

# EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ON.2 - "O NOVO NORTE"

## Executive Summary

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# EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ON.2 – “O NOVO NORTE”

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

1. The present document constitutes the *Executive Summary of the Final Report of the ON.2 - "O Novo Norte" Implementation Evaluation – Norte Regional Operational Programme*, developed by Centro de Estudos e Desenvolvimento Regional e Urbano, Lda (CEDRU), with the Augusto Mateus & Associados (AMA) technical support, and it is structured into four main points.
2. In the first two points, the evaluation is placed into context, through the detailing of its scope, its objectives, and the explanation of the 17 key questions associated with the process.
3. The third point introduces the methodological programme, explaining the methods used for collecting, analysing, and systematizing the information and identifying the involved actors.
4. The fourth point introduces a systematization of the table of recommendations and conclusions, trying to provide a clear and objective matrix that allows a quick understanding on the evaluation results.
5. The evaluation results obliges exclusively the Evaluation Team, who thanks all the entities that, through multiple auscultation mechanisms, contributed to the elaboration of this study, expecting that the recommendations and conclusions table will contribute to improve the implementation and the performance of ON.2 - "O Novo Norte", in order to effectively and efficiently accomplish its objectives.

## I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION SUBJECT AND SCOPE

### I.1. ON.2 – "O Novo Norte"

6. The evaluation subject is ON.2 – "O Novo Norte", an instrument from the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) with exclusive application for the Norte's NUTS II, which integrates 8 NUTS III (Minho-Lima, Cávado, Ave, Grande Porto, Tâmega, Entre Douro e Vouga, Douro and Alto Trás-os-Montes).
7. The Programme counts on a € 2.711.645.133 ERDF endowment, to which is added a national contribution of € 1.543.102.834, leveraging a total investment of € 4.254.747.967 during the seven years of the Programme's implementation.
8. ON.2 comprises five strategic priorities: a) Competitiveness, Innovation, and Knowledge; b) Economic Enhancement of Specific Resources, c) Environmental and Territorial Valorisation and Qualification; d) Urban System Qualification; e) Governance and Institutional Enablement. These gave origin to the Programme's structure, organized into five Priority Axes (besides a sixth one that corresponds to technical assistance), with the respective intervention areas.
9. In terms of specific objectives, the ON.2 – "O Novo Norte" is structured as follows:
  - ✓ Axis I. Competitiveness, Innovation and Knowledge. The specific objectives are: i) the consolidation of regional community services to support innovation and promote the regional innovation system, supporting the creation and consolidation of emerging "clusters" and technology-based companies in sectors that promote the interface between the skills and regional capacity for science and technology, promoting and developing the network of science and technology parks and integrated operations for planning and hosting business, requalification, innovation and strengthening the value chains in areas of expertise, the promotion of collective actions for business development, promoting the digital economy and society of knowledge and the promotion of energy efficiency actions. This is the Axis with the largest financial dimension, with an investment that represents 34% of the total investment planned;
  - ✓ Axis II. Economic Enhancement of Specific Resources. The specific objectives are the enhancement of the excellence of regional tourism, the economic promotion of new ways to use the sea, the enhancement of culture and creativity, the procedures for promoting new areas of agglomeration of economic activities and economic enhancement of endogenous resources in areas of low density and the diversification of economic activity in rural areas. The overall logic that presides over this intervention is that of economic

advancement of its own resources and, particularly, of its symbolic and identity capital. It has a total investment that represents 9.8% of the Programme;

- ✓ Axis III. Enhancement and Environmental and Territorial Qualification. The interventions in this area have three specific objectives: environmental qualification and enhancement, the active management of *Natura* Network and biodiversity, and the qualification of collective territorial proximity services. It represents 25.9% of the total investment;
- ✓ Axis IV. Urban System Qualification. The specific objectives to be pursued are the promotion of operations for urban excellence and competitiveness and innovation networks, the promotion of integrated operations in priority areas for urban regeneration, the promotion of urban mobility and the promotion of the connectivity of the regional urban system. It represents 23.3% of the total investment;
- ✓ Axis V. Governance and Institutional Enablement. In order to improve governance and promote institutional enablement of the Region, this Axis' specific objectives are: to modernize e-Government, to ease the relation of companies and citizens with public and local administration and to promote institutional enablement and local and regional development. It has an investment that represents 4.6% of the total investment planned.

**Table 1. Priority Axes and Financial Allocation of the ON.2**

| Axis | Intervention Areas   | Total Investment (€) |
|------|--|----------------------|
| I    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Qualification and promotion of community services and the regional system to support innovation;</li> <li>✓ Promotion of technological-based entrepreneurship;</li> <li>✓ Promotion of institutions and services to support the creation and consolidation of companies;</li> <li>✓ Integrated initiatives to support the creation and consolidation of emerging clusters;</li> <li>✓ Implementation and development of science and technology parks;</li> <li>✓ Integrated operations of business hosting;</li> <li>✓ Technological and non-technological innovation in companies related to "Traditional Activities";</li> <li>✓ Creation of R&amp;D nucleus in the companies;</li> <li>✓ Advanced services contracting;</li> <li>✓ Strategic activity of business associative structures;</li> <li>✓ Cooperation networks between companies/sectors;</li> <li>✓ Integrated supply of innovative services;</li> <li>✓ Demo actions within new technologies scope;</li> <li>✓ Creation and dissemination of on-line contents;</li> <li>✓ Pilot-projects on energy efficiency.</li> </ul> | 1.448.260.037        |
| II   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Programme for Brand promotion "Porto - Norte de Portugal";</li> <li>✓ Touristic Development Plan of Vale do Douro;</li> <li>✓ Economy of the Sea;</li> <li>✓ Promotion of a cluster on creative industries;</li> <li>✓ Support the organization of large cultural events;</li> <li>✓ Enhancement actions for competitiveness;</li> <li>✓ Touristic development action programmes;</li> <li>✓ Rural excellence poles;</li> <li>✓ Integrated management and enhancement of local productive systems;</li> <li>✓ Promotion of a minimum standard of services in rural context.</li> </ul>  | 414.814.815          |
| III  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Management of the coastal area, the hydrographical network and its resources;</li> <li>✓ Enhancement and management of areas environmentally critical;</li> <li>✓ Optimized action plans for waste selective collecting and selecting;</li> <li>✓ Prevention of natural, technological and sanitation risks;</li> <li>✓ Integrated management and enhancement of the <i>Natura</i> Network and biodiversity;</li> <li>✓ Water urban cycle;</li> <li>✓ Requalification of the School Network regarding the 1st Cycle of Basic Education and Pre-school;</li> <li>✓ Health;</li> <li>✓ Cultural heritage and cultural equipments networks;</li> <li>✓ Life quality/Leisure/Sport;</li> <li>✓ Social development actions.</li> </ul>   | 1.100.000.000        |
| IV   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Urban networks for Competitiveness and Innovation;</li> <li>✓ Enhancement of the thematic vocation of cities and cities networks;</li> <li>✓ Integrated operations for economical enhancement;</li> </ul>   | 992.307.692          |

| Axis | Intervention Areas  | Total Investment (€) |
|------|---|----------------------|
|      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Integrated operations of urban regeneration;</li> <li>✓ Urban and sub-urban transport system;</li> <li>✓ Variants to urban centres;</li> <li>✓ Qualification of the system of public transport of passengers;</li> <li>✓ Elimination of black spots;</li> <li>✓ Plans of sustainable urban mobility;</li> <li>✓ Actions in the area of logistics and micro-logistics;</li> <li>✓ Qualification of the levels of additional routes services and of the network of municipal and national network;</li> <li>✓ Structuring interventions on railways;</li> <li>✓ Structuring interventions on river docks and waterways;</li> <li>✓ Pilot-actions for integrated enhancement of the network and system of community transport regarding rural context.</li> </ul> |                      |
| V    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Modernization, efficiency improvement and articulation of regional services, sub-regional and local;</li> <li>✓ Reinforcement of mechanisms and structures that ease the relation between Administration, companies and citizens;</li> <li>✓ Instruments for land management and monitoring;</li> <li>✓ Projects and innovative initiatives and with high patterns effect about local and regional enhancement.</li> </ul>   | 195.648.874          |
| VI   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Management, monitoring, control and evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Studies and projects;</li> <li>✓ Equipments acquisition and rental;</li> <li>✓ Publicity and dissemination;</li> <li>✓ Documents edition;</li> <li>✓ Meetings with the Monitoring Committee.</li> </ul>   | 103.680.548          |

