



Integrated Territorial Instrument of the Danube Delta – an assessment of its implementation, performance orientation and governance during 2016-2021

Final Report

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABRDD	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration
ACOP	Administrative Capacity Operational Programme
ADI ITI	Inter-Community Development Association - Integrated Territorial Investments
COP	Competitiveness Operational Programme
DDBRA	Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Area
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI Funds/ ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
FLAG	Functional Local Action Group
FMAOP	Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Operational Programme
FWG	Functional Working Group
HCOP	Human Capital Operational Programme
ISDDD	Integrated Strategy for the Development of the Danube Delta
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
LIOP	Large Infrastructure Operational Programme
MA	Managing Authority
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MDPWA	Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration
MEIP	Ministry of European Investments and Projects
MEWF	Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests
NRDP	National Rural Development Programme
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Priority Axis
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
TAOP	Technical Assistance Operational Programme
UP	Union Priority

1. Introduction

The Danube Delta – home to almost 300 bird species and 23 natural ecosystems– is the second largest river delta in Europe, and a World Heritage Site. A sparsely populated area, in acute isolation and with harsh living conditions, however, the Danube Delta experiences significant challenges and it is lagging behind from the perspective of socio-economic and environmental development.

The Integrated Strategy for the Development of the Danube Delta (ISDDD) is the reference strategic document for the development of the Danube Delta and its immediate neighbourhood, laying down a long-term vision for the area as a *“living delta, with balanced support for the environment and its community.”* Its strategic objectives feature the development of the Danube Delta in terms of preserving its unique environmental and natural resources and developing a sustainable green local economy. The strategy is integrated by design, as it covers all aspects relevant for a sustainable development of the Danube Delta over medium to long term.

Prompted by the introduction of the mechanism for integrated territorial development for the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESI Funds) for the programming period 2014-2020,¹ the strategy ISDDD was elaborated during 2013-2015 with the support of European Regional Development Fund and the expertise of the World Bank. Adopted in 2016 with a timeframe until 2030, the strategy was launched in implementation in the period 2014-2020 primarily based on EU financing from all operational programmes for ESI Funds in Romania. Over this period, a total of 1.3 billion euro was allocated for investments in all domains important for the development of the Danube Delta and its immediate neighbourhood. These domains include protecting biodiversity, developing the local economy, improving connectivity, modernizing the public services for education, health, social inclusion, water and waste management, and improving local administrative capacity and governance.

The objective of this assessment is to gather evidence and assess what worked and what could work better with the implementation of the strategy ISDDD based on the experience accumulated during the programming period 2014-2020. The study also includes an analysis of the performance orientation and the governance structure established for the implementation of the strategy, with the objective of identifying further avenues for improvement, where applicable, in view of the next programming period 2021-2027. This study was commissioned by the Directorate General of Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission and conducted during the period November 2021- March 2022.²

¹ Introduced as a new implementation tool for Cohesion Policy for the period 2014-2020, the ITI mechanism enables coordinating investments from one or several programmes for ESI Funds for an integrated approach to the development of a specified territory. For details see the study DG REGIO (2017) in References.

² All questions regarding this study should be addressed to DG REGIO at: REGIO-ROMANIA@ec.europa.eu .

The reference period for the evaluation is 2016-2021, and it covers all investments financed from allocations for integrated territorial development (ITI) in the 8 operational programmes in Romania for the programming period 2014-2020.

The present document is the final report of the assessment, and has the following structure. In the next section, Section 2, we present the main coordinates of the strategy for the integrated development of the Danube Delta, as relevant for the analysis in the study. Section 3 presents the two main previous evaluations of the ISDDD strategy and their recommendations for the programming period 2021-2027. Section 4 presents the methodological aspects of the study in terms of evaluation questions, data collected, and reference points. Section 5 includes the analysis of the status of implementation of the strategy over the reference period, with an emphasis on the distribution of the ITI investments across the main investment pillars of the strategy ISDDD. Section 6 includes the analysis of the alignment of the ITI investments implemented during 2014-2021 with the strategic priorities and the action plan foreseen in the ISDDD strategy. Section 7 includes the analysis of the time efficiency and operational effectiveness of the implementation of ITI investments. Section 8 presents the analysis of the governance and coordination mechanism for ITI investments, while Section 9 summarizes the main findings of the evaluation and provides recommendations for further improvements for updating and implementing the strategy ISDDD in the period 2021-2027. Annexes to the report complete the document.

2. The Integrated Strategy for the Development of the Danube Delta (ISDDD)

The Integrated Strategy for the Development of the Danube Delta (called ISDDD) is the blueprint for the economic, social and environmental development of the Danube Delta – a unique area with extraordinary biodiversity and which was established as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar site in 1990. Developed through a systematic technical analysis and a participatory process by the World Bank over the period 2013-2015, the strategy ISDDD lays down a vision and strategic objectives for the integrated development of the Danube Delta region for a period of 15 years, until 2030. The official text of the strategy was adopted by the Romanian Government in August 2016.³

In this process, the Vision for the Danube Delta was defined as follows: “*An attractive area – with precious biodiversity and vibrant, small/medium scale (artisanal and modern) agriculture and business - where people live in harmony with nature; integrating economies of tourism, farming and fishery; and supported by urban service centers.*” (Guvernul Romaniei (2016)). As explained in the strategy document, this vision was defined based on the development needs of two different sub-areas of the region covered by the strategy. First, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Area (DDBRA),⁴ for

³ See Guvernul Romaniei (2016) in References.

⁴ The Danube Delta (DD) itself is the area referred to as the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Area. This covers: (i) the Core Delta (the area between the Sf. Gheorghe and the Chilia branches of the Danube river); (ii) the Razim-Sinoe-Babadag lake system and adjacent land areas; and (iii) the area along the Danube river west of Tulcea City towards

which the objectives for development include a “living delta” (an area where people live and work) with balanced support for the environment and the community; a healthy, sustainable local economy - mainly based on nature and culture tourism; and with an inclusive planning process (residents, governments, businesses). Second, the vision for the Neighbouring Area referring to a vibrant, modern agricultural and small enterprise area, with a network of urban service centers and a tourism sector that is integrated with the attractions of the area and the Delta.⁵

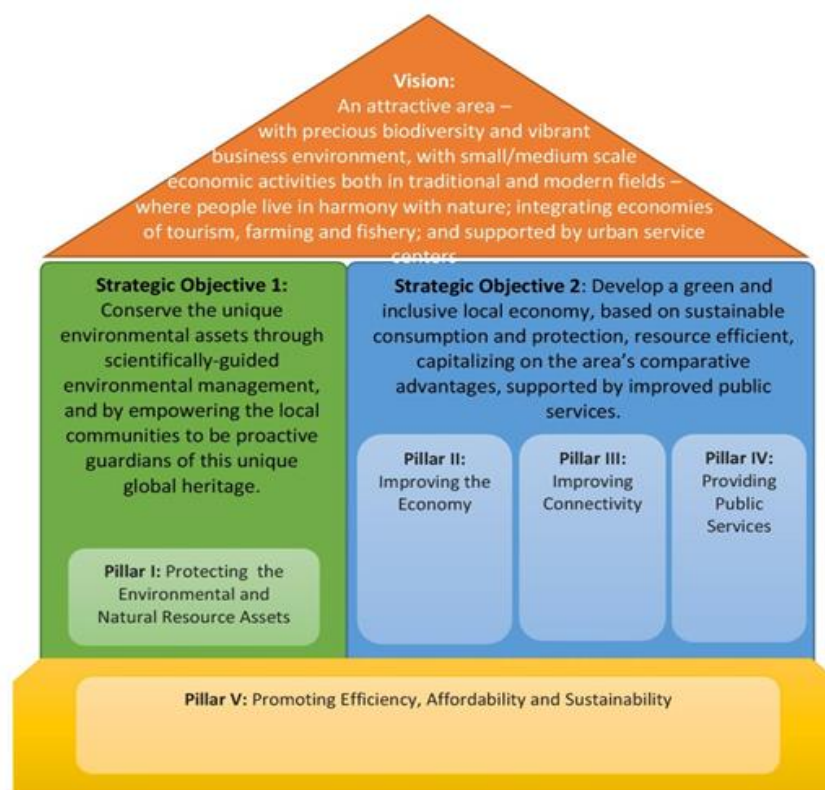
Based on this vision, the two strategic objectives for the integrated development featured by the strategy are defined as follows:

Strategic Objective 1: *Conserve the unique environmental and natural resource assets through scientifically-guided environmental management, and through empowerment of local communities to be proactive guardians of this unique global heritage;* and

Strategic Objective 2: *Develop a sustainable, green local economy capitalizing on the area’s comparative advantages, supported by improved services.*

These objectives are then transposed into areas of investments organized in the five main pillars of the strategy as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Architecture of the ISDDD strategy



Source: World Bank (June 2015) – Action Plan including priority projects to implement the Strategy

Galati. The strategy ISDDD covers also the neighbouring area described in text. For more geographical details see the text of the ISDDD strategy (Guvernul Romaniei (2016)).

⁵ Overall, 38 localities are included in the area of the ISDDD strategy. More on the territorial coverage of the strategy is presented in the analysis of location of ITI investments included in Section 5 in the report.

Further, each of these five strategic pillars is structured in domains of investment, and the domains include types of interventions and even specific investments projects that promote the development of the region from the perspective of the respective domain.⁶ A characteristic of the strategy is its integrated nature in that it is designed to ensure the complementarity of its pillars of investments and synergies between the different types of intervention identified. For example, the strategy takes into account the fact development of the tourism potential in the region is contingent upon the development of the public services (water, sanitation and waste collection).

In the process of elaborating the strategy, through an extensive process of identification of needs for public investments in the area of Danube Delta and an intensive process of consultations held during September – December 2013 with the relevant stakeholders in all communes and towns in the Danube Delta region⁷, the World Bank identified and proposed a system of prioritization of the investments for the implementation of the strategy based on the following 5 main criteria:

1. Anticipated environmental impact relative to Strategic Objective 1 (weight 35%)
2. Anticipated impact on the economy and improved public services relative to Strategic Objective 2 (weight 35%)
3. Geographical breadth and number of final beneficiaries benefiting from the investment (weight 10%)
4. Difficulty and financial sustainability on long term (15%)
5. Level of readiness (for implementation) (5%).

Based on this system, the World Bank experts proposed an action plan for the ISDDD strategy, classifying the investment projects identified in the initial pipeline on a scale with three priority levels: High, Medium, and Low.⁸ The proposal includes also a presentation of potential sources of financing (EU and National budgets) for these investments, as well as an indicative timetable of actions over the period 2017-2020.

Subsequently to the World Bank proposal published in 2015, the national authorities proceeded with the formal approval of the ISDDD strategy in 2016. The official document of the strategy adopted in August 2016 includes to a very large extent the World Bank proposal but the prioritization of the ITI investments was updated to some extent. When comparing the two documents (World Bank (June 2015) and the ISDDD Strategy in Guvernul Romaniei (2016)), we learn that, for some projects, the level of prioritization was changed in the course of the formal adoption of the strategy.

⁶ These domains and interventions are discussed in detail in Section 6 in the report.

⁷ In the report World Bank (2014) – Draft Danube Delta Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy (2030), the World Bank experts explain that, in each locality, two consultation meetings were normally held with the mayor and public sector employees (councillors, teachers, nurses, border police etc) and one meeting with residents (business people, fishermen, cattle herders, pension owners, service providers etc). For further details see the report.

⁸ See World Bank (June 2015) – Action Plan including priority projects to implement the strategy.

For example, for Pillar I (Biodiversity), we find that the World Bank proposed High priority for interventions related to waste management in the Danube Delta, while in the official text of the strategy this type of intervention has no priority. Another example refers to interventions for the modernization of port infrastructure for which the World Bank proposed Low priority, while the official text updates this type of interventions to Medium priority.

During interviews with ADI ITI and the coordinating central services for this study, the Romanian representatives explained that this updating was done following the comments and requests received from the local authorities in the process of the approval of the strategy. It remains unclear, however, to what extent this updating of the priorities for the ITI investments applied the five prioritization criteria which underpin the action plan for the ISDDD strategy.

3. Previous evaluations and studies

There are two previous evaluations which are very relevant for the current study: the World Bank's analysis of the ISDDD strategy published in 2020 (World Bank (2020)) and MEIP's evaluation of the governance of the strategy ISDDD published in 2021 (MIPE (2021)). In this section we present briefly the two studies in terms of their objectives, scope and main results, with an emphasis on their recommendations for the programming period 2021-2027.

The objective of the World Bank's interim evaluation of the ISDDD strategy was to assess the physical and financial progress of the implementation of the strategy and identify scope for further improvements for the next programming period 2021-2027. The three main sub-objectives include: 1) estimate the immediate effects of the ISDDD strategy; 2) provide practical recommendations for the ITI mechanism; and 3) recommend practical processes for ex-ante and ex-post impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation for the further development of the strategy.

As regards the main results, the World Bank concludes that, during the period 2014-2020, the ITI mechanism registered slow progress in the implementation of EU funding supporting the strategy ISDDD. This is explained in terms of a low level of absorption (20%), limited physical progress (35%), and very slow progress with large infrastructure projects by the time of the evaluation. This slow progress in implementation is explained in terms of factors such as the novelty of the ITI mechanism requiring complex activities, including the development and adoption of the strategy, the establishment of the institutional framework for implementation, the development of the inter-institutional agreements and procedures, and the promotion of the financing mechanism. In 2020, the World Bank concluded that further procedures and instruments were still needed to establish clearer roles and responsibilities for data monitoring and aggregation, and for the communication of results.

The recommendations of the World Bank interim evaluation include the following:

1. Re-evaluate the external coherence of the ISDDD strategy with the EU, national and local strategies at the beginning of the next programming period.
2. Update the needs assessment in order to identify the needs already addressed in the current programming period and the further needs for public investments in the next period.
3. Define a clearer intervention logic to be used by stakeholders and beneficiaries in implementation and monitoring.
4. Update the supporting implementation documents.
5. Establish a budget at the strategy level to create a link between needs and the actual financing.
6. Evaluate financial progress throughout implementation and, if necessary, reallocate resources.
7. Set additional result indicators to capture all sectoral specific objectives.
8. Set additional output indicators to capture the majority of interventions (at least 75% of the budget).
9. Finalise the system of indicators with guidelines for data collection and monitoring.
10. Select and implement remedial actions to address the causes for the limited physical progress of the strategy, and implement methods for accelerating project expenditure at strategy and project levels.
11. Develop a monitoring and evaluation procedure with clear responsibilities to each institution involved in implementation.
12. Grant access to data for all institutions in charge of monitoring and evaluation.
13. Develop and communicate an evaluation plan for the SIDD strategy.

The MEIP evaluation published in 2021 focused on the governance of the ITI mechanism in view of making recommendations for further development of the inter-institutional framework and for the design of investments and implementation of the ITI mechanism in the next programming period 2021-2027. The two main evaluation questions in this evaluation refer to the following: 1) the strengths and weaknesses of the governance of the ITI mechanism for the Danube Delta, and 2) the necessary changes in the structure and process of the governance of ITI in the Danube Delta in order to make it more efficient, effective, predictable, responsive, transparent and participatory.

Overall, the MEIP evaluation concludes that the efficiency, effectiveness, predictability, responsiveness, transparency and the participatory nature of the governance of the ITI mechanism are all just acceptable.

As regards efficiency, effectiveness and transparency – aspects analysed also in the current study – the MEIP evaluation concludes as follows:

- On efficiency of the implementation of the ITI mechanism:
 - The resources necessary for the implementation of the strategy were secured relatively late in the programming period.
 - Timely implementation is unlikely for the domains of competitiveness, human capital and administrative capacity in the area of Danube Delta. The slow progress in implementation is explained by delays in the system of implementation and by limited experience and capacity of beneficiaries.
 - The procedures for implementation are similar to the ones in the national system, with the exception of the conformity checks which are specific to the ITI mechanism.
 - Beneficiaries are content with the efficiency of the procedure for conformity checks performed by ADI ITI.
 - ADI ITI activity reports can be improved, and their usefulness needs to be clarified.
 - The monitoring of ITI investments is not systematic at programme level, and the data in SMIS does not reflect accurately the status of these investments.
- On effectiveness, the MIPE evaluation concludes as follows:
 - The logic of intervention for the implementation of the ISDDD strategy from the perspective of the needs and strategic objectives for public investments is unclear and incomplete.
 - Due to the fact that programmes were adopted prior to the adoption of the ISDDD strategy, the alignment of the programmes with the strategy objectives is suboptimal. Moreover, the contributions of the operational programmes to the strategy objectives were established only in financial terms.
 - The design of applicant guidelines for ITI investments follows the practice at national level. One of the criteria for project selection is project quality, but the aspect of integration was not sufficiently exploited. The design of project calls and the capacity of beneficiaries were not conducive to attracting sufficient project applications for the domains of competitiveness and human capital.
 - The resources allocated to the ITI mechanism have attracted new actors in the area of the Danube Delta (institutions, NGOs, and private companies).
 - No evidence was found for the monitoring of the contribution of the projects to the sustainable and integrated development of the Danube Delta.
 - There were no evaluations of ITI investments at the level of operational programmes.

- On transparency of the process, the evaluation concludes as follows:
 - The local community has limited knowledge of the strategy ISDDD.
 - The EU programmes supporting the ITI mechanism are well known to the potential beneficiaries, but not to the community at large.
 - There is acceptable knowledge of the ITI projects financed for the ISDDD strategy at the community level.
 - There is limited availability for the local community of the monitoring and evaluation reports related to the ISDDD strategy.

The main recommendations included in the MIPE evaluation are the following:

1. Identify a complete and quantified intervention logic for the implementation of the ISDDD strategy.
2. Ensure a more sustained rhythm of implementation.
3. Improve data accuracy in SMIS as regards the ITI investments.
4. Carry out an impact evaluation of the ITI mechanism by 2023.
5. Redesign the process of project selection for ITI investments.
6. Consult beneficiaries in order to identify avenues for cooperation and synergies across projects.
7. Inform and involve the local community in the process of the ITI mechanism.

The current study builds on these two previous evaluations through a systematic gathering of updated evidence on the implementation of ITI investments until end 2021 and its dynamics over time, with an emphasis on the extent to which these investments are aligned with the strategic priorities and action plan established for the implementation of the ISDDD strategy at the time of its adoption. The study also explores further the issue of governance of the ITI mechanism, as well as the organization and functioning of the association ADI ITI in charge with supporting and monitoring its implementation in order to help understand what worked and what can work better for the programming period 2021-2027.

4. Methodology

The evaluation questions for this study cover the three main topics stated in its objective:

1. The implementation of the ITI mechanism, viewed from two perspectives: a) the extent of implementation of the action plan included in the strategy and the degree of integration of the investments financed, and b) the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation, including the criteria and timeliness of project selection, the prioritization of priority projects, the duration of contracting and implementation, and reasons for protracted implementation.
2. The performance orientation of the ISDDD strategy in terms of indicators reflecting the achievements of ITI investments, as implemented during 2016-2021;
3. The governance mechanism for the implementation of the ISDDD strategy, and the organization, types of activities, and the added value of the coordinating body at local level (ADI ITI).

The list of the evaluation questions and the mapping of the reports sections where the respective evidence is discussed are presented in Annex to Section 4.

As regards the evidence gathered for the evaluation, it is based on a variety of data sources. The primary data on ITI investments was provided by all Managing Authorities of the operational programmes – data which we complemented with additional information at project level reported in SMIS online, AFIR online open source, and in the lists of operations published regularly by the Managing Authorities.⁹

Further sources of data for this evaluation include the official version of the ISDDD strategy adopted in August 2016, data provided by the coordinating body of the strategy ADI ITI (including the mapping of investments by strategy pillars and domains, data on the fulfillment of the action plan in the strategy, data on conformity checks, data on human resources and annual budgets, and representative examples of procedural documents relevant for the study), and online sources used by ADI ITI to communicate on the strategy implementation. Further details on the data sources for the evaluation are provided in Annex to Section 4.

For the financial data used for this evaluation, all data sources mentioned include amounts in RON. For simplicity, in order to convert all amounts to euro, we used the official exchange rate of the European Commission valid for 1st December 2021. Therefore, given that the datasets span over the period September – December 2021, the amounts reported in euro are to be interpreted as approximate (although sufficiently accurate for the purpose of the study), and they may not coincide precisely to official data reported at European level which is based on varying exchange rates over time.

⁹ SMIS is the electronic monitoring system for EU Cohesion Policy and EU Fisheries and Maritime Affairs in Romania. AFIR open source online is the electronic monitoring system for the EU Common Agricultural Policy in Romania. The Managing Authorities' lists of operations are datasets with project level data for projects selected for the operational programmes of Cohesion Policy. These datasets are published regularly throughout a calendar year, although timing differs across Managing Authorities.

In addition to the quantitative evidence collected for the evaluation, during the period December 2021 – February 2022, we also conducted interviews with the Managing Authorities of the operational programmes, with the central services overseeing the elaboration and the implementation of the ISDDD strategy at national level, and with the team of the coordinating body ADI ITI. The calendar of the interviews conducted is included in Annex to Section 4.

As regards main points of reference, in order to assess the implementation of the ISDDD strategy in its context, we analysed the evaluation issues with regard to the initial planning in the strategy, on the one hand, and relative to the evolution of other (non-ITI) projects implemented in the same priority axes in the programmes financing the ISDDD strategy, on the other hand.

In terms of coverage of the evaluation, the analysis covers all investments relevant for the ITI mechanism financed from the 8 operational programmes for ESI Funds in Romania, over the period 2016 – 2021. Nevertheless, while the ESI Funds represent the primary financing source for these investments, the coverage of the evaluation is not comprehensive as it does not include in-depth analysis of the ITI investments from other national funds. Such investments are discussed only partially in Section 6 in the analysis of the alignment of projects with the ISDDD strategy. This is due to the fact that, at the time of conducting this evaluation, systematic monitoring data for such projects was not available.

This evaluation was conducted during the period November 2021 – March 2022.

Finally, in this context, we thank the central services, Managing Authorities and ADI ITI in Romania for their excellent cooperation and the support with the provision of the data necessary for the evaluation. We also thank the policy desk officers in DG REGIO, European Commission, for their support of this evaluation.

5. Implementation status of ISDDD for ESI Funds 2016-2021

In this section we present the financial planning and implementation of investments in ITI projects in the area of the Danube Delta from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds). The ITI projects are defined as projects financed completely or partially from the allocations dedicated to the ITI mechanism in the operational programmes, and they are identified based on monitoring data at project level collected from the Managing Authorities of the programmes.

The status of implementation of ITI projects analysed in this section covers all ITI projects contracted in operational programmes until end September 2021, and it is defined in terms of the use of the programmed resources for these projects until the end of year 2021.

In addition to these investments in ITI projects, the section refers briefly also to other projects financed from the programmes – projects which are relevant for the integrated development in the Danube Delta but are not financed from the allocation dedicated to the ITI mechanism.

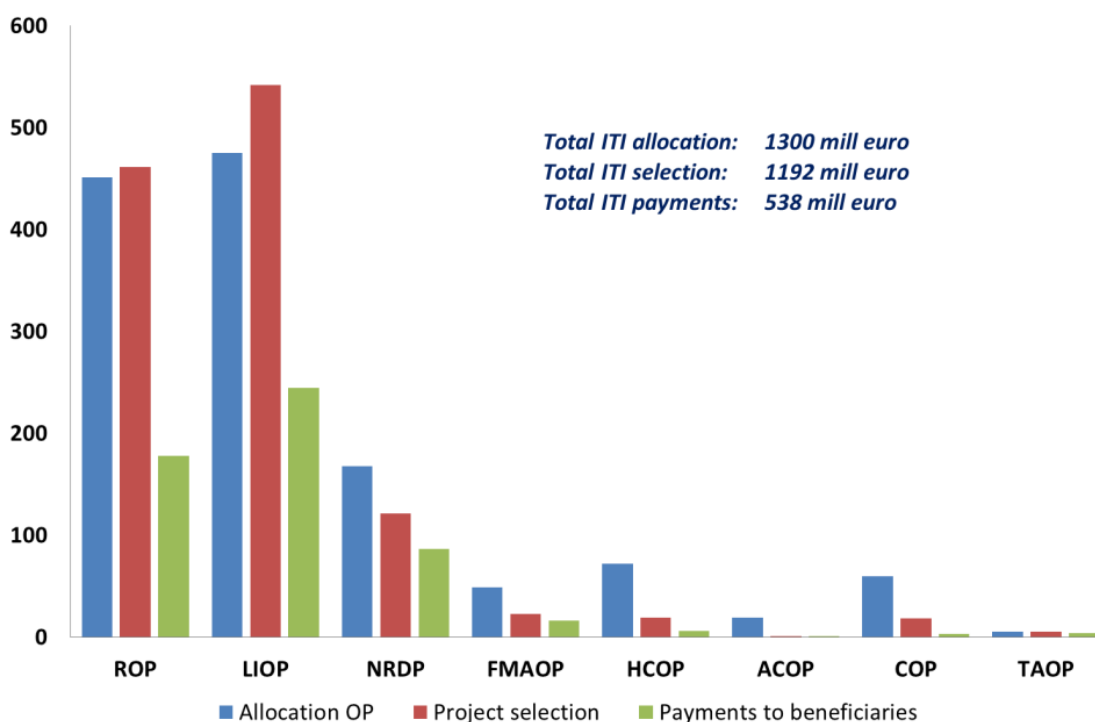
Finally, we also note that, while this analysis covers the large majority of investments relevant for the ISDDD strategy, it cannot provide a comprehensive picture for the implementation of the strategy during the reference period since it does not cover also the relevant investments from other financing sources beyond the ESI Funds. This is due to the fact that a systematic monitoring of such projects (financed, for example, from national resources) is not available.

5.1. Selection and payment rates

The 8 operational programmes for ESI Funds which finance ITI projects for the Danube Delta are the following: Regional Operational Programme (ROP), Large Infrastructure Operational Programme (LIOP), National Rural Development Programme (NRDP), Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Operational Programme (FMAOP), Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP), Administrative Capacity Operational Programme (ACOP), Competitiveness Operational Programme (COP), and Technical Assistance Operational Programme (TAOP).

The allocations, project selection, and payments to beneficiaries for ITI projects contracted until end September 2021 are presented in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1: Programming and implementation of ITI allocations 2014-2021



Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Cancelled projects not included.

Sources: OP ITI allocations: ROP v6.1 2020, LIOP v7 2021, NRDP Managing Authority, FAMOP Managing Authority, HCOP v10 2020, ACOP v4 2020, COP Managing Authority; Project selection and payments: Managing Authorities ITI data, 31 December 2021.

Figure 5.1 reads as follows. For ROP, for example, the programmed allocation for the ITI investments is around 450 million euro, and the level of project selection over the reference period reached around 460 million euro, implying an overbooking of 2% at programme level. Payments to beneficiaries for these projects reached almost 180 million euro by the last quarter of 2021.

Data on ITI allocations presented in Figure 5.1 was collected from the latest versions of the operational programmes ROP, LIOP, HCOP, and ACOP,¹⁰ and from the Managing Authorities for NRDP, FMAOP, COP and TAOP. Data on ITI project selection and payments to beneficiaries was provided by the Managing Authorities of all the operational programmes.

On this basis, we learn that the total allocation for ITI investments across the 8 operational programmes amounts to 1.3 billion euro, of which the large majority is concentrated in LIOP (37%), ROP (35%) and NRDP (13%). For the remaining programmes, their share in total ITI allocation varies between 6% for HCOP and 0.4% for TAOP.

