

Interim Evaluation of the Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and the Social Economy

Executive summary

July 2017

1. Introduction

Context and objectives of the evaluation

This report presents the results obtained from the interim evaluation carried out in 2017 with respect to the **operations implemented or partially implemented at 31 December 2016 in the framework of the Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and the Social Economy (hereinafter, OPSISE).**

Given the late approval of the Programme, and the resolution regarding the selection of operations of the Beneficiaries that report directly to the Managing Authority in December 2015, implementation for the 2014-20 period essentially began in 2016 and this evaluation was started at the beginning of 2017. Consequently, there was little actual data available for the output and result indicators.

Based on the data received and within the time frame available to carry it out, the evaluation work was focused, firstly, on **providing information on the degree of implementation of the Operational Programme**, considering certain aspects such as the quality of the implementation, the type of financial implementation, the delays that occurred between the selection of operations and the implementation thereof, and advances in the implementation measured through the analysis of output and result indicators and, finally, the degree of compliance with the milestones defined in the performance framework of the Operational Programme.

Secondly, to complement the quantitative analysis, the evaluation was then focused on providing **qualitative information** by which to assess the quality of the Programme's management. The qualitative evaluation of the Programme's implementation sought to assess certain aspects such as relevance, internal coherence, the analysis of procedures, the application of the horizontal principle governing equal opportunities and the guiding principles on evaluation, innovation, the exchange of information, synergies, complementarity and good

practices. Particular emphasis was placed on the analysis of procedures, as this is of vital importance for the proper implementation of the Programme and the cornerstone for obtaining quality data for a future impact evaluation at the end of the period.

Given the differences in terms of management and the problems faced by both the Public and Business Management Bodies, two different **workshops** were held for each type of body. The preliminary conclusions of the evaluations were discussed at these workshops and suggestions and possible measures were gathered for the optimisation of the management of the Multi-Regional Operational Programmes.

2. Analysis of implementation

Analysis of implementation: results by Priority Axis and Investment Priority

- **General considerations**

The implementation of the Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and the Social Economy was still at an early stage at the end of 2016. This can be seen from the results obtained from the quantitative questionnaire and from the analysis of the implementation data included in the Annual Implementation Report.

In general terms, **Axis 2 presents the highest degree of implementation, which is a clear, positive response to the logical framework of the intervention, as this is the axis with the greatest financial and qualitative weight of the OPSISE**, in particular under **Investment Priorities 9.1 and 9.3**. Additionally, it should be stressed that **the level of implementation is highest in the category A and B regions**, which are the most developed regions of Spain. According to the Intermediate Bodies, most of the final recipients are concentrated in these regions.

In particular, actions have been implemented under all the Axes and Investment Priorities that comprise the logical framework of the Programme. However, **no action of any kind has been carried out under Axis 6 on social innovation**. This lack of implementation could result in the **non-attainment of the goals set for 2018 and 2023** for this axis.

- **Employment**

Axis 1, which promotes quality and sustainable employment, is, of the two most important axes of the Programme - the other being Axis 2 - that which presents the **lowest level of participation, albeit with a large proportion of participants from disadvantaged groups, and with moderate results** as regards the number of participants who found work after leaving the programme. Nevertheless, only a tiny percentage of them have secured long-term employment, thus the number of participants that have obtained sustainable and quality employment is lower.

Investment Priority 8.4, aimed at promoting equality between men and women, presents positive results as regards the entities to which advice has been provided.

In general terms, the **degree of implementation under Axis 1 is adequate**, and it is notable in the most developed regions, which demonstrates, as previously mentioned, **that results vary widely depending on geographical position**. However, due to this disparity it is highly probable that the performance framework milestones will only be satisfactorily achieved in such regions, thus efforts must be made in the actions carried out in future years in order to achieve the goals set for both 2018 and 2023 in all the regional categories. Redressing the current situation will require the analysis and establishment of action plans by the implementing bodies.

- **Social inclusion and equal opportunities**

Axis 2, aimed at promoting social inclusion, presents the **best data as regards participation and compliance with the target participant profile**.

In the short term, the actions related to IP 9.1, aimed at active inclusion, present the best results, with a large number of participants and acceptable results as regards their subsequent employment. Of the total number of participants in situations of, or at risk of social exclusion, 33% are seeking work, have entered educational or training programmes or have obtained a qualification following their participation.

