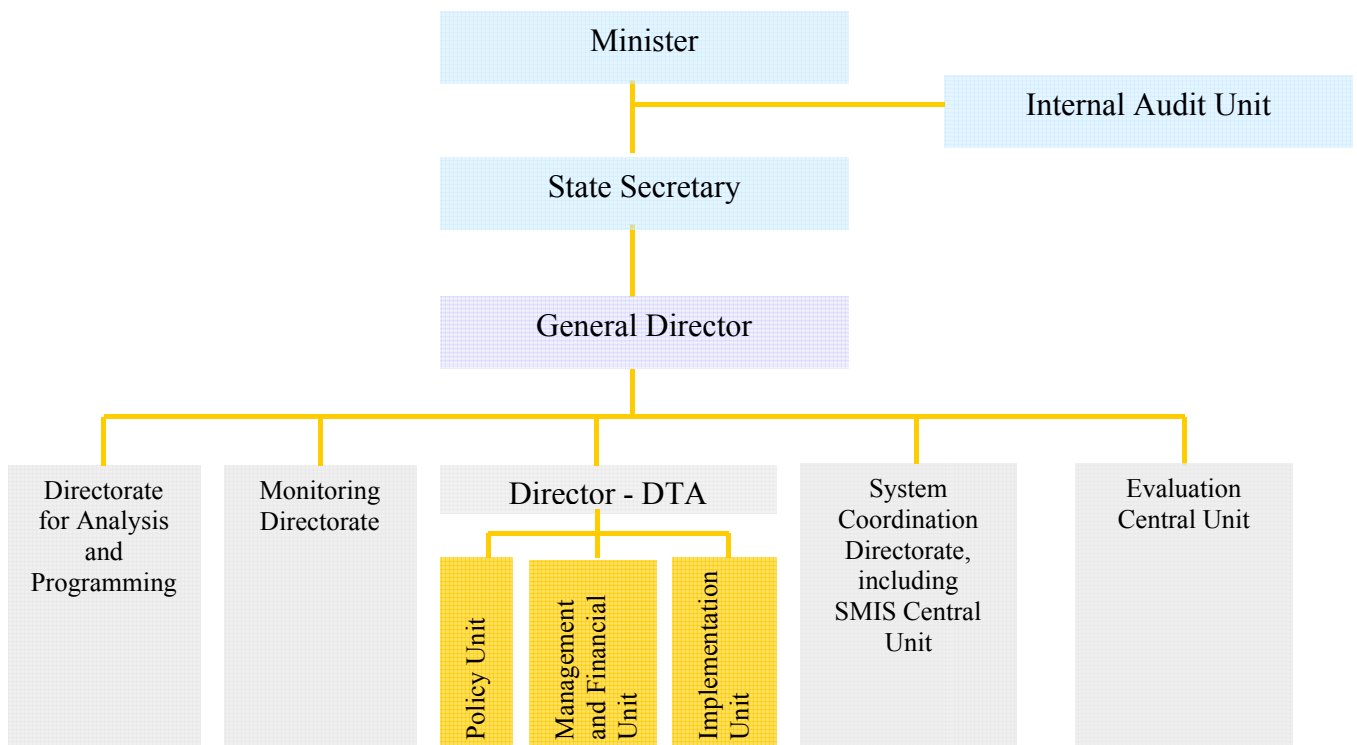
5.1. Management

Managing Authority for the Operational Programme Technical Assistance

The Operational Programme Technical Assistance is managed by the Directorate Technical Assistance within the ACIS - Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The Managing Authority shall be responsible for managing and implementing the operational programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and according to Article 60 of the General Regulation.

The overseeing of management is exercised by the Monitoring Committee for the Operational Programme Technical Assistance.



The **Policy Unit** has the following attributions:

- preparation of the OP in coordination with the TA Priority Axes in the other OPs;
- organisation of the Monitoring Committee of the Operational Programme, taking into account the principles of partnership, representation and equal opportunities;
- assures secretariat of the OPTA Monitoring Committee;
- preparation of the annual/final implementation report for OPTA;
- analyses and proposes modifications of OPTA and submits it to the proper Monitoring Committee;
- ensuring the existence of the procedures regarding the maintaining of a proper audit trail;

- organising evaluation of OPTA according to EC regulations through the Evaluation Central Unit within ACIS;
- development and promotion of partnerships for OPTA;
- information and communication plan for OPTA;

The **Management and Financial Unit** has the following responsibilities:

- management of project application, appraisal and selection;
- management of projects contracting;
- audit trail and ex ante financial control;
- transmission of payment requests to Certifying and Paying Authority;
- reporting irregularities.

The **Implementation Unit** is in charge of:

- implementation of the technical assistance expenditures for DTA;
- help desk function for all other beneficiaries of OPTA;
- coordination and implementation of horizontal training in the Structural Instruments field (Training Development and Coordination Unit).

The unit in charge of project applications within the Directorate Technical Assistance will work in partnership with the other directorates of the ACIS. The other directorates suggest projects and help technically the unit in charge of project applications.