¹⁰ In these programmes, allocations for ITI investments are reported in EU amounts by priority axis in Table 10, Code 03.

Over the reference period, the 8 programmes contracted almost 1090 ITI projects for the Danube Delta, amounting to close to 1.2 billion euro in contract value (thus, an overall selection rate of 92%). Total payments to beneficiaries until the last quarter of 2021 reached almost 540 million euro (and an overall payment rate of 45%).

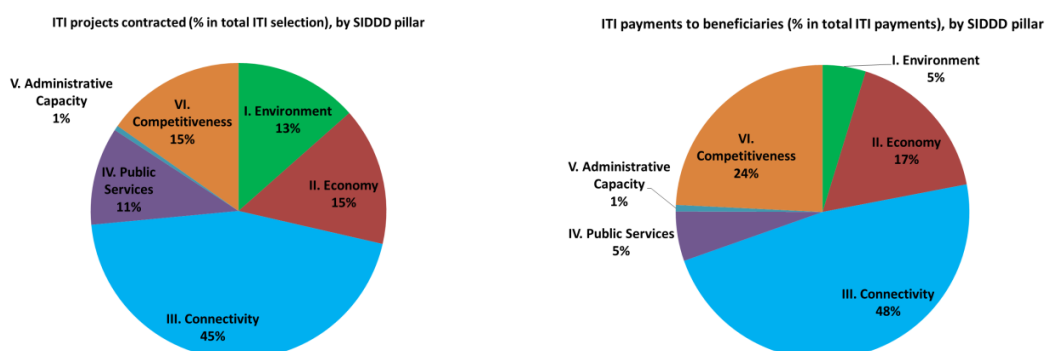
The progress in implementation, however, differs significantly across operational programmes. While LIOP, ROP, and TAOP contracted all (if not more) of their allocations for the ITI mechanism, the selection rate for the remaining programmes varies between 72% for NRDP and 5% for ACOP. In terms of achieved investments, the rate of payments to beneficiaries varies from 72% for FMAOP to 18% for COP. The reasons for this differentiated progress in implementation across (and within) programmes are explored in Section 7 in this report.

5.2. ITI investments by strategy pillars

From the perspective of the ISDDD strategy, however, of interest are the investments across the strategy pillars.¹¹ In this regard, we could only explore the distribution of investments contracted and paid for across the strategy pillars since, in contrast to the operational programmes, the ISDDD strategy does not include estimates of the investments needed for its implementation.

Figure 5.2 presents this data, based on the classification of ITI projects by pillar provided by ADI ITI, and on the implementation data provided by the Managing Authorities.

Figure 5.2: Project selection and payments to beneficiaries for ITI projects by strategy pillar (%)



Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Cancelled projects not included.

Sources: ADI-ITI classification by pillar; Managing Authorities ITI data, 31 December 2021.

Figure 5.2 reads as follows. In the left panel, we present the distribution of the contracted value for ITI projects until the end of 2021 by strategy pillar. Of the 5 pillars initially

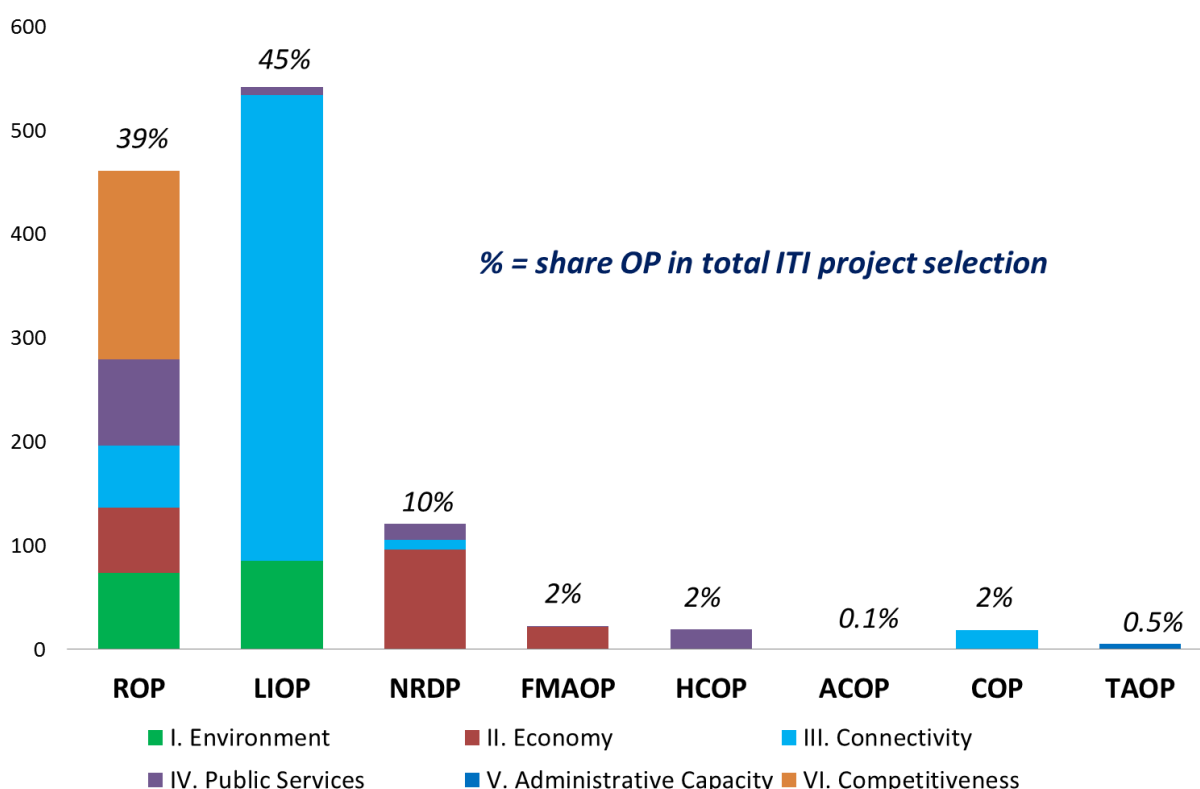
¹¹ The strategy architecture and its five investment pillars are introduced in Section II.

planned in the strategy ISDDD adopted by mid-2016, the highest share of project selection is for Pillar III (Connectivity), followed by Pillar II (Economy) and Pillar I (Environment). Additional ITI projects were contracted during implementation outside the 5 initial strategy pillars and classified in a new pillar - Pillar VI Competitiveness. The alignment of these contracted ITI projects with the initial planning in the ISDDD strategy is explored in Section 6 in this report.

As regards payments to beneficiaries presented in the right panel of Figure 5.2, almost half of the total amount of close to 540 million euro was generated from ITI projects in Pillar III (Connectivity), followed by 24% from ITI projects included in Pillar VI (Competitiveness). In case of Pillar III, the high share of payments is primarily due selection of very large projects, while Pillar VI proved fastest in terms of payments (with a rate of 72%).

Further, we also explored the contributions of operational programmes to the implementation of ITI projects by strategy pillar. Figure 5.3 presents this data.

Figure 5.3: Contributions of operational programmes to the implementation of ISDDD (selection value, million euro and % in total)



Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Cancelled projects not included.

Sources: ADI-ITI for classification by ISDDD pillar; Managing Authorities ITI data, 31 December 2021.

Figure 5.3 reads as follows. ROP, for example, represents almost 40% of the total allocation of 1.3 billion euro for the ITI mechanism in the Danube Delta, and it contracted

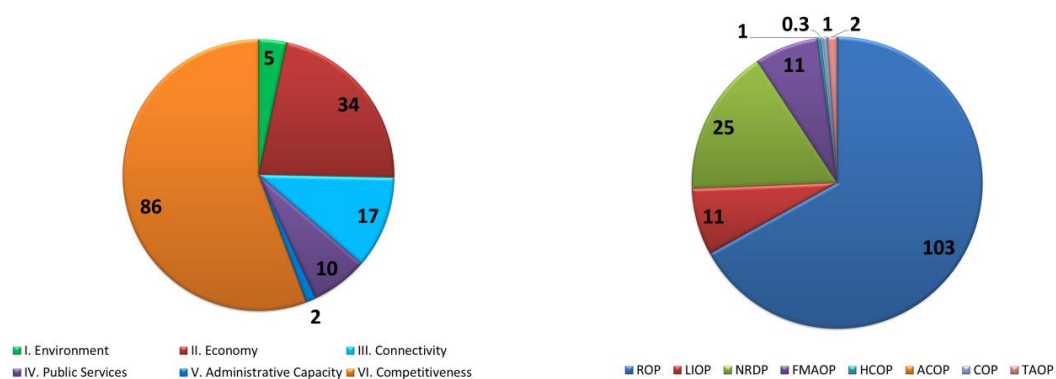
ITI projects in Pillar VI (Competitiveness – 182 million euro), Pillar IV (Public Services – 83 million euro), Pillar I (Environment – 74 million euro), Pillar II (Economy – 63 million euro), and Pillar III (Connectivity – 60 million euro).

On this basis, we see that the primary contributors to Pillar I (Environment) are LIOP and ROP, while Pillar II (Economy) is supported by NRDP, ROP and FMAOP. Pillar IV (Public Services) is financed ROP, HCOP and NRDP, and Pillar III (Connectivity) is financed primarily by LIOP, ROP, and COP. Finally, Pillar V (Administrative Capacity) is financed through ACOP and TAOP.

5.3. Finalised projects and projects still in implementation

Next, we analysed how much of the implementation achieved until end 2021 was generated by ITI projects finalized, where finalized projects are defined as projects for which the investment is completed and the final procedural visit to the project made.¹² Overall, we find that more than half (54%) of the 1086 ITI projects included in the analysis were finalized, cumulating 13% (i.e. 154 million euro) of the total project value contracted by end 2021. The distributions of project selection for these projects by strategy pillar and by operational programs are presented in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Finalised projects – selection value, by pillar and operational programme (million euro)



Notes: Data covers 582 ITI projects finalized.

Sources: ADI-ITI for classification by ISDDD pillar; Managing Authorities ITI data, 31 December 2021.

Figure 5.4 reads as follows. The left panel shows that most of the selection for finalized projects (56% - 86 million euro) is generated from Pillar VI (Competitiveness), followed by Pillar II (Economy) (22% - 34 million euro). For all remaining strategy pillars, the project selection of finalized projects represents much less.

¹² Payment rates for finalized projects are not necessarily 100% due to a variety of reasons. According to the explanations provided by ADI ITI during the interviews made for this study, lower payment rates can also be due to economies made in the project or non-eligible expenditure. Overall, the payment rate for finalized projects across all OPs is 93%.

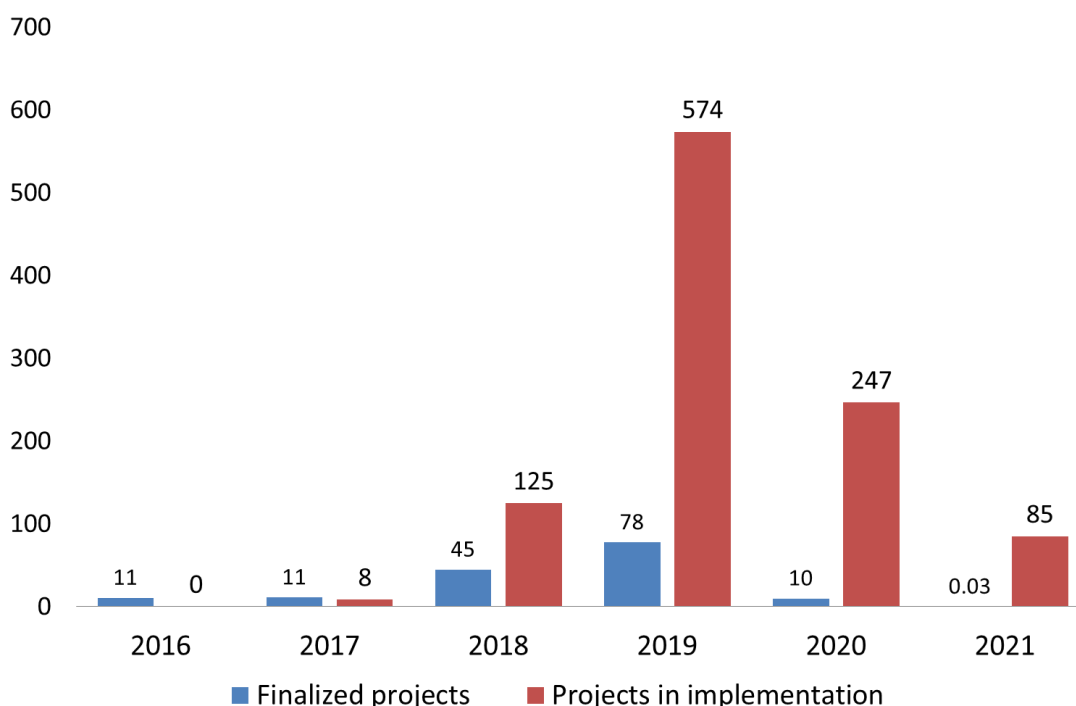
The right panel of Figure 5.4 indicates that a large share (67% - 103 million euro) of the contracted value of ITI projects finalized comes from ROP, followed by NRDP (with 17% - 25 million euro).

Therefore, this analysis implies that, across all 8 programmes, 87% of the selection value of ITI projects was still in implementation by end 2021, with these projects having generated most of the payments to beneficiaries (around 394 million euro) over the reference period. In order to understand better the pace of implementation, in the next subsection, we look at the distribution of project selection by year when projects were contracted.

5.4. Project size and distribution by contracting year

Figure 5.5 summarizes the data for project finalized and projects still in implementation by the year when they were contracted.

Figure 5.5: Distribution of project selection by contracting year – projects finalized and in progress (million euro)



Notes: a) Data covers 582 finalized ITI projects and 504 projects still in implementation.

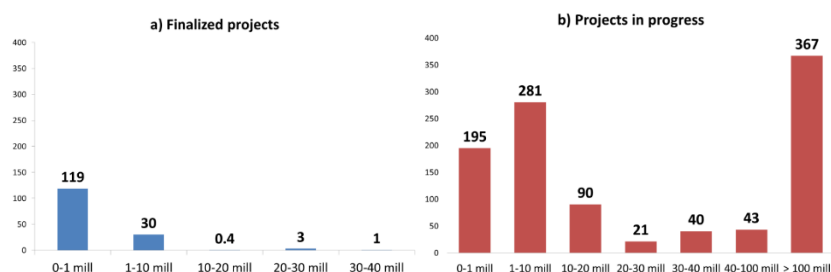
Source: SMIS for date of contract signature; Managing Authorities ITI data, 31 December 2021.

Data in Figure 5.5 suggests a relatively slow start of implementation of ITI projects in terms of value contracted. For finalized projects, most of the project selection is generated by projects contracted in 2019 (i.e. more than 2 years after the adoption of the strategy),

followed by projects contracted in 2018. For projects still in implementation, the highest value of project selection is recorded for projects contracted in 2019, followed by projects contracted in 2020, and 2018. This means that close to 80% of contracted value for projects still in implementation was contracted within 3-4 years after the adoption of the strategy.

Further on the pace of implementation, we also looked at the size of the projects finalized and still in implementation. For this purpose, we classified the projects by the size of their allocation in the programme.¹³ The distributions of ITI project selection by project size for the two types of projects (finalized and in implementation) are presented in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6: Distribution of ITI selection value by project size , cumulated amounts (million euro)



Notes: a) Data covers 582 finalized ITI projects and 504 projects still in implementation.

Source: Managing Authorities' lists operations for project size, Q4 2021; Managing Authorities ITI data for project selection, 31 December 2021.

Figure 5.6 reads as follows. The left panel shows that 119 million euro of contracted value of project finalized by end 2021 stems from projects of less than 1 million euro each, with the larger projects combined having a much lower share. In the right panel, we see that almost half (46%) of project selection for projects still in implementation comes from projects of up to 10 million euro, followed by a third of project selection generated by very large projects (of more than 100 million euro). As regards the latter category, it includes the very large project of Braila bridge, with an ITI selection value of 343 million euro and contracted in 2019.

5.5. Type of ITI investments by ISDDD pillar

Next, we analysed the type of investments financed from the ITI allocation by classifying the projects according to the information included in the project title and summary reported in SMIS online, and by matching this classification with the classification by strategy pillar reported by ADI ITI. The results are presented in Table 5.1 in the next page.

¹³ For most of the projects, the OP allocation coincides with the ITI allocation, but these can be different for the projects which are financed only partially from the ITI allocation. We considered the total project allocation as a proxy of its size since project completion is contingent upon all investment being finalized.

Table 5.1 – Type of investments for ITI projects by pillar

Pillar	ITI projects	ITI project selection		Rate payments (%)
		Amount (mill euro)	% in pillar	
I. Environment	61	161	100%	16%
Public transport	5	35	22%	1%
Protected areas and species	12	33	20%	18%
Emergency services	8	18	11%	41%
Flood management	1	14	9%	2%
Coastal erosion	1	12	7%	8%
Management plan	2	10	6%	60%
Energy efficiency public buildings	7	9	6%	34%
<i>Other</i>		30	19%	5%
II. Economy	596	180	100%	52%
SME support	21	20	11%	56%
Local roads	29	18	10%	70%
Tourism	5	17	10%	20%
New production capacity	10	12	7%	61%
Agrotourism accommodation	206	12	7%	63%
New farms	49	11	6%	58%
Farm modernisation	95	8	4%	98%
Modernisation community centres	23	7	4%	45%
Irrigation	7	7	4%	90%
Acquisition equipment	21	6	3%	97%
Transport	13	5	3%	24%
Leisure	5	5	3%	20%
Rural access infrastructure	8	5	3%	41%
Renovation monasteries	5	5	3%	7%
Young farmers	113	5	3%	99%
Renovation museums	2	4	2%	66%
<i>Other</i>		33	18%	27%
III. Connectivity	43	535	100%	48%
Roads	7	396	74%	52%
Ports	6	82	15%	20%
<i>Other</i>		57	11%	58%
IV. Public Services	80	128	100%	23%
Emergency services	5	48	37%	6%
Renovation schools	20	21	16%	10%
Water and wastewater treatment	12	13	10%	68%
Ambulatory services	1	10	8%	0%
Assistance for unemployed	5	8	7%	38%
Waste treatment and disposal	1	7	5%	91%
<i>Other</i>		21	16%	30%
V. Administrative Capacity	6	6.4	100%	60%
Technical assistance ADI ITI	2	5.5	86%	64%
<i>Other</i>		0.9	14%	37%
VI. Competitiveness	331	182	100%	72%
Construction (materials, machinery, services)	145	81	45%	74%
Roads	48	37	20%	79%
Utility projects for fluids	9	4	2%	100%
Other non-metallic mineral products	4	3	2%	100%
Civil engineering projects	6	4	2%	92%
Auto service	4	2	1%	55%
Machinery and equipment	5	3	2%	82%
Freight transport and removal services	2	2	1%	82%
Bridges and tunnels	2	2	1%	85%
Leisure and sports	6	3	1%	48%
Telecommunications	2	1	1%	16%
Waste treatment and disposal	2	1	1%	93%
Elevators	1	1	1%	100%
Retail food and beverages	1	1	1%	96%
Electrical household appliances	1	1	1%	88%
Agrotourism accommodation	1	1	1%	0%
<i>Other</i>		35	20%	53%

Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Authors' classification by type investment.

Sources: ADI ITI classification by pillar; Managing Authorities ITI data for project selection and payments, 31 December 2021.

Table 5.1 reads as follows. Pillar I Environment includes 61 projects contracted based on ITI resources until end September 2021, with a total contracted value of 161 million euro. The rate of payments to beneficiaries of these projects achieved until end 2021 was 16%. A share of 81% of the investments in this pillar are concentrated in 6 types of projects: public transport for urban mobility, protected areas and species, emergency services, flood management, investments in prevention of coastal erosion, assistance for unemployed, and waste management.

In this manner, we learn that the most diverse pillar in terms of type of investments is the one for Economy, with almost 600 projects. This pillar includes investments for SME support, local roads, tourism, investments in farms and farmers, rural access infrastructure, cultural heritage etc. As presented above, the operational programmes financing projects in this pillar are NRDP, ROP and FMAOP.

For the remaining pillars, we note a very high concentration of Pillar III (Connectivity) in transport projects (mainly driven by the very large project of Braila bridge), and a significant allocation (close to 40%) of Pillar IV (Public services) on investments in emergency services. As regards the new pillar introduced for monitoring ex post (Competitiveness), almost half of the investments are concentrated in the construction sector.

5.6. Location of ITI investments

Next, for the current status of implementation we analysed also the location of investments in ITI projects. For this purpose, we used the definition of the strategy area presented in the strategy document adopted in 2016 as follows:

- *Centre of the Danube Delta* (called **DD Centre**): all localities situated on the territory of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation Area (DDBRA): Ceatalchioi, Pardina, Chilia Veche, C.A. Rosetti, Crişan, Maliuc, Sfântu Gheorghe and the city of Sulina.
- *UAT partially in the Danube Delta* (called **DD UAT**)¹⁴: localities situated partially on the territory of RBDD: municipality of Tulcea, Isaccea city, Babadag city and the localities of Murighiol, Mahmudia, Beştepe, Nufăru, Somova, Niculiţel, Luncaviţa, Grindu, Valea Nucarilor, Sarichioi, Jurilovca, Ceamurlia de Jos, Mihai Bravu, Baia (Tulcea county) and Mihai Viteazu, Istria, Săcele şi Corbu (Constanţa county).
- *UAT neighbouring DDBRA* (called **DD Neighbourhood**): localities neighbouring DDBRA: Măcin city and localities I.C. Brătianu, Smârdan, Jijila, Văcăreni, Greci, Frecăţei, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Slava Cercheză.

For the purpose of the analysis, to this classification we added three more categories for the location of the ITI investments as follows:

¹⁴ UAT = Unitate Administrativa Teritoriala (in Romanian).

- **ISDDD area:** projects which cover localities from more than one of the categories above (Centre, UAT or Neighbourhood). An example of such a project comes for HCOP “Education for Innovation in the Danube Delta”, with a selection value of 0.5 million euro, and located in localities across the ISDDD area.
- **Wider projects:** projects which cover an area wider than the ISDDD area. An example is a project for broadband covering also localities from areas other than ISDDD, financed from COP, with a contracted value of 1.6 million euro, half of which financed from the ITI allocation.
- **National:** projects with national coverage and which are also partly financed from the ITI allocation. These projects cover all counties in Romania and benefit also the population in the strategy area. An example is the project “Efficient emergency reaction saves lives”, financed by LIOP with a total project allocation of almost 19 million euro, of which 0.5 million euro financed from the ITI allocation.

For the classification of the location of investments from ITI projects in the categories described above we used the project location reported in SMIS online. The results are presented in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 – ITI project selection by location and pillar, million euro

	I. Environment	II. Economy	III. Connectivity	IV. Public Services	V. Administrative Capacity	VI. Competitiveness	Total
DD Centre	7	38	21	2	0	3	71
DD UAT	79	116	123	102	0	130	550
DD Neighbourhood	9	26	14	9	0	45	103
ISDDD area	24	1	11	13	6	0	55
Wider projects	21	0	361	1	0	4	388
National	20	0	5	0	0.1	0	25
Total	161	180	535	128	6	182	1192

Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Authors’ classification of location type.

Sources: ADI ITI classification by pillar; SMIS online for project location; Managing Authorities ITI data for project selection 31 December 2021.

Table 5.2 reads as follows. For the Centre of the Danube Delta, for example, the total contracted value of projects implemented is 71 million euro, half of which (38 million euro) is in Pillar II Economy.

Thus, we learn that almost half of ITI investments (45%) are located in the localities grouped in DD UAT, followed by a third of investments financed through wider projects. As regards the latter, the dominant project is the Braila bridge already mentioned above.

Further, we also analysed the profile of the operational programmes from the perspective of ITI project location. The results are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. – ITI project selection by location and programme, million euro

	ROP	LIOP	NRDP	FMAOP	HCOP	ACOP	COP	TAOP	Total
DD Centre	31	18	9	12	0	0	0	0	71
DD UAT	350	86	86	10	15	0.8	4	0	551
DD Neighbourhood	63	14	26	0	0	0	0.2	0	103
SIDDD area	0	33	0	1	4	0	5	6	48
Wider projects	17	368	0	0	0.4	0	9	0	394
National	0	24	0	0	0	0.1	1	0	25
Total	461	542	121	23	19	1	19	6	1192

Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Authors' classification of type location.

Sources: SMIS online for project location; Managing Authorities ITI data for project selection, 31December 2021.

On this basis, we learn, for example, that the ITI projects NRDP and FMAOP are all concentrated in localities in the ISDDD area, while the programmes for Cohesion Policy include also investments located in areas wider than the strategy area. This is especially the case for COP, where half of the selection value is generated from such projects, LIOP and, to a much lesser extent, ROP.

5.7. Beneficiaries of ITI investments

As regard the beneficiaries of ITI investments, we identified the unique beneficiaries based on the unique identification codes reported in SMIS online (for all projects except NRDP) and in the Managing Authority's data on ITI projects for NRDP. Results are reported in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 – Unique beneficiaries of ITI projects, by programme

Programme	ITI projects	Unique beneficiaries		Projects selection (mill euro)		Concentration investments
		All	% public beneficiaries	All	% public beneficiaries	
ROP	421	360	9%	461	56%	Public: 7 (out of 32) beneficiaries have 81% of public projects selection
LIOP	35	15	73%	542	99%	Public: 4 (out of 11) beneficiaries have 85% of public projects selection
NRDP	538	484	16%	121	49%	
FMAOP	51	39	28%	23	13%	
HCOP	22	20	20%	19	32%	
ACOP	4	3	100%	0.9	100%	
COP	12	10	60%	19	32%	Public: 1 (out of 6) beneficiary has 86% of project selection
TAOP	2	1	100%	5.5	100%	

Notes: a) Data covers 1086 ITI projects; b) Authors' classification of type beneficiary.

Sources: SMIS online for beneficiary's unique identifier; Managing Authorities ITI data for project selection, 31December 2021.

Table 5.4 reads as follows. For the 421 ITI projects supported in ROP, there are 360 unique beneficiaries, of which 9% are public. In terms of project selection, 56% of investments are contracted through projects of public beneficiaries. Further, we also

analysed the distribution of project selection across unique beneficiaries, and learnt that, for ROP, 7 out of 32 public beneficiaries cumulate a large majority (81%) of the investments contracted by public beneficiaries, thus indicating a high concentration of investments in a relatively reduced number of beneficiaries for this group.

On this basis, we learn that programmes such as LIOP, ACOP and TAOP finance projects almost exclusively for public beneficiaries, while FMAOP, COP and HCOP address primarily private beneficiaries. Concentration of investments in a limited number of beneficiaries, if present, is usually observed for public beneficiaries (as reported especially for LIOP and COP in the table).

5.8. Other projects relevant for ISDDD

In order to understand better the coverage of ESI Funds investments in the Danube Delta from the ITI allocation, we explored also whether there were additional projects financed from operational programmes and located in the area, but not classified as ITI projects. For this purpose, we first identified such projects based on the location reported for all operations in the 8 operational programmes in SMIS and AFIR online open sources, and then checked whether they could be matched to relevant types of interventions from ISDDD. The results are presented below.¹⁵

Table 5.5 – Other projects relevant for ISDDD, by location (number projects)

	ROP	LIOP	NRDP	FMAOP	HCOP	ACOP	COP	Total
DD Centre		1	31	2				34
DD UAT		2	418	5	3		2	430
DD Neighbourhood			164	1				165
SIDDD area					1			1
Wider projects	1	2		5	7	1	1	17
National					1	1	5	7
Total	1	5	613	13	12	2	8	654

Notes: Authors' classification by type location.