Although the level of participation in the IP 9.2 actions is not as significant as in those of IP 9.1, as it is aimed at a highly specific population group (the Roma community), its results are acceptable as regards the number of participants who find employment or decide to pursue further education or training, which favours their employability.

2. Analysis of implementation

Analysis of implementation: results by Priority Axis and Investment Priority

Investment Priority 9.3, which seeks to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities, also presents a high level of participation, even though its results are not very promising, and therefore it will be necessary to make additional efforts in the remaining years of the period. The results in terms of participation (gender equality and equal treatment) are highly positive, as 86% and 77%, respectively, of the female participants reported an improvement in their personal or work situation following their participation. However, the Programme's indicator system does not allow for the measurement of the impacts on female employees of the implementation of gender equality or equal treatment measures in public or private entities.

As regards the projects carried out by social partners or NGOs, which are included under IP 9.1, IP 9.3 and IP 9.5, the best implementation data relates to IP 9.1, followed by IP 9.3 and, finally, IP 9.5.

The pace of implementation in respect of Axis 2 varies depending on the regional category, with implementation advancing fastest in the category A and B regions and slowest in the category C and D regions. Efforts must thus be made to attain the performance framework milestones set for these regions.

- **Social innovation and transnationality**

Although **Axes 6 and 7** are not pillars of the Operational Programme, **implementation in respect of these axes was slow or practically non-existent in 2016**. Although the results for Axis 7 are highly positive and the pace of implementation is adequate, no actions have been undertaken thus far in relation to social innovation (Axis 6) and, therefore, unless the results for 2017 and 2018 are exceptional, the milestones set for 2018 and 2023 will be hard to meet.

- **Profile of recipients**

One positive aspect that should be highlighted is that **the actions implemented have been effectively aimed at the target groups**, demonstrating that their design in this regard and the participant recruitment process were appropriate.

However, the **participation of women is not as high as could reasonably have been expected, taking into account the strategic goals of the Programme as regards equal opportunities**, and it is therefore recommended that the Intermediate Bodies establish strategies to ensure that their actions have a greater impact on women and apply measures to create jobs and help job-seekers to find employment in the social economy.

Performance framework and degree of implementation

Axis 1. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility

The level of implementation of **indicator EO03**, which relates to the **number of business projects carried out under Axis 1**, varies depending on the regional category.

In the category A regions, the level of implementation is high, representing 245% of the value forecast for 2018 and 12% of that projected for 2023 at 31 December 2016. In the category B regions, the achievement coefficient is 81% with respect to the milestone set for 2018 and 4% with respect to 2023 and implementation is therefore advancing at a good pace.

However, in the category C and D regions, the level of implementation is relatively low, with achievement coefficients of 11% and 7%, respectively, of the milestone set for 2018.

Based on these results it is possible that the performance framework milestone established for these regional categories will not be met, an issue which should be addressed in the next few years.

Axis 2. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination

As regards the level of implementation seen in **indicator EO01**, which relates to the **number of participants in a situation of, or at risk of social exclusion**, in the framework of the actions included under **Axis 2**, the results also vary depending on the regional category in which the co-financed actions were carried out.

2. Analysis of implementation

Analysis of implementation: results by Priority Axis and Investment Priority

In particular, in the category A regions the results regarding participation are very positive, as the achievement coefficient with respect to the milestone set for 2018 is 565%, and 27% with respect to the value forecast for 2023, with the contribution of male participants exceeding that of female participants.

In the category B regions, the results are also highly positive, reflecting an achievement coefficient of 200% with respect to the milestone forecast for 2018 and 10% with respect to the value considered for 2023. As in the category A regions, the contribution of male participants is slightly higher than that of female participants, with the data presenting a higher number of male participants.

However, in the category C and D regions, the level of implementation is lower than in the more developed regions, and the figures at 31 December 2016 represent 35% and 19%, respectively, of the performance framework milestones set for 2018 and 10% and 6% of the values forecast for 2023.

Axis 6. Social innovation

The implementation of actions under Axis 6 was negligible in all the regional categories in 2016, and therefore the achievement coefficient with respect to the milestones defined for 2018 and 2023 in relation to indicator EO08, regarding pilot projects carried out using innovative methodologies, tools or devices, is 0% in both cases. A substantial effort must therefore be made to increase the implementation of actions under this Axis in 2017 and 2018, to ensure achievement of the goals established in the performance framework.

