

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sectoral Interim Evaluation Report: R/HR/SOC/0802

Scope and Objectives

This in-depth sectoral interim evaluation report covers European Union pre-accession assistance to the Social Sector in Croatia, comprising Civil Society, Minority Rights and Education subsectors. The assistance allocation is M€ 5.50 with co-financing of M€ 1.42.

Sectoral Conclusions

The assistance is addressing crucial strategic accessions issues and individual project design is mostly good. The 2005 assistance has commenced and 2006 is on its way towards contracting. Prospects for efficient and effective success are largely positive with the main exception of the 2005 Roma education element. There is however, a range of external as well as internal factors that influences both impact and sustainability such as limited funding, uneven public perception or willingness for integration.

Whilst the planned immediate impacts are expected to be well achieved, there are likely limitations both for intermediate and global impacts. For the Civil Society subsector, the current institutional and political environment is generally supportive but the main aspect of achieving long term sustainability, the need to build capacities and to safeguard strategic development of Civil Society Organisations in view of the rapidly approaching post-accession period, requires more attention. In the Roma Minority subsector, despite some good local practise demonstrated, a more integrated and inclusive approach in tackling this pressing issue would be welcome for future interventions.

Performance Ratings

Subsector	Criterion	Relevance	Efficiency	Effective-ness	Impact	Sustain-ability	Overall Rating
Subsector 1: Civil Society		S	S	S	S	MS	S
Subsector 2: Minority Rights		S	MU	MS	MS	MS	MS
Subsector 3 : Education		S	HS	S	S	MS	S
Total for the Sector		S	MS	S	S	MS	S

HS = Highly Satisfactory, S = Satisfactory, MS = Moderately satisfactory, MU = Moderately unsatisfactory, U = Unsatisfactory, HU = Highly unsatisfactory

The Social sector is rated as '**satisfactory**'. The subsectors Civil Society and Education are both rated as 'satisfactory' whilst the Roma Minority subsector has been rated as 'moderately satisfactory'.

Key Evaluation Findings

Relevance

Phare interventions followed accession-related objectives but future Roma support should engage more with the EU strategy of social inclusion.

Overall, the Phare interventions in the Social sector aim to strengthen capacity of civil society groups, to improve the living conditions of the Roma minority and to improve the educational

system in Croatia. The given support reflects well identified needs and problems of the sector and thus is clearly relevant. Two subsectors, Civil Society and Roma Minority, address particular politically important issues. Assistance to the Civil Society subsector is relevant, potentially encouraging Civil Society Organisations to become active in developing, implementing and monitoring public policies, especially those related to the *acquis*.

The Roma Minority interventions represent positive steps towards the stated broader objectives but attaining these remains a distant target. The Roma infrastructure projects serve as an example of good practice and represent a valuable model for other Croatian counties. Nevertheless, design of Roma infrastructure interventions would have benefited from a more integrated approach, involving not only housing or infrastructure improvements but also jobs and skills training, as well as education and health initiatives as integral components. Good practice from member states confirms the success of such integrated approaches. The Roma educational part of Phare 2005 is also relevant but too limited in scope in view of the vast scale of the problem. The limitations of pre-accession support, focusing primarily on accession and particular *acquis*-driven aspects, putting emphasis on selected pilot initiatives and characterised by very limited funds compared to the size of the social problem, are particularly apparent in the Roma Minority subsector. The Education subsector intervention is too small to significantly influence the education system, but is relevant.

The quality of programme documentation within the Social sector is adequate for all three subsectors. The quality of needs analysis delivered throughout the sector varies and had to be improved in certain areas, but is on the whole satisfactory. However the limitations of pre-accession support - due to its given nature and size - are apparent in particular in terms of the Roma Minority subsector.

Efficiency

Interventions reviewed can be regarded as largely efficient with the marked exception of the education sub-project of the 2005 Roma programme.

Overall, physical realisation of Phare 2005 is making good progress in this sector despite its often late contracting. Protracted contracting of Phare 2005 funds was mostly due to the long lasting preparation and approval process for tendering documents. The implementation of Phare 2006 was temporarily suspended by the EC in December 2007 due to apparent Croatian inadequacies in managing the Decentralised Implementation System. Consequently, with the blockade continuing, the risk of losing Phare 2006 funds is significantly increasing for all sectors over time. At the time of this sectoral interim evaluation, the immediate risk of losing 2006 funds in the sector has been small, however, due to the mostly good progress in preparing for rapid contracting. In particular assistance to the Civil Society subsector is making good progress. Insufficient administrative capacity in the Project Implementation Unit has been more than compensated for by committed personnel, and recruitment will take place shortly to bring the Unit up to full strength.

