

Mid-term Evaluation

Implementation of the EU Structural Funds
in R&DI and Higher Education, 2007-2013

Stage 1: Strategic view

17.08.2011

Focus in stage 1

- Suitability and sufficiency of SF measures to fulfill objectives of HE and R&D strategies and SF OPs
- Need for additional measures?
- Best practices in the programming of the HE and R&D measures?
- Main reasons of the success?
- Reasons for delays in implementation?
- Recommendations for next planning period?

Methodology

- **Documentary analysis**
 - NSRF, HES, R&DI strategy, OPs, implementation plans, earlier evaluation reports, other relevant studies, etc
- **Interviews**
 - Policy makers (MoER, MoEAC, State Chancellery)
 - Beneficiaries, other stakeholders (University of Tartu, Tallinn University, Tallinn University of Technology, Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences), EKKA Quality Assessment Council, Estonian Research Council, Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- **Interim workshop with MoER**

Q1: Is the current set of the SF (and other) measures **suitable and sufficient** for the fulfilment of the objectives of HE and R&D strategies and of the SF OPs? If not, what **additional measures** are necessary in the **current programming period**?

Suitability and sufficiency (Q1)

- In general, the current set of measures is **suitable** for the fulfilment of goals of the R&DI, HE and SF strategies.

However

- The **intervention logic** (functional linkages between strategic objectives, performance indicators, measures, sub-measures) is **not outlined in the OPs in a comprehensive manner.**
- Also, the **indicator system** is **formalistic** and not utilized as a real strategic management tool. OP indicators: too much focus on outputs/results, less on wider impact.

Suitability and sufficiency (Q1)

- There is **no particular need for developing new measures** to be implemented in the current programming period
 - Rather the **focus** should be on **improving the strategic management of the existing set** of measures.

However, an issue to be addressed:

- Danger of fostering **path-dependency** in the R&D system via the SF
 - Could use the thematic programmes (addressing priority areas of the R&D strategy) for capability building in the emerging new fields of S&T.

Q2: What are the **best practices** in the programming of the HE and R&D measures?
What are the main **reasons** of the success?

Best practices (Q2)

- The SF measures have **significantly contributed to overcoming the key problems** in the perspective of sustainable development and competitiveness of the Estonian R&D and HE system.
- The multi-annual budgeting of SF has been highly instrumental in **ensuring stability and continuous development** at the time of the **financial crisis**.
- Success in terms of measures: upgrading the **R&D infrastructure, internationalization** measures, **Centres of Excellence** programme.

Best practices (Q2)

- **Increased co-operation between stakeholders:** Ministry and HE/R&D institutions + among HE/R&D institutions, vocational educational institutions, etc.
- **Most importantly,** success has been based on the **accumulation of experience.** The current programming period has been a valuable process of learning for the MoER.

Q6: How can the HE and R&DI policy **measures** be made **more effective/efficient** in the **next planning period**? What are the recommendations for the design of measures and the choice of the programme modalities in order to overcome the current difficulties?

Challenges (Q6)

- **Not enough focus** in the programming and strategic management of the SF measures.
 - lack of a shared vision about priorities and specialization and, in particular, how priorities should be targeted via SF investments.
- Insufficient alignment and **co-ordination of the HE, R&D and economic development goals** (separation reinforced by SF regulations which don't allow for synergies).
- Weaknesses in **co-ordination** of investments into **technological infrastructure** and **human resources**.
- **Monitoring** system is **not used efficiently**.

Challenges (Q6)

Wider challenges in the HE and R&DI system

- Not enough focus in **dealing with negative demographics**
 - not addressed directly in HE strategy, HEIs too optimistic, current consolidation based on quality evaluations too soft.
- **Obstacles in (extended) internationalization**
 - import” of strong researchers and students still poses challenges. The question of general attractiveness and “marketability” of Estonia.
- Still too little real **cooperation between HE/R&D institutions and enterprises**
 - university career system strongly focused on academic research (vs applied research).

Thank you!