Axis 7. Transnational cooperation

The results relating to the implementation of indicator EO09, reflecting the transnational projects carried out and networks established until 31 December 2016, are very positive. Specifically, the goal for the year has been exceeded.

3. Qualitative analysis

The results obtained from the analysis of the qualitative information included in the surveys highlights the following:

- **Identification of difficulties**

Nine out of 10 entities encountered difficulties in implementing the Operational Programme.

The main difficulties identified were the **lack of information on the simplified cost system** and the **treatment and understanding of the indicators**.

On the other hand, 21% of the entities reported some degree of improvement in procedures, although the proposed improvements primarily related to greater planning, a management manual and the simplification and speeding up of processes.

- **Communication channels**

With respect to communication channels, the surveys show that the usual channel for the communication of actions was the **organisation's own website**, used by over 70%, followed by digital information and communication media (53%).

Among the Direct Beneficiaries and the Business Management Entities there is a clear preference for the use of social networks as a means of communication.

- **Recruitment channels**

The most widely used recruitment channels were the **entity's own website and other specific media**.

The Intermediate Bodies and Public Management Entities primarily used their own websites, while the Direct Beneficiaries and Business Management Entities used social networks.

- **Valuation of the contribution**

The operations carried out in the framework of the OPSISE, and in particular the integrated plans for job placement and social integration and the actions to promote equal opportunities, have had a considerable impact on both men and women.

The only operations that have been pinpointed as having less impact are the grants awarded for the creation and reinforcement of networks and associations, and job training.

- **Reaching the final recipients**

All the entities affirmed that the activities carried out reach the final recipients (87% stating that all final recipients are reached, while 13% consider that the majority of final recipients are reached).

The Direct Beneficiaries and the Business Management Entities have identified greater difficulties in reaching the final recipients.

- **Duplication and measures to avoid it**

Just under half (47%) indicated that there has been some degree of duplication between the activities carried out in the framework of the Operational Programme and other actions. This duplication primarily relates to activities in the same area focused on other beneficiaries.

The Direct Beneficiaries and Business Management Entities have identified the greatest amount of duplication.

Just under half of the entities do not establish measures to avoid duplication because it never arises in their sphere of action.

Those entities that do establish such measures report both good internal communication and the implementation of a control procedure.

- **Target groups**

67% have not identified substantial socio-economic changes in the target groups.

The Public Management Entities and Direct Beneficiaries have noted fewer changes.

3. Qualitative analysis

- **Satisfaction survey**

Eight out of 10 carry out satisfaction surveys among recipients, primarily focused on the suitability of the space and the speakers.

The **Intermediate Bodies** make less frequent use of surveys.

- **Evaluation of impact**

Only one entity (Direct Business Management Beneficiary) has performed some kind of evaluation of the impact of the Programme actions.

Four out of 10 have not conducted any kind of evaluation because they do not know what kind of evaluation is required.

- **Promoting innovation**

Almost three out of 10 have carried out some kind of action to provide training in and encourage innovation among the final recipients. It should be noted that half have not done so due to a lack of time.

Such actions were only undertaken between Direct Beneficiaries and Business Management Entities.

- **Exchange of good practices**

73% have held at least one meeting with beneficiary entities or Intermediate Bodies to exchange good practices.

Meetings with entities in the framework of the European Union are less frequent: Two out of three have held at least one meeting of this nature.

- **Actions promoting equal opportunities**

All the entities have carried out some type of action promoting equal opportunities between men and women. Almost all of them have implemented actions transversally (almost 50% have also implemented specific actions), particularly the Direct Beneficiaries and Business Management Entities.

- **Obstacles encountered**

Almost half identified obstacles impeding the participation of both women and men, most of which related to work-life balance issues.

The greatest difficulties were encountered in the actions led by the Direct Beneficiaries and Business Management Entities.

- **Synergies**

73% of the participant organisations consider that a synergy exists between their actions and those of other programmes.

These synergies have **mainly been identified** in the actions carried out by **Direct Beneficiaries** and **Business Management Entities**.

4. Best Practices

Directorate-General for Migration

“Success in organising the hiring and relocation of temporary workers”

In 2016, the Sub-Directorate General for Immigration, exercising its authority to "regulate migratory flows", supported the employment of migrant workers during the seasonal agricultural campaigns, reaching 18,015 workers.