Efficiency in the Roma Minority subsector remains uneven, however. Realisation of the 2005 and 2006 Roma infrastructure interventions is well under way and these projects appear to be examples of attempting what is seen to be realistically possible in the present situation. There appears to be excellent cooperation among the stakeholders and in particular the commitment demonstrated by the Medimurje County is remarkable. Far less satisfactory is the lack of progress in the Roma education sub-project of Phare 2005. The currently unfavourable situation there is a direct consequence of ongoing reorganisations at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, combined with an insufficiently pro-active technical assistance element.

The single intervention within the Education subsector represents a rare example of a project being delivered in a very efficient manner.

Effectiveness

Although at an early stage programmes can be expected to effectively achieve their intended outputs. Effectiveness of the 2005 Roma education sub-project is not yet secured.

Overall, the Phare Social sector assistance is expected to deliver effective results and it is likely that the purpose of the interventions will be mostly achieved. Stakeholders and beneficiaries are overall adequately prepared and involved in the implementation process. Motivated Programme Implementation Units in all three subsectors lead towards achieving effectiveness. In view of past experience and the sound institutional framework, it is likely that planned results for the Civil Society subsector will be effectively achieved.

The infrastructure parts within the Roma Minority subsector are both likely to effectively achieve their outputs. Cooperation and partnership both at national and regional level are secured and working well, facilitating the effective delivery of the Roma infrastructure. However, the involvement of the local Roma community via temporary employment is unlikely to occur. Likewise, insufficient capacity of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports for closely liaising with a less proactive technical assistance contractor potentially compromises effectiveness of the educational part of the 2005 Roma minority project. In the Education subsector all planned activities under the single intervention are being carried out according to plan and the project is underway towards full effectiveness.

Impact

Interventions are likely to have a positive immediate and intermediate impact. Global impacts will be limited particularly in the area of Roma minority.

Across the Social sector, the planned immediate impacts in terms of improving living conditions of Roma, supporting Civil Society Organisations and strengthening the capacity of Education and Teacher Training Agency staff are likely to be achieved. Intermediate impacts will materialise from all interventions, to a varying extent however. In spite of the sound basis for successful realisation of immediate impacts, the interventions in the Civil Society subsector face challenges in effectively achieving all of their expected intermediate and global impacts. These include low levels of public involvement in Croatian civil society in comparison with some other countries and potentially problematic access to future pre-accession funds and structural funds. Although the performance of Croatian Civil Society Organisations and supporting institutional frameworks are seen as sound, the experience of many smaller Civil Society Organisations in new member states suggests that EU accession can result in adverse effects unless these Civil Society Organisations are able to cope with a new funding situation.

In the area of Roma Minority substantial global impacts will hardly be achieved unless a broader approach for inclusion is being followed. The infrastructure related interventions are clearly on their way to produce the expected immediate impacts whilst for the education sub-part this is not ensured yet. Intermediate and global impacts of the entire Roma interventions will probably be positive but limited. No Roma intervention in the subsector reaches the level of the fully integrated schemes elsewhere, which include education, employment training and health components. Concerning the Education subsector the single intervention is expected to produce the planned immediate impacts in due time. There will be also positive intermediate impacts via information dissemination and pilot projects introduced in the school system. More broadly, the standards of the Croatian educational system will be improved gradually.

Sustainability

All interventions appear sustainable with qualifications. Withdrawal of donors' funding and the worsening climate of fundraising after Croatia's accession pose a threat to smaller Non-governmental Organisations.

Prospects for sustainability of the Social sector are in general positive. The Civil Society and Minority Rights subsectors are expected to continue with interventions under the single Instrument for Pre-Accession which will foster sustainability. Concerning the Civil Society subsector a strong institutional framework together with a clear political commitment provide currently a sound basis for sustainability. However, the sustainability of individual Non-Governmental Organisations is still often fragile and not secured. The major threat to long term sustainability lies in the effect of the withdrawal of foreign donors' funding as accession comes closer. Consequently, ways for building capacity and safeguarding the development of Civil Society Organisation in a post-accession environment need to be identified.

There are in principle positive expectations for sustainability as concerns the Roma Minority subsector. Concerning the education part, commitment of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports still needs to be fostered, however. Likewise, sustainable inclusion requires fuller spatial integration of Roma which is not always obvious in the interventions under evaluation. Within the Education subsector sustainability is mostly good. Full sustainability of the training being provided would however require that the trained supervisors are supplied with appropriate supervisor licenses.

Key Strategic Recommendations

- The Government Office for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations should consider proposing a grant fund specifically or at least partly dedicated to build capacity and safeguard civil society development in a post-accession environment.
- The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, in the case of further pre-accession education-related Roma support, should ensure that such support takes more account of the status of assistant teachers; is well linked to desegregation throughout the education system; is clearly emphasising the goal of a desegregated education system; and can rely on more comprehensive and reliable statistics on effective integration in education systems.
- The Government Office for National Minorities should ensure that future pre-accession assistance to infrastructure in Roma communities is clearly based on integrated plans for Roma settlement development which cover, not only infrastructure, but also housing, employment, training, education and health issues.