Sources: SMIS online for location and summary investment for all OPs except PNDR; AFIR for NRDP mid December 2021.

First, Table 5.5 presents the number of additional projects that, at least based on their location and title, seem to be directly relevant for the strategy ISDDD. Of the 654 projects of this type identified, the large majority are supported in NRDP for rural development, with the remaining projects distributed primarily in FMAOP and HCOP.

Therefore, we learn that the large majority of these projects are situated in localities in the ISDDD area. As regards relevance for the strategy, most of the projects are relevant for Pillar II Economy, being distributed across all NRDP measures which are relevant also for the ITI projects. Some of the projects identified for FMAOP and LIOP are relevant for Pillar I Environment such as, for example, investments for the conservation of natural heritage

¹⁵ In Table 5.5, we present only the number of projects and not the contracted value since, for national projects or projects covering areas wider than ISDDD area, we have no information on the share of selection relevant for the ISDDD area.

in the ISDDD localities. Projects from COP and HCOP are relevant for Pillar III (Connectivity), with investments such as e-education and ICT equipment for schools. Finally, for Pillar IV (Public Services), investments relevant for ISDDD include projects for water and wastewater treatment, training for integration in the labour market, new childcare facilities etc.

Second, in a similar manner, we identified also projects which are located in the ISDDD area, are not financed from the ITI allocation, but are potentially relevant for the integrated development of the territory. Potential relevance is defined as relevance of the investment for the socio-economic or environmental development of the area, but for which there are no specific types of interventions included in the strategy. Overall, we identified 62 such projects, with the large majority (44) supported by HCOP for entrepreneurship, followed FMAOP with 13 projects (of which 4 are for elaborating strategies for local development).

6. Alignment of project selection with strategic priorities

In this section, we analyse the extent to which the ITI projects identified as priorities in the ISDDD strategies were implemented during the reference period of the study. We analyse also whether the prioritization system established in the strategy was embedded in the process of project selection and of the extent of integration of the ITI investments in planning and implementation.

6.1. Planning and implementation of priority projects

For the analysis of the extent to which projects identified as priorities in ISDDD were also implemented during the reference period for the study, we first mapped all types of interventions and projects in the strategy, together with their level of priority and the proposed source of financing – as included in the official strategy document adopted in August 2016.

Overall, there are 168 types of interventions and 163 concrete projects distributed across 5 pillars and 16 domains of investments. The difference between interventions and projects is as follows: while the first are more generic (for example: Optimisation of natural water flows, for biodiversity), the latter indicate individual or groups of specific investments. An example of a planned project covering a group of investments is a project for energy efficiency of public buildings which refers to more than 20 buildings in the ISDDD area.

From the perspective of planned interventions and projects, the strategy has the following features:

- a) Each intervention is specific to only one domain and pillar.
- b) A given intervention includes more than one project.
- c) Within the same domain, a specific project can be relevant for more than one intervention, even if sometimes with a different level of priority.

For example, for the domain of energy efficiency in the pillar of biodiversity, the project quoted above (i.e. energy efficiency in public buildings) is included for intervention I.16 Energy efficiency in public buildings with medium priority, and considered relevant also for I.15 Pilot projects for renewable energy in the same domain, with no priority.¹⁶ For the purpose of our analysis, we removed the double counting at the domain level, thus counting a project only once and considering its highest level of priority across interventions in the domain.

- d) A project can be assigned also to more than one domain in the strategy (even across pillars), also sometimes with different levels of priority.

An example is the project on “Social inclusion adapted to the ecosystem specific to the Danube Delta” – a project included with high priority in the domain of Social Inclusion,

¹⁶ In this regard, ADI ITI explained that the projects for energy efficiency in buildings also have a component of use of renewable energy.

and with low priority in the domain of Education (both domains in Pillar IV Public Services). Overall, we find that 19% of the 163 projects identified in the strategy are considered relevant for more than one domain of investment. For the purpose of our analysis, we counted these projects at the domain level, with their highest level of priority within the domain, and without removing the double counting across domains.

As regards the prioritization of the planned projects in the strategy, it has been established on three priority levels (High, Medium, and Low) based on an analysis according to the 5 main criteria described in Section II above.¹⁷ At the strategy level, we find that 54% of the 163 projects have priorities across interventions and domains set at high or medium levels, 15% have low priority, and the remaining have no level of priority established.

For implementation, we analysed the data provided by ADI ITI regarding the implementation of these planned projects during the programming period 2014-2020.¹⁸ Further, based on their title and summary, we also screened all the projects implemented in the 8 programmes during the reference period.

On this basis, in order to estimate the extent of implementation of the planned projects, we applied a simplified rating system as follows: 1) projects implemented fully, rated with score 1; 2) projects partially implemented, rated with score 0.5; 3) projects implemented very partially, with score 0.25; and 4) projects not implemented, with score 0. Implementation in this section is interpreted in terms of project selection, and it does not necessarily imply the finalization of the projects during the reference period. It does not include, however, the cancelled projects.

Examples of such projects include the following. First, for the planned projects with substantial implementation, and which thus can be considered as fully implemented, an example is the project for support of young farmers which was financed by NRDP through numerous interventions at local level. For simplicity, in this category, we included also the projects which could be considered as almost complete. Second, for the planned projects which we assessed as partially implemented, an example is a project for energy efficiency of education infrastructure, for which only some of the buildings identified initially were financed over the reference period. Third, for projects assessed as only very partially implemented, an example is the project for energy efficiency of buildings of public institutions (i.e. police, municipality buildings etc) which, in planning, includes 20 buildings, and for which only 5 buildings were supported for this type of investment. Finally, there are also the projects for which no implementation could be identified over the reference period.

¹⁷ These criteria include: Criterion 1 and 2 for the anticipated impacts of the project on the two strategic objectives of the strategy; Criterion 3 on geographical breadth and number of final beneficiaries expected to benefit from the investment; Criterion 4 on difficulty and long term sustainability of the project; and Criterion 5 the level of readiness of the project for implementation.

¹⁸ The data provided by ADI ITI indicates that, in addition to the planned projects, for some interventions there are additional projects implemented and which were identified subsequently to the adoption of the strategy and its action plan. Although relevant for ISDDD, we did not include these projects in the analysis in this section since the focus is on the extent to which the initial planning was implemented during the reference period.

Further, for all pillars of investments, we also explored the reasons for partial or no implementation, especially of the planned priority projects, based on explanations provided by ADI ITI at project level, and based on the interviews with the Managing Authorities of the operational programmes for ESI Funds.

The results of this analysis are summarized by pillars of investments in the main text, and presented also by domains and types of interventions in the Annex to Section 6. We start with summary results for Pillar I. Environment, presented in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 – Planning and implementation of initial projects/interventions in Pillar I: Environment

Pillar I: Environment	Planned (by prioritisation)				Planned and implemented (by prioritisation)				Share planned and implemented (all)	Shared planned and implemented (H and M)
	High	Medium	Low	None	High	Medium	Low	None		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)		
Biodiversity	2	11	1	10	1	6 + 1 very partially	1	1+1 partially	41%	56%
Climate change		1	2	2					0%	0%
Disaster risk				16				3	19%	n.a.
Energy efficiency	1	17	2	1		5 + 1 partially + 3 very partially	2 partially		35%	35%
Pollution emergencies			2	2				1	25%	n.a.

Note: a) H and M = high and medium priority levels; b) n.a. = not applicable.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation of action plan; MAs data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Table 6.1 reads as follows. In columns (1) – (4), we summarize, by level of priority, the number of projects planned in the ISDDD strategy for each of the domains included in this pillar. On this basis, we learn, for instance, that for the domain of protecting biodiversity the ISDDD strategy includes 2 projects planned with high priority, 11 with medium priority, 1 with low priority, and 10 with no priority level established.

On the implementation side (columns (5)-(8)), we see that only one of the projects planned with high priority was implemented during the reference period. For medium priorities, of the 11 projects planned, 6 were fully implemented and 1 very partially implemented. In the last two columns, we estimate the share of all projects planned and implemented (ex: 41% for protecting biodiversity), and the share of priority projects planned and implemented (ex: 56% for protecting biodiversity), where priority projects are defined as projects with high or medium priority within the respective domain.

As regards planning, we thus learn that the high priorities in this pillar were established with two projects for monitoring protected areas and sedimentation (included in the domain of biodiversity), and one project for energy co-generation (included in the domain of energy efficiency). For the level of medium priority, there are many more planned projects included especially for the domains of biodiversity and energy efficiency. We also note, however, the very low frequency of priority projects established in the strategy especially for the domains of adaptation to climate change (only one project with medium priority), managing disaster risk (no priority projects planned), for addressing pollution

emergencies (also no priority projects planned), but also for biodiversity (where waste reduction in natural areas, measures for pollution reduction and reforestation of degraded areas, for example, have no priority). For details at domain and intervention level, see Annex to Section 6, tables for Pillar I.

For implementation, we learn that the most advanced domain is the one for protecting biodiversity, with an estimated level of implementation of 56% for the priority projects, followed by energy efficiency, with an estimated level of implementation of 35% for the priority projects. For adaptation to climate change, however, the only priority project planned with medium priority was not implemented until end 2021. Finally, for the domains of disaster risk management and measures for addressing pollution emergencies, no estimation of implementation of priority projects is feasible since, as explained, there are no such projects included in the strategy for these domains.

In terms of financing sources for the projects implemented in this pillar, they include the operational programmes LIOP, ACOP and COP, as well as national funds.

As regards reasons for no implementation of priority projects, for the high priority intervention on monitoring sedimentation included in Biodiversity, ADI ITI explained that this project was submitted for financing to LIOP, but the project was rejected due to eligibility issues. Further, for three other projects included in the strategy with medium priority for the intervention for optimization of natural water flows, ADI ITI explained that no financing source could be identified (although the initial planning mentions LIOP). Finally, another project for research of biodiversity in the Danube Delta, included with medium priority, was not implemented due to beneficiary's decision.

We also identified the situation of a project planned for the construction of a research and innovation centre DANUBIUS, included with medium priority in the domain of biodiversity. For this facility, the estimated initial allocation was substantial (40 million euro) in the operational programme Competitiveness but only a preparatory study was implemented until 2021 (with a budget of around 5 million euro). The representatives of the Managing Authority for this programme explained that the project could not be implemented during 2014-2020 due to a combination of factors, including legislative changes which triggered delays in project preparation, and organizational issues related to the beneficiary. This project is now proposed for the period 2021-2027.

For the projects planned with medium priority in the domain of Energy Efficiency which could not be implemented during the period 2014-2020, based on the data from ADI ITI, the main reasons for non-implementation include the non-eligibility of the projects (either because the building had a seismic risk and needed consolidation prior to the intervention for energy efficiency, or because the building was classified as heritage, or because the beneficiary was not eligible), or limited financial capacity of the beneficiary. Also for this domain, some of the priority projects not implemented during 2014-2020 are proposed for 2021-2027.

Next, a similar analysis for Pillar II: Economy of ISDDD is presented in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2 – Planning and implementation of initial projects/interventions in Pillar II: Economy

Pillar II: Economy	Planned (by prioritisation)				Planned and implemented (by prioritisation)				Share planned and implemented (all)	Share planned and implemented (H or M)
	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)	None (4)	High (5)	Medium (6)	Low (7)	None (8)		
Fisheries and Aquaculture	5	6		8	4	4		1 + 1 very partially	49%	73%
Agriculture	2	9	7	21	2	6 + 2 partially	4	10 + 1 very partially	60%	82%
Tourism	6	14		8	1 + 1 partially	6 + 3 partially + 2 very partially			34%	48%

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation of action plan; MAs data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

For Pillar II: Economy, we note a higher extent of implementation of priority projects, especially for the domains of Fisheries and Aquaculture (supported primarily from FMAOP), and for Agriculture and Rural development (supported primarily from NRDP). Less advanced implementation of priority projects is estimated for the domain of Tourism.

The priority projects implemented in this pillar include, for example, fishermen and river infrastructure, improvements in hydrological conditions of natural habitats, and SME support for aquaculture (in Fisheries and Aquaculture). The domain of Agriculture includes projects for bottom-up initiatives for support for young farmers and new farms, modernization of irrigation systems, modernization of rural infrastructure (for water, roads, schools etc), and creation of small non-agricultural businesses. In Tourism, examples include tourism infrastructure, projects for urban revitalization, and projects for protection and promotion of cultural heritage.

As regards the reasons for non-implementation (especially for priority projects planned for Tourism), data received from ADI ITI indicate limited financial resources of the beneficiaries, delays in preparation of project documentation, non-eligibility of the beneficiary (for example, a museum), and lack of alignment of the project with the requirements of the operational programmes.

For the next pillar, Connectivity, the results of the analysis are presented in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 – Planning and implementation of initial projects/interventions in Pillar III: Connectivity

Pillar III: Connectivity	Planned (by prioritisation)				Planned and implemented (by prioritisation)				Share planned and implemented (all)	Share planned and implemented (H and M)
	High	Medium	Low	None	High	Medium	Low	None		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Transport	7	5			4	3 + 1 partially + 1 almost complete			69%	69%
ITC	2	1	13	5	1 + 1 very partially		2 + 1 very partially	4	17%	42%

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation of action plan; MAs data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Pillar III: Connectivity includes two domains: Transport and ICT. For transport, we note that all projects planned in the strategy have high or medium priority, and we estimate the extent of implementation of these priority projects at close to 70%. For ICT, on the other hand, the large majority of projects planned have low or no priority. Of the three priority projects planned for this domain, we find that one project could be considered as fully implemented and another project as very partially implemented.

Examples of priority projects for transport implemented in this pillar include modernization of national and local roads, modernization of ports, airport infrastructure, and sustainable transport in the Danube Delta. These projects are financed from LIOP and ROP.

For the domain of ICT, the priority project which is assessed as fully implemented is a national project for e-government (online payments of taxes) which covers also the ISDDD area, while the priority project assessed as implemented very partially includes broadband investments. The only additional project planned with medium priority for the domain of ICT and not implemented during 2014-2020 is a project for acquisition of drones for data transmission in emergency situations in real time and from areas with limited accessibility.

The analysis for the fourth strategy pillar for Public Services is summarised in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 – Planning and implementation of initial projects/interventions in Pillar IV: Public Services

Pillar IV: Public Services	Planned and implemented (by prioritisation)				Planned and not implemented (by prioritisation)				Share planned and implemented (all)	Share planned and implemented (H and M)
	High	Medium	Low	None	High	Medium	Low	None		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Education		8	5	2		2 + 4 partially	4 partially + 1 very partially		42%	50%
Health		1	4	6			1	2 + 1 partially	32%	0%
Social Inclusion	7		5	5	2 + 1 very partially		1 partially + 1 very partially	3 partially	18%	32%
Waste Management		1		1		1			50%	100%
Water Management		3				3			100%	100%

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation of action plan; MAs data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

For Pillar IV: Public Services, we first note that no high priorities were established in the strategy adopted in 2016 especially for Education, Health, and Waste management, as well as the very limited number of medium priorities for the domains of Health and Waste management.

As regards the implementation of the priorities for this pillar, we estimate a relatively low level for Social Inclusion (32%), and a slightly higher level for Education (50%). For Health, the only priority project included in the strategy (ambulatory facilities in Babadag, Macin, Sulina) was not implemented during the reference period. For Waste management, caution in interpretation is advised as the estimate of 100% of priority projects is due to the limited number of priority projects rather than substantial implementation.

Examples of priority projects implemented for Education include education and training for pupils in areas with a small number of inhabitants, back to school programmes addressing early school leaving, projects for partnerships between employers and schools for labour market adaptation of education. For Social Inclusion, examples of such projects are the formation of maternal assistance for children with disabilities and the provision of integrated social services after leaving residential places. For Water and wastewater management, the three priority projects planned were implemented through a number of projects for creation and / or modernization of networks for water and wastewater treatment in localities in the Danube Delta.

As regards priority projects implemented partially or not implemented, examples for Health include reforms for health management (family doctors, telemedicine, ambulatories). Education includes modernization of school infrastructure in localities of the ISDDD area (partially implemented), development of key competences for pupils in secondary education (not implemented), and reduction and prevention of early school leaving (partially implemented). For Social Inclusion, examples include professional education for the management of de-institutionalisation processes, creation of a network of personal assistants, and construction/ modernization of integrated community centres.

For reasons for no or partial implementation, ADI ITI mentioned lack of alignment with requirements of the operational programs, eligibility issues, and difficulties in identifying a financing source. As regards eligibility issues, for example, in the case of integrated community centres, both ADI ITI and the Managing Authority for ROP explained that, for this type of investments, the eligible localities were specified in a list elaborated by the Ministry of Labour and that the localities from the ISDDD area were not included in this list. The persons we interviewed could not clarify why this situation could not be resolved over the reference period.

In terms of financing sources, the projects selected for pillar of public services are supported by 5 operational programmes (NRDP, ROP, HCOP, LIOP and COP), as well as national funds.

Finally, the analysis for Pillar V: Administrative Capacity is presented in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 – Planning and implementation of initial projects in Pillar V: Administrative Capacity

Pillar V: Administrative Capacity	Planned and implemented (by prioritisation)				Planned and not implemented (by prioritisation)				Share planned and implemented (all)	Share planned and implemented (H and M)
	High	Medium	Low	None	High	Medium	Low	None		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Administrative Capacity		4	1	5		2		2	40%	50%

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation of action plan; MAs data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

For the fifth strategy pillar, the priority projects include the technical assistance for the financing of the activity of ADI ITI as a coordinating body of the ISDDD strategy, and projects for increased quality, efficiency and transparency of public services in the ISDDD area.

In implementation, the projects for technical assistance for ADI ITI went as planned, while the implementation of other projects for modernizing public administration in the region were mostly not implemented due to eligibility issues. The representatives of ACOP (the main financing source for this pillar) explained that, until late 2021, the beneficiaries eligible for investments from the programme could have been only municipalities and counties – a condition which limited significantly the access to the funds for the local authorities in the Danube Delta (where only the county and municipality of Tulcea were eligible). Starting with end 2021, however, this eligibility requirement was changed, thus enabling financing of applications also for local authorities. The Managing Authority explained that, for this latest project call for local authorities, they had already received financing applications for around 14 projects from local authorities in the Danube Delta, and they were still in evaluation at the time of the interviews for this study.¹⁹

Overall, at the strategy level, we found that close to 38% of the 163 projects planned were implemented fully or almost fully, almost 17% were implemented partially or very partially, and the remaining were not implemented. If we consider only the subset of priority projects (i.e. with high or medium priority), then we find that 44% of these projects were implemented fully or almost fully, and almost 20% implemented partially or very partially. The most frequent reasons for non-implementation, primarily according to the data received from ADI ITI, include non-eligibility of beneficiaries, insufficient financial capacity of the beneficiaries, lack of alignment of the projects with the requirements for applications for EU financing, or difficulties in identifying a suitable financing source.

¹⁹ And ADI ITI explained they had performed conformity checks for around 30 projects but, at the time of this evaluation, it was not known how many would be submitted for financing.

6.2. Selection of ITI projects

The implementation of projects with high or medium priority from the perspective of ISDDD is likely to be influenced by the extent to which the selection processes provide sufficient incentives for a sustained administrative focus on the identification and preparation of such projects. Therefore, we also analysed the processes through which ITI projects were evaluated and selected.

In implementation, the project selection for ITI investments from ESI Funds was driven by a combination of two factors: a) an ITI specific eligibility condition (called “conformity check”) in the form of an assessment of project alignment with the strategy ISDDD carried out by ADI ITI, and b) the type of calls for project selection organized by the Managing Authorities of the operational programmes. A summary of the approaches of these two features of project selection across the operational programmes is presented in Table 6.6 below.²⁰

Table 6.6 – Approaches to project selection in operational programmes for ESI Funds

Programme	ADI ITI conformity checks		Type of calls for ITI projects
	Required ?	When ?	
ROP	yes, with exception for Axis 2	together with the financing request	ITI dedicated
LIOP	yes	together with the financing request	national
NRDP	yes	together with the financing request	ITI dedicated
FMAOP	yes, with overall assessment for FLAGS	15 days after submission of financing request	mixed
HCOP	yes	together with the financing request	ITI dedicated and national
ACOP	yes	together with the financing request	national
COP	yes	together with the financing request	mixed and national

Sources: *Conformity checks procedures, applicant guides, and interviews with ADI ITI and Managing Authorities.*

First, as regards the conformity check, it is defined as a horizontal eligibility condition for financing projects from the ITI allocation. This check is carried out by ADI ITI based on procedures for conformity assessments established with each operational programme.²¹ Prior to submitting an application for an ITI project to the Managing Authority, the potential beneficiary is required to submit an application for a conformity assessment to ADI ITI with the objective to establish whether the project is aligned with the strategic objectives of ISDDD. Thus, in principle, the eligibility of an ITI financing request is conditional upon a favourable conformity assessment from ADI ITI.

²⁰ In this section, we analyse primarily the extent to which the selection processes take into account the prioritization system established in the strategy ISDDD. Further analysis of project selection from the operational perspective is included in Chapter 7 on effectiveness and efficiency.

²¹ For an example of conformity check procedure for ROP see:

<https://www.itideltadunarii.com/finantare/perioda-de-programare-2014-2020/por>

The conformity check procedure was developed by ADI ITI in the first quarter of 2016, discussed with all stakeholders, and adopted in March 2016. Generally, the conformity check procedure is similar across programmes, with exceptions included for ROP and FMAOP as follows. For ROP, the conformity assessment is required for all ITI project applications with the exception of projects submitted for SME support in Axis 2 (SME competitiveness). For FMAOP, the conformity checks at project level were replaced by conformity checks at the level of FLAG.²² In the case of the FLAG in FMAOP, ADI ITI assessed the alignment of the strategy for local development with the ISDDD strategy, rather than the alignment of the individual projects. For FMAOP, a distinct feature is also the timing required for the conformity assessment. In contrast to all other programmes, for which beneficiaries were required to submit the ADI ITI assessment together with the financing application, for FMAOP the beneficiaries could submit this assessment within 2 weeks from the submission of the financing request.

The procedural documents for the conformity checks indicate that ADI ITI assesses the beneficiary's request based on four main criteria: a) relevance of the project for the strategic objectives of ISDDD; b) relevance of the project for the strategic pillars and domains of the investment proposed; c) geographical location of the project; and d) the integrated approach and/ or the relationship of the project with other projects/ initiatives in the ISDDD area.

These criteria are assessed based on the information provided by the beneficiary in its conformity request in a binary manner (with YES/NO), without an explicit rating of the extent to which the project fulfills each criterion. An overall positive assessment at project level is established if the project is assessed affirmatively for each of the four criteria.²³ In this regard, we asked ADI ITI whether there is an explicit methodology defined for the assessment of each criterion, and the reply was that the experts followed the principles established in the official document of the strategy, without any additional methodological guidelines.

Based on the data provided by ADI ITI, we learnt that 66% of the ITI projects selected requested conformity checks from ADI ITI.²⁴ At programme level, all ITI projects selected in NRDP and HCOP have conformity assessments, 97% in LIOP, 75% in ACOP, and 67% in COP. For FMAOP, the share of ITI projects selected with conformity checks is 41%, while for ROP it is 21%. Further, we also find that all projects for which the beneficiaries did make a request for conformity check received a favourable assessment, meaning that all were rated affirmatively for the four criteria applied by ADI ITI in their assessment.

As regards the differences in the coverage of ITI projects by conformity assessments across programmes, for programmes which selected ITI projects based on national calls

²² Fisheries Local Action Group. For more on FLAGs, see Miret-Pastor L., Svets K., and Freeman R. (2020) in References.

²³ In this process, ADI ITI applies also the four-eyes approach, with two experts making the assessment for a conformity check request.

²⁴ For consistency, cancelled projects are not included in this reporting, but they also have conformity checks by ADI ITI.

(i.e. LIOP, ACOP and COP), it is very likely that the projects without conformity checks were considered relevant for financing from the ITI allocation after selection.

For the Regional Operational Programme, however, no conformity assessment was carried out for close to 80% of the ITI projects selected, with all these projects being financed from the ITI allocation assigned to Axis 2 (SME Competitiveness) in the programme. As a result, in implementation, ADI ITI monitors these projects in a category introduced after the adoption of the strategy (and which is labelled as Competitiveness) since there is no planned type of intervention in the ISDDD strategy for this type of investments.

We analysed further these projects from ROP in order to understand their relevance for the ISDDD strategy. Based on the data from the Managing Authority and SMIS online, we learnt that, as with all other ITI projects selected in ROP, the ITI projects in Axis 2 were also selected based on project calls dedicated to beneficiaries from the ISDDD area. Close to 50% of these investments, however, are in construction (site preparation, residential and non-residential constructions, other type of construction activities, and with an emphasis on equipment acquisition). Nevertheless, given the status of a protected area from the environmental perspective of the Danube Delta, the domain of construction is not an investment priority from the ISDDD perspective.

Further, we also analysed the project beneficiaries by identifying the origin of the private companies which accessed the funds for these investments. On this basis, we found that only 34% of them originate from the ISDDD area, with the majority being companies established in other counties in the country and which opened a working station in the ISDDD area. Therefore, in our assessment, these projects have a very low potential to contribute to the development of local entrepreneurship in the ISDDD area, and it is highly unlikely that they are relevant for the strategy objectives.

We asked the Managing Authority why the selection of ITI projects in Axis 2 was excepted from the eligibility requirement of conformity assessment which, otherwise, applied to all other ITI projects selected in ROP. The Managing Authority explained that this was the decision of the Monitoring Committee of the program, and that the investments in Axis 2 are aligned with the National Strategy for Competitiveness – a strategy in which the construction sector is a priority.

In conclusion, as regards the procedure of conformity assessments of projects proposed to be financed from the ITI allocations, our assessment is that it does not have the potential to enable and contribute to the selection of priority projects from the ISDDD strategy due to the following reasons. First, the criteria applied for this assessment are not aligned with the criteria used for establishing the priorities of investments in the ISDDD strategy, and there is no evidence that the actual methodology applied for this assessment took into account the prioritization established in the strategy. Second, the conformity assessment procedure does not have the potential to reflect the extent to which the projects proposed are aligned with the objectives of the ISDDD strategy.

As all beneficiary requests received favourable assessments, this renders the procedure more as a formality rather than a genuine filter of more valuable investments from the strategic perspective. In our opinion, this is also due to the fact that the conformity assessment was introduced as an eligibility condition rather than an evaluation criterion during project selection.

We also asked the Managing Authorities about their opinions on the usefulness of the conformity assessment from their perspective. They replied that, in principle, they appreciate the assurance that someone is checking the alignment of project proposals with the ITI strategy since their focus in the selection process is the alignment of financing requests with the objectives and requirements of their programme. Nevertheless, some of the Managing Authorities also emphasized that, in its current format, the procedure is less than optimal because, in practice, all projects received a favourable assessment. They concluded that it could be improved in order to enable a ranking of projects according to their alignment and contribution to the strategy.

Next in our analysis, we also explored the process of project selection for the ITI projects at the level of the operational programmes, in terms of the types of calls launched and the criteria used to evaluate the project applications.

As presented in Table 6.6 above, across the operational programmes, the Managing Authorities organized three types of calls for the selection of ITI projects: a) calls dedicated to ITI projects; b) mixed calls (national and ITI dedicated); and c) national/general project calls.

