

## Summary

The aim of the document was to perform an interim evaluation of the implementation of the Operational Programme on Technical Assistance until 31 December 2019. The evaluation was based on the evaluation questions set out in the Evaluation Plan of the OP TA, the scope of which was extended so as to include additional evaluation questions. The interim evaluation can be divided into three logical parts. The first part of the document consists of the collection and analysis of input data within the most important areas of implementation of the OP TA. The structure of the OP TA document and the area of management and implementation of the OP TA were analyzed. The key areas of management and implementation of the OP TA, which needed to be analyzed to foster other parts of the evaluation, were mainly the administrative capacities of the Managing Authority (MA) for the OP TA, the management documentation of the OP TA, the announced calls, the contracting and drawing of funds and the achieving of measurable indicators. Based on the information obtained and the analysis thereof, in the second part, the evaluation answered the evaluation questions. The evaluation questions were focused on the area of physical implementation of the OP TA by assessing the reaching of the values of measurable indicators and the achieving of the expected results of the implementation of the OP TA. The questions were also focused on the financial implementation of the OP TA, specifically on the contracting and drawing of funds, the  $n + 3$  rule and the efficiency of the funds spent. Additional questions were focused on the control of public procurement, the possibility of reducing the administrative burden and on the education of the administrative capacities (ACs) of the MA for the OP TA. In addition to the assessment of the situation in the given area, specific partial recommendations for improving the implementation were formulated within the answers to the evaluation questions. These recommendations were finally summarized in the third part of the document.

Based on the first part of the evaluation, it can be stated that the MA for the OP TA carries out its activities efficiently and at a good level. The administrative capacities of the MA for the OP TA are currently sufficient and are characterized by high stability. In 2019, there was no fluctuation among the administrative capacities of the MA for the OP TA whatsoever. The management documentation of the OP TA is continuously updated, in accordance with the set deadlines, it reflects on the changes made in relevant master documents, findings and recommendations from the performed inspections, or on the needs arising from the implementation practice. The analyzed findings resulting from the performed inspections were not of a high enough severity to significantly affect or jeopardise the implementation of the OP TA. The process of announcing calls is managed well by the MA for the OP TA, but constant changes made in the announced calls, mainly due to increases in allocations, indicate shortcomings in the financial management processes at the level of the OP TA. However, these shortcomings are found not only on the part of the MA for the OP TA, because, mostly, the MA for the OP TA only responds to requests made by eligible beneficiaries. The position of the MA for the OP TA vis-à-vis eligible beneficiaries of the OP TA is quite specific, and its insufficient gravity forms the basis for meeting the requirements of eligible beneficiaries in an automated manner. The ratio of allocations within the announced calls to the total funds of the OP TA indicates a possible lack of funds, which is also confirmed by the current levels of contracting and drawing of the funds. At first glance, the achieved values of measurable indicators were in most cases at the expected and reasonable level, but their closer analysis identified several shortcomings, which are described in detail in the second part of the evaluation document.

The central element of the evaluation is the second part of the document, which includes the answers to the evaluation questions. All measurable indicators of the result and output of the OP TA were assessed. The basis for monitoring the OP TA through measurable indicators of the OP TA is the Description of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, which was updated by the MA for the OP TA at the end of 2019. Compared to the previous version thereof, it outlines a more consistent and effective setting of the system of measurable indicators of the OP TA. However, the changes made, especially as far as the methods of calculating the reached values of some measurable indicators are concerned, are causing the MA for the OP TA problems with the correct reporting of values, especially in connection with the values reported in previous years. The MA for the OP TA should analyze the possibilities of changes in the values reached in previous years of implementation. Overall, however, the measurable indicators of the OP TA are met at an adequate level. As already indicated in the first, i.e. the analytical part of the document, the contracting and drawing of OP TA funds seems to be at a disproportionately high level when taking into consideration the implementation phase of the 2014-2020 programming period. The risk of a lack of financial resources for the implementation of the eligible activities of

all eligible beneficiaries of the OP TA by the end of the programming period is high, indeed. However, the MA for the OP TA has several options at hand to deal with this risk. One of them is to begin with an early implementation of the next programming period 2021-2027. The effectiveness of the funds spent was assessed in relation to the achieved outputs in the sense of the evaluation question. Measurable output indicators cover almost all of the eligible activities. Based on the achieved values of relevant indicators, it can be stated that the funds of the OP TA were spent effectively. The performance of administrative financial control of public procurement documentation was delegated by the MA for the OP TA to the Department for the Control of Public Procurement within European Financial Mechanisms. Deficiencies in the performance of control of public procurement, such as the non-compliance with the set deadlines, were mainly caused by eligible beneficiaries - specifically due to multiple amendments made to the public procurement documentation. The MA for the OP TA takes a proactive approach to reducing the administrative burden. The MA for the OP TA has a management information system in place that allows it to perform almost all of its activities electronically. The electronic performance of the activities of the MA for the OP TA significantly reduces the administrative burden on the part of the MA for the OP TA and shortens their response time, which also benefits the eligible beneficiaries. There is room for further reduction of the burden in the development of the management information system. A new area that would also significantly contribute to reducing the administrative burden on the part of the MA for the OP TA as well as on the part of eligible beneficiaries is the introduction of simplified reporting of expenditures for appropriate types of projects. The training of the ACs of the MA for the OP TA is provided in a sufficient manner in the areas necessary for the performance of the activities of the managers of the MA for the OP TA. However, there is room for improvement in increasing the interest in specific education among the ACs of the MA for the OP TA. Appropriately targeted specific training is not necessary; however, it can significantly contribute to improving the performance of the activities on the part of the MA for the OP TA.

In the third, i.e. the final part, the evaluation summarizes the partial recommendations that were formulated within the individual chapters of the document. The recommendations address five major areas where room for improvement has been identified. These include the areas of the financial management of the OP TA, monitoring of the OP TA, control of public procurement, reduction of administrative burden and simplification of administration and education of the ACs of the MA for the OP TA. Taking into account and considering the proposed recommendations could improve the performance of activities on the part of the MA for the OP TA, and thus the overall implementation of the OP TA.