Source: ON.2

## I.2. Evaluation Scope

10. In the framework of NSRF global evaluation model, the Management Authority of ON.2 had elaborated the ON.2 Evaluation Plan that integrates the NSRF and Operational Programmes Global Evaluation Plan 2007-2013. This Evaluation Plan defined two exercises that focus on the overall Programme, whose responsibility belongs to the Management Authority of the Programme:
  - ✓ The Evaluation of the Implementation under the NSRF Strategy;
  - ✓ The Mid-term Evaluation.
11. Complementarily, the ON.2 Evaluation Plan establishes the elaboration of Thematic Evaluations comprising areas such as the "Valorisation of Heritage and Environmental Resources"; the "Entrepreneurial Innovation"; the "Public Context Costs" and the "Regional Development Asymmetries". The NSRF and the OPs Global Evaluation Plan also established transversal evaluations on the "Implementation of Support Schemes", the "Implementation of Urban Networks for Competitiveness and Innovation and Innovative Actions for Urban Development"; the "ERDF Contribution to Support the Actions Covered by the ESF Intervention Scope" and the "Integration of the Gender Perspective".
12. This current evaluation, with ON.2 as the subject, privileges the operational dimension, aiming at the established and already mentioned objectives from the community regulation, whose specification at paragraph b) of the nr. 4 of the Article 14<sup>th</sup> of the Decree-Law nr. 312/2007 explicit in the sense of "*analyse the implementation of the Operational Programme interventions (...) and introduce recommendations to improve its performance*". Therefore, its scope is the programme's operational implementation throughout all the Norte Region, focusing on matters such as: the governance model; the admissibility and acceptability from the beneficiaries and actions; the operation selection process; the Programme's internal management; the role of Partnerships and Intermediate Entities (with whom the Management Authority agreed the delegation of competencies); the implementation monitoring, and; the transaction costs.

## II. OBJECTIVES AND KEY QUESTIONS OF THE EVALUATION

13. The national and community rules and regulations and guidelines from the NSRF Global Evaluation Plan and the Evaluation Plan of ON.2 specifies the nature of this current evaluation exercise:
  - ✓ It is an operational evaluation that, according to the Global Evaluation Plan, aims at *“analysing the implementation of the OP interventions or sets of OPs and introducing recommendations for its performance improvement”*;
  - ✓ It is an evaluation associated to a very clear objective that, according to the ON.2 Evaluation Plan, aims at *“understanding the technical, financial, administrative and governance tools to put into practise, after the formal approval of ON.2 – “O Novo Norte” allowing the achievement, as expected and in the terms expected , of the objectives of the OP and the NSRF”*;
  - ✓ It is an evaluation that respects the evaluations objective framed by the Decree Law related to the NSRF and the OP Governance defined as follows: *“to improve the quality, the efficiency, the effectiveness and the consistency of the operations achieved with the support of community funds of a structural nature”*.
14. Therefore, it is not a strategic evaluation *“focused on the analysis of the contributions of the OP and the NSRF operations for the prosecution of the respective objectives and priorities and on the introduction of recommendations to improve the respective performances”*, nor a mid-term evaluation that analyses *“the context, the performance and the halfway stage impact”*, that might *“lead to reprogramming”*.
15. The subject and scope of this evaluation mark out the exercise to perform. However, it is important to define its contours more objectively. The difference established between evaluations of a strategic and operational nature contributes to that same purpose.
16. Both share the same purpose – *“introduce recommendations to improve the performance”* – and both focus on “operations” or “interventions” of OPs, sets of OPs or the NSRF. Nevertheless, they differ significantly in the adopted perspective – or on the focus – of the evaluations: while the exercises of a strategic nature privilege the analysis on the operations’ contributions for the prosecuted objectives and priorities, those of operational character privilege the analysis on the interventions’ implementation. Therefore, this evaluation focuses exclusively on the assessment of how the Programme is implemented.
17. Thus, the evaluation study is exclusively focused on the appreciation of the implementation methods of the Programme.
18. It also matters to stress that the evaluative exercises expected for the Action Plans and Global Evaluation Plan comprise multiple analysis perspectives, autonomous though complementary, determining the need to frame in the works of the Evaluation of the ON.2 – “O Novo Norte” Implementation, the reading and inclusion of those evaluations results, with possible contact points relatively to its subject – depending on its availability – taking into account the synergies, interactions and complementarities established among them.
19. Given this background, the community and national norms, the Global Evaluation Plan of NSRF, the Action Plan of ON.2 and the Terms of Reference set out the main objectives of this present evaluation exercise.

**Table 2. Key objectives of the Evaluation of the Implementation of ON.2 – O Novo Norte**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Evaluation Overall Objectives</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improve the quality, the effectiveness, and the consistency of the intervention and the OP strategies and achievement regarding specific structural problems that affect Portugal and the Norte region in particular, bearing in mind the objective of sustainable development and the relevant community legislation regarding strategic environmental evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Improve the quality, the effectiveness, and the consistency of the achieved operations with the support of ERDF.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Objectives of the Evaluations of an Operational Nature</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support the Operational Programme monitoring;</li> <li>✓ Analyse the Operational Programme interventions implementation and suggest recommendations to improve its performance.</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>General Objectives of the ON.2 Implementation Evaluation</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Contribute to the Programme's implementation improvement by analysing its different implementation phases, namely the analysis on the admissibility and acceptability of the beneficiaries and operations, the operations eligibility and selection, the Programme's internal management and the OP Communication Plan. In addition, there is the need to:</li> <li>✓ Contribute for the Global Evaluation of the NSRF Implementation, namely the systematization of the information related to the good practises and the identification of the dynamics explaining factors for the PN.2 implementation;</li> <li>✓ Set articulation and develop complementarities with the remaining NSRF evaluation exercises and the ongoing OP;</li> <li>✓ Elaborate a first comparison between the implementation mechanisms and the approved projects with the expected at the beginning;</li> <li>✓ Present conclusions and recommendations within the scope of the implementation mechanisms considered relevant to ensure the prosecution of the set objectives – ensuring the presentation of outcomes in good time aiming at introducing sustainable improvements in the ON.2 implementation and allowing increasing the levels of effectiveness and efficiency of the co-financed interventions.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Specific Objectives of the ON.2 Evaluation</b></p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Follow up the Ex-ante Evaluation, on the one hand, the relevance of the governance model and its contribution for the reinforcement of the governance regional model and the suppression of the regional weaknesses and, on the other hand, analysing the institutional enablement of the actors evolved in its implementation and their role in eliminating those weaknesses;</li> <li>✓ Analyse and evaluate the implementation pace and its compatibility with the programmed values and management deadlines, identifying possible deviations and measures/solutions to overcome them and improve their performance;</li> <li>✓ Assess the adequacy of the implementation instruments adopted to the prosecution of the specific objectives and indicators defined on the programming time.</li> </ul>   |

Source: ToR of the ON.2 "O Novo Norte" (2009) Implementation Evaluation; Global Evaluation Plan of NSRF (2009)