The ITI dedicated project calls were organized as a rule for NRDP and ROP and for projects calls in two (out of three) priority axes for HCOP. In these cases, the two main eligibility conditions from the ITI perspective were the geographical location of the project (required in the ISDDD area) and a favourable conformity assessment from ADI ITI (when required in the case of ROP). Usually, these calls were launched at the same time with the national project calls for similar types of investments, but they were organized through a separate procedure.

The mixed projects calls, on the hand, included two components: one for ITI projects (with the same ITI specific eligibility requirements for the geographical location of the project and a favourable conformity assessment), and a general component, for all other project at national level. The two main differences between mixed calls and ITI dedicated calls include the following. First, in the case of the mixed calls, part of the allocation at call level was ring-fenced for projects located in the ISDDD area (for the ITI component). If, following the evaluation of the applications received, this allocation could not be used entirely for ITI projects selected, the difference would be reallocated to the general component of the call for selection of additional projects at national level. If, on the other hand, the ITI projects evaluated as suitable for financing required an allocation higher than foreseen for the ITI component of the call, some of these projects would be transferred to

the general component of the call. The second difference of this type of project calls relative to the ITI dedicated ones is the fact that, in the mixed calls, the ITI and national components are organized with the same administrative procedure, and therefore launched at the same time. Mixed calls were organized in FMAOP and, in some cases, by COP.

Finally, the third type of project calls, the national/ general calls are the project calls organized as a rule for project selection in all operational programmes, without taking into account the specificity of ITI investments. ITI projects were selected based on national calls in LIOP, ACOP, and, in some cases, in HCOP and COP. For LIOP, the Managing Authority explained that, with the exception of Axis 4 (Biodiversity), the projects financed in the programme are usually large scale projects which are pre-defined, and therefore selection is non-competitive. For ACOP, on the other hand, the Managing Authority explained that the projects proposed for the ISDDD area were similar to the ones proposed at national level, and that they had nothing specific to the ISDDD strategy (with the exception of geographical location) that would justify the organization of ITI dedicated calls.

Nevertheless, whether ITI dedicated or not, beyond the ITI specific eligibility conditions, all project applications were evaluated based on the evaluation criteria specific to the operational programme. Based on an analysis of applicants' guides for 45 selected project calls with ITI projects from 6 operational programmes (all, except TAOP and NRDP), we find significant diversity of evaluation criteria and weights for project selection across the operational programmes.

For ROP, for example, the dominant criteria for project calls for axes 2,3 and 5 include project maturity, quality, and sustainability (with a maximum score up to 71%) and project contribution to the objectives of the programme (with maximum score of up to 56%). For LIOP, the maximum score for project maturity and quality reaches 60% in axes with ITI projects, followed by project relevance and timeliness, and financial and administrative sustainability (each with 20%). For COP, on the other hand, project maturity and quality reaches a maximum score of 30%, while project relevance and timeliness has 40%. ACOP and HCOP have similar evaluation criteria, but also with different weights, including, for example, project relevance and timeliness (36% in ACOP, 30% in HCOP) and cost efficiency (24% in ACOP, 30% in HCOP). Finally, FMAOP uses a number of evaluation criteria specific to Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, with higher weights for criteria such as contribution to the measure (40%) or increased processing capacity (45%) (where applicable). Further details for evaluation criteria at axis level by operational programmes are included in the programmes' profiles in Annex to Section 7, Tables OP.6b-7b.

From this analysis, we learn that there is little (if any) overlap between the prioritization criteria for ISDDD, or the assessment criteria for conformity checks, on the one hand, and the evaluation criteria used for project selection in the operational programmes, on the other hand. This means that, while projects are prioritized in ISDDD based on their expected impacts on the strategic objectives and beneficiaries in the area, they are assessed for ITI eligibility based on their relevance for the objectives and investment

pillars in the strategy, and then selected for financing based on their expected contribution to the programme, maturity and quality of project proposal and other criteria specific to operational programs. Therefore, the process of selection (through eligibility and evaluation) remains highly programme specific and, except of geographical project location, takes little to no account of the prioritization of investments established in the ISDDD strategy for the ITI investments.

6.3. Integration

We also analysed the extent to which the integration of investments has been embedded in the process of planning and implementation of ITI projects, where integration is considered in terms of investments relevant for more than one domain, or supported by more than one fund. Further, we also considered the distinction between integration of investments at strategy level, and integration at project level.

In planning, from the perspective of funding sources, the strategy ISDDD is clearly integrated by design as it is expected to be supported by all ESI Funds (ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD, ESF, and EMFF) and national funds. As regards the relevance of the ITI projects for more than one domain of investment, we estimate that, of the 163 ITI projects planned in the strategy, close to 20% are relevant for more than one domain. An example is the project for improving SME competitiveness, included as relevant for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture and Tourism (all domains of Pillar II: Economy). Further, if we consider only the priority projects in the strategy (i.e. with highest priority high or medium across interventions), then we find that 17% of the ITI priority projects are relevant for more than one domain.

In implementation, from the perspective of funding sources, the ITI investments for the ISDDD strategy are supported by all ESI Funds and national funds, although there is no integration at project level (i.e. there is no project that is funded from more than one fund). The Managing Authorities explained that, in this regard, integration at project level is difficult to achieve in practice due to the different rules that govern the ESIF. An indirect solution could be, they said, the implementation of several components of a larger project (for example a project aiming at investments from ERDF for infrastructure and ESF for training) coordinated across Managing Authorities through the planning and sequentiality of calls and the use of an evaluation criterion that rewards integration (across domains and funds) in project selection.

Still for implementation, from the analysis of project selection criteria, we learnt that there is no evaluation criterion in the process of selection that rewards integration. It is only in the eligibility stage where, in its assessment of conformity, ADI ITI considers a criterion for integration of projects (assessed in a binary manner with YES/NO).

Further for implementation, we also analysed the extent to which the projects implemented are relevant for more than one domain of investments. First, as concerns integration by design, of the 31 integrated ITI projects planned in the strategy, we find that

45% were fully implemented and below 25% partially or very partially implemented. If we consider only the 16 priority projects planned initially, then we learn that close to 70% were fully implemented, and almost 17% partially or very partially implemented.

As regards the remaining ITI projects implemented which were not initially planned in the strategy, it is difficult to provide an estimate of the extent of integration due to issues with the monitoring data as follows.

For monitoring implementation, ADI ITI established a methodology in order to calculate the project contribution to the domains and pillars in the strategy. Based on this methodology, we find that 14% of the implemented ITI projects are assigned to more than one domain (all of them financed from NRDP). This monitoring is, however, not fully consistent with ADI ITI assessment of the relevance of these projects for the domains of the ISDDD strategy carried out upon the beneficiary request for conformity checks. Among the 734 ITI projects with a conformity assessment and which were selected subsequently in one of the operational programmes, 28% were considered by ADI ITI as relevant for more than one domain in the strategy ISDDD. In our opinion, in some cases, this assessment is rather generous as the proposed projects were considered relevant even for 8 domains in the strategy (while the approach in planning is more conservative, as the maximum number of domains for which a project is considered relevant is 4). More importantly, however, we assess that the contribution of implemented projects to the domains in the strategy is also likely to be underestimated as there are clearly projects which have a potential to contribute to more than one domain, but are assigned to only one domain. An example are the project for energy efficiency which can be considered as contributing also to the domain of Climate Change in Pillar I: Environment,²⁵ but in implementation they are considered only for the domain of Energy Efficiency.

In conclusion, as regards the approach to integration, our assessment is that it has been achieved at strategy level by design both from the perspective of funding sources (being supported by all ESIF and national funds) and from the point of view of types of investment needs identified. At project level, however, the thematic integration is rather limited, as it was planned for around 20% of the planned interventions. Similarly, in implementation, we find around 25% of the ITI projects planned initially and implemented (fully or partially) are relevant for more than one domain. The extent to which the planned funding sources succeeded in supporting the strategy is further analysed in the next section on effectiveness and efficiency of implementation of ITI projects.

²⁵ This is one of the reasons for the apparent lack implementation of planned projects for the domain of Climate Change described earlier in the section.

7. Effectiveness and efficiency of implementation

In this section we explore the evolution and use of financial resources allocated for ITI investments over the reference period of the evaluation, with an emphasis on the approach of these investments in the operational programmes for ESI Funds. In contrast to the previous section, the analysis in the current section is organized primarily by operational programme due to the relative autonomy of the Managing Authorities in the decision making process for implementation. The section approaches issues of effectiveness in implementation in terms of programme modifications to accommodate ITI investments, selection and implementation on the ground, resolution of difficulties in implementation (where applicable), and the time efficiency of the project contracting and implementation. The section concludes with an analysis of the performance orientation of the ITI projects.

7.1. Programme allocations for ITI investments

The process of identifying the investment needs for an integrated development of the Danube Delta and its neighbouring areas started in 2013, in parallel with the preparation of the first versions of the operational programmes for ESI Funds for the programming period 2014-2020. At the time of their adoption in 2015, the operational programmes were already included ITI allocations although the strategy ISDDD was to be adopted one year later, in 2016.

According to the Managing Authorities, these allocations were determined primarily based on preliminary lists of projects identified while elaborating the strategy ISDDD. Over time, the ITI allocations changed in some programmes, both at the level of priority axis and at the programme level. In Table 7.1, we present the initial ITI allocations included in first versions of operational programmes for ESIF and their change over time, as reflected by the levels of these allocations in the more recent versions of these operational programmes from 2020/2021.

Table 7.1 – Programme ITI allocations over time (million euro)

Programme	First version	Latest relevant version	Change over time
ROP	434	451	4%
LIOP	517	475	-8%
PNDR	168	168	0%
FMAOP	49	49	0%
HCOP	70.4	71.6	2%
ACOP	19	19	0%
COP	60	60	0%
TAOP	6	6	0%
Total	1323	1300	-2%

Sources: ROP: v1.2 (July 2015); v7 (Sept 2020); LIOP: v1.3 (July 2015); v7 (Sept 2021); HCOP: v1.4 (Feb 2015); v10 (Dec 2020); ACOP: 1.2 (Jan 2015); v3.1 (Aug 2020); Managing Authorities for PNDR, FMAOP, and COP.

These data indicate that, from the very beginning of the period, the cumulated allocation for ITI investments across operational programmes was 1.3 billion euro (in EU and National resources combined), and it was reduced marginally (by 2%) over time, until 2020/2021. This reduction is the net result of a decrease by 8% of the ITI allocation included in LIOP, and increases by 4%, respectively 2%, in ROP and HCOP.

The reasons for the changes of ITI allocations at programme level differ by programme. For LIOP, the Managing Authority explained that, at some stage during the programming period, there was a need to reallocate resources from LIOP to other operational programmes (such as ROP) and that the reduction in the ITI allocation was proportional with the reduction of the total allocation at the level of the programme. Indeed, as can be inferred from the data presented at priority axis level in Table LIOP.1 in Annex to Section 7, the ITI allocation in LIOP was reduced by 8% for all the relevant axes.

For ROP, the net increase in ITI resources of 4% over time is reflected less than proportional at axis level. Proportionally more ITI resources were allocated for Priority Axis 2 (SME Competitiveness – with an increase of 27%), followed by Priority Axes 3 and 5 (Low carbon economy and Regional road infrastructure – each with 18% increase), Axis 8 (Health infrastructure – 15%), and Axis 5 (Urban environment and cultural heritage – 10%). The remaining axes relevant for ITI investments (Education infrastructure, Tourism, and the new axis for Small and medium cities) had more limited increases in additional resources of 3-6%. Details at priority axis level for ROP are included in Table ROP.1 in Annex to Section 7.

For HCOP, as with LIOP, the net change of 2% in the ITI allocation at programme level is reflected proportionally for all 4 priority axes relevant for ITI investments in the programme. For details at priority axis level, see Table HCOP.1 in Annex to Section 7.

In terms of timing, for these three operational programmes, the changes in the ITI allocations were introduced at later stages, around year 2018.

7.2. Impact on operational programmes

The adoption of the ISDDD strategy in August 2016 did not have much additional impact on the financial allocations and the terms for ITI investments in the operational programmes. During the interviews, the Managing Authorities explained that most of the changes necessary to accommodate the ITI investments had already been embedded in their programs based on the preparatory work for the strategy (and thus prior to its adoption).

For example, in ROP, the eligibility conditions for Priority Axis 7 (Tourism) were adapted to the specificity of the Danube Delta by assimilating the localities in the ISDDD area to

touristic destinations. In addition, the terms of the programme were modified also to enable the financing of river specific infrastructure.

After the adoption of the strategy, additional changes were introduced primarily in ROP and NRDP to further enable the eligibility of ITI projects as follows. For ROP, there was a realization of the fact that the specificity of public transport in the Danube Delta was water transport, and therefore eligibility for means of public transport was extended to include also water transport in Priority Axes 3 (Urban mobility) and 5 (Regional road infrastructure). Further, also for ROP, an additional change in eligibility conditions was operated for Axis 8 (Health infrastructure) in order to enable the financing of Tulcea Hospital (while, at national level, the program was financing primarily emergency units). For NRDP, ADI ITI explained that they cooperated with the Managing Authority in order to adapt the terms of a project call so that access to river infrastructure would be eligible for the ISDDD area.

For all other operational programmes, the respective Managing Authorities explained that it was not necessary to introduce changes relevant for ITI investments since they had participated in the process of consultations at national level organized during the elaboration of the strategy ISDDD.

In addition to the changes in the ESIF programmes presented above, a series of adaptations of national strategic documents also took place. ADI ITI explained that, after the adoption of the ISDDD strategy and following consultations at national level, the ITI investments were introduced also in the Master Plan for Transport, the National Strategy for Waste Management, the Master Plan for Water and Wastewater Management, the National Plan for Flood Management, and the Management Plan for DDBRA.²⁶

²⁶ DDBRA = Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation Administration.

7.3. Progress in implementation of ITI investments

Next, we analysed the progress in the implementation of ITI investments over time in terms of the extent to which the resources allocated in the programme were contracted for ITI projects until 2021 (i.e. selection rate), and in terms of implementation on the ground as proxied by payments to beneficiaries (i.e. rate of payments). This data is presented at programme level in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2 – Selection and implementation of ITI projects, 2016-2021

Programme	ITI projects	Rate project selection	Rate payments to beneficiaries
ROP	421	102%	39%
LIOP	35	114%	45%
NRDP	539	72%	71%
FMAOP	51	46%	72%
HCOP	22	27%	31%
ACOP	4	5%	37%
COP	12	31%	18%
TAOP	2	n.a.	64%
Total	1086	92%	45%

Note: n.a.= not available.

Sources: OP latest relevant versions and Managing Authorities' data for ITI projects, end 2021.

The overall results for selection and payments at programme level were already introduced in Section 5 on the status of implementation. What is of interest for the current section on operational effectiveness of implementation is the fact that the net rates of selection and payments are the results of varying progress in implementation at priority axis level. For all programmes, the rates of selection and payments at priority axis level are reported in Tables OP.2 in Annex to Section 7 by programme, and they indicate the following.

For ROP, the net selection rate of 102% is the net result of significant over-contracting for Priority Axis 7 (Tourism – with overbooking of 53%) and Priority Axis 2 (SME Competitiveness, (with 48%). For the remaining priority axes relevant for ITI investments in the programme the respective allocations remained underutilized over the reference period. The lowest selection rate until end 2021 was for Priority Axis 5 (Urban environment and cultural heritage) with around 60% ITI resources contracted.

We asked the Managing Authority and the Intermediate Body for ROP why progress in the implementation of ITI investments was slower in some priority axes of the programme, and they explained that reasons for delayed contracting differ by priority axis.

For urban mobility, for example, the limited contracting is due to delays in the preparation of the plan for urban mobility. During 2021 the applicant guides were still in preparation, and it was unclear whether they could be adopted on time in order to enable the implementation of the investments until the end of the programming period. For Priority Axis 10 (Education infrastructure), slow implementation was due both the delays at national level in establishing the priority criteria for education infrastructure, and to the limited capacity of local authorities to organize public procurement. For Axis 5 (Urban environment and cultural heritage), the Managing Authority explained that one of the two main types of investments in the axis are green urban areas, and that the beneficiaries from the ISDDD area had difficulties in preparing the register of green areas (which is an eligibility requirement in the programme).²⁷

More generally, however, the opinions of the Managing Authority and the Intermediate Body of ROP were that, of all projects identified in the strategy ISDDD, the most prepared projects proved to be the ones for large infrastructure, with the remaining being more preliminary in preparation (even at the stage of intention), and therefore not sufficiently mature for financing.

As regards the payments to beneficiaries in ROP, the net rate of 39% is the result of higher payment rates for Priority Axis 2 (SME Competitiveness – 72%) and, to a lesser extent, Priority Axis 6 (Regional road infrastructure – 46%). Very slow progress on the ground in ROP is observed for the following axes: Priority Axis 7 (Tourism – 3%), Priority Axis 8 (Health infrastructure – 5%) and Priority Axis 6 (Low carbon economy – 6%).

For Tourism, the protracted implementation is explained by the late launch of the project selection (in 2018). For the remaining priority axes with slow progress on the ground, factors mentioned by the Managing Authority and the Intermediate body include delays in implementation due to the COVID crisis, the increase in prices in the construction sector which required legislative support at national level for the ongoing public investments concerned, long durations of public acquisition procedures,²⁸ and limited administrative capacity for implementation at local level. There are also factors specific to the types of investments such as the example of energy efficiency for which implementation is slowed down by the fact that such projects require coordination with multiple actors (ex: associations of owners in case of residential buildings) or are undertaken while the buildings are still in use (as it is the case of public buildings).

For LIOP, the net selection rate of 114% is the net result of significant contracting in Priority Axis 2 (Multimodal Transport – with overbooking of 60%) and relatively advanced contracting in Priority Axis 5 (Adaptation to Climate Change – with 83% selection rate).

²⁷ Additional difficulties in contracting priority projects for ISDDD in ROP were discussed also in the previous section, where we explained that, for Axis 8 (Health infrastructure) the planned investments in community centres could not be selected for financing due to eligibility issues. This priority axis had a selection rate of 85% by end of 2021, and the project call for community centres was still in preparation at time of writing this report.

²⁸ The Managing Authorities explained that there is a significant difference between projects with private beneficiaries and the ones with public beneficiaries: while procurement procedures in the private sector could take 1-2 months, in the public sector they could take at least one year.

The lowest selection rate by end 2021 was in Priority Axis 3 (Environmental infrastructure – 12% selection rate), followed by Priority Axis 4 (Biodiversity – 61%).

For Axis 3 in LIOP, the Managing Authority explained that the projects proposed are rather ambitious and they usually require a long time for preparation for feasibility studies, environmental assessments etc. By early 2022, the process of contracting was still ongoing for this axis. A similar explanation was provided also for Axis 4, mentioning an example of a very recent large project of 300 million euro – project which is likely to be contracted during 2014-2020 and phased into the next programming period 2021-2027.

As regards payments to beneficiaries in LIOP, the most advanced priority axis is Axis 3 (82%), followed by Axis 2 (49%). For the remaining two priority axes, the payment rate is up to 28%. The reasons for this slow progress on the ground mentioned by Managing Authority are similar to the factors identified also for ROP earlier, i.e. the COVID crisis, and limited implementation capacity of the beneficiaries.

For NRDP and FMAOP, the selection rates at measure / union priority levels are not available, while the level of payments are all above the average across programmes for ITI investments. At programme level, for FMAOP the Managing Authority explained that additional calls were being organized and that they already had indications of additional resources (of about 3 million euro) needed for financing the FLAG in the ISDDD area.

Much less implementation is observed for HCOP, where the net selection rate of 27% is the net result of a maximum of 60% for Axis 4 (Social Inclusion), and much lower contracting rates in Axis 6 (Education and Skills) and Axis 3 (Jobs for all). Moreover, the resources of 3 million euro allocated for ITI investments in Axis 1 (Jobs for young people) were not used at all until end 2021. As regards the payments from HCOP, the most advanced axis is Axis 3 (61%), while for the remaining axes the payment rates are within the range 27-31%. For HCOP, we did not have the opportunity to elicit the Managing Authority's view regarding the implementation of ITI projects in their programme.

For ACOP, the very limited use of the ITI allocation (with selection rate of 5%) is the net result of a selection rate of 1% for Axis 1, and 9% of Axis 2. As regards Axis 1, the Managing Authority explained that eligible beneficiaries are central authorities. The projects financed from this priority axis are for regulatory measures at national level, and it is difficult to estimate the contribution of such projects for the ISDDD area. For Axis 2, the Managing Authority stated that the primary difficulty for project selection was induced by lack of eligibility of local authorities, while in the ISDDD area there were initially only 2 eligible beneficiaries from the area. More progress in this priority axis is expected starting with 2022 and following the recent changes introduced in the programme to extend eligibility also to local authorities (not only in the ISDDD area, but at national level).

For COP, the net selection rate for ITI allocation at programme level is the result of 42% selection in the first priority axis, and 9% selection in the second priority axis. For Axis 1 (R&D&I for Competitiveness), the ITI allocation of 40 million euro was intended for the

creation of the R&I centre DANUBIUS in the ISDDD area. For the period 2014-2020, however, this objective could be achieved only partially, by implementing only a preparatory study for the centre. The Managing Authority explained that the beneficiary incurred delays with the project preparation for DANUBIUS both due to legislative changes and to beneficiary specific factors. Further for this axis, ADI ITI explained also that there were a number of other projects proposed by the research centre INCDDD in the ISDDD area, but that this beneficiary was not eligible since it was not included in roadmap for research centres at national level.

For Axis 2 (ICT) in COP, the Managing Authority explained that the demand for ICT projects in the ISDDD area is very limited, as usually the expertise for this type of projects is concentrated around university centres (ex: Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi etc) in Romania. We asked the Managing Authority why, if this was the situation on the ground, there was a decision to allocate 20 million euro in this axis for ITI investments. Their explanation was that the allocation was meant to contribute to national programmes that would cover also the ISDDD area.

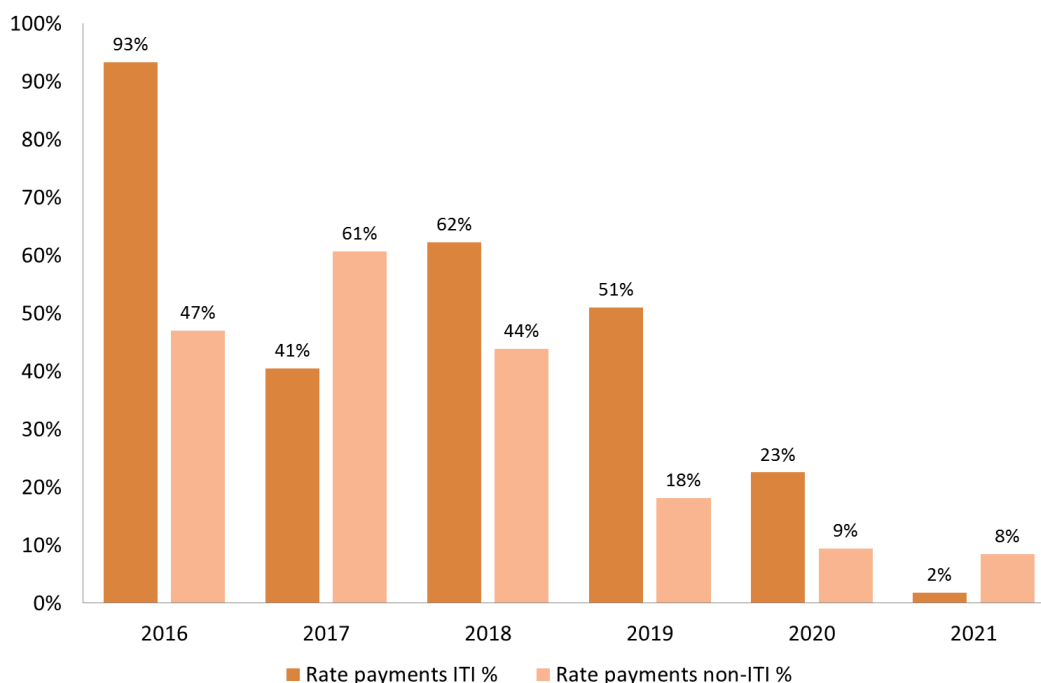
Finally, for TAOP, the implementation of the two projects for technical assistance for the functioning of ADI ITI progressed as planned.

Overall, our analysis of progress in implementation in terms of project selection indicates that only in few cases the limited implementation could be explained by factors more specific to the ISDDD area. A horizontal feature of investments in the ISDDD area mentioned by several Managing Authorities was the special status of the area from the environmental perspective and the time required to obtain the necessary approvals for infrastructure projects in the area. We also note the eligibility issues discussed for APOC or COP, and the limited demand for certain types of investments as in the case of COP. Otherwise, factors such the COVID crisis, limited capacity of the beneficiary, or time needed for public procurement are likely to apply more generally, at national level.

As regards the payments to beneficiaries, we compared also the payment rates for ITI projects with the payment rates of non-ITI projects in 4 operational programmes (ROP, LIOP, HCOP and ACOP) by year when the projects were contracted.²⁹ Figure 7.1 illustrates these results.

²⁹ Online data for non-ITI projects is available in a comparable format at project level only for the 4 programmes included in the analysis. For FMAOP and COP data on payments for non-ITI operations is not available in MA lists of operations, while for NRDP data on contracting dates for non-ITI operations is not available in AFIR open data.

Figure 7.1: Payment rates for ITI and non-ITI projects, by contracting year



Note: a) Data covers 456 ITI projects and 7274 non-ITI projects contracted with data available. b) Programmes included: ROP, LIOP, HCOP and ACOP.

Sources: SMIS, MA lists of operations last quarter of 2021.

Figure 7.1 reads as follows. For the ITI projects contracted in year 2016, the payment rate cumulated across the operational programmes included in the analysis was 93% by end 2021. For all other, non-ITI, operations, in the same programmes and over the same period, the cumulated payment rate by end 2021 was 47%.

On this basis, we learn that, when compared with non-ITI operations, the cumulated payment rates for ITI projects were systematically higher, with the exception of projects contracted in years 2017 and 2021. For year 2021, data is less comparable across programmes due to different timing of publication of Managing Authorities' lists of operations.

In our assessment, a contributing factor to this result could also be the fact that, when compared with non-ITI projects, the set of ITI projects includes a higher proportion of projects that had already started implementation by the time they applied for financing, especially in ROP and LIOP. For more details on rates of payments for ITI and non-ITI projects for each operational programme see Figure OP.4 in Annex to Section 7.

7.4. Project calls, conformity checks, and contracting

Next, for each programme, we analysed further the projects calls through which ITI projects were selected. From the previous section, we recall that the 7 programmes (i.e. all except TAOP) included in the analysis organized three types of calls for ITI projects: ITI dedicated calls (in ROP, NRDP and, to some extent, HCOP); mixed calls (in FMAOP and, to some extent, COP); and general/ national calls (in LIOP, ACOP, and HCOP in one priority axis). During the interviews with the Managing Authorities, we asked them to explain their choice of organizing the specific type of calls for ITI projects.

The Managing Authorities for ROP and NRDP explained that, with the ITI dedicated calls, the projects submitted from beneficiaries in the ISDDD area had higher chances to be selected for financing from the ITI allocation, while they still had to be aligned with the programme requirements. Given the eligibility condition for the geographical location in the ISDDD, this type of call enabled access to financing from the ITI allocation only to projects located in the strategy area. As regards advantages and disadvantages of this type of project calls, the Managing Authorities explained that they found it more convenient from the administrative perspective to organize calls addressed to ISDDD beneficiaries, thus increasing their chances for selection. Dedicated calls have also more flexibility in scheduling, thus offering the possibility to tailor the launching time to beneficiary's needs.³⁰ On the other hand, dedicated calls require additional administrative effort as they are organized in separate procedures and, if there are not enough mature projects applying for the financing included in the calls, there is a risk of a need to reorganize the call or of underutilization of funds.