In order to ensure an **efficient, effective and transparent process** of programming, monitoring, financial management, control and internal audit, the following **separation of tasks** should be observed:

For the Authority for the Coordination of Structural Instruments (ACIS), and in particular for the DTA, as Managing Authority, the applicant will be different from the unit in charge of the appraisal and the selection of project in order to:

- *distribute clearly the tasks between actors;*
- *maximize the competences.*

For the Certifying and Paying Authority, the applicant should be different, at least, from the unit in charge of the certification and payment of technical assistance expenditures.

For the Audit Authority, the applicant should be different, at least, from the unit in charge of the control of technical assistance projects.

For the MAs of other OPs, there is no risk of confusion of tasks because these applicants will not be involved in the management, certification and payment or auditing in relation to OPTA.

In order to establish clear and transparent relationship between the MA and the beneficiaries, project agreements will be signed between the beneficiaries and the MA to establish the duties and responsibilities for each actor.

The Certifying and Paying Authority

In Romania, the Ministry of Economy and Finance is designated to fulfil this role for all OPs. The Certifying and Paying Authority is responsible for drawing up and submitting to the Commission certified statement of expenditure and applications for payment in line with the provisions of Article 61 of the General Regulation.

The Audit Authority

The Audit Authority is responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control systems. It is set up under Law no. 200/2005⁶ as an associated body to the Romanian Court of Accounts.

Steering Committee for the Operational Programme Technical Assistance

With specific regard to the cross-sectoral nature of OPTA that requires intense coordination efforts to avoid overlaps, OPTA Managing Authority established a Technical Assistance Working Group which will convert into a Steering Committee with the role of coordinating operations of the OPTA on an almost day-by-day basis. The coordination is aimed at ensuring consistency and coordination of activities, financed via the TA budget. Views formulated by WG's for training, communication and SMIS shall also be represented in the Committee, chaired by the MA of the OPTA. As a result of the activity of such a group it's expected that risk of overlap inherent with the structure of programmes can be substantially reduced. The Steering Committee will report to the Monitoring Committee of OPTA.

The Managing Authority chairs the Steering Committee meetings and ensures the administrative work for it. The Steering Committee task is to co-ordinate operations implemented under the OPTA and ensure their co-ordination and consistency with technical assistance operations implemented as part of other Operational Programmes. The Committee shall convene as the needs arise, however at least quarterly.

The Steering Committee includes representatives of the following bodies:

- Managing Authority for OPTA
- Authority for the Coordination of the Structural Instruments
- Managing Authorities of other OPs
- Certifying and Paying Authority
- Audit Authority

5.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

5.2.1. Monitoring

Monitoring of the OPTA, as regards its implementation progress and methods, shall be the MA's responsibility. As regards its efforts related to implementing priorities and measures under the Programme, the Managing Authority shall be supervised by the OPTA Monitoring Committee. The monitoring process shall cover both:

⁶ for the approval of the Emergency Governmental Ordinance no.22 from 17 March 2005, for the completion of Law no. 94/1992 regarding the organization and functioning of the Romanian Court of Accounts.

- physical monitoring related to the implementation of objectives, priorities and measures set out in the Programme, by monitoring the indicators specified in the OPTA, and
- financial monitoring, which is a function of Programme financial management and that of expenditure incurred in implementing individual priorities and measures.

The SMIS will support the Managing Authority with the monitoring of the OPTA.

The Policy Unit will service the Monitoring Committee for OPTA, prepare all necessary reports according to EC regulations, including the annual and final implementation reports that will provide a clear view on the progress achieved in the implementation of OPTA.

OPTA Monitoring Committee

Art. 63 of the General Regulation provides that the Member State shall set up a Monitoring Committee for each OP, in agreement with the Managing Authority after consultation with the partners.

The Monitoring Committee will be chaired by the Secretary of State in charge of coordination of Structural Instruments within Ministry of Economy and Finance.

As a general rule, the decisions of the Monitoring Committees shall be taken by consensus. However, rules of procedures of the Monitoring Committees shall ensure that the decisions necessary for the implementation of the OPs will be taken, including decisions on reallocation of funds as needed.

The Monitoring Committee will meet at least twice a year (usually in spring and autumn). However, they can meet more often if necessary. The first meeting usually reviews progress made for the previous year – ending up with the approval of the implementation report –, while the second meeting looks at progress up to 30th June of the current year. In circumstances where a decision is required before the next meeting is due, the Monitoring Committee can also make decisions by written procedures.

The membership of the Monitoring Committee will aim to ensure representation of all interested stakeholders according to the principle of partnership, as follows:

- MA for OPTA;
- MAs for the other OPs;
- Representative of economic partners;
- Representative of the NGO sector;
- Representative of local authorities association.

A representative of the European Commission will be invited in an advisory capacity.

The secretariat for the Monitoring Committee, based in the MA, prepares documentation on progress, financial tables on expenditure, agendas and minutes of meetings.