20. Considering the table of objectives, the evaluation results should be used in order to allow:
  - ✓ The eventual formulation of adjustments on the ruling framework – General Regulation (GR) and additional normative instruments from ON.2 according to its strategic priorities and the objectives and goals to be prosecuted;
  - ✓ The eventual formulation of adjustments on the programming and selection criteria and modalities;
  - ✓ The eventual adoption of new management measures to improve the implementation pace and its adequacy to the programming as well as to reduce "transaction costs";
  - ✓ The eventual formulation of adjustments on the information system, namely regarding the progress on the accessibilities and functionalities in order to make it more "user friendly" and to allow management efficiency and effectiveness gains;
  - ✓ The eventual formulation of changes on the expected achievement and outcome indicators framework verifying its relevance and capability for the prosecution of the Programme's objectives;
  - ✓ The eventual formulation of adjustments on the Communication Plan in order to improve the achieved results, namely to reach new targets.
21. Therefore, one may assume that not only the evaluation process must be made with a strong engagement and in close interaction with the stakeholders of the ON.2, but also that the results in terms of conclusions and recommendations must meet the current needs and priorities. Consequently, the evaluation exercise is considered relevant only if it produces dynamics that lead to value creation in terms of information and knowledge, and if it becomes a reinforcement on the organizational enablement of the Programme's actors.
22. A high level of participation constitutes an important goal for this exercise, and the most suitable methodological instruments will assure its efficiency and effectiveness.
23. The need for this approach within the context of the *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Regional Programme within the Context of the NSRF Strategy* is reinforced by the number, diversity and quality of the involved stakeholders – that the Technical Conditions present - , namely:



- ✓ The users of the evaluation conclusions and recommendations: the NSRF Ministerial Steering Committee; the Mainland Regional OP Ministerial Steering Committee; the ON.2 Management Authority;
  - ✓ The Monitoring Group of the evaluation works that integrates the elements of the Management Authority of ON.2, of the Centre for the Observation of Regional Dynamics (CODR), of the Financial Institute for Regional Development (IFDR), and of the NSRF Observatory (NSRF O);
  - ✓ The entities with responsibilities regarding the NSRF governance and the Operational Programme: the NSRF Observatory (as the entity responsible for the monitoring and coordination of the NSRF strategy and as the entity that presides the NSRF Coordination Technical Committee); the IFDR (as the entity responsible for the ERDF Financial and Operational Monitoring and the NSRF Cohesion Fund) and the ON.2 Monitoring Committee;
  - ✓ The EC in the quality of entity that manages the Funds' application together with the Member-State;
  - ✓ The Funds beneficiaries, using the national and community regulations that legally contextualizes them;
  - ✓ The citizens in general, considering the principles of transparency and responsibility.
24. Having the table of objectives of this Evaluation as a benchmark, the Technical Specifications had determined a set of evaluation questions that have worked as a methodological guide.
25. From this referential and with the purpose of increasing the objectives clarity and the subject of each question, increasing the results utility (in a process-improvement perspective) and reinforcing the evaluation focus on the implementation methods, six main specific sub-objectives were set and the number of the questions, and approach were extended. In this table, there were readjustments related to the approach/grouping of questions giving place to 17 evaluation key questions, while the diversity of questions at the Specifications are assumed as complementarily questions and supportive of the evaluative process.

**Table 3. Objectives and Questions of the Evaluation the Implementation of ON.2**

| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES  | EVALUATION QUESTIONS  | COMPLEMENTARILY AND SUPPORT QUESTIONS   |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Ex-Ante Evaluation Follow Up</i>  |   |   |
| Follow up the Ex-ante Evaluation, assessing, on the one hand, the relevance of the governance model and its contribution to reinforce the governance regional model and the suppression of the regional weaknesses and, on the other hand, analysing the institutional enablement of the evolved actors in its implementation and role in eliminating those weaknesses | <b>1.1. Does the "uniform and authoritative" governance model of the Regional OPs "may impair the institutional densification and the strengthening of the regional model of governance that can fill in the weaknesses in the Norte repeatedly identified in previous operational programmes based on their assessments"?</b>                                      | Did the establishment of uniform Specific Regulations at the national level overcome the weaknesses of the Norte Region, particularly in institutional terms? Or on the contrary, had aggravated them? What institutional mechanisms of densification and strengthening of the regional model of governance have been adopted? Do they contribute to overcome the institutional weaknesses that have marked the Region in the last decade, and to improve the implementation and territorialisation of public policies? |
|  | <b>1.2. What role could have played the Monitoring Committee, the Strategic Advisory Committee, the Pact for Competitiveness of the Norte Region (and their agendas), the partnerships formed within the Collective Efficiency Strategies (CEE) or even the process of contracting with the Intermunicipal Communities for the elimination of those weaknesses?</b> | What are the advantages and disadvantages of the working models of these partnerships in relation to other similar in the previous programming period (Management Units, Measures of Central Administration Regionally Public, etc.)?   |
| <i>Implementation vs Programming</i>   |   |   |
| Analyse and evaluate the implementation pace and its compatibility with the programmed values and management deadlines, identifying possible deviations and measures/solutions to overcome them and improve their performance  | <b>2.1. Is the current pace of approval of ON.2 - "O Novo Norte" compatible with the programming?</b>   | And for each of the Priority Axes? And within each Priority Axis, is there any ventilation by the various sources of funding? Is the average rate of co-funding for each Priority Axis, resultant from the operations approved, compatible with the one programmed? Where do the possible deviations come from?   |
|  | <b>2.2. Are the pace of release of "Notices" and the subsequent time-periods associated with different stages of the life cycle of applications compatible with the programming of ON.2?</b>  | Are the pace of release of "Notices" and the subsequent time-periods of the respective periods for submission of applications, analysis of the conditions of admissibility and acceptability of operations, analysis of the merits, the decision of the Steering Committee, contracts and beginning the implementation on the ground compatible with the programming of ON.2?   |
|  | <b>2.3. Is the percentage of expenditure approved in the "Earmarking" priority themes compared to the total compatible with the schedule?</b>   | Which subjects have the major deviations registered? Are these deviations due to non-approval, still from operations, which contribute to them or are there any other reasons?  |

| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES   | EVALUATION QUESTIONS   | COMPLEMENTARILY AND SUPPORT QUESTIONS  |
|---|--|--|
|   | <p><b>2.4. Is the current pace of implementation of the overall ON.2 - "O Novo Norte" compatible with the main management goals established?</b></p>   | <p>Is the relation between approval and implementation more appropriate to the implementation objectives (Rule "n +3" in 2010, Rule "n +2" in the remaining years and closure, at least by 2015)? Is the performance recorded in the various Priority Axis and Specific Objectives / Types identical? Where are the best performances registered? And the worst? What are the causes of such performances?</p>   |
| <i>Implementation vs Performance and Results</i>  |  |  |
| <p>Assess the adequacy of the implementation instruments adopted to the prosecution of the specific objectives and indicators defined in the programming period</p>   | <p><b>3.1. Do the Regulations provide the types of projects that allow materializing the objectives of ON.2 and indicators? Did the "notices" provide support to typologies of projects contributing to the achievement of these objectives and indicators? Did the process for selecting the operations allow selecting those that most contributed to these objectives and indicators?</b></p> | <p>Do the "Regulations" provide or not some distortion on the programming?</p>   |
|   |  | <p>Are there any types provided in the Regulations not covered by "notices"? Is its annual programming aligned with the timing of goals?</p>   |
|   |  | <p>If there are deviations, where do they come from? From the explanation and analysis of the criteria? From the poor response of demand?</p>  |
|   |  | <p>If there are significant potential deviations regarding these objectives and indicators, in relative terms, are they due to the "Regulations", the "Notices" or to the process for selecting the operations?</p>  |
| <p>Are the specific objectives and indicators of ON.2 still appropriate? Where do changes should be made? On the objectives and indicators? On the "Regulations"? On the profile of the future "Notices"? On the selection criteria? On the selection procedures?</p> |  |  |
| <i>Partnerships (related to Management)</i>   |  |  |
| <p>Review the adequacy of established partnerships, based on the various action plans, on the framework of requirements for effective and efficient management</p>  | <p><b>4.1. Are the objectives of the various Action Plans aligned with the specific objectives and indicators of ON.2?</b></p>   | <p>Are the objectives of the various Action Plans (Territorial Development Programmes, Action Plans from the CEE, PRU, etc ...) that worked as a support to the establishment of these partnerships aligned with the specific objectives and indicators of ON.2? Where do major deviations may be registered?</p>  |
|   | <p><b>4.2. Is the selectivity of the operations within each Action Plan identical to what occurs in common "Notices"?</b></p>  | <p>What selectivity is possible to impose when selecting the operations? Have these Action Plans allowed integration in terms of thematic, time and space of policy instruments? Have they been implemented on time?</p>   |
|   | <p><b>4.3. Do these approved Action Plans impose more or less flexibility in managing the ON.2 regarding the need to ensure the levels of physical and financial implementation scheduled?</b></p>   | <p>Are the necessary mechanisms for its review and adjustment provided? What contribution do they have on the ON.2 overall performance with regard to overall levels of approval and implementation?</p>   |
| <i>Costs of Transaction</i>   |  |  |
| <p>Evaluate the transaction costs imposed by the governance model, identifying the need to readjust procedures and finding out the response level from the Information System to the management needs;</p>  | <p><b>5.1. Are the Notices and the demanding level of the application procedures adequate, considering the objectives and deadlines of the call for tenders?</b></p>   | <p>Are the "Notices" explicit enough in their aims, types, co-financing, results, etc. regarding the operations to be approved? Are the requirements regarding the investigation of applications reasonable to meet deadlines and objectives for each call for tender? Was the demand the most appropriate to the supply of finance?</p>   |
|   | <p><b>5.2. Are the processes of analysis and decision on the applications in accordance with the required quality and deadlines?</b></p>   | <p>Did the analysis of admissibility and acceptability of operations take place with the quality and speed needed? What selectivity exists at this level? Is it appropriate or not? Isn't there the risk that the selectivity can happen at this stage and not at the analysis of merit? If yes, what is the cause? The inability of correct instruction about the applications by the beneficiaries? The difficulties in interpreting the requirements under the "Notices"?</p>   |
|   |  | <p>And what about the analysis of merit? Was it hold in accordance with the provisions in time? Are the decision maker's utility duties, explained in the multi-criteria analysis table, the most appropriate? Do they allow doing the best ranking of the operations in relation to the objectives? Are they sufficiently discriminating? Are there different scores assigned to different criteria? Or can some criteria not differentiate the merit of the applications? Are these functions appropriate even when the number of operations under analysis is high? Does the analysis of the merits allow ensuring the reasonableness of the budgets for the approved operations?</p> |
|   |  | <p>After the analysis of the merits, do the approvals by the Executive Committee happen on time? What are the time-periods that happen between the approvals, notifications, analysis of (potential) resources and contracts? Are there any critical points in this final stage of decision-making process? What are the causes?</p>   |
|   | <p><b>5.3. Once agreed, have the operations been performed in accordance with the expected and are the number of checks and validations by the Technical Secretariat appropriate regarding the desirable pace of refunds?</b></p>  | <p>Is the process of investigation of claims for payment by the promoters simple and adequate? Does it take too long to consider? Once considered, are there many errors detected? What kind of errors are more frequent? What are the causes?</p>   |
|   |  | <p>Do the non-conformities detected have any effect on postponing the deadlines? What consequences can it have on reimbursement? Is the financial implementation monitoring linked to the physical implementation? Can it happen that they are not in tune? How can one reconcile the desirable pace of reimbursements to the needs for physical and financial reprogramming of operations?</p>  |

| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES  | EVALUATION QUESTIONS  | COMPLEMENTARILY AND SUPPORT QUESTIONS   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <p><b>5.4. Does the Information System (SIGON.2) meet all the requirements in the regulations to support the management of ON.2, in particular the "Compliance Assessment"?</b></p> | <p>Does it have enabled gains in management efficiency and effectiveness regarding to that established in the previous programming period (SIGNO)? What are the main differences? Have its widespread use by the Technical Secretariats been secured without great expense? And what about the external users? Have they adapted themselves to the new management model that involves the electronic submission of applications and requests for payments through SIGON.2? There have been complaints? What are the causes? Have SIGNO.2 been updated, where necessary, in order to improve its accessibility for beneficiaries and reduce the (potential) claims? Is the SIGON.2 from the point of view of its "front office" the most "user's friendly" as possible? When (eventually) that is not the case, is it due to the SIGON.2 itself or to the management model of ON.2 behind it (reflected particularly in its "Compliance Assessment")? Are there any new developments planned for SIGON.2? Do these developments allow addressing new issues that the next stages of the programme's life period impose?</p>  |
| <b>Communication Plan</b>  |   |   |
| <p>Evaluate the implementation levels of the Communication Plan, in terms of objectives accomplished and the results and goals achieved.</p> | <p><b>6.1. Has the Communication Plan been implemented according to schedule?</b></p>   | <p>Have the targets been pursued? What are the deviations and changes? And the actions that embody it, have they been put into practice? Did partnerships for dissemination take place? Has the promotion in the press (both in terms of "advertising" or in terms of "publicity") been ensured? Have the dissemination and electronic communication, through its own website and newsletter, been continuously developed? To what extent? And what about the public events, related either to the dissemination of the strategy or funding opportunities or the outcomes, have they been properly planned and carried out according to management needs of the ON.2 - "O Novo Norte"? Are the other communication and dissemination supports (brochures, flyers, mailing) the right ones? Have they been produced in the quantities required to reach the stakeholders? Was the policy of "branding" the most appropriate? And have the actions for the "Novo Norte" brand extension been highlighted in the Plan of Communication? And in the communication for "new audiences" expected by the Communication Plan, what progress has been achieved? What are the expectations?</p> |
|  | <p><b>6.2. Have the results and goals outlined in the Communication Plan been achieved?</b></p>   | <p>Have the indicators of performance and result and their targets in the Communication Plan been achieved? What about in terms of accessibility? Does the website registered an increasing number of users? Are those users aligned with the target audiences? What kind of support do they meet? Has the relevant information, by this way or another, reached the target groups defined? What is the perception of public opinion and published regarding the ON.2? Is it associated with the Structural Funds? With Regional policy? With the Norte Region and the idea that it is intended to convey? With the CCDR-N? Does the brand extension policy begin to show results? Does the branding will put "O Novo Norte" as a global brand from the Norte Region? What is the assessment so far on the results regarding the results reported previously concerning the "ON – Operação Norte"? Are they the best? How and why? Are they worse? How and why? What measures should be implemented to enhance the results achieved so far?</p>   |
|  | <p><b>6.3. Have the Regulatory obligations (information and advertising) been implemented?</b></p>  | <p>Has the role played by the Management Authority with the beneficiaries, provided by the Plan of Communication and by the Community legislation been achieved? Do the tools for information, awareness, monitoring and enlightenment exist and work? What is the level of specificity? And what are the results? Are they better or worse than those obtained in the previous programming period?</p>   |

Source: Evaluation Team (2010)

### III. METHODOLOGIES FOR THE EVALUATION

26. The evaluation exercises on the policy instruments for socioeconomic development require the adoption of multi-dimensional methodological approaches that manage to comprise and understand, in an integrated way, the multiplicity of questions associated to it and the various perspectives under which these may be observed. The methodological approach for this evaluation has taken this need and is supported by a wide range of methodologies for collecting and analyzing information.
27. The selection and application of these methodologies have resulted from a careful reading of the technical implications associated with each evaluation question, so that the most adequate instruments were applied for each one. This reading reflects an improvement regarding the methodology proposed at the beginning, consolidated in the Initial Report presented on the 2010.09.01 and approved by the ON.2 Steering Committee.
28. In this sense, a Toolbox of methodologies was elaborated to achieve the Study objectives. In the selection of the methodologies to use, it was sought to combine "classical" evaluation techniques for socioeconomic programmes, such as the interviews, or the documents analysis, and information systems information, using "innovative" instruments as is the case of the Beneficiary Web Survey.