“Personalisation of job placement and social integration plans”

The success of this action was based on the personalisation of the plans and the application of innovative methodologies fomenting the motivation and active participation of the recipients of the intervention. However, there are still many challenges ahead, such as reducing unemployment, improving business prospecting, reinforcing the empowerment of women, facilitating the work-life balance and promoting gender mainstreaming in the workplace.



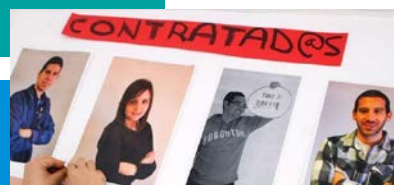
Acción Contra el Hambre (Action Against Hunger)

“European network for inclusion”

The “European network for inclusion” commenced its activities transversally in all regions, seeking partners and members, and held an event for the exchange of good practices in the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities, attended by 107 participants (104 from category A regions) from 69 entities. Two study visits were arranged and ACH was chosen for its good practices in the European “Eco System APP” project and was a finalist in the Inclusive Growth category of the RegioStars Awards. Additionally, ACH published a guide on the participation of NGOs in European projects and attended an event organised by the OECD on creativity, jobs and local development. Three entities expressed a desire to adopt the good practices applied by ACH in the aforementioned activities.

“Boosting participants' motivation”

As an example of good practice, ACH presented a publicity campaign based on the use of new technologies and social networks. This campaign can be replicated in other regions and presents a high degree of coverage of the target population of the action.



Evaluation culture

ACH performs monthly monitoring and twice a year conducts a qualitative evaluation of the programme to identify improvements and continue adapting it to users' needs.

Each plan includes an interim evaluation and the resulting recommendations are included as areas of improvement.

An App to assess the improvement in participants' socio-economic and employment status after completing their plans is currently being piloted.



4. Best Practices

Fundación Secretariado Gitano

“Personalised plans”

The most successful actions in terms of improving the integration of the Roma population relate to the personalised plans for job placement and social integration, which provide direct attention adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries, increasing their likelihood of success.



Fundación Mujeres

“Empowerment training”

"DANA, EMPLEO EMPRENDIMIENTO EN IGUALDAD" is a comprehensive intervention to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities for women and men in the area of employment. In 2016 the operation was focused on developing employment and entrepreneurial plans, through information and advisory actions, skills training to improve employability and empowering women to give them greater access to employment, as well as training on how to create companies, support with and monitoring of plans, job intermediation and follow-up of participants.



IMIO (Institute for Women and for Equal Opportunities)

“Plans”

The actions carried out under the axis concerning the promotion of social inclusion comprised the employability plan projects for women in situations of social exclusion (CLARA programme).

“Raising awareness in the area of education”

This action includes the “Exchange Portal” for the sharing of educational materials and good practices in the field of co-education. It also encompasses a number of online courses on “Women in culture” to raise awareness of the contribution and participation of women in the cultural, political, economic and social life of different social spheres.



Spanish Red Cross

“Sin denominación de origen” (No designation of origin)

This activity formed part of the “Reto Social Empresarial” programme in Jaén. Its purpose was to create a framework for establishing contact with business owners in the hospitality sector with a view to increasing the job opportunities of the participants in the “Entredades e Inclusión activa” programme who seek professional employment in some of the main occupations in the gastronomy and restaurant sectors.



5. Community added value

Impacts on institutions

The problems inherent to the complexity of managing Community Funds appear to be the greatest obstacle faced by the Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries responsible for carrying out the actions co-financed by the OPSISE.

Despite the notable efforts made by both the Managing Authority and the Intermediate Bodies and Direct Beneficiaries to implement actions as promptly as possible, it is essential that the coordination and reporting mechanisms between the Managing Authority, the Intermediate Bodies and the Direct Beneficiaries, and internally between the entities, continue to be reinforced at an institutional level, above all as regards the implementation of the simplified cost options and the handling and collection of data to prepare the indicators for monitoring the actions.

We would advise strengthening the guidance measures so that the Intermediate Bodies can effectively adapt their IT tools to the functional requirements of the ESF 2014-20 application and so that the Direct Beneficiaries can collect the microdata from their participants efficiently and correctly. Additionally, it is essential that both the Intermediate Bodies of the Programme and the Beneficiaries that report directly to the Managing Authority adapt their operating models to the Programme's requirements and that they adapt effectively to the changes represented by the new regulatory framework.

Impacts on intervention models and active employment policies

As previously mentioned, the OPSISE covers a range of measures and recipients and all of its actions have great potential in terms of the job market integration and activation of their target groups, in addition to the social economy's potential to boost employment.