Role of the OPTA Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee has the following roles and responsibilities:

- a) it considers and approves the criteria for selecting the operations financed within six months of the approval of the OP and approve any revision of those criteria in accordance with programming needs;

- b) it shall periodically review progress made towards achieving the specific targets of the operational programme on the basis of documents submitted by the managing authority;
- c) it examines the results of implementation, particularly achievement of the targets set for each Priority Axis;
- d) it examines the evaluations of the OPTA;
- e) it considers and approves the annual and final reports on OP implementation;
- f) it is informed of the annual control report, or of the part of the report referring to the OP concerned, and of any relevant comments the Commission may make after examining that report or relating to that part of the report;
- g) it approves any adjustment or review of the OPTA to improve its management, to achieve specific target;
- h) it may propose to the MA any revision or examination of the operational programme likely to make possible the attainment of the Funds' objectives or to improve its management, including its financial management;
- i) it considers and approves any proposal to amend the contents of the Commission decision on the contribution of the Funds.

Monitoring is an on-going process and has an important role to play in the management of the operational programme, in confirming that it is making good progress, determining whether or not the programme continues to pursue the original targets and in identifying potential problems so that corrective action can be taken.

The OP monitoring system takes into account the needs of different user groups and different levels of the management structures. The potential users of information are the stakeholders who have their own areas of responsibilities and, therefore, their distinctive information needs, as follows:

- Beneficiaries;
- Managing Authorities;
- Monitoring Committees;
- Government of Romania;
- European Commission;
- External evaluators;
- Wider public and NGOs.

The monitoring system is based on a regular examination of the context, resources (inputs), outputs and results of the programme and its interventions. It is composed of a mechanism of coherent information including progress review meetings and progress reports providing periodic summaries which incorporate key information from the physical and financial indicators. The purpose of the reports is to provide updates on achievements against indicators and milestones and they will be written in a standard format allowing for comparison between reports over time.

The core piece of information to be provided in the reports is related to indicators capturing the progress of the interventions vis-à-vis the goals set in the programming phase. In this respect, a system of indicators for each OP has been developed under the coordination of ACIS. Although adapted to the specific feature to the OP, the indicator system pursues the uniformity of the core data allowing information to be bottom-up aggregated at different levels of interventions (projects, key area of interventions, Priority Axes, OP, NSRF), themes, sectors etc. The system will be detailed with guiding elements providing a common understanding throughout the stakeholders, such as a comprehensive list of monitoring and evaluation indicators, definition of each indicator, responsibilities, periodicity and ways of data collection and processing, as well as indicators tables to be generated by SMIS providing a clear picture of the interventions' context and progress.

Whenever appropriate, the indicators will be broken down by different criteria (territorial, gender, target groups, size of the recipient etc.).

The use and improvement of the set of indicators as part of the monitoring system is a continuous task during the programming period. ACIS and the Managing Authority will check periodically the reliability of the information collected and will coordinate an on-going process of improving the functioning of the monitoring system. Evaluations and quality check of the monitoring system concerning its coverage, balance, and manageability will be carried out. The individual indicators will be assessed in terms of their relevance, sensitivity, availability and costs.

The Monitoring Committee will be consulted on the indicators system at an early stage of programme implementation as well as during the entire programming period in order to verify that:

- the indicator system as a whole has been set up properly, and
- the information is sufficient for its own work.

Although the monitoring system will be largely responsible for generating output data, some output, and most result data may require additional efforts (e.g. surveys, field work, collecting information from other organisations). On the other hand, official statistics generating context indicators will need to be supplemented with surveys, studies or other techniques of data collection and interpretation. The specific needs for complementary information and related planned activities will be included in the OP and NSRF Evaluation Plans that are described in Evaluation section of this document.

5.2.2. Evaluation

Regulatory framework

Evaluation of Operational Programmes is an activity inseparable from the overall OP management and implementation arrangements, as a tool for assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness of the financial assistance deployed, as well as the impact and sustainability of the results achieved.

The requirement to conduct systematic evaluation activities of the Operational Programmes and the general rules for those activities are provided for in the General Regulation (Articles 37, 47 – 49).

In accordance with Articles 47-49 of the General Regulation, three main types of evaluations will be carried out for OPTA:

- *An ex-ante evaluation*
- *Ongoing evaluations* (during the period of implementation of the OP)
- *Ex-post evaluation.*

Ex-ante evaluation. For the programming period 2007-2013, the ex-ante evaluation was carried out for all OPs by an external evaluator (a single contractor). The management of the ex-ante evaluation contract was ensured by the ACIS through the Evaluation Central Unit in close cooperation with the MAs and other main stakeholders.

Ongoing evaluations to be carried out during the period of implementation of the OPTA shall be of three types – *a) interim, b) ad hoc* and *c) with a cross-cutting theme*, as follows:

The Interim Evaluation will aim at improving the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance and the strategy and implementation of operational programmes. The interim evaluations

will support the OP management process by analysing problems which occur during the implementation and propose specific solutions to improve the operation of the system.