**Table 4. Toolbox of Methodologies of Evaluation**

| Designation                                  | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>Semi-Structured individual interviews</b> | These are interviews whose speakers are individuals/representatives of entities, who for their role and their knowledge, appear to be relevant to help explaining to the Evaluation Team the issues that characterize the object of the study.<br>The working model of this methodology consisted of individual interviews, according to a semi-structured model, based on a script of pre-defined questions. Interviews were made with the representatives from the various entities, considered relevant for the evaluation purposes. Several meetings also took place to monitor the speakers responsible for the ON.2 monitoring and management.                                 |
| <b>Beneficiary Web Survey</b>                | It consisted of the elaboration and processing of questionnaires to the Programme's recipients, headed to their universe or specifically headed to the beneficiaries of specific Calls for Tenders (for the Case Studies). The application of this online inquiry methodology has many advantages for the evaluation process, particularly in terms of the level of engagement of beneficiaries, the increased speed of communication, processing and analysis of the results, saving resources and consequently, the possibility to extend the inquiry to the entire universe of beneficiaries.   |
| <b>Information Systems Analysis</b>          | Data collection from SIGON.2, complemented with statistical information from several official sources, was a basic methodology for the preparation of the Study. Several statistical techniques were used allowing them to transform the information collected from the information systems into indicators.   |
| <b>Documental Collection and Analysis</b>    | The back-office work consisted of the identification, selection and collection of reports, regulations, application forms, technical studies and other documents related to the ON.2 management. Subsequently, the analysis of collected documental information took place, trying to filter, summarize, and systematize the most relevant information contained therein.  |
| <b>Focus Group</b>                           | The Focus Group is an instrument that integrates the primary information instruments at the level of qualitative data, but it is also an instrument that belongs to the discussion methodologies. There were two Focus Group sessions, one at the CCDR-N on 2011.01.25, where all the Intermunicipal Communities (CIM) from the Norte had participated, including AMP (Porto Metropolitan Area), with the exception for Douro, Ave and Cávado CIM, and the other one at Hotel Tuela-Porto on 2011.02.01, where editors/journalists from various media had participated, namely the Jornal de Notícias, Jornal Público, Grande Porto, Rádio Renascença, Agência Lusa and Porto Canal. |

Source: Evaluation Team (2010)

29. As prescribed in the schedule of works and in accordance with the guidelines agreed with the Monitoring Group (GA) during the second phase of the Study, the methodological steps related to the Web Beneficiary Survey were implemented. The following table presents the dimension of the universe of the inquiry (number of inquiries sent) and the number of answers by major types of beneficiaries. Taking into account the total number of valid answers (577), it appears that the margin of error associated with the results obtained is less than 5% for a confidence level of 95%.

**Table 5. Resume of the Inquiries Sent and Answers Obtained**

|                              | Universe | No of answers | % of answers |
|------------------------------|----------|---------------|--------------|
| Notice GAEPC/01/2008         | 52       | 27            | 51,9         |
| Notice PRU/02/2008           | 92       | 48            | 52,2         |
| Notice Mar/TC//PCT/1/2009    | 1        | 1             | 100,0        |
| Notice SALECT-IETIEFE/1/2009 | 25       | 16            | 64,0         |
| Promoters Universe           | 2.342    | 577           | 24,6         |

Source: Evaluation Team (2011)

**Table 6. Resume of the Answers Obtained, by Typology of Beneficiaries**

| Typology of Beneficiaries  | Answers    |            |
|--|------------|------------|
|  | No         | %          |
| Municipality/Intermunicipal Community/Metropolitan Area                        | 74         | 13         |
| Municipal Public Enterprise, Intermunicipal or Metropolitan/Municipal Services | 16         | 3          |
| Higher Education Institution   | 7          | 1          |
| Central Administration/Public Entity or Similar Held by the State              | 16         | 3          |
| Enterprise   | 258        | 45         |
| Foundation or Non-Profitable Private Entity                                    | 190        | 33         |
| Others   | 16         | 3          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>577</b> | <b>100</b> |

Source: Evaluation Team (2011)

## IV. SYNTHESIS OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

30. This current chapter highlights the conclusions and the recommendations considered the most relevant from the whole evaluation process.
31. The density and the specificity of the Study's 17 evaluation questions – focusing on very different areas– led to a vast number of conclusions in the answers introduced by the Evaluation Team, which wealth and extent suggests the reading of the Final Report.
32. In this context, the following table highlights the main conclusions, structured according to the specific objectives of the Evaluation.