For the programmes with mixed calls FMAOP and COP, the Managing Authorities explained that their choice for mixed calls was meant to balance the need to support the implementation of the ISDDD strategy with the primary objective of the programme to use the funds in a timely manner. In these cases, the ITI application would compete only with each other in a first stage of selection. If the ITI allocation for a respective call proved too limited relative to the investment needs of the ITI projects submitted (and evaluated as feasible), then the additional projects could be financed from the national share of the call if they compared favorably relative to other projects competing at national level. If, however, the ITI projects submitted did not cover fully the ITI allocation in the call, then the remaining resources would be transferred to the national part of the call. As regards the advantages and disadvantages of this type of calls, the Managing Authorities explained that they help combine the two objectives, i.e. ensure increase chances of selection of mature projects for ITI beneficiaries in a first stage, while also ensuring a better utilisation of funds for a given administrative selection procedure. From the perspective of ITI beneficiaries, the disadvantages include the timing of the calls, which is likely to be driven by factors at national level, and the need to include similar evaluation criteria for both components (i.e. ITI specific and national) of the call.

³⁰ Another advantage of dedicated calls could also be the possibility to tailor the evaluation criteria in selection to the ITI investments in order to achieve a better alignment of these investments with the strategic objective. This, however, was not the case for the period 2014-2020 as the only condition specific to the ITI investments was the eligibility requirement for geographical location of the project in the ISDDD area.

For the national calls, for LIOP, the Managing Authority explained that there was no need to organized competitive calls for ITI projects since the project calls in the programme are mostly non-competitive, dedicated to pre-defined projects. For LIOP, however, we also note that 14 out of 34 ITI projects were selected in Axis 4 (Biodiversity) based on competitive national calls.

For ACOP – also a programme with national calls for ITI selection – the Managing Authority explained that, given the eligibility conditions in the programme, the projects submitted from beneficiaries in the ISDDD area had no ITI specificity relative to other projects submitted from similar areas in the country (ex: sparsely populated), and therefore there was little justification for the organization of ITI dedicated calls. The main advantage of this type of calls, from the perspective of Managing Authority, is the administrative simplicity of the process (relative to ITI dedicated or mixed calls). The main disadvantage is increased competition for ITI beneficiaries for types of investments with a higher demand and, as in the case of mixed calls, less flexibility in terms of timing adapted to the needs of ITI beneficiaries. For these two programmes, however, the Managing Authorities explained that competition was not an issue since there were sufficient resources available. In their view, the main difficulties they encountered referred to the readiness of projects from ITI beneficiaries for financing.

Subsequently, based on the data on calls reported in SMIS and AFIR online open data, we compared the selection rates of ITI projects with the selection of non-ITI projects at axis level. The results of this analysis are summarized by programme in Table 7.3 below, with details at the level of priority axis/ measure / union priority included in Tables OP.6a-7a in Annex to Section 7.

Table 7.3 – Calls for ITI and non-ITI projects

Programme	Number calls		Numbre projects selected in all calls		Median selection rate per call		Share calls with 100% selection		Median number projects selected per call	
	With ITI projects	With non-ITI projects	With ITI projects	With non-ITI projects	With ITI projects	With non-ITI projects	With ITI projects	With non-ITI projects	With ITI projects	With non-ITI projects
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
ROP	25	100	437	6659	78%	77%	36%	22%	3	14
LIOP	15	50	203	447	71%	63%	27%	32%	6	2
NRDP	16	553	75	35230	78%	53%	38%	1%		
FMAOP	17	171	209	407	86%	100%	35%	73%	8	2
HCOP	5	116	64	2266	54%	75%	0%	42%	6	2
ACOP	4	38	147	442	79%	100%	0%	55%	38	3
COP	7	36	536	578	75%	91%	43%	42%	5	3
TAOP	2	25	10	133	100%	100%	100%	80%	5	3
Total	91	1089	1681	46162						

Notes: Data covers only priority axes/ measures/ union priorities with ITI projects.

Sources: SMIS online September 2021, AFIR, Managing Authorities' data on ITI projects end 2021; Managing Authorities' lists of operations last quarter 2021.

Table 7.3 reads as follows. For ROP – a programme which organized ITI dedicated calls – the 437 ITI projects (column (3)) were selected through 25 project calls (column (1)) launched over the period 2016-2021. At the same time, for the same priority axes, the programme launched also 100 calls (column (2)), selecting close to 6660 non-ITI projects (column (4)). At the programme level, the median proportion of ITI projects selected relative to projects submitted for the respective calls was 78% (column (5)). This means

that, for a majority of the 25 calls with ITI projects, chances of a project submitted to be selected were at least 78%. Similarly, as regards the calls with non-ITI projects, for a majority of calls, the chance of a project submitted to also be selected was at least 77% (column (6)) in ROP. Further for ROP, we determined also that 36% of the project calls dedicated to ITI projects selected all projects submitted (column (7)), in comparison with 22% of the calls with 100% selection for non-ITI projects (column (8)). Finally, in terms of number of projects selected per call, we find that a majority of ITI dedicated calls selected at least 3 projects per call (column (9)), compared with non-ITI projects with at least 14 projects selected per call for a majority of calls (column (10)). A similar interpretation applies to NRDP – a programme which also organized ITI dedicated calls.

For all other programmes, the reading of the data in Table 7.3 is slightly different, as these programmes selected ITI projects together with other non-ITI projects through common calls (mixed or national). For FMAOP – a programme which organized mixed calls for ITI projects – 17 of the calls organized by the programme resulted in the selection of around 200 projects, of which 51 were ITI projects. For the same union priorities, the programme launched other 171 calls, selecting around 400 projects (all non-ITI). The chances of success for a majority of mixed calls (i.e. with ITI component) for FMAOP were at least 78% at the call level, but we cannot determine the chances of success at the level of the ITI component within the call. A similar interpretation applies also for all other programmes for which ITI projects were selected through more general calls.

On this basis, when we compare the results from ROP with NRDP, we infer that, indeed, dedicated calls increase the chances of success of ITI projects in the selection process. This is most apparent for NRDP, where the probability of selection of a project in the ITI dedicated calls is substantially higher (78%) when compared with the probability of project being selected in a general call (53%). In our assessment, when compared to other programmes, projects in NRDP are likely to be very similar (whether ITI or not) and the competition among projects for the same type of measures is likely to be also substantially more intense. In fact, for NRDP, based on the analysis of unique beneficiaries of projects selected in the programme, we found that 22% of the beneficiaries with projects selected in ITI dedicated calls also participated and succeeded also in national project calls for similar measures.

If we consider ROP, on the other hand, despite the reduced competition in the ITI dedicated calls, the aggregate rates of selection in ITI dedicated calls are rather similar with selection rates for the national calls (77-78%). In our assessment, this may be due to a lower degree of maturity of project applications submitted for the ITI calls, when compared with national calls. Further, from the perspective of administrative burden for the Managing Authority, we infer also that the ITI dedicated calls are likely to be less effective as the median number of projects selected per call is substantially lower (i.e.3) than the median number of projects (14) selected in national calls.

In HCOP, the difference made by the type of call organized is visible at axis level (see Table HCOP.6 in Annex to Section VII). This programme selected ITI projects through ITI dedicated calls for Axes 4 and 6, and through national calls in Axis 3. If we compare the

selection probabilities between the two types of axes for ITI projects, we learn that chances of an ITI project to be selected are likely to be higher in selection processes dedicated to ITI, compared to general calls. In none of the cases, however, is the selection rate 100%, thus indicating also difficulties with the maturity of some project applications from the ISDDD area.

For the programmes with mixed calls (FMAOP and COP), we learn that the median aggregate rates of selection for the mixed calls are lower than the comparable rates for national calls. As mentioned, we cannot really distinguish the chances of success of an ITI project in the dedicated component of a mixed call (since we do not know the number of ITI projects submitted), but we conclude overall that chances of success in a mixed call seem lower than in a general call. In addition, for FMAOP, we learn that the share of calls where all projects submitted are selected is much higher for national calls, when compared with mixed calls (while they are comparable for COP). Our assessment is that, for these programmes, competition among ITI projects is much less of an issue, and that the dominant factor driving selection is the maturity of project applications from the ISDDD area. As regards the administrative burden in the Managing Authority, however, the mixed calls appear to be more effective in terms of the median number of projects selected per call.

For ACOP, given the selection based on national calls, it is even more difficult to determine chances of success of an ITI project in the wider context of national competition. What we learn from the data, however, is that median rate of selection in calls with ITI projects is lower than for call without ITI projects, and the shares of calls where all submitted projects are selected is higher for calls without ITI projects. This may also be an indication that maturity of project applications is the dominant factor driving the selection of ITI projects in this programme.

As regards LIOP, differences in selection rates are apparent at axis level, when making the distinction between priority axes with non-competitive calls and the priority axis (Axis 4) with competitive calls. As one would expect, the data at axis level indicate that the rates of selection for axes with non-competitive calls are systematically higher than in the case of competitive calls (see Table LIOP.8 in Annex to Section VII). Further, the share of calls with 100% selection for calls with ITI projects in Axis 4 is substantially lower than similar calls with non-ITI projects, or when compared with non-competitive calls. This also indicates the possibility that the maturity of some project applications from the ISDDD area was not sufficient for them to be selected.

Further for the analysis of the organization of projects calls for ITI projects by operational programmes, we analysed also the timing of those calls, relative to similar calls for non-ITI projects. The results are presented in Tables OP.6a/7a in the Annex to Section 7 for each operational program, by priority axis / measure/ union priority.

On this basis, we learn that, for a majority of cases across operational programmes, the Managing Authorities started launching calls relevant for ITI projects (whether dedicated

or not) soon after the adoption of ISDDD in August 2016. This is the case in programmes such as ROP, LIOP, NRDP, POPAM, COP and ACOP. HCOP is the only programme where calls for the selection of ITI projects started at earliest in 2018. At axis level, however, also in other programmes we identified situations of axes where selection of ITI calls started later. Examples include Axes 7 (Tourism) and 10 (Education infrastructure) for ROP,³¹ and Union Priority 1 (Fisheries) in FMAOP.

Nevertheless, from the evaluation of MEIP presented in section III, we learnt that beneficiaries of ITI project were generally satisfied with the timing of projects calls for ITI investments, while from ADI ITI activity report we learnt that beneficiaries solicited the postponement or extension of project calls (most probably for ITI dedicated calls) in order to have more time for project preparation. In fact, one of the Managing Authorities explained that, at least in their case, the project calls for ITI projects took longer than similar national calls (i.e. one year, compared with 6 months) as the beneficiaries were not ready with the documentation. Their conjecture was that, at least in the case of public beneficiaries, this was due to the fact that the beneficiaries from the ISDDD had the challenge to prepare several projects at the same time.

Therefore, on this basis, we conclude that most of the Managing Authorities proved rather cooperative in accommodating the timing of the process of selection of projects from the ISDDD area.

Next, we analysed the process of selection from the perspective of the time it takes to apply for funding and, if successful, sign a financing contract. We considered two steps in this process: the conformity checks, a step specific to ITI projects and carried out by ADI ITI, and the project evaluation and contract signature carried out by the Managing Authority.

For conformity checks, we analysed the time needed by ADI ITI to issue a conformity check upon beneficiary's request. The results are presented in Table 7.4 below, by operational programme.

³¹ For Axis 10 in ROP, we already explained that delays were incurred more generally, at national level, due to delays in the adoption of prioritization criteria for education infrastructure by the Ministry of Education.

Table 7.4 – Number and duration (in days) of conformity assessments

PROGRAM	Number assessments	Median duration	Max duration
ROP	143	1	4
LIOP	50	1	7
NRDP	1,258	0	7
FMAOP	45	2	12
HCOP	57	1	4
ACOP	6	1	2
COP	24	1	5

Source: ADI ITI, end September 2021.

Based on procedural data from ADI ITI, we learn that conformity assessments usually took 1-2 days for the majority of requests for all programmes, with the exception of NRDP for which there were many cases with conformity assessments issued in the same day when the request was received.

ADI ITI explained that, in the case of NRDP, many projects were very similar and therefore the assessment was fast. They also explained that, in some cases, the beneficiaries were rather late with their applications and therefore they made an effort to expedite the assessment in order to enable a timely application.

In terms of maximum duration for the conformity assessments, we find that it was up to almost two weeks in the case of FMAOP – a programme for which, as explained, it was possible to submit the conformity assessment within 2 weeks after the submission of the application.

Therefore, we conclude that, from the perspective of duration, the process of conformity assessment proved efficient.³²

For the next stage in selection - project application and contracting – we calculated the time it took to sign a financing contract from the date when the project application was submitted, and compared the ITI projects with non-ITI projects by programme. The results are presented in Table 7.5 below.

³² Based on the documentation provided by ADI ITI, we also learnt that a dossier for the conformity check could reach almost 100 pages. Given that beneficiaries need to prepare a series of documents for the financing application, this is likely to generate additional administrative burden. Therefore, we believe there is scope for simplification in this regard.

Table 7.5 – Duration contract signature (months), by programme

PROGRAM	Duration contracting ITI projects			Duration contracting non-ITI projects (median)
	Median	Min	Max	
ROP	15	3	38	14
LIOP	10	0.3	19	7
NRDP	7	1	35	n.a.
FMAOP	6	0.4	12	6
HCOP	8	5	14	10
ACOP	7	2	11	6
COP	8	1	51	9

Note: n.a.=not available.

Sources: MA data on ITI projects end 2021; and MA lists of operations last quarter 2021.

For simplicity, in Table 7.5, we present in more detail the data for ITI projects (in terms of median, minimum and maximum time it takes to sign a contract from the time when application is submitted) and only the median duration calculated at national level for non-ITI projects in the programme.

On this basis, we learn that, for a majority of projects, the median duration of contracting is in the range 6 – 15 months, with the higher values for ROP and LIOP. We also learn that these values are roughly comparable with the median durations at national level for most programmes.

There is, however, a high variability in these durations within and across programmes. For ROP, for example, median contracting durations for ITI projects reach 16-18 months for Axis 2 (SME Competitiveness) and Axis 7 (Tourism). In terms of maximum durations, there are cases with a duration of contracting of up to 3 years and more across all axes. For LIOP, the contracting duration tends to be higher (median 13) for Axis 4 (Biodiversity), and much lower (1 month) for Axis 5 (Climate change). For NRDP, higher contracting durations are observed, for example, for measures for agricultural farms, infrastructure projects, and rural non-agricultural SMEs. In FMAOP, higher median durations are observed for Aquaculture, and in HCOP for Axis 6 (Education and skills). Finally, for ACOP median duration of contracting is higher for Axis 2, while for COP the median contracting in Axis 1 was 33 months. These details are reported in Tables OP.7-8 in Annex to Section 7.

We asked the Managing Authorities why, in some cases, the contracting duration is rather long, and they mentioned several reasons. First, they explained, all infrastructure projects in the ISDDD area require an environmental approval, and this procedure could take even more than a year. Second, as the ITI dedicated calls were launched at the same time with the national calls, this generated administrative pressure for the evaluation and selection of all projects, and therefore tended to extend the process. Third, for the extreme values of contracting durations observed in some cases, a Managing Authority explained that some projects are selected from the reserve list, and in that case the waiting time is

embedded in the duration between application and contracting. Finally, for the case of COP where the median contracting duration is very high for Axis 1, the Managing Authority explained that they had difficulties with the evaluation process for those specific calls, and that the situation was resolved subsequently.

7.5. Project duration and extensions in implementation

Still on implementation, in Section 5 above we explained that about 80% of the selection value of ITI projects was contracted within 3-4 years after the adoption of the strategy ISDDD. This is due to a combination of factors, including the timing of the calls and the duration of contracting presented above. Further, we also learnt that that the large majority of projects were still in implementation by end 2021.

Therefore, for a better understanding of effectiveness of implementation from the perspective of finalization of projects, we analyse the duration of projects, by comparing the ITI projects with the non-ITI projects within and across programmes, and estimate also the extent of implementation delays, where feasible.

As regards project duration, we calculate the calendar time between the date of project start and the expected/actual finalization date. The results are presented by programme in Table 7.6 below, and in more details at axis level by programme in Tables OP.6-7 in Annex to Section 7.³³

Table 7.6 – Project duration (in months), by programme

PROGRAM	Project duration ITI projects			Median project duration non-ITI projects
	Median	Min	Max	
ROP	39	9	109	32
LIOP	53	9	108	36
NRDP	38	20	62	n.a.
FMAOP	24	12	39	24
HCOP	30	23	42	31
ACOP	30	15	45	26
COP	34	0.1	43	22

Note: a) n.a.=not available; b) for NRDP project duration is proxied by operation duration.

Sources: MA data on ITI projects end 2021; and MA lists of operations last quarter 2021.

The data on project duration indicates that, across programmes, the median duration of ITI projects tends to be significantly higher compared with the duration of the non-ITI projects selected. This duration varies between 2 years (for FMAOP) to more than 4 years in LIOP.

³³ In the Annex to Section VII, we make a distinction between project duration and operation duration. The two indicators coincide for projects which start at the time of contract signature for EU financing, but they are different for projects which are already in implementation by the time the financing contract is signed.

First, project duration is likely to be determined to a very large extent by the type of investment, with infrastructure projects requiring more time for implementation. For ROP, for example, data at axis level shows significant differences between the median duration of close to 3 years for projects in Axis 2 (SME Competitiveness), and much higher median duration of 4-5 years for the remaining axes. Similarly, for LIOP, the median duration of ITI projects in Axis 2 (Multimodal transport) increases to 5 years, while for Axis 5 (Climate change) is 3 years.

In NRDP, however, the ITI projects with longest duration are observed for Measure 6.2 (Non-agricultural start-ups), while in HCOP projects with longest median duration of 3 years are in Axis 4 (Social inclusion), In ACOP, the projects in Axis 1 take a median value of almost 4 years, The lowest variability in median project duration is observed for FMAOP (around 2 years for all union priorities) and for COP (around 2.5 years for both axes).

We asked the Managing Authority about the factors that are likely to generate long project durations. They explained that long implementation is due to a combination of factors including time needed for public procurement, the COVID crisis, increases in construction prices, and administrative capacity of the beneficiaries, especially in cases of local authorities who have less experience with project implementation. Finally, a factor more often applicable to the ITI projects are the environmental approvals for construction works in the protected area of ISDDD.

Next, we looked also at the extent to which projects were completed within the timeframe planned. For this purpose, we first analysed how many projects were expected to be finalized by the last quarter of 2021 and were still in implementation at the time. The data on ITI projects was provided by the Managing Authorities for this evaluation and it was dated end 2021. The results are presented in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7 – Delayed projects (%), by programme

PROGRAM	ITI projects expected to be finalised			Delayed non-ITI projects
	Finalized	Cancelled	Delayed	
ROP	91%	4%	5%	5%
LIOP	25%		75%	79%
NRDP	91%	3%	6%	n.a.
FMAOP	44%	34%	22%	46%
HCOP	50%		50%	17%
ACOP	67%		33%	16%
COP			100%	10%

Note: n.a.=not available.

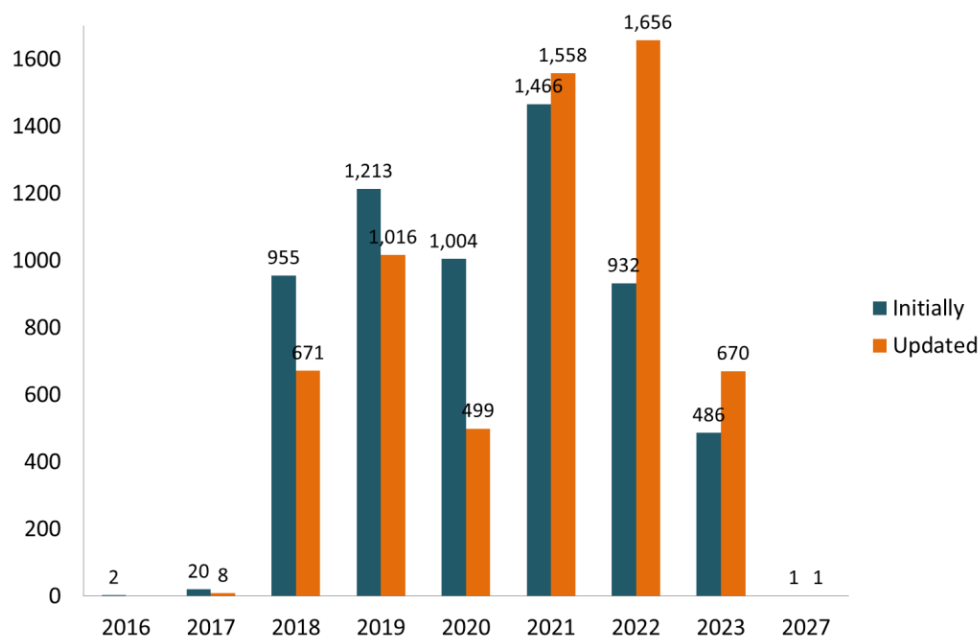
Sources: MA data on ITI projects end 2021; MA lists operations last quarter 2021.

On this basis, we explored the status of the ITI projects that were expected to be finalized and were still in implementation by the end of 2021. Thus, we learn that the share of delayed projects varies across programmes, from 100% in COP (where 2 projects expected to be finalized were still in implementation), to 5% in ROP. When compared with the non-ITI projects delayed at national level, we see that the situation differs by programme. In relative terms, ITI projects are relatively less delayed in FMAOP and, to a lesser extent, in LIOP. For the remaining programmes, the share of delayed projects is higher for ITI projects compared with non-ITI projects.

Second, for the two largest programmes ROP and LIOP, we also explored how many projects were initially planned with a certain expected date of completion, and subsequently extended. This would imply a *de facto* delay of implementation relative to the initial planning.

For this purpose, we tracked the projects contracted over time and reported by the Managing Authority in the excel files with lists of operations over time. In this manner, for all the projects in the programme, we compared the first version of the expected completion date reported in the list of operations when the project first appears with the latest version of the expected completion date reported in the list of operations from end September 2021.³⁴ The results at programme level are illustrated in Figure 7.2 below.

Figure 7.2: Planning of project completion in ROP (initial and last update)



Note: Data for 6079 with both initial and updated finalization date

Sources: MA files with list of operations for the period: April 2018 – September 2021

³⁴ The analysis covers 6079 projects with complete data reported in 15 excel files with lists of operations published over time by MA ROP over the period April 2018 – September 2021

Figure 7.3 reads as follows. The initial planning in the financing contracts implied that 955 projects would be completed in 2018, while the contract changes operated subsequently reduced this number to 671 projects. The extensions of expected completion dates over time are eventually reflected in larger numbers of projects expected to be completed towards the end of the programming period (i.e. years 2021-2023).

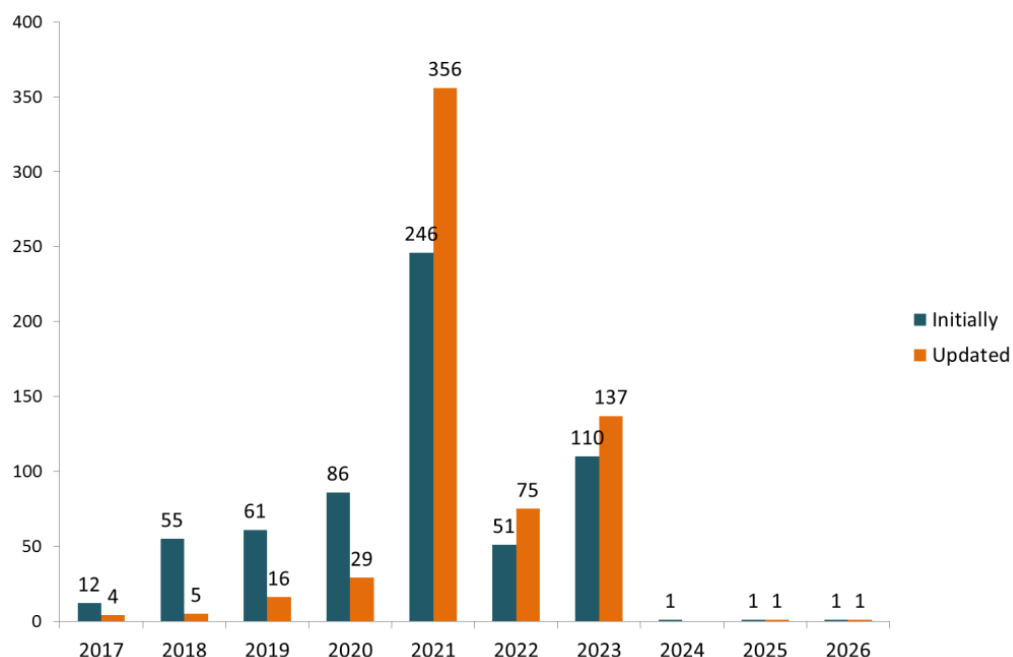
On this basis, we learnt that 60% of the ITI projects contracted over time for ROP had their date of completion changed over the reference period in the direction of the extension of the contract duration. Of these, most projects had an extension of at least 12 months, and 25% of the projects were extended by at least 18 months. By comparison, at OP level, the results are rather comparable: we find that 45% of the ROP projects had their expected completion date extended. For at least half of these projects the extension was of at least one year, and for 25% of them of more than 19 months. These changes had an effect of shifting the distribution of project completion by at least one year towards the end of the programming period.

We asked the Managing Authority for reasons why it was necessary to extend the period of implementation of the projects selected in the programme, and they explained that these reasons are similar to the ones presented above for the project duration. In addition, the Managing Authority also inferred that this result may indicate also a need for a more realistic planning for the period of project implementation from the very beginning, at the time when the project financing contract is signed.

For LIOP, we carried out a similar analysis.³⁵ For this programme, we find that 17% of the ITI projects had the expected finalization date extended. For the majority of these projects the extension was of at least 2 years, and 10% of them had extensions of more than 3 years. At programme level, 34% of non-ITI projects had the expected finalization date extended, and for 25% of these projects the extension was of at least 3 years. As in the case of ROP above, these changes had an effect of shifting the distribution of project completion towards the end of the programming period. These results at programme level are illustrated in Figure 7.3 below.

³⁵ The analysis for LIOP is based on the data from 35 lists of operations published by the Managing Authority during the period December 2017-September 2021.

Figure 7.3: Planning of project completion in LIOP (initial and last update)



Note: Data for 624 with both initial and updated finalization date

Sources: MA files with list of operations for the period: December 2017 – September 2021

7.6. Performance orientation of ITI projects

Next, we analysed the performance orientation established for ITI projects in order to understand the extent to which the set of indicators monitored for these projects has the potential to reflect the achievements and the contribution of these investments to the ISDDD strategy.

A first observation is the fact that there are no high level indicators monitored at the level of the strategy.³⁶ While, in the planning stage, there is a set of high level indicators introduced at strategy level (for example, the Europe 2020 indicators), these indicators were not monitored and analysed subsequently to understand the extent to which the investments implemented in the area contribute to its development over time.

The types of indicators monitored for the ITI projects in implementation include procedural, output and result indicators at project level. Based on the monitoring data from ADI ITI, we find that there are two types of project level indicators monitored: programme indicators, and ISDDD specific indicators.

³⁶ By high level indicators we understand indicators with a potential to reflect the evolution of the socio-economic and environmental development of the Danube Delta over time. Such indicators are usually statistical indicators calculated over a medium to long term. An example includes the percentage of households with access to wastewater treatment in the area of the Danube Delta.