There will be 2 interim evaluations of the OP: one evaluation to be carried out at the end of 2009 and one in 2012. The first interim evaluation will examine progress to date in implementing OPTA, looking particularly at issues such as management of the OP, whereas the second interim evaluation will focus more on priorities, looking towards the next programming period.

Ad-hoc evaluations will be carried out where programme monitoring reveals a significant departure from the goals initially set or where proposals are made for the revision of operational programmes. Ad-hoc evaluations can also address either implementation or management issues of an individual Priority Axis or Key Area of Intervention, or can be “thematic”. At the proposal of the Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee will decide on the subjects and timing of the ad-hoc evaluations, based on the examination of the financial and physical data provided by the monitoring system.

Interim and ad hoc evaluations will be managed by the evaluation function of the Managing Authority and will be conducted externally, by independent evaluators.

Evaluations with a cross-cutting theme will be carried out where the evaluation is of a horizontal nature and completion of the evaluation demands involvement from more than one OP. These evaluations may examine the evolution of all or a group of OPs in relation to Community and national priorities. They may also examine particular management issues across all OPs. Evaluation with cross-cutting themes will be managed by Evaluation Central Unit of the ACIS and will be commissioned to external consultants.

Specific objectives, evaluation questions, tasks and expected results of interim, ad-hoc and cross-cutting evaluations will be defined separately for each evaluation to be conducted.

The ex-post evaluation shall be carried out by the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member State and the Managing Authorities, according to art. 49 par. 3 of the General Regulation.

The Commission may also carry out **strategic evaluations**, as well as evaluations linked to the monitoring of OPs, in accordance with art. 49 par. 2 of the General Regulation.

Institutional framework for evaluation

The national institutional framework for evaluation comprises 2 levels:

- an overall coordination level, ensured by the **Evaluation Central Unit** established within the ACIS structure, Ministry of Economy and Finance
- a functional level, composed of the **evaluation units established within each MA.**

The **coordination role** of the Evaluation Central Unit can be summarized as follows:

- (i) Carrying out cross-cutting evaluations;
- (ii) Providing capacity building activities to support and develop the operational capacity of the evaluation units established in the OP Managing Authorities.
- (iii) Providing overall quality assurance activities to ensure the quality of all evaluations.

As concerns the OPTA, ECU will act as MA’s evaluation unit. The evaluation activity of the OPTA will be clearly visible in the ECU Internal Rules of Procedure, providing detailed information upon

the OPTA evaluation responsible staff. In fulfilling its responsibilities related to OPTA evaluations, ECU will act in co-operation with the OPTA Monitoring Committee and Managing Authority.

Evaluation Plan

An OP Evaluation Plan will be drafted, which will comprise the indicative evaluation activities it intends to carry out in the different phases of the programme implementation, collection of complementary data that is not delivered by the monitoring system, the indicative human and financial resources allocated for each evaluation activity, the actions aimed at capacity building, as well as the incumbent responsibilities. This planning shall be done in accordance with the Community regulations on Structural Instruments; the methodological working papers on evaluation issued by the European Commission; the methodological working papers on evaluation issued by ACIS - Evaluation Central Unit. The OP Evaluation Plan shall be subject of the Monitoring Committee approval.

In addition, an Evaluation Plan at NSRF level will be drafted by the Evaluation Central Unit of ACIS. The NSRF Evaluation Plan will aim at providing information for the strategic decision making process and will plan evaluation activities at macro socio-economic level. Possible evaluation themes to be included in the NSRF Evaluation Plan may be linked to the NSRF priorities (infrastructure, economic competitiveness, human resources development, administrative capacity and territorial dimension) or may concern the delivery system such as the horizontal ad-hoc external evaluation with a special focus on the implementation and process issues across the OPs as well as on the external coherence of the programmes with national policies that will be commissioned by the ACIS in 2008.

Operating arrangements

Each OP will have an Evaluation Steering Committee, which should convene for each evaluation exercise. A Strategic Evaluation Steering Committee will be established also at the level of NSRF for evaluations with cross-cutting themes. The steering committee will fulfil, as a minimum, the following tasks: set the terms of reference for individual evaluations, facilitate the evaluator's access to the information needed to perform his/her work; support the evaluation work, particularly from the methodological standpoint; ensure that the terms of reference are observed; exercise quality control in relation to the evaluation performed.

Under the coordination of the Evaluation Central Unit, a follow-up mechanism of the evaluation recommendations will be set-up in the Evaluation Procedures Manual to be applied by the OPTA Managing Authority.

As concerns the availability for the public of the evaluation results, at least the executive summary of the evaluation reports will be made publicly available. The means of communication will be readily identifiable and accessible.