**Table 7. Main Conclusions of the Evaluation Study**

|                                       | Main Evaluation Questions   | Evaluation Conclusive Synthesis   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Ex-Ante Evaluation Follow Up</i>   | May the governance model for the Regional OPs compromise the institutional densification and the strengthening of the model of regional governance for the development of the Norte Region? | The current ON.2 model of governance reveals a considerable degree of development, incorporating several advantages compared to the previous programming period, being worth to highlight the gains from elimination of redundant structures but simultaneously the weaknesses and significant losses on matters of public scrutiny and territorialisation of public policies.  |
|                                       | Did the methodology adopted for setting Specific Regulations, uniform at the national level, allow overcoming the weaknesses of the governance model or not?                                | The fact that this model is applied uniformly and authoritative in all regions, can negatively affect the role of the regional Management Authority, which met a significant restriction of its powers and intervention capacity, particularly with regard to the selection process of applications, due to the fact of being very parameterized and regulated.   |
|                                       | What role may have played institutional partnerships and contracting processes to eliminate these weaknesses?   | The impetus and promotion of institutional partnerships allowed qualitative leap in the field of sedimentation of the regional model of governance, ensuring greater involvement of the most representative actors of the Norte in terms of sectors and territory, and therefore a wider scrutiny.  |
|                                       | What are the advantages and disadvantages of working models of institutional partnerships comparing to others similar in the previous programming period?                                   | The models of partnerships of ON.2, nevertheless, find themselves in continuity with the experiences of the previous programme framework, are innovative and have important advances. Among the greatest advantages one can highlight the creation of spaces organically set of scrutiny and reflection, the monitoring of the implementation and of the regional effects of public policies and instruments of regional development, enhancing planning and intermunicipal cooperation and the decentralization of the Programme's management. Among its major drawbacks, one can underline the loss of flexibility, negotiation and also the educational impact that resulted from the operation of the Management Units. |
| <i>Implementation vs. Programming</i> | Are the pace of approval and release of "Notices" compatible with the programming of ON.2?  | ON.2's financial performance has been generally positive with regard to the engagement rate, which on September 30, 2010, reached 51%, and on December 31, 2010, 66%. As a result, the level of approvals achieved by the end of 2010 exceeded the expected in terms of programming in about 20%.   |
|                                       | Is the expenditure approved in the "Earmarking" priority themes consistent with the schedule?   | The highest concentration of ERDF allocated by the ON.2 to earmarking priority areas (70% of the volume of approvals and 74% of implementation), reflects the direction of the Programme to pursue the priorities of the Lisbon Strategy and has also allowed to fulfil the targets set for this domain.  |
|                                       | Is the overall pace of implementation of ON.2 compatible with the main management goals established?  | The financial performance of ON.2 regarding the implementation was rather modest (9% on September 30, 2010 and 15% on December 31, 2010), but, nevertheless, in line with the other Operational Programmes of the Regions of Convergence in Mainland. The rate of implementation was mainly influenced by the changing of the economic and financial context, generating significant effects on the availability of financing and investment capacity by private and public promoters, but also reflects the insufficient maturation of a number of projects submitted and approved.  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Implementation vs. Performance and Results | <p>Do the Notices and Regulations provided for the types of projects allow materializing the objectives of ON.2 and related indicators?</p>   | <p>Any mismatches between the regulatory framework and the objectives and the indicators of ON.2 come from the methodology used in the design of the Specific Regulations (RE), at the National level, and evenly and simultaneously to all the Mainland Regional Operational Programmes and some thematic OPs. Still, it appears that the Notices and Regulations set out the types required to implement the objectives of ON.2. and related indicators, although it is also worth mentioning that there were limitations to the information available during the elaboration phase of the battery of indicators, worsened by the technical complexity of some intervention areas. Moreover, the final architecture of the Programme, resulting from the production of Specific Regulations nationwide, led to concentration of private investments in Axis I (Incentive Systems). Therefore, some indicators do not have translation on Axis II, as set out in the programming document approved programme (the "Enhancement of Collective Business Efficiency Incentive Systems", of Axis II, moved into Axis I).</p>  |
|  | <p>Did the process for selecting the operations allow selecting those that most contributed to these objectives and indicators?</p>   | <p>The acceleration by the end of 2010 of the rate of release of notices and the approval and contracting process of projects confirm the adequacy of the selection of operations to the majority of the targets set, even if it is identified deviations from the physical performance regarding the goals set. This arises from the fact that there was not a sufficient number of applications for some types, which will justify the reformulation of the indicators and / or goals.</p>   |
| Partnerships                               | <p>Are the objectives of the various Action Plans that would support the establishment of Partnerships, aligned with specific objectives and indicators of ON.2 or somehow show deviations?</p>   | <p>The various action programmes, which would support the establishment of four partnership models analyzed (PRU, RUCI, PROVERE and Contracting with the CIM/AMP) are aligned with the overall architecture of the ON.2, presenting, however, some specificities.</p> <p>In the case of the instruments of cities policy (PRU and RUCI), this alignment is immediately assured, as it results from specific objectives well defined at ON.2.</p> <p>The approved Action Plans of PROVERE are aligned with the ON.2, to the extent that the architecture of the Programme provides a specific target for the low-density areas, namely "economic enhancement of endogenous resources in areas of low density and diversity of economic activity of the rural area (s)" included in the II Priority Axis.</p> <p>The Development Territorial Programmes (PTD), which include strategies for integrated development of the CIM/AMP, are those better aligned with the objectives and indicators of ON.2, do not have direct correspondence with the specific objectives and indicators of ON.2, to which is added that each PTD is not framed by only one Specific Regulation. The alignment happens through the approved operations resultant from the PTD, as being framed by certain Specific Regulations, are aligned with a specific objective and related indicators.</p> |
|  | <p>Is the selectivity of the operations within each Plan the most suitable and is it identical to that which occurs in the "normal" Notices? Is it possible to impose more selective criteria of operations?</p>  | <p>In the selection of operations within each instrument, one can note that the criteria matrices tend to be generalists. If for the Specific Regulations this feature results from the need of its suitability for differing regional contexts, the same is not true for the selectivity of operations. It is considered, therefore, that a more detailed approach of these criteria contributes to a better processing of the applications, speeding up the selection of operations, as well as a more detailed selectivity and adapted to the needs of the Management and the achievement of the objectives of regional development in priority areas.</p> <p>The selection of regulated and standardized operations, however, on the moment of selecting the operations, it is possible, in some cases, for the Management Authority to find additional response mechanisms that ensure a more careful selectivity.</p> <p>However, the lack of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating at the PRU, RUCI and PTD, which allow, on a regular basis, to make adjustments in the projects under the Action Plans, sets an important base limitation (importance of enabling the Management Authority with mechanisms to, in a timely manner, ensure the completion of a small evaluation / point of situation, rethinking of the relevance of the projects).</p>           |
|  | <p>Have Action Plans allowed integration in terms of theme, time and space of the policy instruments and have they been implemented on schedule?</p>  | <p>In conceptual terms, it is assured that action plans have integration in terms of thematic, time and space of the policy instruments, since their respective Specific Regulations establish the temporal and spatial horizons in which they should apply and privilege integrated approaches in thematic terms. This conceptual concern found in the Specific Regulations is in close conjunction with lessons from past experience that had confirmed the low effectiveness of extremely sectoral approaches. Based on a matrix of ten themes, the assessment of the actors involved in partnerships and the nature of the projects included in the approved action programmes, it was shown that all plans tend to have integrated approaches to the area they are headed to.</p> <p>Therefore, the accomplishment of the action plans on schedule is marked by initial difficulties and vicissitudes that marked the processes of formation and formalization. At the same time, the poor instruction presented by the applications submitted, in most instruments, largely conditioned delays in their approval.</p>  |
|  | <p>Do these approved Action Plans impose more or less flexibility in managing the ON.2 facing the need to ensure the levels of physical and financial implementation scheduled, and what contribution do they show to the overall performance of ON.2 in relation to overall levels of approval</p> | <p>The slowness that characterized the initial stage of formalization and establishment of partnerships, in most instruments, the several sequential steps to overcome (in the case of PROVERE, included an initial phase of Preparatory Actions), arising from the obligation of complying with the established on the Specific Regulations, plus the fact that the selection/approval of the action programmes from PRU and RUCI involve a "direct approval" of the applications there included, and therefore becoming commitments to be made by the Management Authority (even if they are conditioned approvals implying a "new" submission and "new" assessment), places a greater rigidity in the Management and it is more difficult to</p>  |



|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | and implementation?   | maintain the levels of physical and financial implementation scheduled.<br>Action Plans play a significant contribution to the overall levels of approval and implementation of ON.2, representing 31.7% of the total ERDF approved in the OP and 41.7% of the implementations carried out in the context of the operations approved for action programmes. However, there are significant asymmetries between the various instruments.  |
| Costs of Transaction: from the Notices to the Contracts                  | Are the Notices and the demanding level of application procedures appropriate with regard to the targets and deadlines of the tenders?  | The configuration of the Notices was crucial to the development and implementation of the tendering process by the beneficiaries, since the initial decision to move forward with the application to the investigation and subsequent submission. Assessing how the profile of the financed operations is explained in terms of objectives, types of investment and beneficiary, co-financing, and eligibility and admissibility conditions, there were no weaknesses or omissions.  |
|  | Are the processes of analysis and decision on the applications in accordance with the required quality and deadlines?   | In some tenders, the volume of applications submitted far exceeded what would be expected, therefore, in some exceptional cases, the Management Authority has made the reinforcements of allocation in order to maximize the approval of applications of superior merit. This option by the Management Authority and not the option of providing new tenders, contributed to the fact that a significant number of approved projects had shown clear weaknesses in terms of reduced maturity and instructive, but to compensate it limited the transaction costs and the possibility of generating the entropy in the implementation of the Operational Programme.<br><br>On the other hand, not always the option of resorting to a multi-criteria grid proved to be relevant and useful in the selectivity of applications. Thus, to keep this feature, it should be ensured that its ultimate goal is to build a hierarchy of high quality of applications that follow and sustain the budgetary allocation for Tender.   |
| Costs of Transaction: from the Contracting Process to the Implementation | Once signed the contract, have the operations been performed in accordance with the provisions and is the number of checks and validations by the Technical Secretariat appropriate regarding the desirable pace for reimbursement? | In the five operations selected for the case study, the OP implementation solutions ensure the compliance with the norms and deadlines related to the verification of the physical and financial implementation of the operations. However, it was also confirmed that there is a set of conditions, which impose transaction costs and may adversely affect the pace of implementation of the OP. The call-back skills within the overall grant agreements made with the CIM/AMP and the reprogramming of operations after the funding contract, by request by the beneficiary or by changes on the regulatory framework have also put greater pressure on the technicians that analyzed the requests for payment, implying doubling of some procedures and the consequent increase in "transaction costs".   |
| Costs of Transaction: Information System                                 | Does the Information System meet all the requirements in the regulations that support the management of ON.2, in particular its "Compliance Assessment"?  | The SIGON.2 represents a critical element for ON.2 implementation, assuming in the current programming period a role far more relevant to the performance of the management system and control than that recorded in previous periods of community programming. In fact, the SIGON.2 sets a much more advanced and versatile solution, due to both the effect of technology adopted and the architecture defined by the extent of its features and capabilities, which have allowed, overall, very positive response to the challenges posed by the regulatory framework of the NSRF and the requirements of the Management and Control System. In addition, the interoperability with information systems is guaranteed for the main external entities concerned. However, the regulatory and normative instability that has been observed, is a natural constraint on the normal development of the implementation of SIGON.2, which is worse when the changes involve retroactive effects on projects approved or even running.<br><br>The interoperability with the information system is guaranteed for the main external parties involved: the IFDR, IP in the areas of certification and monitoring (the latter, since January 2011) and COMPETE in the Network Business Incentives. The envisaged interoperability with other thematic Operational Programmes is not implemented. In conjunction with the information system of the CCDR-N, there is still a set of operations that is not yet supported by SIGON.2 (for example, the procedures related to contracts for the allocation of funding and procedures relating to environment and land use management). |
| Communication Plan   | Has the Communication Plan been implemented as planned, and have the results and goals been achieved?   | The first phase of the Communication Plan, "Release, Knowledge and Implementation", has been performed in accordance with the provisions established in the programming, allowing to design and support the identity of the Operational Programme and to guide the search. The overall goals were met and sometimes exceeded, being the most significant indicators those related to accessing the website of the Programme and the media communication. The policy of regular information was taken up and developed with remarkable success, as recognized by the various target audiences. In 2010, 44% of the news about the Programme resulted from communication actions triggered by CCDR-N/ON.2. The policy of branding that has been developed, has managed to promote the "Novo Norte" brand awareness (the brand extension of "ON.2 – O Novo Norte") as a Region global brand, associating to it a promising and innovative image.  |
|  | Have the regulatory obligations for the dissemination of information and publicity been implemented?  | The Management Authority developed the Identity Manual of ON.2, thus complying with the requirements, rules and procedures laid down by the Community legislation and to establish universal minimum requirements to be applied by the beneficiaries in terms of information and dissemination. The beneficiaries have been respecting and using the obligations that are part of the Identity Manual of ON.2. Broadly speaking, the beneficiaries do not have difficulties in fulfilling the obligations of information and publicity, where only some constraints, residually, are pointed.  |