The programme indicators are measures of achievements (outputs and/ or results) introduced in the financing contracts with the beneficiaries and are monitored officially by the Managing Authorities of the programmes. These are the indicators aggregated in the programme and reported regularly at the European level.³⁷

The set of ISDDD indicators includes, in addition to the programme indicators, also other indicators at project level (procedural, output, or result) considered necessary for the monitoring of project achievements from the perspective of the ISDDD strategy, and agreed upon with the beneficiaries at the time when they made the conformity requests to ADI ITI. This implies that ISDDD indicators are monitored only for those projects that had a conformity assessment when applying for financing. As a rule, all programme indicators are also ISDDD indicators, but not the other way around.

A summary of the use of these two types of indicators in the ITI projects across programmes is presented in Table 7.8 below, while Tables OP.10 in Annex to Section 7 include more details on the indicators used by ITI projects in each operational programme.

Table 7.8 – Types of indicators used in ITI projects, by programme

Type indicator	Number projects	Number indicators	Number indicators per project			Projects with more than 2 indicators	Projects with no indicator
			Median	Min	Max		
ROP							
SIDD indicators	424	14	1	1	4	23	0
Program indicators	32	1	0	0	1	0	392
LIOP							
SIDD indicators	33	10	2	1	2	0	0
Program indicators	11	2	0	0	1	0	22
NRDP							
SIDD indicators	541	31	3	1	8	210	0
Program indicators	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
FMAOP							
SIDD indicators	59	4	2	1	4	19	0
Program indicators	55	2	0	0	1	0	4
HCOP							
SIDD indicators	22	19	4	2	15	19	0
Program indicators	13	2	1	0	2	0	9
ACOP							
SIDD indicators	4	2	2	2	2	0	0
Program indicators	4	1	1	1	1	0	0
COP							
SIDD indicators	8	5	2	1	2	0	0
Program indicators	4	3	1	0	1	0	4

Note: a) Data includes only projects identified based on MA files with ITI projects;³⁸ b) n.a. = not applicable.

Sources: ADI ITI and MIPE mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2022.

³⁷ The planned and implemented values for these indicators are reported on the Open Data Platform of ESI Funds at: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu>.

³⁸ The number of ITI projects with ISDDD indicators differs slightly from the number of ITI projects reported by the Managing Authorities at programme level due to monitoring difficulties of ITI projects encountered by ADI ITI. This is explained in the next section, where we present ADI ITI's activities.

Table 7.8 reads as follows. For ROP, ISDDD indicators are included and monitored in 424 ITI projects. Overall, there are 14 ISDDD indicators monitored for these projects, with at least one indicator introduced for a majority of projects. The maximum number of ISDDD indicators per project is 4, and the number of projects with more than 2 ISDDD indicators is rather limited (23 projects). As regards the programme indicators, there is only one programme indicator monitored for a subset of 32 projects, so that the large majority of ITI projects from ROP do not have any programme indicator. A similar interpretation applies to all programmes featured in the table.

Therefore, for ROP, we learn that all ITI projects monitored by ADI ITI have at least one ISDDD indicator, and 8% of these projects have a programme indicator. A further analysis of the type of indicators used for these projects indicates that almost all (99%) of the ITI projects in ROP use the procedural indicator “Number of projects implemented” (with value 1 if project is finalized). The remaining 13 ISDDD indicators for output and results are used in only 19% of the ITI projects.

Further, all the ISDDD indicators in ROP have targets but no reported values for implementation. This is explained by that fact that, while ADI ITI monitors the extent to which targets are met only upon the finalization of the project, in ROP all the projects with other types of indicators (output or result) were still in implementation by February 2022.

As regards the use of ISDDD indicators for similar projects in ROP, we find that it is generally consistent. For example, for the projects for energy efficiency in dwellings and public buildings, all relevant projects include similar indicators (number of buildings renovated, GHG emissions reduction, number households with better classification for energy consumptions and primary energy consumption). In addition, as mentioned, all these projects include also the procedural indicator on number of implemented projects.

For LIOP, all ITI projects monitored by ADI ITI use at least one ISDDD indicator. Almost all use the procedural indicator of number of projects implemented, and a majority of them (76%) also use an additional indicator for output of result. All the ISDDD indicators have targets included.

As regards the implementation values, for the 4 finalised projects included in the dataset for LIOP, the extent to which targets are met is at 100%, including also for the procedural indicator “Number of projects implemented” (with a target value of 1).

In terms of programme indicators, only 2 of the 10 indicators used in LIOP for the ITI projects are also programme indicators, and they are used by a third of the projects. Therefore, two thirds of the ITI projects have no programme indicator.

For LIOP, we find that the use of output/result indicators across similar projects is partially consistent. For example, for the domain of emergency services, the result indicator on average reaction time is used consistently in all relevant projects. For modernization of ports, on the other hand, only two out of 4 projects use the result indicator on freight transported.

In NRDP, all projects included in the dataset use at least one SIDD indicator, and none of them have program indicators. A majority of these projects have at least three SIDD indicators. The procedural indicator “Number of projects implemented” is used by all projects, and it takes value 1 upon the finalization of the projects. Further, in addition to the procedural indicator on number of implemented projects, 92% of the ITI projects in NRDP include at least one output or result indicator.

Almost all ISDDD indicators included in NRDP ITI projects have targets. As regards values in implementation, they are reported for almost all of the projects finalized included in the dataset (primarily for the indicator on number of projects implemented), and they are usually 100%.

In terms of consistency of the use of indicators across similar projects in NRDP, we note the scarce use of relevant result indicators for similar investments. This is especially the case of projects for agrotourism accommodation, representing almost 20% of all projects included in the dataset. For these projects, the ISDDD indicators included refer most often to the % farmers opening a non-agricultural activity and number of jobs in tourism, but much less frequently to the use of the facility in terms of number of tourists per year, revenues from tourism, or customer satisfaction. For example, of all these 105 projects, only two projects include the result indicator on the occupancy rate of the facility.

For FMAOP, almost all (58 out of 59) ITI projects use at least two ISDDD indicators: one on the number of projects implemented, and another one for aquaculture or jobs. A third of the projects use more than two ISDDD indicators. Two of the ISDDD indicators are also programme indicators, and they are used in 55 (out of 59) projects.

All the ISDDD indicators in FMAOP have target values. As regards values for implementation, they are reported as 100% for the procedural indicators on number of projects implemented in finalized projects, but no values are reported for the result indicator on new jobs in finalized projects.

In terms of consistency of use of indicators across similar projects in FMAOP, we assess the use of existing indicators as consistent.

In HCOP, almost all ITI projects use at least two indicators: an output/result indicator and the procedural indicator on implemented projects. A quarter of the projects, however, use at least 8 and up to 15 indicators. An example is a project for a centre for integrated services for which the indicators refer to individuals benefiting from projects on property

rights regularization, individuals benefiting from projects on good practices. Roma students/trainees supported to participate in education, individuals benefiting from primary medical assistance, number of projects implemented.

Almost all indicators in the ITI projects in HCOP have targets. As regards values in implementation, there are only 3 finalised projects and therefore few assessments reported for implementation in the programme.

For ACOP, the four ITI projects use 2 ISDDD indicators: one output indicator (which is also a programme indicator) and the procedural indicator for number of implemented projects. Both indicators are binary, with possible values 0 or 1. Therefore, the target values for these indicators are all set to 1. For implementation, of the four ITI projects supported by the programme, two are finalized with 100% fulfilment of targets.

In COP, all ITI projects use the procedural indicator on number of projects implemented, and 5 of them use also an additional indicator of output/ result. Of all 22 projects, only 4 projects include 3 of the ISDDD indicators as programme indicators. Further for COP, apart from the procedural indicator (with target 1), only one result indicator has a target in one project. As regards values from implementation, no values are reported as none of the ITI projects supported in the programme were finalized by the reference date for this evaluation.

Finally, for TAOP, the only indicator used for the ITI projects supported by the programme is the procedural indicator on number of projects implemented, which takes the value of 1 upon project finalization.

In conclusion, as regards the use of performance measures at project level for the ITI projects, we first note the very frequent use of the procedural indicator “Number of projects implemented” – an indicator with target 1 in all cases, and 100% fulfillment upon project finalization. In our opinion, this indicator is not informative from the perspective of a meaningful measurement of the achievements of ITI investments. Moreover, it is also redundant since the number of projects finalized can be inferred based on the project status reported regularly by the Managing Authority and it makes sense at aggregate (ex: programme/ strategy) level.

Second, we note also the relatively limited use of more meaningful indicators that can reflect the achievements of investments (i.e. output and results). This is especially the case in ROP and, to a lesser extent, in COP. This means that the achievements of investments for the ISDDD strategy are only partially measured through the ISDDD indicators monitored. This conclusion is strengthened also by the fact that ISDDD indicators could be introduced only for projects which applied for conformity checks. Projects without conformity checks are not monitored by ADI ITI in this regard, and therefore cannot be reflected at the aggregate level of the strategy. Further, as we explained in Section 5 above, for some programmes (example: NRDP), there is a significant number of projects which are relevant for the ISDDD strategy, but are not

financed from the ITI allocation. In principle, however, the achievements of these projects are also relevant for the ISDDD area, but their monitoring by ADI ITI remains partial.

Third, we also note the scarce use of programme indicators, at least in some programmes such as ROP, LIOP, NRDP and HCOP, both from the perspective of projects using at least one programme indicator, and the number of indicators used in the projects. As mentioned, an advantage of using programme indicators (relative to ISDDD indicators) is that they are monitored officially by the Managing Authority. Therefore, use of programme indicators implies a reduced need for additional ISDDD indicators and therefore no additional administrative burden for the beneficiary with data reporting to ADI ITI. Moreover, in our opinion, programme indicators have the advantage of better data quality as well as the possibility of reporting of achievements at programme and European level.

Further for programme indicators, our analysis indicates that, in the case of ISDDD, there has been little coordination for the use of indicators between the Managing Authorities and ADI ITI. The output and result ISDDD indicators reported for the ITI projects are very similar to (if not the same as) the output and result indicators used otherwise in the respective programmes. Therefore, given the similarity of the majority of ITI investments with other non-ITI investments in the operational programmes, a more efficient approach would be to rely primarily on representative programme indicators of outputs and results at project level and limit the introduction of additional ISDDD indicators only for investments highly specific to the ITI area (if necessary).

In conclusion, as regards the performance orientation of the ITI projects, our assessment is that the coverage of the monitoring of achievements across projects relevant for the strategy ISDDD remains partial. We assess that it can be improved through higher reliance on programme indicators at project level and a better coordination between ADI ITI and the Managing Authority in this regard. Moreover, we also note that the lack of high level indicators with targets and monitoring mid-term and after implementation implies that the performance and contribution of the ITI investments to the integrated development of the ISDDD area remain unaccounted for.

8. Governance mechanism and added value of ADI ITI

In this section, we analyse the governance mechanism established for the elaboration and implementation of the ISDDD strategy, with a primary focus on the organization, activities and value added of ADI ITI – the association which coordinates the strategy ISDDD at local level.

The two main central institutions that oversee and coordinate the strategy implementation at the national level are the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration (MDPWA) and the Ministry of European Investment and Projects (MEIP).

MDPWA - a central service responsible for public policies and development at national level - has the political ownership of the strategy and it coordinates its planning and implementation at national level. Starting with 2013, the institution coordinated the elaboration of the ISDDD strategy and the associated consultations at national level. Subsequently, however, it was less involved in the implementation of the strategy. During the current period, this central service is responsible for the coordination of the process of updating the strategy ISDDD. MDPWA is also the Managing Authority for the operational programmes ROP and ACOP.

MEIP - a central service responsible for the programming and implementation of ESI Funds in Romania - coordinates the cooperation between the Managing Authorities, ADI ITI and other relevant actors for the implementation of ITI investments. For this purpose, MEIP created a Functional Working Group (FWG) formed by representatives of Managing Authorities, ADI ITI, and other relevant actors (when necessary) in order to provide a forum for discussion and coordination of the implementation of ITI projects. According to the national representatives, this group functioned well as it ensured the communication between the central and local levels for the implementation of the strategy, with meetings held regularly especially prior to the COVID period. MEIP is also the Managing Authority for the operational programmes LIOP, HCOP, COP and TAOP.

Another central service relevant for the implementation strategy is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), as the Managing Authority for NRDP and FMAOP.

At the local level, the implementation of the strategy ISDDD is coordinated and monitored by the Inter-Community Development Association for Integrated Territorial Investments (with acronym ADI ITI in Romanian). As the association plays an important role for the coordination of ITI investments in the ISDDD area, we analyse in more details its activities and value added in the following sub-section.

8.1. Organisation, activities and value added of ADI ITI

The association ADI ITI is a private entity with public utility status and it was launched in 2014, i.e. at the time when the strategy ISDDD was in preparation. Its primary mission is to coordinate the implementation of the ITI mechanism at local level in the ISDDD area.

According to the information posted on ADI ITI's website ³⁹, the main objectives of the association include the following:

- Coordinate interventions funded through the ITI mechanism for the ISDDD area.
- Contribute to the sustainable and integrated development of the localities included in the ISDDD area.
- Initiate and support joint projects for ITI development in order to help reduce territorial disparities.
- Support access to various international funding sources, and especially the ESI funds, for the development of the ISDDD area.
- Ensure the interface with and play the active role as a partner for local public administration as regards development issues, and public policies and actions of inter-community interest.
- Assess and approve the alignment of project proposals for ITI investments with the ISDDD strategy.
- Monitor projects financed through the ITI mechanism.

The members of ADI ITI include the representatives of all localities included in the ISDDD area: 39 administrative territorial units (ATUs), respectively Tulcea County Council, Constanta County Council, 5 urban ATUs from Tulcea, Macin, Isaccea, Sulina and Babadag, and 34 rural ATUs (30 located in Tulcea County, and 4 in Constanta County).

The governing body of ADI ITI is its General Assembly, headed by the President of ADI ITI, and which has the responsibilities to participate in the elaboration of the strategy and its action plan, as well as decide on issues related to the implementation of the strategy. The operational activities of ADI ITI are overseen by its Board of Directors. Within this governance structure, there is also an ITI coordinator.

Further, ADI ITI also has an Advisory Committee, established in 2017 as an open partnership body with the objective to promote the partnership principle of the implementation of the ITI mechanism. The Committee represents the interests of stakeholders relevant for ISDDD, including public organisations, businesses, civil society organisations, social partners, and academia located in the geographical area covered by the strategy. The Advisory Committee is structured in 5 thematic sub-committees, corresponding to the 5 investment pillars in the strategy. Currently, the Committee

³⁹ www.itideltadunarii.com

includes representatives from 24 public institutions / authorities, and 26 from NGOs/ associations/ other. During the interviews for this evaluation, ADI ITI explained that the members of this Committee are the potential beneficiaries of ITI projects.

We analysed the activities of the Advisory Committee based on its statute and the activity reports of ADI ITI. On this basis, we learnt that the Committee was to meet at least twice in an extended format, including also the Managing Authorities and representatives from the European Commission, and to hold also regular meetings every 6 months. The activity reports of ADI ITI, however, do not reflect much evidence that this planning has been implemented systematically over time. For the period 2016-2021, we learnt that Committee meetings took place 3 times in 2017 (September, October, November), followed by additional meetings in 2018.

Further, we also asked ADI ITI whether the stakeholders were consulted in this format during implementation, and learnt that the members of the Advisory Committee were consulted primarily at the beginning of the process, for identifying the investment priorities in the SIDD area and initial project ideas. Therefore, for the programming period 2014-2020, our assessment is that this forum, although in principle a necessary condition for the implementation of the partnership principle of the ITI mechanism, has not been effectively used to ensure active stakeholder consultations during the implementation of ITI investments. During the interviews, ADI ITI also mentioned that the role of the Advisory Committee is to be strengthened for the period 2021-2027, so that they are consulted not only as regards project ideas but also for other issues.

As regards the human resources of ADI ITI, based on the data provided by the association, we summarized the positions and number of its employees, and grouped its team in three categories: management, experts on ESI Funds and operational programmes, and other type of personnel (administrative, human resources, financial, IT expert, expert in public procurement, communication experts, advisers, etc). The evolution of the number of staff in ADI ITI over the period 2014-2021 is summarized in Table 8.1 in the next page.

Overall, we learn that ADI ITI's team includes around 21 employees (with numbers differing slightly by year), with all staff working full time. Of these, starting with 2016, half of the team are experts working on the issues related to the implementation of the ITI projects in the operational programmes for ESIF.

Table 8.1 – ADI ITI categories of staff (number persons)⁴⁰

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Management	4	5	3	2	2	1	1	0
Experts programmes/ ESIF	1	2	10	10	10	10	11	11
Other	13	17	10	9	11	10	9	9
Total	18	24	23	21	23	21	21	20

Source: ADI ITI, November 2021

Over time, 37 persons were employed by ADI ITI during the period 2014-2021, with 16 of them in continuing employment over the period 2016-2021. Of these, 8 are experts for the operational programmes, thus implying a relative stable pool of expertise on ESIF available to the association. Moreover, we learnt that 21 of ADI ITI staff benefited from training on issues relevant for the implementation of ITI projects such as public procurement, preparation of financing requests, project management and training skills. Of these employees, 17 were still working for ADI ITI in 2021.

As regards the financial resources of ADI ITI, we analysed its annual budgets provided by the association for the period 2016-2021. This data is summarized in Table 8.2 below.

Table 8.2 – Budget ADI ITI 2016-2021

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total 2016-2021
Total income (mill euro)	1.24	0.90	1.01	0.95	0.95	0.95	6.00
Own (% of total)	14%	16%	14%	15%	15%	15%	15%
ERDF (% of total)	86%	84%	86%	85%	85%	85%	85%
Total expenditure (mill euro)	0.75	0.92	1.03	0.98	0.98	0.95	5.62
<i>Eligible from TA (mill euro), of which:</i>	<i>0.66</i>	<i>0.78</i>	<i>0.88</i>	<i>0.83</i>	<i>0.83</i>	<i>0.83</i>	<i>4.83</i>
Salaries staff (% of eligible)	57%	65%	57%	70%	65%	65%	63%
Salaries management (% of eligible)	12%	17%	13%	17%	16%	16%	15%
General administration (% of eligible)	9%	6%	9%	6%	7%	8%	8%
Transport means (% of eligible)	9%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Courses and events (% of eligible)	3%	4%	5%	0.2%	1%	1%	2%
Travel (% of eligible)	2%	3%	7%	0.4%	0.02%	1%	2%
Other (% of eligible)	9%	6%	3%	6%	10%	8%	7%
<i>Non - eligible (mill euro), of which:</i>	<i>0.09</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>0.15</i>	<i>0.15</i>	<i>0.12</i>	<i>0.79</i>
Salaries (% of non-eligible)	66%	55%	48%	52%	15%	58%	48%
Other (% of non-eligible)	34%	45%	52%	48%	85%	42%	52%

Source: ADI ITI annual budgets.

⁴⁰ In the category of management staff, based on the data at employee level provided by ADI ITI, we included the staff in the positions of General Manager, Financial Manager, Assistant Manager, Executive Director, and Project Manager. For year 2021, however, none of the staff occupied these positions, thus indicating a reorganization process of the management of the association.

On this basis we learn that, for the 6 years included in the analysis, the total budget of ADI ITI cumulated 6 million euro.⁴¹ This budget is financed in a proportion of 85% from technical assistance from ERDF, with the remaining 15% financed from members' contributions. As regards expenditure, 86% of the total expenditure over the 6 years was financed by technical assistance resources from TAOP, with the remaining covered by own resources.

In terms of structure of expenditure from technical assistance, almost 80% is dedicated to salaries of ADI ITI's team, followed by 8% for the general administration of the association's activity. For the first years of the period considered, other significant categories of expenditure include the acquisition of transportation means, organization of courses and events, and staff travel to beneficiaries in the ISDDD territory. The category of other expenditure includes various types of expenditure, such as IT developments of the website and databases, communication and promotion expenditure, rents etc.

As regards the structure of expenditure from own resources, close to half of the available budget was allocated to salaries, with some variations over time.

Next, for the activities carried out by ADI ITI for the coordination of the implementation of ISDDD, we analysed the association's quarterly activity reports for the period January 2016 – September 2021 published on its website. On this basis we identified the following categories of activities:

- 1) Communication and promotion of funding opportunities from ESI Funds programmes
- 2) Identification of project pipeline and coordination of project ideas/ proposals
- 3) Consultations with beneficiaries for the preparation and launching of project calls
- 4) Conformity assessments for the alignment of project applications with the strategy ISDDD
- 5) Assistance to beneficiaries during implementation
- 6) Monitoring of ITI projects during and post implementation
- 7) Promotion of good practices
- 8) Identification of investment needs for 2021-2027

First, the activity for communication and promotion of funding opportunities from ESI Funds programmes was carried out based on information events organized jointly with the Managing Authorities for the potential local beneficiaries, and media campaigns. It also included meetings organized by ADI ITI with potential beneficiaries, and publication of relevant documents (ex: adopted versions of operational programmes, applicant guides for project applications etc) on ADI ITI website. The main objective of this activity was to help

⁴¹ The financial data for ADI's income and expenditure is in RON. For simplicity and comparability with the rest of the data in the report, we used the European Commission's official exchange rate for December 1st, 2021. Therefore, the amounts in euro are approximate.

inform and orient local beneficiaries with respect to the funding opportunities available from the ESI Funds programmes for ITI investments.

This type of activity appears very frequently in ADI ITI's activity reports starting with the first quarter of 2017. According to these reports, the association organized meetings and presentation seminars for potential beneficiaries in the localities of the ISDDD area and in Tulcea with a relatively high frequency (over 10 per year) during 2017-2021. Further information on these events in terms of agenda, number of participants, feedback received from the participants etc, however, is not publicly available on association's website.

Further, most of the events and meetings organized for communication and promotion of funding opportunities are not promoted through the association's website. In the Events category on the website, we learn about 8 conferences organized by ADI ITI over the reference period, of which 3 refer to the TAOP project for technical assistance which finances the association's activity, and only 4 refer to specific promotion events. The documents provided for these meetings are minutes, and to a much lesser extent the agenda and the presentations discussed. Also, we could not find a calendar of such events on the website.

The website is used by ADI ITI primarily to publish information regarding the resources available for investment from the operational programme and to provide links to the relevant applicant guides for project calls. This information is presented in a structured manner, by programming period, programme, and priority axis/ measure / union priority. In our assessment, however, the presentation of this information is rather procedural since the website mainly provides links to the relevant documents on the Managing Authorities' websites. We could not find more intuitive presentations of the funding opportunities prepared for a more general audience – an audience which is likely to have less exposure and experience with accessing EU funds.

Further, the funding opportunities are also presented on social media (primarily Facebook), but the promotion through this means is rather unstructured, with the information on funding opportunities being mixed with other categories of information and therefore difficult to identify.

Also from the association's activity reports, we also learnt about frequent meeting with individual or group of beneficiaries for consultations on the preparation of financing requests. Such meetings are also complemented by a helpdesk activity providing information to questions asked by beneficiaries by email or by phone.

Since no further information on these meetings is publicly available, we asked ADI ITI on the objectives of such meeting, especially in view of the fact that most beneficiaries use consultancy companies for the preparation of financing requests. The association's representatives explained that these were also information meetings, whereby they

helped clarify the terms of applicant guides for these beneficiaries. Therefore, we include these meetings also in the activity for the promotion of funding opportunities.

Nevertheless, we could not find any additional information on the accumulated experience from these meetings with beneficiaries in any of ADI ITI's reporting (ex: frequently asked questions, clarifications for the most difficult aspects of the preparation of financing requests from beneficiaries' perspective etc). Therefore, we cannot assess the value added of this activity.

Finally, ADI ITI reports regularly on the number of articles related to the ITI mechanism published in the local media. The in-depth analysis of the media content, however, was not within the scope of this evaluation.

Overall, although the activity reports provide detailed quantitative information on the number and frequency of meetings and events organized by ADI ITI for the promotion of funding opportunities, we could not find much direct evidence on the content, outreach and value added of these activities. Nevertheless, indirect evidence on the potential value added of such activities was provided by the Managing Authorities who, during the interviews, explained that, of all activities delivered by ADI ITI, they appreciated the most the association's efforts to promote the ESIF funding opportunities and mobilize the potential local beneficiaries. They appreciated also the help provided by ADI ITI in mobilizing the local beneficiaries for the events organized by the Managing Authorities in the ISDDD area.

The second type of activity carried out by ADI ITI refers to the identification of project pipeline and coordination of project ideas/ proposals. In this regard, ADI ITI maintains a database with projects potentially relevant for the ISDDD area – projects identified based on consultations with potential beneficiaries. Updated regularly, this database is also useful for informing the Managing Authorities on the optimal timing for launching project calls for the different types of investments from the perspective of the beneficiaries in the ISDDD area.

Third, as regards consultations for the preparation of applicant' guides and the launch of project calls, ADI ITI mobilizes the local beneficiaries for providing comments on applicant's guides available for public consultations and maintains a dialogue with the Managing Authorities with respect to aspects specific to the ISDDD area. Thus, especially for the project calls dedicated to ITI investments, ADI ITI collects comments from potential applicants on the content of the guides and transmits them to the Managing Authority. Further, the activity reports mention also instances when ADI ITI solicited to the Managing Authority to postpone the launch of certain project calls since the beneficiaries were not ready with the preparation of the required documentation.

As regards the interaction between ADI ITI and the Managing Authorities for the preparation of project calls, ADI ITI was generally satisfied with the feedback received on the comments sent. Although not all of their comments were always implemented, the

association appreciated that, in general, the Managing Authorities took into account the observations sent from the ISDDD beneficiaries. They even mentioned some representative examples (such as eligibility of access to river infrastructure or public transport on water for the area of the Danube Delta) – examples already presented earlier in this report.

Further, also some of the Managing Authorities appreciated this interaction, explaining that the feedback received to the consultations on the applicant guides from beneficiaries in the ISDDD area proved useful. In addition, ADI ITI was also invited in the Monitoring Committee for most operational programmes, and a member with voting rights in the Monitoring Committee for ACOP. Therefore, it had additional opportunities to interact with the Managing Authorities formally in this context.

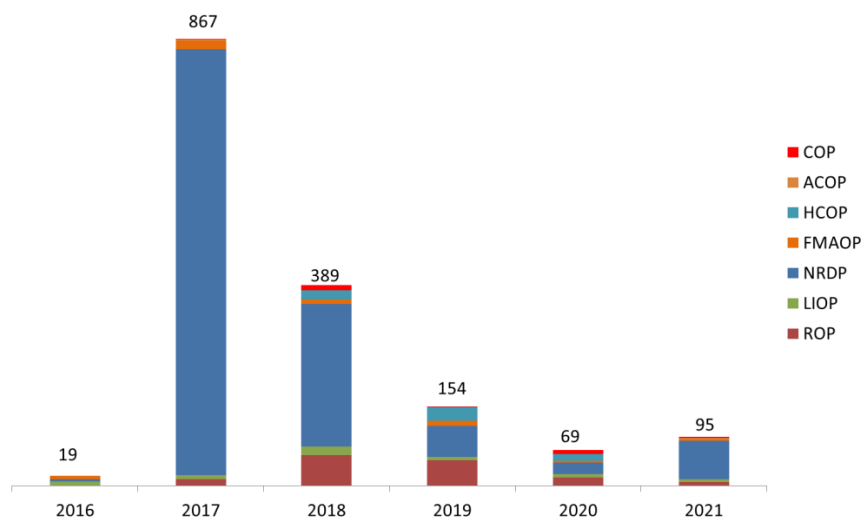
Overall, we assess ADI ITI's activity for consultations with beneficiaries as useful for the implementation of the ITI mechanism as it helps inform the Managing Authorities on the needs for alignment of eligibility requirements with the specificity of the ISDDD area, where applicable.