5.3. Financial Management and control

The Ministry of Economy and Finance is designated to fulfil the role of **Certifying Authority** for all OPs, responsible for drawing up and submitting to the Commission certified statements of expenditure and payment applications in line with the provisions of Article 61 of the General Regulation. The Certifying Authority is within the office of the National Fund, making use of the pre-accession experience.

The **competent body for receiving the ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund payments from the European Commission** in respect of all OPs is the Certifying and Paying Authority within the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The **body responsible for making the payments to the Beneficiaries** is the paying unit within the MA for OPTA.

An associate body of the Romanian Court of Accounts has been designated as **Audit Authority** for all OPs, in line with the requirements of Article 59 of the General Regulation. The Audit Authority is operationally independent of the Managing Authorities, and of the Certifying and Paying Authority.

The Certifying and Paying Authority– shall be responsible in particular for:

1) Certification of expenditure, which means drawing up and submitting to the Commission certified statements of expenditure and payment applications in computerized form.

It is certifying that:

- the statement of expenditure is accurate, results from reliable accounting systems and is based on verifiable supporting documents;
- the stated expenditure complies with applicable Community and national rules and was incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the programme.

Within this purpose, the task of the Certifying Authority is to ensure that the received information on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure and included in expenditure statements provides an adequate basis for certification, which entails:

- to verify the compliance of the claimed amounts with the database;
- to verify the correct calculation of the total amount of eligible expenditures;
- to take account of the results of all audits carried out by or under the responsibility of the Audit Authority/internal audit body or European Commission;
- to maintain accounting records in computerized form of expenditure declared to the Commission;
- to keep a debtor ledger.

2) Receiving payments from the Commission

- to receive from the European Commission the amounts from ERDF, ESF and CF, as pre-financing, intermediate and final payment;
- to draw up and submit annually to the EC the provisional forecast of likely applications for payments for the current financial year and for the subsequent one;
- to return to the EC non-eligible expenditures, recoveries as a result of an irregularity or the funds that were not used, including interest of late payment.

3) Making payments to the beneficiaries for SOP Environment and SOP Transport and transferring the EU Funds to the paying units for the other OPs

- to make payments to beneficiaries from the ERDF and CF and the co-financing amounts, for SOP Environment and SOP Transport;
- to transfer the funds from the ERDF and ESF to the paying units, for the other OPs.

The *paying unit* within the MA for OPTA has the following main responsibilities:

- to receive transfers of the Community contribution to the OP from the Certifying and Paying Authority;
- to make payments to the beneficiaries from the ERDF and the co-financing amounts.

The Managing Authority of OPTA is responsible for managing and implementing its Programme efficiently, effectively and correctly in line with the provisions of Article 60 of the General Regulation. The Managing Authority will work closely with the designated Certifying and Paying Authority in fulfilling the responsibilities of financial management and control to ensure that:

- Money is used most effectively to achieve the objectives of each OP;
- Use of resources is publicly accountable to the EU and the Member State;
- Budgetary control is effective so that commitment is sustainable within each OP and financial planning profiles are adhered to;
- Contracting is within budget;
- Procurement of goods and services under projects financed:
 - takes place;
 - conforms to EU and Member State rules;
 - represents value for money;
- Financial statements sent to the European Commission and other bodies are correct, accurate and complete:
 - correct - funds are applied correctly;
 - accurately – free from errors;
 - complete – all relevant items have been included;
- Payments to Beneficiaries are made regularly and without undue delay or deductions;
- Co-financing resources are provided as planned;
- Payments are properly accounted for;
- Irregularities are notified in line with EU regulations;
- Any sums wrongly paid out are recovered swiftly and in full;
- Unused or recovered resources are re-committed within the respective OP;
- De-commitment is avoided – particularly in relation to the n+3/n+2 rule;
- Closure of each OP takes place smoothly and on time.

Before submitting the application for reimbursement, the Beneficiary verifies the accuracy, actuality and eligibility of expenditure according to the national legislation on internal control.