33. Although the study had primarily focused on issues related to the implementation of ON.2 – complying with the national and Community rules and guidelines of the Global Evaluation Plan of NSRF and the Evaluation Plan of ON.2 - the results obtained allow a broader approach, in some cases, of a strategic nature.
34. Thus, with the aim of enhancing the usefulness of the results – from a process-improvement perspective - the recommendations were organized into multiple types and macro-objectives, according to criteria of objectivity, relevance and effectiveness/efficiency.
35. For each of the 49 recommendations presented in the following table, it is identified the entity/bodies responsible for the project and its priority level (3 being the highest).

**Table 8. Synthesis of Recommendations, Entity Responsible for the Implementation and Priority Level**

| #   | Recommendation   | Entity Responsible   | Priority Level |
|---|--|--|----------------|
| <b>A. Improve the Implementation Overall Efficiency</b> |  |  |                |
| 01  | Strengthen the capacity of the Management Authority in terms of design and adjustment of regulatory decision-making processes.   | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR (Financial Institute for Regional Development) | 3              |
| 02  | Consider the more frequent resource to alternative methods for submitting applications besides call for tenders, such as applications in continuous or the invitations, particularly in cases of single recipients or in limited numbers, and when the budget is set to <i>a priori</i> .  | Technical Secretariats/ Steering Committee   | 2              |
| 03  | Improve planning and compliance with the timings for the release of Call for Tenders - matching an approximation of the dates scheduled/planned to the effective dates of the launch - and communication well in advance to potential developers.  | Steering Committee/Communication Office  | 2              |
| 04  | Promote, in general, the shortening of deadlines for decisions and make them more realistic and adjusted to the actual ability to comply by providing the Management Authority the capacity to manage them, for example, according to the expected demand.   | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR  | 2              |
| 05  | Bridging the effective time of the decision of those in perspective based on the Notices, not creating unrealistic expectations to the promoters.  | Steering Committee   | 2              |
| 06  | Intervene close to the competent authorities to ensure that the projects approved under the NSRF have a "fast lane" with respect to deadlines for assessment and issuance of licenses and certificates.  | Technical Secretariats / Steering Committee  | 3              |
| 07  | Set time limits for responding the entities with responsibilities in issuing opinions on the applications submitted.   | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR  | 3              |
| 08  | Evaluate what the indispensable opinions are and tacitly assume the positivity of "non-core", by default/no response/opinion, once completed the stipulated period.  | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR / Steering Committee                           | 3              |
| 09  | Set, based on the Regulation, the bodies of the Ministries responsible for issuing opinions that accompany the applications in order to expedite the procedure required, and this way, reduce the average time of decision.  | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR  | 3              |
| 10  | Set guidelines to support the preparation of opinions, especially when in the same Specific Regulation several entities are involved.  | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR  | 3              |
| 11  | Simplify procedures for checking the contracting procedures in cases of direct award of small amounts.   | Ministerial Coordination Committee of the NSRF and IFDR  | 2              |
| 12  | Establish less generalist criteria for assessing the Merit of Operation (MO), presenting a more detailed and adaptation to the region situation.   | Monitoring Committee and Management Authority  | 3              |
| <b>B. Reviewing the Programming Documents</b>           |  |  |                |
| 13  | Reduce, in a future re-programming, the value of private funding programmed for the OP and focus this source only on the Axes where regulation and compliance enable this type of financing. Consider, then, depending on the development of OP, the feasibility of increasing the funding set by the ERDF and reduce the national public funding participation. | Technical Secretariats / Steering Committee  | 3              |
| 14  | Undertake a comprehensive review of indicators, including:<br>✓ Replace the indicators not adaptable to the approved regulatory framework and include indicators that allow assessing achievements and results generated by  | Technical Secretariats / Steering Committee  | 3              |

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
|   | <p>operations supported by not-covered types;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Review the Axes indicators, adapting them to the operations envisaged in the Specific Regulation, so that all types are covered by one indicator of achievement, at least;</li> <li>✓ Increase the targets set for the indicators where they have been exceeded or that there is a strong chance for this to happen;</li> <li>✓ Reduce the value of the goals of the indicators, which have a lower chance of achievement and/or create conditions so that the projects to be supported involve lower investment average amounts.</li> </ul> |  |   |
| 15  | Increase the investment scheduled for the earmarking priority themes "Investment in companies directly linked to research and innovation and Education", "Ports", "Information and Communication Technologies" and "Services and applications for citizens".  | Technical Secretariats/<br>Steering Committee  | 3 |
| 16  | Reduce the planned investment for the earmarking theme "Technology transfer and improvement of cooperation networks between small and medium enterprises" and reassess the ability for effective implementation of the programmed values for the group "Environmental protection and risk prevention", in particular the values associated with urban water cycle.  | Technical Secretariats/<br>Steering Committee  | 3 |
| 17  | Re-evaluate the implementation capacity of the earmarking themes classified in the groups "Adaptability of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs," "Access to employment and sustainability", "Social inclusion of the disadvantaged" and "Improvement of human capital."  | Technical Secretariats /<br>Steering Committee                                       | 3 |
| 18  | Increase targets, of the majority of the indicators of the Communication Plan, adapting them to the pace of implementation for the next years.  | Marketing and<br>Communication Office/<br>Steering Committee                         | 3 |
| 19  | Review the PTD, for formal reasons (implications of Memoranda) and further adjustment to changes/options assumed in the first period (priority of Education over other types contracted).   | CIM/AMP  | 3 |
| <b>C. Improving the Financial Performance</b>   |   |  |   |
| 20  | Identify the operations, which financial transactions that are completed on time require a significant acceleration in the pace of implementation and the promoters, whose ability to proceed with the project is clearly limited, preferably, in the latter case, proceed to cancellation of funds.  | Technical Secretariats   | 3 |
| 21  | Give priority to the contracts of the operations approved and to the effective verification of the commitments assumed, and not yet turned into approvals, to be achieved in the planned timings.   | Technical Secretariats   | 3 |
| 22  | Consider the arbitration between the reprogramming with the increased rates of co-financing (with the associated decrease of eligible expenditure), the non fulfillment of the amounts of the Community Fund provided by the ON.2, with the consequent reduction of the eligible investment and/or the reprogramming between Axes ensuring a better match to the pace of implementation and allowing a better approach to achieve the financial goals of the Programme without, however, compromise the attainment of the global objectives of ON2.   | Steering Committee   | 3 |
| 23  | In the absence of a reprogramming, it will be necessary to achieve the values programmed by commitment, a reduction of co-financing rates implicit in future approvals of Axis I and IV.  | Technical Secretariats/<br>Steering Committee  | 3 |
| <b>D. Improving the Management Model</b>  |   |  |   |
| 24  | Implement, totally, the functions of the bodies that integrate the governance model, namely, the Strategic Advisory Committee (strengthening of the functions of strategic advice, in close collaboration with the Centre for Observation of Regional Dynamics, by identifying the challenges and structuring projects for regional development).   | Strategic Advisory<br>Committee  | 3 |
| <b>E. Improving Human Resources Allocation</b>  |   |  |   |
| 25  | Improve the planning of the calls for tenders, limiting the burden on human resources at peak times, high number of applications for consideration, and increasing their ability to respond in time.  | Ministerial Coordination<br>Committee of the NSRF<br>and IFDR/ Steering<br>Committee | 2 |
| 26  | Involve the technician that analyzes the approved application in the monitoring of the implementation of the projects after the contract, from the perspective of a project manager throughout its life cycle, allowing to introduce a more efficient management of resources and a more effective monitoring.  | Ministerial Coordination<br>Committee of the NSR,<br>IFDR and IGF                    | 3 |
| <b>F. Increasing the Effectiveness and Efficiency in the Assessment of Applications</b> |   |  |   |
| 27  | Maximize the standardization of information and documents/items to display (introductory phase), particularly in the structuring/standardization of the budget readings.  | Technical Secretariats/<br>Steering Committee  | 3 |