Fourth, we recall from the previous sections in this report that ADI ITI plays a formal role in the process prior to the submission of financing requests for ITI projects to the Managing Authorities by assessing the alignment of the projects proposed with the ISDDD strategy. ADI ITI carries out this activity according to its procedures for conformity checks, also published on their website.

Based on the data on conformity checks received from ADI ITI, we learnt that, overall, ADI ITI issued closed to 1600 conformity assessments during 2016-2021, with most of this activity concentrated in the period 2017-2019. Figure 8.1(next page) illustrates the number of conformity checks performed by ADI ITI per year and by programme.

On this basis, we learn that almost 90% of the conformity assessments were delivered during the period 2017-2019, with the number of conformity checks increasing slightly again in 2021. By programme, however, we learn that 80% (1265) conformity assessments were made for projects for NRDP, followed by 9% (144) assessments made for projects from ROP.

Figure 8.1: Conformity assessments issued by ADI ITI (number), by year and programme



Source: ADI ITI, end September 2021.

As explained earlier in this report, the number of ITI projects contracted for NRDP by end 2021 was 553 projects, thus implying that more than half of the conformity assessments made by ADI ITI for the beneficiaries of this programme were for projects not financed from the ITI allocation in the programme. This is most likely due to the fact that there has been a reflection over time on the type of projects that were to be monitored as ITI projects by ADI ITI. These issues are discussed in more detail below, when we present the monitoring activity.

Further for NRDP, as regards the intensity of the activity for conformity checks, we find that there were situations where the conformity assessments were issued in very large numbers within a very limited period of time, especially during the summer of 2017. For example, over the period April 26 – May 04, ADI ITI issued close to 250 conformity approvals for NRDP projects – all positive. During the interviews, ADI ITI explained that these projects were very similar, and therefore it was possible to process a large number of requests faster. As explained already, however, our assessment is that this activity was rather procedural, with little value added as regards the assessment of the extent to which a project is aligned with ISDDD.

Fifth, as regards ADI ITI's assistance to beneficiaries during project implementation, the activity reports mention frequently that ADI ITI informed the Managing Authorities about implementation problems encountered by beneficiaries. Our understanding is that ADI ITI collected this information in the context of the visits to project beneficiaries. Further, the activity reports also mention some of the issues identified, but we have not found evidence of a systematic reporting at the level of all ITI projects in implementation. For example, while the activity reports mention instances when ADI ITI helped some beneficiaries solicit an extension of the implementation period with the Managing Authorities, there is no systematic reporting at the strategy level on this issue although, as

we learnt from the analysis of ROP and LIOP in Section VII, the prevalence of extensions of implementation periods was rather high (at least in these two programmes).

We also asked the Managing Authorities about their opinion on the support provided by ADI ITI during implementation. The representatives we interviewed explained that there was little information on this issue at the level of the Managing Authority. They said that the support provided by ADI ITI in this regard is usually not mentioned by the beneficiaries in their progress reports, and that they learnt about it more from ADI ITI's activity reports. Therefore, we conclude that there is not much evidence on the value added of this type of activity.

Sixth, as regards monitoring, as a local coordinator of ITI investments in the ISDDD area, ADI ITI is in a unique position to aggregate the monitoring data for these investments at the strategy level. According to the association's statute, but also in the perception of the actors involved in the implementation of the ITI mechanism, the mandate of the association was to collect and aggregate the monitoring data for the ITI investments from the ESI Funds.

This activity was intended to be carried out according to monitoring procedures, elaborated and proposed by ADI ITI for each operational programme in 2017. According to these procedures, ADI ITI was to collect data on the implementation of ITI investments from the information on the implementation of ESI Funds published by the Managing Authorities on their website. Further sources of data intended included communication with representatives of Intermediate Bodies responsible for the monitoring of the projects, and information collected directly from beneficiaries, including also monitoring visits to the projects.

As regards the information publicly available on the Managing Authorities' websites, our assessment is that the collection of data on ITI projects is not straightforward since neither the lists of operations published by Managing Authorities nor the online open sources SMIS and AFIR identify clearly the ITI projects. In principle, for ROP and NRDP such projects can be identified based on the ITI dedicated calls, but for the remaining programmes there is no clear identifier of ITI projects. A second best solution is to use the location of investments to identify projects located in the ISDDD area, but this method is very labour intensive and cannot help distinguish between projects financed from the ITI allocation and projects from the ISDDD area but not financed from the ITI allocation.

When asking the Managing Authorities whether there has been any additional systematic process of data transmission from them to ADI ITI on the implementation of ITI investments, we found no such example. In fact, ADI ITI was reporting the data collected and aggregated for ITI investments in its progress reports submitted to the Functional Working Group organized by MEIP, and subsequently received comments on the accuracy of the reporting at programme level from the Managing Authorities. Nevertheless, we also found a very recent good practice in this regard with NRDP. For this programme, we learnt that AFIR (the Intermediate Body for NRDP) and ADI ITI

adopted in early 2022 a protocol for data transmission from the Intermediate Body to the association on the implementation of ITI projects in the programme.

As a result, ADI ITI complemented the data collected from the online sources with additional data gathered on financial and physical implementation directly from the beneficiaries of ITI projects. Based on the data reported in the activity reports, we estimate that ADI ITI made almost 500 visits to project beneficiaries over the period 2018-2021, with close to 300 of them to NRDP projects, followed by 124 to ROP ITI beneficiaries.

We asked the Managing Authorities about the organisation of such visits to beneficiaries, and found the situation was mixed. In some cases (ex: NRDP), it is likely that ADI ITI organized these visits together with the Intermediate Body of the programme. In other cases, however, either there was no coordination between the Intermediate Body and ADI ITI in this regard (as in the case of ROP), or the representatives of the Managing Authorities had no information on these visits beyond the reporting from ADI ITI (for the remaining programmes). In conclusion, our assessment in this regard is that requests for data reporting to the beneficiaries, in addition to their already substantial reporting obligations to the Managing Authority/ Intermediate Body, are likely to generate significant additional administrative burden for them.

Further, we also assess that the net result of this monitoring activity is suboptimal as the monitoring data collected by ADI ITI on ITI projects is not fully aligned with the official data issued by the Managing Authorities, and the method implemented for this data collection is very labour intensive and prone to error for the following reasons.

In the process of gathering the data for this evaluation, we compared the financial data on ITI projects collected by ADI ITI, on the one hand, with the data reported in SMIS online and by the Managing Authorities in their lists of operations, on the other hand. On this basis, we found that the monitoring data from ADI ITI included discrepancies both as regards the identification of projects considered by the Managing Authorities as ITI projects (thus financed from the ITI allocation), and also in terms of the accuracy of data (ITI project allocation, dates of project start and finalization etc).

For example, for NRDP, the Managing Authority includes 553 projects in the set of ITI projects (i.e. all projects selected through the ITI dedicated calls organized by NRDP), while ADI ITI monitors 541 of these projects, plus additional 167 projects which are not financed from the ITI allocation in the programme. For the remaining programmes, differences in ITI projects monitored are marginal, but the data on ITI allocations and implementation on the ground differed in a number of cases.

As regards monitoring the performance of ITI investments, from the monitoring procedures we learnt that ADI ITI also collects data post implementation on the ISDDD indicators included for the ITI projects either through visits to beneficiaries or via additional reporting from the beneficiaries to the association. As explained in the previous section,

the ISDDD indicators were included in addition to programme indicators, and thus are not monitored by the Managing Authority. Further, implementation values for all indicators are reported only for the finalized projects in ADI ITI's progress reports submitted to MEIP and the Functional Working Group.

In our assessment, however, while we understand the need to collect data on the achievements of the ITI projects in order to measure the performance at the strategy level (especially in cases where programme indicators are absent), we also consider that visits and information requests to the beneficiaries post implementation (in addition to the monitoring activity carried out by Intermediate Bodies and Managing Authorities) are likely to generate significant additional administrative burden for the beneficiaries.

Finally for monitoring, we also identified the issue of which projects should be monitored as relevant for the integrated development of the ISDDD area. As mentioned, the mandate of ADI ITI for the period 2014-2020 was to monitor the projects financed from the ITI allocation. Their monitoring, however, covered also other projects relevant for ISDDD but not financed from the ITI allocation in an uneven manner (i.e. only for NRDP).⁴² Further, ADI ITI also collected occasionally data on the implementation of projects relevant for ISDDD and financed from national funds.⁴³ Therefore, from this perspective, we assess that the monitoring of investments relevant for the strategy ISDDD remains partial since, as presented in Section V, in some programmes there is a significant number of projects that relevant for the development of the area, even if they are not financed from the ITI allocation.

Seventh, on activities for the promotion of good practices, ADI ITI's website includes the description of the 10 projects in the ISDDD area promoted as good practices. Beyond this information, however, we found no evidence on a more substantial activity for the promotion of good practices such as forums with beneficiaries or other type of activities. Further, as regard the overall transparency on the implementation of ITI projects for the general public, we find that the reporting on implementation on ADI ITI's website remains cursory, at the aggregate level, without details on the type of projects implemented by location in the ISDDD area. While the activity reports of the association are published on the website on ADI ITI's initiative, we assess that they are too detailed and repetitive to appeal to a more general audience which would require a more streamlined and user friendly approach to communication. Therefore, we assess this type of activity as marginal.

Eighth, for the period 2021-2027, ADI ITI plays an active role in updating the project pipeline. Their website includes information on the public consultation organized for this

⁴² Although, in principle, we agree on the need to monitor also projects not financed from the ITI allocation but relevant for the strategy ISDDD, we also consider that the monitoring system of ADI ITI should distinguish clearly between the two types of projects, especially as regards the reporting of the extent of implementation. Currently, all projects monitored are considered as contributing to the implementation of the ITI allocation while, in reality, only a subset does so.

⁴³ This monitoring, however, is not systematic and we could not use it in our evaluation beyond the identification of projects proposed initially in ISDDD and financed from national funds presented in Section VI.

purpose, with feedback required until mid-March 2022. Therefore, this activity is work in progress at the time of writing this report.

Finally, as regards its overall portfolio of activities, we asked ADI ITI whether they have a system of time accounting in place in order to account for the organizational effort for each type of activity, and learnt that no such system has been implemented. We also asked them which activities, in their opinion, are likely to generate most added value, and their reply was that, in principle, all these activities are important since they are carried out throughout the life cycle of the ITI investments.

We also asked the Managing Authorities for their opinion on the main source of value added of ADI ITI's activities and what could be changed in the future, and they identified primarily the role played by ADI ITI in the promotion of the funding sources and the mobilization of the local beneficiaries. They also mentioned that the role and responsibilities of ADI ITI should be defined better, and that the association could assume a more significant responsibility in the process of project selection, through a more robust assessment of the alignment of projects with the ISDDD strategy. Further, the central services mentioned also that, for the future, the support to ADI ITI as regards the data collection for ITI projects is to be strengthened.

In conclusion, as regards the governance of the ITI mechanism for the Danube Delta, we assess that, in principle, the governance structure created (with central services overseeing the process at national level, and ADI ITI as a local coordinator) is functional, although challenges remain as regards a smoother cooperation among the actors involved. In our assessment, there is also scope for a more active involvement of stakeholders during implementation, and for a more transparent and user-friendly style of communication on the strategy implementation of the strategy for a more general, non-specialized audience. Nevertheless, based on the interviews conducted for this evaluation, we assess also that the experience accumulated in 2014-2020 is likely to inspire further improvements of the governance mechanism at all levels for the period 2021-2027.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

In this section, we summarize the main findings of the evaluation and our recommendations for further improvements in the future. The section is organized by the five main topics of the evaluation: the strategy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, performance orientation, governance, and the added value of the association ADI ITI.

9.1. Planning of the ISDDD strategy

As regards the ISDDD strategy, we assess that it is based on a robust analysis of investment needs in the area of the Danube Delta and its surroundings, reflecting the main challenges in the area from the socio-economic and environmental perspective. Carried out by a team of experts from the World Bank, this analysis is built on substantial evidence on the development status of the ISDDD area, as well as on extensive consultations with all relevant stakeholders at national and local level. In addition to achieving its objectives of identifying a vision and clear strategic objectives for the medium and long term development of the area over the period 2016-2030, this process also helped raise awareness of the importance of the area of the Danube Delta and its needs for an integrated development, as well as forge strategy ownership at local level.

For the issue of integration - with integration defined in terms of investment domains included in the strategy and its funding sources - we assess that it has been achieved by design at the strategy level as ISDDD covers almost all (if not all) of the investment domains relevant for the integrated development of the area, and it was funded from all ESI Funds through the 8 Romanian operational programmes of the period 2014-2020. These programmes cover the following investment domains: regional and urban development, agriculture and rural development, fisheries and maritime affairs, human resources, competitiveness, and development of the administrative capacity of public administration.

In terms of integration at intervention/ project level in planning, however, we assessed that around 20% of the interventions planned in the strategy cover more than one domain. And if we consider only projects planned with high or medium priority, this share reduces of 17%. As regards integration of funding sources at project level, according to the Managing Authorities, project financing from more than one fund proved difficult under the regulatory rules of the ESI Funds and would require adopting more innovative administrative solutions to achieve it.

The strategy also includes a methodology for the prioritization of investments based on 5 criteria which help assess the expected contribution of a project to the strategic objectives of ISDDD, its outreach to final beneficiaries, its difficulty and long term sustainability, and its readiness for implementation. At the strategy level, we found that a majority of the projects/ interventions identified initially have high or medium levels of priority, 15% have low priority, and the remaining have no level of priority established.

For the integrated projects/ interventions, we also found that some of them have different levels of priorities in different domains, although none of the prioritization criteria refer specifically to the investment domain but rather to the strategic objectives in ISDDD. Further for the priorities established in the strategy, we also noted the fact that, in the process of the public consultation conducted for the official adoption of the strategy, some of the priorities of the projects/ interventions identified initially were updated relative to the initial analysis developed by the World Bank, and the extent to which this process applied the same methodology for prioritization remains unclear.

Also related to prioritization of investments, based on an analysis of the mapping of types of interventions / projects by strategy pillars and domains, we found that, for some important domains in Pillar I: Protecting Biodiversity (such as climate change, disaster risk and pollution emergencies), and Pillar IV: Public Services (especially the domains of education, health and waste management), the number of high and medium priorities identified in ISDDD for public investments is very limited. Therefore, given the importance of the contribution of these domains to a sustainable and integrated development of the area, in our view the action plan in the strategy could be better aligned with its vision and strategic objectives.

Further, based on the screening of investments from ESI Funds in the ISDDD area for the programming period 2014-2020, we also learnt that, in addition to projects which can be classified as aligned to the intervention types planned in the ISDDD, the actual implementation includes additional types of investments (ex: entrepreneurship in HCOP, or the development of local development strategies in FMAOP) – investments which are relevant for the integrated development of the territory, but could not be easily assigned as relevant for the strategy in its current form.

Finally, based on the interviews with the central services overseeing the strategy ISDDD and with the association ADI ITI responsible for the local coordination of the strategy ISDDD, we learnt that, for the period 2021-2027, the strategy is to be recalibrated by updating its prioritization methodology, the action plan and interventions planned for the next programming period.

Therefore, as regards the strategy ISDDD and its action plan, we have the following recommendations:

- a) *Increase the extent of integration at project level by identifying and prioritizing more interventions/ projects likely to contribute to more than one investment domain in the strategy.*
- b) *Identify projects suitable for financing from more than one fund (in case of ESI Funds) or other sources of funding in order to ensure integration also from the perspective of financing sources at project level. A solution could be to reward integrated projects in selection in order to incentivize beneficiaries to apply with such projects.*

- c) *Apply the prioritization methodology consistently throughout the process of the elaboration and adoption of the strategy.*
- d) *Revisit the prioritization methodology in order to ensure more clarity for the level of priority of integrated interventions to facilitate implementation and monitoring. A possibility could be to consider the concept of a dominant domain for which an intervention could have high priority in implementation, with the remaining domains relevant more for monitoring than implementation.*
- e) *Increase efforts to identify projects/ types of interventions with high and medium priority levels for the investment domains in the strategy which are currently weakly prioritized.*
- f) *Inform the updating of the action plan in the strategy also based on the experience accumulated during the period 2014-2020 in terms of additional types of interventions that could contribute to the integrated development of the ISDDD area.*

9.2. Implementation of ITI investments

As regards implementation, we approached the subject from two perspectives. First, we analysed the strategy action plan in terms of a) the extent to which the projects/ interventions planned in the ISDDD strategy were actually implemented over the reference period of the study, with an emphasis on the projects/ interventions with high and medium priority.; and b) the extent to which the prioritization system established in the strategy was embedded in the process of the selection of projects during implementation. Second, we also analysed the operational effectiveness and time efficiency of selection and implementation processes for ITI investments in the operational programmes for ESI Funds.

For the implementation of the strategy action plan, we found that the extent of implementation differs significantly across the strategy domains. Thus, in our assessment, the implementation of priority projects was most advanced for the following domains: Agriculture (with 82% implementation of priority projects), Fisheries and Aquaculture (with 73%) in Pillar II: Economy, Transport (69%) in Pillar III: Connectivity and, to a more limited extent, Water management in Pillar IV: Public Services.⁴⁴

Limited implementation of planned priority projects is observed especially for the domains in Pillar I: Protecting Biodiversity, for Health, Social inclusion, and Education in Pillar IV: Public Services, but also for Tourism (Pillar II: Economy) and ICT (Pillar III: Connectivity).

Overall, at the strategy level, we found that 44% of the priority projects were implemented fully or almost fully, and 20% of them implemented partially or very partially, with the remaining 36% not implemented. Reasons for non-implementation identified include eligibility constraints, lack of project alignment with programmes' requirements, delays in

⁴⁴ Quantitatively, Water management is estimated as 100% implementation of medium priorities, but this also the result of a more limited number of priorities for this domain. The same applies to Waste management.

project preparation, beneficiary's decision to postpone implementation, beneficiary's financial constraints, or difficulties to identify a suitable financing source.

Our analysis of the extent to which the project prioritization was embedded in project selection indicates that selection focused primarily on the location of investments, without a clear assessment of the extent of the contribution of these projects to the strategic objectives and the extent of their (expected) impact on final beneficiaries.

In this regard, we analysed first the conformity checks established as an eligibility condition for ITI projects, and carried out by ADI ITI, and learnt that these checks were rather procedural, providing a positive assessment to all projects submitted.

Further, we also learnt that in the case of Axis 2 of ROP, the exception from conformity checks applied to projects for SME competitiveness resulted in suboptimal selection. In our assessment, projects selected on this basis are unlikely to contribute significantly to the strategic objectives of ISDDD. For this situation, the Managing Authority explained that the priorities for the selection of these investments were established in the National Strategy for Competitiveness, rather than ISDDD.

Also for the conformity checks, we noted the lack of alignment between the criteria adopted by ADI ITI for these assessments and the prioritization methodology established in the strategy, and found no convincing evidence of a systematic methodology applied for the conformity assessments.

For project selection, we also analysed the types of project calls organized for ITI projects and the evaluation criteria applied for the selection of these projects. Managing Authorities had different approaches for project calls, with ITI dedicated calls organized for ROP, NRDP and HCOP, mixed calls for FMAOP and COP, and general / national calls for LIOP, ACOP and HCOP. The main reasons for these differences in approach were the expected demand for project financing from the ISDDD area, the specificity of ITI investments, and the administrative burden implied by ITI dedicated calls.

Regardless the type of project calls organized, however, access to the ITI allocation was ensured for projects located in the ISDDD area through the eligibility condition of the conformity assessment. Beyond this step, there was no other requirement related to ISDDD alignment or integration embedded in the selection process, with all ITI projects being evaluated based on the same criteria as projects at national level – criteria which are different from the prioritization criteria established in ISDDD. We therefore concluded that there is no compelling evidence that the selection process takes into account the prioritization of investments established in the ISDDD.

Therefore, from the perspective of implementation of strategy action plan, we recommend the following:

- a) *Ensure an alignment between the evaluation criteria applied for ITI projects and the prioritization criteria established in the strategy in order to strengthen the incentives for the (timely) implementation of priority projects.*
- b) *Establish a clear methodology for the conformity assessments so that they reflect adequately the extent of the project contribution to the ISDDD strategic objectives. In this regard, a solution could be to maintain the eligibility condition related to the location of the project in the ISDDD area, while introducing also an evaluation criterion specific to ISDDD in the selection process for the ITI dedicated calls.*
- c) *Ensure a levelled playing field for the selection of all ITI projects by implementing similar selection requirements.*
- d) *Consider organizing ITI dedicated calls only for projects that are highly specific to the Danube Delta and require tailored timing, and eligibility and evaluation in selection beyond the criterion of geographical locations. Compared to mixed calls, the ITI dedicated calls are likely to induce more administrative burden for the Managing Authorities, and therefore should help compensate through increased effectiveness.*

Next for implementation, we also analysed the extent to which the ITI allocations included in the operational programmes were utilized for contracting projects (i.e. selection rate), and the extent of progress in implementation on the ground as proxied by payment to beneficiaries (i.e. payment rate).

In this regard, we learnt that, at the aggregate level, 92% of the total ITI allocation across programmes had been contracted by September 2021 and, of this contracting value, payments to beneficiaries represent 45% by end 2021. We also found that progress in contracting and implementation differs significantly across and within programmes (with LOP, ROP and NRDP more advanced with project selection, and with limited project selection especially in HCOP and ACOP).

When exploring the reasons for varying implementation rates across programmes and priority axes, we learnt that they are due to a combination of factors. In programmes such as ROP, ACOP, and COP, the potential beneficiaries from ISDDD had difficulties with the eligibility requirements in the programmes – issues which could not be resolved in a timely manner for implementation over the reference period. Further, other factors for slow implementation mentioned by Managing Authorities included national specific factors (such as delays in adopting selection criteria at national level for education infrastructure), beneficiaries' difficulties in preparing the necessary project documentations (ex: need for environmental assessments for infrastructure projects, plans for urban mobility, lack of a register of green areas etc), long durations of public procurement for public beneficiaries, labour shortages and price increases in construction, the COVID crisis, beneficiaries' limited financial capacity, and limited administrative capacity of beneficiaries. Overall, however, except for the cases where eligibility requirements reduced the possibility for ISDDD beneficiaries to apply for funding and the need for environmental impact assessments for all projects in the protected area of the Danube Delta, we did not find evidence of other area specific factors that contributed to protracted implementation.

As regards the types of projects implemented from the ITI allocations, we found that, in some cases, also national projects were partially funded from these allocations. This is the case for ACOP or COP, for example, where the ITI allocations were established taking into account that some of the national projects to be implemented were to include also the ISDDD area. In our view, however, such projects would have been implemented anyway (with or without an ITI allocation), and there is no sufficient rationale for considering them as financed from the ITI allocation. This is especially the case where no ITI specific requirement is applied in project selection.

Moreover, our analysis of project calls for ITI projects reflects the expectation that ITI dedicated calls are likely to increase chances of selection. It also indicates, however, that the maturity of project applications from ISDDD beneficiaries remains an issue. This result is complemented by additional evidence on the need to postpone the launching of some project calls in order to provide more time for beneficiaries to prepare the necessary documentation, and longer duration of some project calls for ITI projects when compared to the national level. One of the factors contributing to these issues is the fact that, especially in the case of public authorities, the same beneficiaries have to prepare several projects at the same time.

We also analysed the (expected) duration of project implementation and learnt that it ranges between a minimum of 2 years in FMAOP to more than 4 years for LIOP, in median values. There are, however, many projects that requires a much longer period of implementation. Overall, we find that the median duration of ITI projects tends to be higher than the median duration of projects at national level for projects in the same programme.

Further, we also explored the delays incurred in implementation at project level, and learnt that, at least for ROP and LIOP, a significant number of projects had their implementation period extended, with the net effect of shifting expected completion of implementation towards the end of the period (thus generating significant administrative burden for the Managing Authorities). This result applies both to ITI and non-ITI projects. The factors that contribute to these developments are the same as the one mentioned above for contracting and implementation rates, to which we add also the possible optimism bias applied to project planning mentioned by one of the Managing Authorities.

Therefore, from the perspective of implementation in operational programmes, we also recommend the following:

- a) *Address eligibility issues related to priority projects in the strategy in a timely manner, possibly by enlisting the support of the central services overseeing the strategy in the context of the Functional Working Group.*
- b) *Consider a better calibration of ITI resources programmed in the operational programmes, by taking into account primarily the projects specific to the ITI area.*
- c) *Incentivize the prioritization of priority projects in scheduling the preparation of projects at the level of beneficiaries.*

- d) *Where applicable, account for optimism bias in project planning at the time of contracting in order to reduce the need for further contract modifications later in the process.*
- e) *Incentivise timely completion of projects by rewarding early finalization.*

9.3. Performance orientation

For the performance orientation of ITI investments, we found that no high level indicators for measuring the performance at strategy level have been actively used. Therefore, our analysis focused on the project level indicators used for ITI projects.

In this regard, we found that additional ISDDD indicators needed to be introduced for the ITI projects due to scarce use of programme indicators at project level, at least in some programmes. In our perception, this reflects primarily a lack of coordination between the Managing Authorities (responsible for project level indicators) and ADI IT (responsible for gathering data on performance at strategy level). The disadvantages of this situation are several, including a partial coverage of ITI investments by indicators, an additional administrative burden for the beneficiaries, and lack of guarantee for data quality.

Another issue we identified with the indicators introduced for the ITI investments is the frequent use of the procedural indicator “Number of projects implemented.” This is especially the case for ROP, where 80% of the projects use only this indicator. We explained that, in our view, this indicator is not informative from the perspective of achievements and it is also redundant as it can be inferred from other type of data in the monitoring system. Essentially, for projects which use only this indicator, there are no genuine achievement measures monitored.

Finally, in terms of monitoring the implementation values for the indicators at project level, we found that ADI ITI reports the extent to which targets are met upon project finalization, instead of reporting the actual indicator values in implementation. This practice is not aligned with the monitoring of indicators in the operational programmes, for which the Managing Authorities report the implementation values annually.

Therefore, for the performance orientation of ITI investments, we recommend the following:

- a) *Introduce and monitor high level indicators that have the potential to reflect the contribution of ITI investments to the integrated development of the territory covered by the strategy, together with baselines, milestones and targets over the reference period of the strategy.*
- b) *Coordinate better the use of project level indicators for ITI investments, giving priority to programme level indicators that are also relevant for reflecting the achievements from the perspective of the ISDDD strategy. At the same time, remove/ limit additional data requests from beneficiaries beyond their existing obligations for reporting within the framework of ESI Funds.*

- c) *Where applicable, increase the coverage of projects by indicators to at least one representative output and one representative result at project level, while prioritizing the use of EU common indicators. Further, avoid the use of procedural indicators such as “Number of projects implemented” at project level.*
- d) *Align the monitoring of indicators at project level for the ISDDD strategy with the monitoring of indicators at project level carried out by the Managing Authorities of the programmes that finance the ITI projects.*

9.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

For monitoring the financial implementation of the ITI projects, we learnt that ADI ITI plays an important role in collecting data on all ITI investments and for providing aggregate reporting at strategy level.