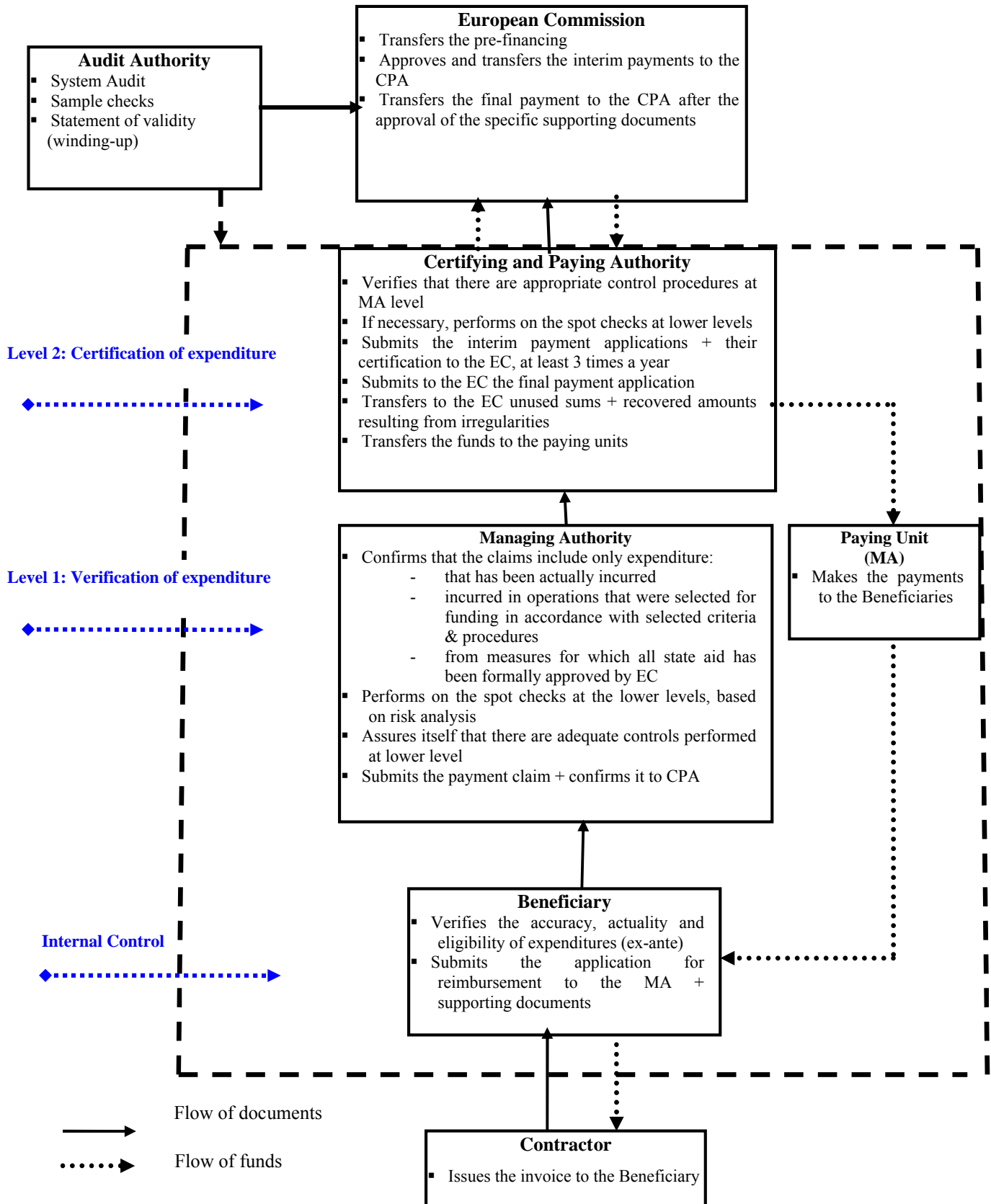
Within the purpose of expenditure certification to the European Commission, checks for OPTA are carried out on two levels:

- 1) verification of expenditures at MA level;
- 2) certification of expenditure at Certifying and Paying Authority level.

Regarding the payment process at the Ministry of Economy and Finance level, it was taken the decision to have two payment flows:

- a) direct payment for European Union financial contribution and co-financing amounts from the Certifying and Paying Authority to the beneficiaries, in the case of SOP Transport and SOP Environment,
- b) indirect payment, through the paying units that are established near the Managing Authorities, for the other Operational Programmes.

Financial flow of the OPTA



Irregularities

The legal basis is represented by Commission Regulation no. 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation no 1083/2006 and of Regulation no 1080/2006, the Council Regulation no. 2988/95 on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests and the Romanian Government Ordinance no. 79/2003 with subsequent modifications and completions which settles the ways of control and recovery of sums from non-reimbursable EU financial assistance.

The objective of this section is to describe the identification and reporting of any suspected fraud or other irregularity. This section will also deal with the importance of the immediate implementation of corrective action (including sanctions and launching of civil or criminal proceedings) deemed necessary as a consequence of the investigation of an irregularity.

Irregularities involving loss of EU funds of less than 10,000 Euro are not required to be reported to the Commission under Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 unless the Commission requests it.

Therefore, irregularities of over 10,000 Euro and all irregularities committed intentionally must be reported to the European Commission. These reports are aggregated and checked by the Certifying and Paying Authority and then are forwarded to the Fight Against Fraud Department (DLAF) for transmission to OLAF on a quarterly basis. The Certifying and Paying Authority receives the reports from the MAs and it must include any reports on irregularities within the Certifying and Paying Authority itself.

In order to allow a proper process of prevention, detection and reporting of irregularities, at the level of the MA, an irregularities officer is appointed. The irregularities officer appointed at the level of the MA prepares quarterly and ad-hoc reports and submits them to the Certifying and Paying Authority.

Any person involved in the implementation of OPTA can report the suspected case of fraud to the irregularities officers of the Certifying and Paying Authority, MA or to the Internal Audit Units of the Certifying and Paying Authority or MA either formally or anonymously. The person reporting the suspected case will have no further involvement in the irregularity process for personal security reasons.