The Operational Programme has a long-term vision which, with the help of community financing, is focused on reversing historical trends and redressing shortcomings in the job market, social inclusion processes and the social economy in order to meet the following objectives:

- Reducing poverty and social exclusion rates through inclusive labour markets;
- Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups to facilitate their participation in the job market on an equal footing;
- Improving and strengthening active inclusion policies with comprehensive intervention strategies;
- Harnessing the potential of the social economy to boost economic recovery.

In accordance with this strategy and with the Programme's results, we can see that progress has been made during the first few years of its implementation, above all as regards promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination through measures such as the job placement and social integration plans.

However, the aforementioned measures have a broader reach and longer-standing tradition in Spain and in the framework of the Social Fund than do other measures, such as those aimed at promoting self-employment and the creation of social enterprises, which must be promoted still further by the OPSISE, placing particular focus on their innovative nature and capacity to revitalise the job market.

5. Community added value

Impacts on individuals

The results at 31 December 2016 show that the Programme is on a satisfactory path in terms of reaching its target groups, particularly as regards the Axis 2 actions, an effort that must be continued in the remaining years of the programming period with respect to the other Programme axes, placing particular **emphasis on increasing the impact of actions promoting equal opportunities and those aimed at disadvantaged women, whose visibility in terms of the Programme's implementation is still limited.**

The typical profiles of the participants of the Axis 1 actions were as follows:

Specifically, under Investment Priority 8.3, aimed at promoting self-employment and innovation, the participants comprised highly trained men and women, most of whom were unemployed (with a substantial number of long-term unemployed) or inactive, aged between 25 and 54. A moderate number of participants were disadvantaged individuals or members of disadvantaged groups or lived in jobless households.

Under **Investment Priority 8.4**, aimed at promoting equality between men and women in all areas, including access to employment, no participants have been recorded as yet.

As regards the actions corresponding to **Axis 2**, the participant profiles are as follows:

Under **Investment Priority 9.1**, which seeks active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation and improving participants' possibilities of finding work, a very high proportion of the participants were unemployed, and many of them were long-term unemployed. However, there was a higher proportion of male participants than female participants. These participants were aged between 25 and 54 and had low levels of education and training.

The actions carried out in respect of this priority reach the most disadvantaged groups, as the vast majority of participants have some degree of disability, are immigrants, belong to another group of disadvantaged persons or live in jobless households.

Under **Investment Priority 9.2**, which **seeks the socio-economic integration of the Roma population**, the profile of the actual participants is in line with the target profile, as the participants are largely women, and include both unemployed (with a high proportion of long-term unemployed) and inactive people, aged between 25 and 54 or under 25 and with a low level of education or training. The vast majority of participants were immigrants, of foreign origin or members of minorities and many of them live in jobless households.

Under **Investment Priority 9.3, aimed at combating any discrimination**, practically all participants were unemployed, aged between 25 and 54 and were not well qualified. Almost 90% of the participants were immigrants, of foreign origin or members of minorities.

Under **Investment Priority 9.5, which seeks to promote social entrepreneurship and professional integration in social enterprises and in the social economy** to facilitate access to employment, men and women were equally represented among the participants, most of whom were employed, over the age of 54 and had a low level of education or training (ISCED 1-ISCED 2). Most of the participants had some degree of disability.

6. Impact analysis

Recommendations

As previously mentioned, the implementation of the Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and the Social Economy was still at an early stage at the end of 2016. This makes it impossible to perform an impact evaluation that measures the actual effects of the co-financed actions of the Programme, due to a lack of information and critical mass.

However, for future evaluations, it would be advisable to select certain Programme actions that can be evaluated in terms of impact. Given that a **counterfactual** impact evaluation requires the creation of a treatment group and a control group, the design of the two groups should be commenced as **soon as possible**.

Therefore, firstly, it would be essential to select a number of specific actions within the Operational Programme that can be evaluated. Taking into account the logical framework of the OPSISE, and the results as regards implementation contained in this report, it is recommended that the design of impact evaluations be commenced for the following types of operation:

- **Integrated job placement and social integration plans**
- **Reductions in Social Security contributions for the recruitment of people with disabilities**
- **Incentives for self-employment or entrepreneurship**
- **Positive impacts of equality plans on the employment status of women**

For all these measures, the impact evaluation should focus not only on the causal relationship between participating in a European Social Fund action and securing a job, but above all on the **quality and stability** of the job obtained.