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| 28  | Standardize reference costs for some expenses and set thresholds by type (ensure the budget discipline of the beneficiaries).  | Technical Secretariats/<br>Steering Committee  | 3 |
| 29  | Strengthen and improve the internal management of projects, leveraging the advantages of coordination/consultation arising from the fact that the entity responsible for Land Management and the entity responsible for the examination/approval of the investment are "integrated" in the same structure (two processes with internal treatment at the CCDRN).  | Management Authority/<br>CCDRN   | 3 |
| 30  | Ensure timely availability of merit criteria in order to increase the quality of descriptive memories and, simultaneously, provide greater transparency in decision-making.  | Technical Secretariats/<br>Steering Committee  | 2 |
| <b>G. Improving the Performance and Strengthening the Relevance of the Monitoring Processes</b> |  |  |   |
| 31  | Track and monitor the Action Programmes approved within the instruments of the Cities Policy, to ensure their evaluation and reprogramming on schedule, the compliance with the integrated approach and its contribution to territorial competitiveness and innovation, as well as to ensure increased levels of Implementation.   | Ministerial Coordination<br>Committee of the NSRF<br>and IFDR, Management<br>Authority and Technical<br>Secretariats | 3 |
| 32  | Follow up and monitor the Territorial Development Programmes ensuring the implementation and compliance with the contracted typologies.  | Management Authority and<br>CIM/AMP  | 3 |
| 33  | Monitor the implementation and results of the actors engagement that integrate the various partnerships.   | Strategic Advisory<br>Committee/ Management<br>Authority   | 3 |
| 34  | Monitor on a regular basis the deadlines for submitting applications for payment and the adequacy of the implementation level to the schedule of projects.   | Technical Secretariats   | 3 |
| <b>H. Improving the Performance of the Information System</b>                                   |  |  |   |
| 35  | Integrate in the System the processes associated with the analysis of the admissibility and merits of applications, promoting, this way, greater efficiency in the processes of analysis and giving greater depth and updated information provided by SIGON.2  | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 3 |
| 36  | Develop the features associated with the extraction of management information for internal monitoring of the OP, for example, setting pre-formatted reports (such as "tableau du bord") that can be generated automatically by the System at intervals defined for each output type or at any time that is sought to get, expeditiously, updated assessment of the situation.  | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 3 |
| 37  | Introduce adaptations in the interfaces and outputs of the Information System for the management, making them more "user friendly".  | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 2 |
| 38  | Update and strengthen internal training to promote ease of access and information extraction and exploring the full potential of the System by its users.  | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 2 |
| 39  | Prioritise the introduction of further developments in SIGON.2 considering: the availability of application forms and payment requests in pdf format; ease of fulfilling in the application forms and payment requests and the incorporation of the registration of suppliers; the submission of large files expeditiously; the integration of procedures related to financing agreements.   | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 3 |
| 40  | Complete the functionalities associated with the interoperability of the CCDR-N <i>Expedientissimo</i> as well as with the rest of the NSRF Thematic OPs, in order to maximize the efficiency of the implemented systems and the compliance with the provisions of the Compliance (for example, the procedures related to the allocation of funding contracts and processes relating to the environment and spatial planning).   | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 2 |
| 41  | Implement in the short term, the Information System module associated with the establishment and management of physical indicators for monitoring the Programme, once set the concepts and methodologies to be adopted at the NSRF, particularly with respect to indicators of performance and result.   | Team responsible for the<br>Information System   | 2 |
| <b>I. Improving the Communication Effectiveness</b>   |  |  |   |
| 42  | Carry out with the improvements on the Programme's website:<br>1. In terms of utility, recent news and accessibility, including asserting a more intuitive and friendly web surfing and the introduction the FAQ;<br>2. Ensuring more rapid updates and providing some statements in audio-video format, enabling the improvement and quality of information provided and fill any gaps/absence at press conferences;<br>3. Creating and developing a specific area of a demonstrative nature, including examples of use and "best practices" as well as ensure greater efficiency in the process associated with info- promotional box e-mailing to help the beneficiary on the reporting of information and advertising. | Marketing and<br>Communication Office of<br>CCDR-N   | 2 |
| 43  | Minimize factors for non-participation of (potential) beneficiaries in dissemination actions, particularly in relation to the selected locations (fostering a greater geographical dispersion), the broad and timely dissemination to the increase of the period between the dissemination (knowledge ) and register/RSVP, as well as the  | Marketing and<br>Communication Office of<br>CCDR-N/ Steering<br>Committee  | 2 |

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|   | creation of additional actions, obviating the limitation of the number of participants.   |  |   |
| 44  | Increase the dissemination and advertising initiatives and increased production of news content associated with the <i>Novo Norte</i> Awards to attract new audiences and increasing demand associated with the types of beneficiaries with a lesser current extent.  | Marketing and Communication Office of CCDR-N/ Steering Committee | 3 |
| 45  | Increase the number of distribution spots of the DOURO UP publication (Town Hall of each municipality in the Region, major hotels, business associations and various structures from the Central Administration) and extend the concept/the initiative to other sub-regions, with recognized ability and dynamic installed.   | Marketing and Communication Office of CCDR-N/ Steering Committee | 1 |
| 46  | Evaluate the cost-benefit of establishing: a) the resumption of the partnership with the Porto Canal for implementation of the "Novo Norte" in the remaining years of the programming; b) a line/programme on the "Novo Norte" in a national radio station, with broadcast "on this day and at this time"; c) partnerships with weekly newspapers (Expresso and/or Grande Porto), while regional and national benchmarks. | Marketing and Communication Office of CCDR-N                     | 1 |
| <b>J. Ensuring the Compliance with the Regulatory Obligations and the Actions of the Communication Plan</b> |   |  |   |
| 47  | Develop the training/awareness/update for journalists (open to two journalists by editorial office) on the structural funds, the Programme and the Management of ON.2 advocated in the Plan but not yet implemented.  | Marketing and Communication Office of CCDR-N                     | 2 |
| 48  | Readjust the file provided to the beneficiaries, with the format and minimum dimensions for specific media.   | Marketing and Communication Office of CCDR-N                     | 2 |
| 49  | Elaborate the specific report and informative communication to beneficiaries on the held photographic reporting and start the consultation, analysis and report to applications and communications resources in 15 projects.  | Marketing and Communication Office of CCDR-N                     | 2 |