Suspected irregularities will be analysed and investigated by the competent services and the response will be sent according to the internal procedures of the competent authority and to the Romanian legal framework in force.

The irregularities officer takes action both from own initiative and on the complaints received. The irregularities officer carries out its activity based on the Irregularities Manual that will be prepared at the level of MA.

Internal audit

Within all ministries involved in the implementation of the Operational Programmes have been established Internal Audit Units that are independent from the structures performing the tasks of Managing Authorities (or Intermediate Bodies) and are directly subordinated to the heads of the institutions concerned.

The methodological coordination of these Units is ensured by a special unit within the Ministry of Economy and Finance, namely the Central Harmonizing Unit for Public Internal Audit.

The attributions of Central Harmonizing Unit for Public Internal Audit

- Developing and implementing uniform procedures and methodologies based on international standards agreed by the European Union, including internal audit manuals and audit trails.
- Developing risk management methodologies.
- Developing the Ethical Code of the internal auditor.
- Endorsing the methodological norms on public internal audit, specific to the different domains of activity in the field of public internal audit.
- Developing a reporting system for the results of all public internal audit activities and elaborating an annual report.
- Verifying whether norms, instructions, as well as the Ethical Code are respected by internal audit services in public entities; it may initiate the necessary corrective measures in co-operation with the Head of the respective public entity.
- Co-ordinating the system of recruiting and training in the field of public internal audit.

The tasks of the Public Internal Audit Unit

Public Internal Audit Units within the institutions that implement Structural and Cohesion Funds have specific audit manuals for the European Funds.

According to the law, the tasks of the Internal Audit Unit are the following:

- Performing internal audits activities in order to assess whether the financial management and control systems of the public entity are transparent and comply with the norms of lawfulness, regularity, cost-effectiveness, effectiveness and efficiency;
- Informing CHUPIA on the recommendations not followed by the head of the audited public entity and of their consequences;
- Reporting periodically on the findings, conclusions and recommendations resulted from its audit activities;
- Preparing an annual overview of its activities in the annual report;
- Reporting immediately to the Head of the public entity and to the inspection unit in case of detecting any serious irregularities or fraud cases.

Audit Authority

Romania has established an **Audit Authority** for all Operational Programmes through Law no 200/2005, which will perform the functions established in the Article 62 of the Council Regulation no 1083/2006.

The **Audit Authority** is an associated body to the Court of Accounts, without legal capacity, operationally independent from the Court of Accounts and at the same time independent from all the Managing Authorities and Certifying and Paying Authority.

In accordance with to the provisions of the Law 200/2005, Article 14², the Audit Authority has the following responsibilities:

- system audit, sample checks and final audit;
- checks and external audit for the structural and cohesion funds;
- annual checks of the management and control systems;
- checks of the statements of expenditure, on the basis of an appropriate sample;

- carries out appropriate checks in order to issue winding-up declarations at the closure of the programmes;
- checks the existence and correct use of the national co-financing.

Assessment of the compliance of the management and control systems

As required by Article 71 of the General Regulation, an assessment of the compliance of the management and control systems for OPTA will be submitted to the Commission before the submission of the first interim application for payment or at the latest within twelve months of the approval of the OP.

5.4 Information and publicity

OPTA promotion and publicity shall comply with applicable regulations.

The major focus of the OPTA promotion is to encourage beneficiaries to use all possible funding to manage, monitor evaluate and control process of structural funds implementation effectively.

The Managing Authority is obliged to provide and distribute information about the fund supporting Operational Programme and the projects being implemented. Moreover, the MA shall initialize and implement promotional and informative actions.

Within the framework of promotional actions, the Policy Unit in MA will:

- Sustain and upgrade a website concerning OPTA, with information on calls for proposals, execution of projects within OPTA, selection criteria, application forms, forum, frequently asked questions etc.
- Issue information bulletins,
- Organize seminars and workshops for beneficiaries and assistance receivers.

The Implementation Unit in the MA for OPTA will act also as a help desk for the beneficiaries, supporting them in preparing the application and implementing the TA projects.

A communication plan will be prepared for OPTA, detailing the actions to be undertaken by the MA for OPTA in order to ensure an efficient promotion and publicity related to OPTA.

5.5 Single Management Information System

Concept of the Single Management Information System

The Single Management Information System is a nation-wide web-based information system, supporting all Romanian organisations implementing the National Strategic Reference Framework and Operational Programmes. The system is addressing the needs of all management levels (Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies, Certifying and Paying Authority etc.) and through all the stages of the programme cycle (programming, tendering, contracting, monitoring, evaluation, payments, audit and control). SMIS main characteristic is that it provides its users with a single mechanism for assisting them in accomplishing their everyday tasks.

As a monitoring tool, SMIS is the main provider of information on progress regarding the implementation, at both project and programme level, allowing monitoring reports to be automatically generated.

