**Evaluation of the Local Action Plans for Education Development**

# Executive Summary

In September 2015, the Operational Programme Research, Development and Education Managing Authority (OP RDE MA) announced the Call for Projects 02\_15\_005 "**Local Action Plans for Education Development**", to which **municipalities, voluntary municipal associations and local action groups** could apply. Of 323 applications, **222 projects were awarded**. Projects from this call are going to be phased out between 31st May 2017 and 30th June 2018.

At the beginning of 2017, the OP RDE MA has decided to acquire a feedback on local action plans as a part of the preparation further interventions, especially for the follow-up call for projects 005 " Local Action Plans for Education Development II". **The purpose of the Evaluation of the Local Action Plans for Education Development (LAP) is to evaluate whether the LAPs are currently fulfilling the function that was expected from local action planning as a form of territorial dimension of interventions and to propose recommendations resulting from the assessment of available sources of information. The recommendations are also planned to be used for the preparation of the new call for projects on local action planning.**

This evaluation was conducted by the Evaluation Unit of the OP RDE MA. In terms of methodology, it is based on the synthesis of information from several secondary data sources. It uses the available documentation for the LAP call for the reconstruction of the theory of change; it also draws on findings from the external evaluations (Ongoing Evaluation of Implementation of the Operational Programme Research, Development and Education, Verification Study of the Environment of the Implementation of Interventions of Priority Axes 1, 2 and 3 OP RDE) findings from self-assessment reports - internal evaluations of individual LAP projects, findings from the LAP Functional Verification Survey, and the findings from the roundtable meetings of LAP beneficiaries from each region over their strategic framework analyses.

The main conclusions of the evaluation and the recommendations are:

According to the conclusion of the external evaluator, the existing system of LAP preparation is relevant to the needs of regional education, and even the LAP actors do not question the importance of the LAP, according to available information.

According to the theory of change of the LAP and according to the implementation teams, **trust and motivation** are the key elements for the success of community planning (not only) in education, ensuring the willingness of the actors to cooperate and thus correctly identify the real needs of the area. Trust and motivation are difficult to build, even harder to maintain and very easy to irretrievably lose. In order to establish and keep both trust and motivation, it is necessary to inform the key actors sufficiently, to support them methodically, to interconnect the subsequent interventions with LAPs and to enable their smooth implementation.

**The LAP actors are inadequately informed**. This is related to their low motivation to participate actively. The participation of stakeholders is a critical factor for community planning. The Ministry of Education should place more emphasis on informing about its policies and on explaining the importance of action planning in education, especially to the least motivated groups.

**Methodological support is inadequate**. The methodological support has been provided for many projects too late or in the wrong time. However, the expert level of the support, especially from the National Institute for Further Education, was not questioned. The projects would welcome a clarification of the roles of the particular actors, to receive clear handbooks, templates and working information system already when the call is announced. They would also welcome to be **actively informed about any changes in advance and in a clear and regular way**.

**The following calls for projects should reflect the needs identified in the LAP I and should be properly subsequent to LAP I call**. If the stakeholders do not see any tangible results of their planning, their interest to participate will fade away. If the continuation of the LAP projects is not ensured by a subsequent call, the implementation teams will fall apart in the meanwhile and the long-built confidence in the emerging communities will be irreparably damaged.

Personal meetings are the key factor in engaging actors in LAP and in building trust. Particularly for large rural areas, the workload for the field workers is immense and therefore the allowed FTEs are insufficient. In the following call, it would be advisable to **increase the amount of eligible FTEs for the implementation teams**.

**The MA’s administration of the LAP projects is risky**. The MEYS does not comply with the rules for ex-ante financing and the reimbursements are delayed. The second major issue is the short monitoring period, which affects both the beneficiary and the MA, and causes situations where the administration of the monitoring report is longer than its monitoring period.