The aforementioned operations (in particular the plans and Social Security contribution reductions) must **promote the creation of stable and quality jobs for individuals requiring job placements or improve the employability of such individuals**.

The future impact evaluations of both types of measure must assess three types of effect:

- **Reduction of unemployment:** Has participation in the action increased the individual's possibilities of getting a job?
- **Participants' income:** What is the negative or positive effect of the action on the participant's income?
- **Stable and quality employment:** How stable are the jobs secured? Do the contracts last longer than one year? What is the participants' salary/working day ratio? Are the jobs secured of sufficient quality?

To this end, it would be necessary to observe the participants' behaviour six months after leaving the programme, to measure the effects in the short and medium term, and their situation after 24 (or 36) months, in order to measure the long-term effects and whether they are sustained or diminish over time.

Additionally, taking into account that the OPSISE is aimed at a number of different groups of disadvantaged individuals, it would be advisable to evaluate the specific effects on diverse participant profiles, such as immigrants, women in vulnerable situations, people of Roma origin, etc.).

The availability of participant microdata is key to being able to carry out this type of evaluation. Moreover, the medium and long-term information can be obtained by carrying out participant surveys and through the study of their employment histories.

The availability of microdata on both the participants and the entities through which the assistance is channelled would facilitate the use of all the information gathered through analytical techniques, obtaining clear advantages as compared with the current impact analyses, such as:

6. Impact analysis

- The obtainment of information in real time.
- The analysis of integrated information between the different Bodies that carried out similar actions.
- The improvement of the information provided by the result indicators.
- The anticipation of future actions and initiatives to improve employability as a result of these analyses.
- The minimisation of duplications of final aid grant recipients.
- The evaluation of the actual impact of the actions on the job market.
- The reduction of the possibility of fraud.

The implementation of two **measures** which, in the evaluator's opinion, are **key pillars** for undertaking an impact evaluation, is recommended:

- The construction, by the Managing Authority, of a single **micro database** of the beneficiaries and final recipients of the grants, guiding the different Bodies to which this information will be provided. One possible channel could be the ESF 2014-20 application itself, introducing the necessary functionalities.
- The establishment of **agreements with the Social Security Treasury (TGSS) and the State Employment Office (SEPE)**. Both of these bodies have highly relevant information for the purposes of evaluating the impact of the actions aimed at boosting hiring and employment: on the one hand, data on Social Security registrations and, on the other hand, the information on the contracts reported. Were the Social Security Treasury, the SEPE and the Managing Authority all to report to a single Ministry, this would facilitate this collaboration and enable information to be obtained in real time on the job stability of the individuals whose employers have received assistance from the Social Fund in relation to their recruitment, in the short, medium and long term. It would also allow, through the use of algorithms, for the inference of possible causal relationships between the action undertaken and job stability.

Additionally, emphasis should be placed on the undertaking of evaluations within each Intermediate Body. In this regard, the following actions are recommended:

Training of the Intermediate Bodies and their technical personnel on evaluation techniques.

Dissemination of evaluations carried out by the European Social Fund throughout Europe in relation to similar actions (AUESF portal). Dissemination of the evaluations performed at the sector conferences and at the annual board meetings of the Business Management Bodies to inform the sector experts of the work and actual results obtained and so that these results can be taken into account in the making of decisions and subsequent development of strategies.

Communication of results of the evaluations carried out by the AUESF to all the agents involved in the management and implementation of the European Social Fund.

Inclusion in the working groups and quarterly meetings of the Directorate-Generals or Divisions that carry out the evaluation within the organisation. This recommendation is particularly relevant in the case of public entities, as each Ministry has a newly created Directorate-General of Evaluation, which would benefit considerably from receiving feedback on the activities of the ESF.

Establish the compulsory nature of the periodic evaluations to be performed by the Intermediate Bodies. It is essential that the Bodies themselves understand and internalise the importance of self-evaluation and not only of monitoring the actions to comply with the requirements of the Annual Implementation Reports.

7. Evaluator's recommendations

Listed below are certain recommendations for improving the implementation of the Programme:

1. Individual monitoring of each Intermediate Body. Thematic errors have been identified in the inclusion of operations under certain axes and it is therefore recommended that a more individualised management be carried out by the Managing Authority.