The SMIS has been developed under the coordination of ACIS and in close cooperation with the representatives of all structures involved in the management of Structural Instruments. During the implementation period, the SMIS will be managed and further developed by ACIS.

SMIS design and functionalities

The SMIS design follows three main principles: data *availability* (data are directly available following the request of an authorized user); data *confidentiality* (data are provided only to those users authorized for accessing that specific piece of information); data *integrity* (data processing should occur only by authorized users under authorized means). As means for implementing the three aforementioned principles the system supports multiple users categorized into a number of user groups/roles. In that way user permissions are easily organized and managed and the access to information can be thoroughly audited and logged in a flexible way.

In order to provide an effective management tool, the functional model of the SMIS is based on a set of subsystems, which together reflect the broad range of functionalities the System is designed to perform, as follows:

- *Programming*, which allows the registration and the modification of the main information on the NSRF broken down at lower levels by OP, Priority Axis, key area of intervention and operation;
- *Project management* (registration and the modification of the main information on projects, including the contracts⁷);
- *Monitoring*, which allows observing the progress in structural and cohesion funds implementation at all levels, where appropriate against targets previously set. It also allows automatically bottom-up aggregation of the *actual value* of the core data which are registered at lower levels of the System;
- *Audit and control*, which registers the control and audit findings;
- *Funds flow management*, which deals with payment request forecasts, inflows, project revenues, suspensions and recoveries of funds.

Data will be introduced in SMIS at the appropriate level, based on clearly defined user rights profiles. The access to the system will be granted based on username/password, obtained from ACIS following a specific procedure which involves the heads of the institutions managing the Structural Instruments.

SMIS Coordinators' network

At the level of the Managing Authorities, Certifying and Paying Authority and Audit Authority, SMIS Coordinators have been designated, responsible for collecting and pipelining the needs of their institutions, concerning the improvement of the system and for up keeping the integrity and uniformity of the procedures followed in the implementation of Structural Instruments.

Among the SMIS Coordinators' tasks and responsibilities, the following can be mentioned:

- To act as an interface between OP MA and ACIS concerning SMIS issues;
- To collect and disseminate information from and within the institution they represent;
- To be the first line of help desk function;

⁷ A contract is a legal commitment concluded between the Beneficiary and the Grantee or Provider of the services, works or supplies necessary to implement a part of the project or the entire project.

- To be in-house trainers of users, including for the new employees.

Electronic data exchange with the European Commission, according to Art. 40-42 of the Commission Regulation no.1828/2006, will be done through an interface between SMIS and the System for Fund management in the European Community 2007-2013 (SFC2007).

6. Partnership

According to Article 11 of the General Regulation, the OPTA has been elaborated and will be implemented, monitored and evaluated in the framework of partnership with the relevant authorities.

The elaboration of the OPTA was done by observing the principle of partnership. In this sense, the structure and content of the OPTA was presented to and discussed with the partner institutions (MAs, Certifying and Paying Authority, Audit Authority and ACIS) several times since September 2005, both in general and bilateral meetings.

In order to allow enhanced discussions concerning the TA measures, a Technical Assistance Working Group was established in October 2005. The main objective of the TA Working Group is to ensure smooth implementation and proper co-ordination of technical assistance operations within the National Strategic Reference Framework and among OPs.

Until now, the Group has been functional and met numerous times. Members of this Working Group are representatives of OPTA MA, of the Managing Authorities for the other Operational Programmes, ACIS, Certifying and Paying Authority and Audit Authority.

The main tasks of this working group are:

- to co-ordinate programming of TA Priority Axes within all OPs in order to ensure coherent and complete scope of the technical assistance within the NSRF;
- to ensure a good collaboration between all TA units (with MAs) to share experience and develop good practice in TA implementation field;
- to provide broad strategic guidance to all TA units (within MAs) in performance of their duties;
- to co-ordinate TA operations in order to avoid possible overlaps, eliminate gaps and to ensure settlement of operational problems arising from the implementation and management of TA Priority Axes;
- to work out common standards and approach to following themes: eligibility of TA expenditures, training, evaluation, promotion, equipment.

The Group will convert into a Steering Committee for OPTA as explained in Chapter 5 to cope with implementation of TA issues during the whole 2007-2013 period, being a useful forum for solving problems occurring in the process of implementation.

Annex 1

Indicative breakdown of the Community contribution by category in the Operational Programme Technical Assistance

Commission reference No: CCI2007RO161PO005

Name of the programme: **Operational Programme Technical Assistance**

Date of the last Commission decision for the Operational Programme concerned: __/__/__
 (in euros) (in euros) (in euros)

Dimension 1 Priority theme		Dimension 2 Form of finance		Dimension 3 Territory	
Code *	Amount **	Code *	Amount **	Code *	Amount **
85	127,901,244	01	170,237,790	00	170,237,790
86	42,336,546				
Total	170,237,790	Total	170,237,790	Total	170,237,790

* The categories are coded for each dimension using the standard classification.

** Estimated amount of the Community contribution for each category.