2. Creation of a register with a list of all the operations with a breakdown by body and by operational programme. This register or map of actions would prevent duplications and boost synergies and complementarity, as all the bodies could see the actions being implemented in their area of work, treatment group and geographical area.

3. Thematic meetings on the terminology and concepts considered in the Social Fund's strategy. In particular, on issues such as indicators, simplification (with participation of the General Intervention Board of the State Administration (IGAE)) and evaluation. The creation of working groups between Bodies that address these issues.

4. Access of all the Intermediate Bodies to frequently asked questions and their answers on a website.

5. Table of indications and requirements for the implementation of IT tools.

6. Working group on gender equality. It is proposed that a specific working group be created.

7. Inclusion of documentation on the AUESF's website (in a specific section), encompassing all types of up-to-date documentation and illustrative or didactic videos on equal opportunities for men and women that can be used by the Bodies.

8. Dissemination of the documentation generated by the Equality Network (guides, manuals, etc.) or by any other entity that has expert knowledge in this area.

9. Training of the Intermediate Bodies and their technical personnel on different didactic methodologies for implementing Equal Opportunities in all areas.

10. Compliance with reporting deadlines by the Intermediate Bodies. Although the administrative burden of starting up the Programme is high and the effort made by the Intermediate Bodies to comply with regulatory obligations must be taken into account, it is vital that the Intermediate Bodies remain firmly committed to meeting certain deadlines for the reporting of information to the Managing Authority, such as the Annual Implementation Reports and periodic financial reporting obligations. This commitment would make it easier for the Managing Authority to carry out sufficient monitoring and facilitate the handling of unexpected events.

11. Commitment to evaluation by the Intermediate Bodies. Although it is not established as a regulatory requirement, it is essential that the Intermediate Bodies begin to evaluate the impact and results of their own actions, in addition to conducting satisfaction surveys and reporting indicators to the Managing Authority. The undertaking of evaluations within each Intermediate Body itself would facilitate the identification of possible negative effects that have not yet been identified or corrected. Additionally, the results of such evaluations may reveal that certain traditional actions are not appropriate or do not achieve the desired effects, thus allowing for strategies and interventions to be redirected in accordance with the logical framework of the intervention. Furthermore, this may motivate other bodies to perform evaluations, due to the group effect.

7. Evaluator's recommendations

Listed below are certain recommendations based on the quantitative analysis of the implementation of the OPSISE to ensure the Programme's objectives are met:

1. **Increase the pace of implementation of the Programme actions.** In general terms, the pace of implementation of the Programme is slow and if it is not hastened the performance framework objectives are unlikely to be met. Therefore, it is essential that, prior to providing the implementation data for 2017 and 2018 in the mandatory Annual Implementation Reports, the implementation of the Programme be monitored, detecting the areas with the lowest levels of implementation to establish the necessary solutions or action plans.
2. **Application of Data Analytics to monitoring and evaluation.** To carry out effective monitoring that also allows for the evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness, it is recommended that Data Analytics models be applied to the management tools of both the Managing Authority and the Intermediate Bodies. The use of these tools would make it possible to link management information to information derived from the risk, irregularities, verifications, certification and results of the implementation, obtaining an overview of the implementation of the Programme that would facilitate decision-making and the evaluation of results.
3. **Focus on the reach of the actions related to equal opportunities.** The actions aimed at increasing the recruitment of women and the reintegration or integration into the job market of individuals with dependants must be reinforced. Although the number of projects focused on the participation and sustainable progress of women in the area of employment is notable, the results reported are not very satisfactory. Furthermore, the impact of these projects in terms of improving the employment situation of female workers is not known. In the remaining actions the Intermediate Bodies and Beneficiaries must make an effort to reach a greater number of women as, except in

the actions specifically aimed at this segment of the population, the participation of women was lower than that of men.

4. **Increase the implementation of operations with a component focused on innovation and job creation through the social economy.** In order to redress the shortfall in the implementation of Axis 6 of the Programme, and for the purposes of testing non-traditional actions that might have a greater impact on participants, it would be advisable to incorporate innovative aspects in the operations selected.
5. **Boost the implementation of operations with a component focused on job creation through the social economy.** It is indispensable not to forget that the social economy is a relevant part of the OPSISE. Consequently, in addition to boosting the start-up of projects to create social enterprises, it would be necessary to value the effects of these measures in terms of the actual and effective creation of sustainable and quality employment and how it relates to these projects.



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