A first issue we identified for the monitoring of the ITI projects refers to which projects should be covered by the data collection carried out by ADI ITI. We distinguished three types of projects that are, in principle, relevant for the development of the ISDDD area: a) projects located in the ISDDD area and financed from the ITI allocation; b) projects located in the ISDDD area and financed from ESI Funds, but not from the ITI allocation, and c) projects located in the ISDDD area and financed from funds other than ESI Funds. For the programming period 2014-2020, the mandate of ADI ITI for data collection was confined to the ITI investments financed from the EU Funds, although it is not clear whether this mandate covered both types a) and b).

In practice, we found that the data reported by ADI ITI covers a mix of projects located in the ISDDD area, both financed and not financed from the ITI allocation, and without a clear distinction between the two types of projects. Further, occasionally, ADI ITI also collected data on projects financed from national sources, but not in a systematic manner. Therefore, we assess that the data collected on public investments relevant for the ISDDD strategy remains partial and this is not explained adequately at the level of aggregate reporting on the implementation of the strategy.

As regards the method implemented for data collection on ITI investments, ADI ITI was expected to collect data primarily from the online open sources published by the Managing Authorities on their websites, and based on data collected directly from the beneficiaries requesting conformity checks from ADI ITI prior to project application. We assess that this method proved suboptimal due to the following reasons. First, inferring which (and to what extent) projects are financed from the ITI allocations in the operational programmes based on the data published by Managing Authorities is not a straightforward exercise. In our view, it is labour intensive and prone to error. We found that the net outcome of this situation was that the data collected by ADI ITI on the ITI projects was not fully aligned with the data reported by the Managing Authorities on ITI projects.

Further, additional activities for complementary data collection directly from the beneficiaries are likely to generate significant additional administrative burden for the beneficiaries and also induce an inefficient use of human resources for the association ADI ITI. We estimated that, over the course of 2-3 years, the experts of ADI ITI made hundreds of visits to beneficiaries in the ISDDD area for data collection – a situation which could be avoided with a more efficient method of data collection.

Moreover, also on the method of data collection, we learnt that the cooperation between the Managing Authorities/ Intermediate Bodies and ADI ITI in this regard was in most cases limited to absent. While we found an example of very recent good practice in the form of a protocol for data transmission from the Intermediate Body to ADI ITI for NRDP (protocol adopted in early 2022), over the period 2016-2021 and for all programmes, no systematic practice of data transmission of official data on ITI projects from the Managing Authorities to ADI ITI was in place. This generated the need for ADI ITI to establish its own methods of data collection which, as explained above, resulted in suboptimal outcomes.

As regards evaluation, we learnt that the governance structure and the implementation of ITI investments were evaluated by the central services during the years 2020-2021, and that these evaluations already sparked a reflection on what can be done better during the next programming period 2021-2027. From the interviews with the central services, we learnt that this work is currently ongoing and it covers a recalibration of the strategy in terms of updating its action plan and the methodology for project prioritization, measures of strategy and ITI projects performance, as well as the reorganization of the monitoring process.

Therefore, as regards monitoring and evaluation, we recommend the following:

- a) *Ensure a systematic data collection on all investments relevant for the ISDDD strategy, while also making a distinction between projects financed from the ITI allocation, on the one hand, and projects not financed from the ITI allocation but otherwise relevant for the integrated development of the area, on the other hand. A solution could be to consider a two-tier monitoring system, with a focus on the projects financed from the ITI allocation, and with simplified monitoring and support for the non-ITI but otherwise relevant projects.*
- b) *Ensure a proper reflection of the extent of implementation of the ISDDD strategy by type of project by explaining separately the extent of implementation based on the ITI allocations and implementation of other relevant projects.*
- c) *Ensure systematic access of ADI ITI to the official data on ITI projects collected by the Managing Authorities for the ESI Funds in order to achieve an alignment between that data reported by ADI ITI at the strategy level and the data reported by the Managing Authorities on these investments at the programme and EU levels.*
- d) *Reduce/ contain the need for additional data collection directly from beneficiaries by ADI ITI in order to prevent an overlap with the official responsibilities of*

Managing Authorities / Intermediate Bodies for monitoring at project level and avoid additional administrative burden for beneficiaries.

- e) *Maintain the practice of evaluating the implementation of the ISDDD strategy mid-term in order to understand progress achieved to date, and to identify further avenues for improvements in due time (if applicable).*

9.5. Governance and added value of ADI ITI

For the elaboration and implementation of the ISDDD strategy, given the novelty of the ITI approach for the ESI Funds during the programming period 2014-2020, the relevant national and local actors engaged in an unprecedented process of establishing a governance mechanism in order to ensure coordination at national and local levels.

At national level, the central services established procedures and the Functional Working Group formed by representatives of the Managing Authorities of all operational programmes, ADI ITI, and other relevant actors with the objective to ensure communication and coordination for the implementation of the strategy. In our assessment, this approach is, in principle, functional and could be strengthened by stepping up the cooperation and support provided by the Managing Authorities and central services to ADI ITI. For example, we assess that there is scope for improvement in providing timely assistance at central level as regards the programme eligibility conditions for priority projects identified in the strategy adopted at national level.

We also learnt that, in some cases, the precise role of ADI ITI in the framework of implementing the ESI Funds for ITI investments was not clear to at least some of the Managing Authorities of the operational programmes. During the interviews, they expressed their opinion that the role and responsibilities of the association could be defined better, and also strengthened with regard to assumed responsibility for the assessment of the alignment of projects with the ISDDD strategy.

Further, some of the Managing Authorities also expressed a need for more transparency of the monitoring activities carried out by ADI ITI at project level. In our assessment, a clear delineation of responsibilities of ADI ITI, in comparison with existing official administrative structures for the management and control of ESI Funds, has the potential to help elicit a closer cooperation between the Managing Authorities and associated bodies, on the one hand, and ADI ITI, on the other hand.

As regards the activities of ADI ITI, we identified a number of activities including the following: promotion of funding opportunities for potential beneficiaries in the ISDDD area; identification of project ideas suitable for financing from the ESI Funds; participation in the elaboration of applicant guides; consultations on programme adaptations necessary to cater to the specificity of the ISDDD area; support to beneficiaries in the process of preparation of financing request; conformity assessments; involvement in implementation through visits to beneficiaries for data collection and identification of difficulties in implementation; and continuing monitoring post implementation for indicators. ADI ITI also

promotes the strategy at the local level through a variety of means, including its website, social media, and more traditional media.

Of these activities, the Managing Authorities and the central services opined that the highest potential added value of ADI ITI activities stems from its involvement in promoting the funding opportunities and guiding the beneficiaries towards the most appropriate sources of funding for their projects. Further, some of the Managing Authorities also appreciated the association's activity in gathering and providing beneficiaries' feedback on the draft applicant guides submitted for public consultation. And, in our assessment, ADI ITI also plays an important role in aggregating data on the implementation of the strategy across the operational programmes and other sources of funding which contribute to its financing although, as explained above, there is scope for further improvement.

Further, an important aspect of ADI ITI's activity is its role in assessing the alignment of ITI projects with the strategic objectives of ISDDD. In our assessment, however, the potential added value of this activity has not been fully realized. As explained earlier, while in principle a check of the alignment with the strategy is necessary, in practice all conformity checks carried out by ADI ITI were positive, and therefore not informative regarding the extent to which the projects were aligned with the strategy. Complete absence of conformity checks, on the other hand, can lead to suboptimal outcomes, as experienced by ROP.

Other important potential sources of added value of ADI ITI activity are the support provided to potential beneficiaries and its communication to the general public at local level in the ISDDD area. As regards the support to potential beneficiaries, the associations' activity reports indicate an intense activity in terms of meeting with individual beneficiaries focused on concrete projects. In this regard, we would recommend a more effective approach through the organization of regular workshops with groups of beneficiaries and identification of more horizontal issues likely to apply to more beneficiaries.

A complementary aspect is also the transparency and communication for these activities. In our assessment, this activity is not very visible publicly, as the events and meeting organized, although reported in activity reports, are not documented on the association's website in terms of agenda, participants, and presentations discussed. An advantage of a more transparent approach would be also a wider outreach to potential beneficiaries from the ISDDD area which did not participate in the specific events.

For public promotion of good practices and the overall reporting on the implementation of the ISDDD strategy, we assess that they remain rather procedural, with little user friendly content and less likely to appeal to and be informative for the non-specialised audience in the area.

An additional aspect we identified with the approach of ADI ITI in the process of implementation of ITI investments is the very limited consultation with the relevant

stakeholders during implementation, with stakeholders primarily involved in the initial stages of project identification. In this regard, however, ADI ITI stated that the active involvement of the stakeholders' forum already in place is to be strengthened.

Finally, as regards the organization of ADI ITI activities, we learnt that the association has no system to account for the time allocated for each type of activity carried out by its experts. In absence of time accounting, it is thus difficult to assess the efficiency of these activities and identify further opportunities for streamlining the overall process.

Therefore, as regards governance and the value added of ADI ITI activities, we recommend the following:

- a) *Strengthen the de facto ownership of the strategy at central level though a more active involvement of the central service responsible for national development during the implementation of the strategy, by providing timely assistance with regard to issues that require action at central/ national level.*
- b) *Ensure a clear delineation of the role and responsibilities of ADI ITI relative to the existing official administrative structures for management and control of ESI Funds.*
- c) *Focus ADI ITI's activities primarily on types of activities with high potential of value added by addressing the difficulties with data collection. In this regard, the earlier recommendation on a more effective method for data collection is complementary, in that it would allow an increased focus of the organisation's efforts towards activities such as promotion of funding opportunities, identification of viable projects, horizontal support in the process of project preparation, and user friendly communication for a non-specialised audience.*
- d) *Strengthen the role and responsibility of ADI ITI with respect to the assessment of the project alignment with the ISDDD strategy. This approach would require an internal organization in the association, by separating the function of conformity assessment from the remaining activities in order to ensure its independence. This could be achieved, for example, by creating a pool of the most experience experts in ADI ITI responsible for conformity assessments. This recommendation complements the earlier recommendation on introducing a more rigorous methodology for conformity assessments and on introducing also an associated evaluation criterion in project selection for ITI dedicated calls.*
- e) *Increase the effectiveness of support activities for beneficiaries in the process of project preparation by shifting the focus towards events/ workshops/ trainings with groups of beneficiaries in order to enable identification and more effective communication on horizontal issues and potential solutions. This approach could also help increase the outreach to potential beneficiaries throughout the ISDDD area. Further, complement the organization of events/ trainings with the publication on the association's website of user friendly materials such as frequently asked questions, intuitive presentations on the terms of operational programmes for relevant investments, videos of training sessions etc.*
- f) *Improve communication on and transparency of activities of direct interest to the potential beneficiaries and stakeholders in the ISDDD areas, including events organized, types of projects financed from the strategy and progress in implementation over time. In this regard, we recommend a focus on*

communication tailored to a non-specialized audience, as well as an open source system for providing information on the implementation of ITI projects. Further, we would also recommend the use of association's website as a primary platform for structured communication on the association's activities, with the use of social media more for quick operational communication.

- g) Step up the promotion of good practices by addressing also the issue of the maturity of project applications. In order to inspire potential applicants from the ISDDD area, a possible approach could be, for example, the publication of (anonymised) project applications rated as of very good or good quality by the Managing Authorities in the process of project selection.*
- h) Strengthen the process of stakeholders' consultation during the implementation of the ISDDD strategy, possibly by organizing a forum with all relevant actors at local, national and European level, at least three times during a programming period (i.e. start, mid-term and end period).*
- i) Introduce a system of time accounting for experts' activities in ADI ITI in order to enable an effective focus of the use of resources towards activities with highest potential of added value.*

Finally, as a conclusion to this evaluation, we assess that the strategy for the integrated of the Danube Delta is an example of EU added value as the introduction of the ITI approach in the framework of the ESI Funds inspired the national and local authorities to launch the initiative of elaborating the strategy and include it in the implementation of the ESI Funds for the period 2014-2020. This experience entailed initial extensive consultations, governance building, and establishing administrative coordination and cooperation – all issues which are important also from the perspective of their potential for replication for other ITI initiatives in the future. On the other hand, we also assess that the implementation of the strategy proved challenging for the actors involved during the programming period 2014-2020, and that there is scope for further developments in view of the programming period 2021-2027.

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Annex Section 4

Table 1: Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions	Section in the report
<i>Q1: Were SIDD strategic priorities clearly identified and appropriately reflected in the action plan?</i>	Section II: SIDD strategy Section VI: Implementation priority projects
<i>Q2: Did guides for applicants correctly and clearly represent the SIDD strategic priorities?</i>	Section VI: Project selection
<i>Q3: How was project contribution to SIDD strategic priorities and targets considered in the project selection?</i>	Section VI: Implementation priority projects, conformity checks and project selection
<i>Q4: How was a project-integrated approach considered in the project selection for SIDD?</i>	Section VI: Conformity checks and project selection
<i>Q5: How did the ADI ITI DD monitor relevance of the strategy and its action plan over time?</i>	Section III: Data sources. Section VIII: ADI ITI monitoring
<i>Q6: How did ADI ITI DD monitor and report on the progress of the implementation with regard to the strategic targets?</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI monitoring
<i>Q7: What was the timetable for launching the calls and which were the most frequent and more specific causes for delays?</i>	Section VII: Analysis of project calls
<i>Q8: What was the project selection rate by operational programme, i.e. number of projects selected of the total transmitted, and how does this rate compare to the average selection rate for the respective operational programme and the specific priority axis? Identify causes for lower selection rates for ITI DD.</i>	Section VII: Analysis of project calls
<i>Q9: What was the distribution by Pillar and Sector within the SIDD of the project selected and their respective amounts, including source of fund, operational programme and specific objective, as of end September 2021. How will this distribution ensure achievement of strategy targets?</i>	Section V: Current status of implementation
<i>Q10: What was the average contracting timeline and how does this compare to the average at the level of the respective operational programme? Identify causes of delays.</i>	Section VII: Timetable of applications and contracting
<i>Q11: What is the proportion of projects that were amended to extend the implementation timeframe? Which were the causes for the implementation delays and how did the ADI ITI address those?</i>	Section VII: Project changes over time and difficulties in implementation
<i>Q12: What is the proportion of projects (number and corresponding funding), from the total selected, that have been completed by end of September 2021?</i>	Section V: Current status of implementation
<i>Q13: How many of the completed projects include indicators for which achieved value is less than the target?</i>	Section VII: Indicators at project level and targets
<i>Q14: Identifying the current implementation planning for the remaining years until 2023 at project level including the chances of using the full allocation for the implementation of the ITI projects by end 2023</i>	Section VII: Effectiveness of implementation
<i>Q15: Identifying the unique beneficiaries (eg. type, number, distribution of projects)</i>	Section V: Analysis of unique beneficiaries

Table 1: Evaluation questions (continued)

Evaluation questions	Section in the report
<i>Q16: Examining the level of transparency during the stakeholder consultations process</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q17: How did the ADI ITI communicate and consult the stakeholders on the performance of implementation and were their suggestions included in the proposal for improved implementation?</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q18: Investigating the distribution of responsibilities in the context of the implementation of SIDD at national level and how the monitoring of the implementation at strategy level has been done so far</i>	Section VIII: Governance and ADI ITI monitoring
<i>Q19a: ADI ITI added value: contribution to the planning of implementation for SIDD (for all sources of funds, including national/ local if any)</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q19b: ADI ITI added value: promotion of the strategy and funding opportunities</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q19c: ADI ITI added value: reporting to stakeholders on the progress of SIDD implementation, promotion of good practices for projects, achievements</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q19d: ADI ITI added value: support for capacity development of project beneficiaries as regards project preparation and implementation</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q19e: ADI ITI added value: consultations of stakeholders during SIDD implementation</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q19f: ADI ITI added value: long term monitoring of SIDD</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q19g: ADI ITI added value: other activities? (quality of data and monitoring)</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q20a: ADI ITI organisation: development of human resources over time and their role</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI organisation and structure
<i>Q20b: ADI ITI: budget over time and split between salaries and expenditure with activities</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI organisation and structure
<i>Q20c: quality of online activity (transparency, completeness, user friendly)</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI website and online activities
<i>Q20d: relationships with the MAs and intermediate bodies for the OPs. Is there a complementarity of attributions?</i>	Section VIII: Governance
<i>Q20e: assessment of the activity of ADI ITI over time</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Q20f: have there been any changes introduced/ planned for ADI ITI after the intermediate evaluation of the OP TA?</i>	Section VIII: ADI ITI activities
<i>Recommendations for 2021-2027</i>	Section IX: Conclusions and recommendations

Table 2: Interviews with relevant actors

ADI ITI and MIPE	December 20, 2021
Managing Authority ACOP	February 3, 2022
ADI ITI	February 4, 2022
Intermediate Body ROP - ADR SE	February 4, 2022
Managing Authority NRDP	February 9, 2022
Managing Authority FMAOP	February 10, 2022
MIPE	February 16, 2022
Managing Authority ROP	February 16, 2022
MDLPA and MIPE	February 22, 2022
Managing Authority LIOP	February 24, 2022
Managing Authority COP	February 25, 2022

List of data sources for the evaluation:

1. Managing Authorities' data on projects financed from the ITI allocations

All Managing Authorities of the 8 operational programmes provided the lists of ITI projects contracted by end September 2021 in their programmes, including financial data on selection and payments for these projects until end 2021.

2. ADI ITI dataset tracking the implementation of the action plan in ISDDD

ADI ITI provided a dataset tracking the implementation of the projects/ interventions planned in the ISDDD strategy. The dataset includes also additional projects implemented but not planned, details on the sources of financing, as well as explanations on why some projects could not be implemented.

3. SMIS online – data on project calls

From SMIS online,⁴⁵ we compiled a dataset with all projects calls launched until end September 2021 for the following operational programmes: LIOP, ROP, COP, ACOP, HCOP, TAOP and FMAOP. This dataset includes 619 project calls and the following variables:

- At call level: operational programme; priority axis; name, code and id project call; number project applications and projects contracted; type of call (open/ closed); date call open, date call closed;
- At project level: name project, SMIS project code; version contract.

We matched this data with data from the Managing Authorities for the ITI projects, and with the monitoring data from ADI ITI for ITI projects.

4. SMIS online – list of operations selected

Also from SMIS online, we downloaded the dataset with operations launched for the programming period 2014-2020 in the 7 operational programmes mentioned above until end September 2021. This dataset includes almost 12 540 projects/ operations and the

⁴⁵ <https://www.fonduri-ue.ro/statistici>

following variables at project level: operational programme; name beneficiary; CUI beneficiary; SMIS project code; thematic objective; title operation; intervention category; project location; summary operation; date operation start; (effective / expected) date operation completion; fund; currency (mostly RON); total eligible expenditure; EU cofinancing; National cofinancing; total project value with and without VAT.

We used this dataset to analyse all ITI projects (and other relevant projects for comparison), especially as regards the OP allocation to the project, project location, unique beneficiaries, and the dates for start and (expected) completion of the project.

5. SMIS data on application and contracting dates

The central service MEIP provided the calendar dates for application for EU financing and (first versions of) financing contracts for all operations to date. From this dataset, we selected all projects in operation by end September 2021 and used the dataset for the analysis of the efficiency of implementation in terms of the duration of project selection and contract signature, and duration of project implementation.

6. ADI ITI dataset with ITI projects

ADI ITI provided an excel file with all the ITI projects financed from all operational programmes (i.e. the seven OPs listed above plus PNDR) monitored by the association. We use this dataset primarily for the classification of ITI projects by strategy pillar and domain.

7. MA datasets with lists of operations

For the updated data on project status and payments to beneficiaries at project level, we used the excel files with lists of operations published by the Managing Authorities on their websites. This data is available for all operational programmes funded from EU Cohesion Policy (ERDF, Cohesion Fund and ESF). Further, for two largest OPs (ROP and LIOP) contributing to ITI investments, for the analysis of changes in planned project completion dates over time we downloaded all the excel files (15 for ROP and 35 for LIOP) with lists of operations published by the two MAs over time and until end September 2021.

For NRDP, we downloaded the AFIR data reported online by mid December 2021 and used it for the comparison of ITI projects financed from NRDP with other similar projects financed from NRDP.

For FMAOP, we used the data at beneficiary level reported by the Managing Authority in order to analyse the ITI projects financed from the programme in the context of other similar operations from FMAOP.

8. SIDDD strategic documents

We used the official document of ISDDD adopted in 2016 to collect the data on the priority levels of projects planned initially in the strategy.⁴⁶ Further, for the analysis of the process of strategy elaboration and changes over time in the prioritization process, we used also the reports issued by the Work Bank during their work on the strategy.

⁴⁶ See Guvernul Romaniei (2016) in references.

9. Operational programmes

For the data on resources programmed for the ITI mechanism in the operational programmes (and changes over time), we analysed the following versions of the operational programmes with such allocations: LIOP: v1.3(2015), v4(2018), v7(2021); ROP: v1.2(2015), v5.3(2018), v7(2020); COP: v1.2(2014), v4(2018), v8(2021); HCOP: v1.4(2015), v5(2018), v10(2020); ACOP: v1.2(2015), v2(2017), v3.1(2020). For the remaining programmes, we collected data on the ITI allocations from the Managing Authorities.

10. WWW for origin of beneficiaries

For the analysis of the origin of the private companies which are beneficiaries of ITI projects we used the search engine on WWW.

11. ADI ITI dataset with decisions and calendar dates for conformity checks

Provided by ADI ITI, this dataset includes data on all conformity assessments carried out by ADI ITI until September 2021. This data includes also the expert assessments provided for each conformity assessment, and the assessment of the relevance of the projects for strategy pillars and investment domains.

12. Applicant guides for project calls

For the analysis of the evaluation criteria applied by Managing Authorities in project selection, we screened the applicant guides issued for a subset of 45 project calls based on which the ITI projects were selected.

13. Data on ADI ITI human resources and annual budgets

ADI ITI provided the data for the staff employed by the association during 2016-2021 and the types of training relevant for their activity received over time. ADI ITI provided also the annual budgets of the association for the reference period.

14. Data on indicators at project level

ADI ITI provided a dataset including indicators at project level monitored for all ITI projects selected until end September 2021, together with target values and assessments of achievements for finalized projects.

15. ADI ITI activity reports and its website

For the analysis of the added value of ADI ITI, we analyse the information published on its website, with an emphasis on the 27 activity reports published quarterly by the association over the years 2016-2021.

16. Other documents provided by ADI ITI for the evaluation

This category includes: representative examples for the conformity assessments carried out for one project from each operational programme, the procedures for the conformity checks, the procedures for monitoring ITI projects, communication plan, example of a progress report submitted to the Functional Working Group.

Annex Section 6

Pillar I. Environment

Table Pillar I.1: Biodiversity

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.1 Waste reduction in natural areas				1	1	Other				1 partially	NRDP, ROP
I.10 Reforestation in degraded areas				1	1	Other					
I.11 Pollution reduction				1	1	NRDP				1	LIOP
I.12 Creation DANUBIUS RI		1			1	COP		1 very partially			COP
I.13 Integrated control management against mosquitos				1	1	None					
I.14 Integrated management of reed				1	1	None					
I.2 Monitoring of protected areas	1			1	2	LIOP	1				National
I.3 Monitoring sedimentation	1				1	Other					
I.4 Consolidation administrative capacity in ARBDD		1		3	4	ACOP		1		1	ACOP, LIOP
I.5 Optimisation natural water flows		8		2	10	LIOP, Other		5			LIOP
I.6 River cleaning and ecological reconstruction		8	1	1	10	LIOP		5	1		LIOP
I.7 Studies and technical assistance for biodiversity conservation		1			1	None					
I.8 Restoration of natural habitats		7			7	LIOP		5			LIOP
I.9 Studies for optimal use of natural assets		1		1	2	LIOP					
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	2	11	1	10	24		1	6 + 1 very partially	1	1+1 partially	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar I.2: Climate Change

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority		
I.19 Climate adaptation - SME and community support		1			1	LIOP, ROP
I.20 Creation cross-sectorial unit for climate change			1		1	ACOP
I.21 Guide for good practices for climate change			1	2	3	HCOP, ROP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level		1	2	2	5	

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar I.3: Disaster Risk

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.22 ISU and SMURD equipment				1	1	Other				1	LIOP
I.23 Flood protection in 14 localities				15	15	Other				1	LIOP
I.24 Modernisation ISU Tulcea, Macin, Crisan, Babadag, Topolog				1	1	Other				1	LIOP
I.25 Database of risk factors				1	1	Other				1	LIOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level				16	16	Total				3	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar I.4: Energy Efficiency

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.15 Pilot projects for renewable energy	1	1		18	20	LIOP, ROP, NRDP		1		3 + 2 partially + 3 very partially	ROP, LIOP, COP, National
I.16 Energy efficiency for public buildings		16			16	ROP		4 + 1 partially + 3 very partially			ROP, LIOP, COP, National
I.17 Public street lights			1		1	ROP			1 partially		ROP, National
I.18 Energy efficiency for dwellings			1		1	ROP			1 partially		ROP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	1	17	2	1	21			5 + 1 partially + 3 very partially	2 partially	0	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar I.5: Pollution Emergencies

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.26 Comprehensive plans for pollution prevention				1	1	ACOP				1	LIOP
I.27 Task force for interventions in pollution emergencies				1	1	ACOP					
I.28 Equipments for emergency interventions for pollution				1	1	Other				1	LIOP
I.29 Interinstitutional database for environmental responsibilities			2		2	ACOP, COP					
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level			2	2	4					1	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Pillar II. Economy

Table Pillar II.1: Fisheries and Aquaculture

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.40 Reduction of sedimentation in large lakes		3			3	LIOP		3			LIOP
I.41 Dredging to restore water depth				3	3	LIOP				3	LIOP
I.42 Fishermen and river infrastructure	4				4	FMAOP	3				FMAOP
I.43 Artificial reproduction of valuable fish species	1				1	FMAOP	1				FMAOP
I.44 Fish habitats				1	1	None					
I.45 Removal of uncontrolled fishing camps	3				3	FMAOP	2				FMAOP
I.46 Fiscal incentives (removal of water tax)				1	1	None					
I.47 Data collection and analysis for fisheries				4	4	COP					
I.48 Analytical capacity of INCDD		1			1	FMAOP Other					
I.49 R&D related to fisheries				1	1	None				1 very partially	FMAOP
I.50 Aquaculture support (SMEs included)		1		2	3	HCOP, ROP FMAOP		1		2	FMAOP
I.51 Small scale fish processing		1	1	1	3	FMAOP Other			1		FMAOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	5	6		8	19		4	4		1 + 1 very partially	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar II.2: Agriculture

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.52 Production/ collection/ processing capacities for agricultural products		1			1	NRDP		1			NRDP
I.53 Modernisation rural infrastructure (water, roads, schools etc)		3		5	8	NRDP, ROP, HCOP, National		1 + 2 partially		5 + 1 very partially	NRDP, ROP, National
I.54 Protection and promotion of cultural and natural assets				6	6	NRDP, ROP				3	NRDP
I.55 Land restitution and cadastre of land/ farms				1	1	None					
I.56 Support ecological agriculture in Natura 2000 sites				5	5	NRDP				3	NRDP
I.57 Access to agricultural education			4		4	NRDP, HCOP			3		NRDP
I.58 Modernisation quality control system for agricultural products			1		1	NRDP					
I.59 Events for promotion of local and EU funding (including project preparation)				1	1	NRDP, HCOP				1	NRDP
I.60 Advice and training for farmers/ workforce in rural areas				3	3	NRDP, ACOP				1	NRDP
I.61 Bio agriculture		1			1	NRDP					
I.62 Young farmers		1			1	NRDP		1			NRDP
I.63 Modernisation/ rehabilitation irrigation systems		1			1	NRDP		1 almost complete			NRDP
I.64 Consolidation/ modernisation small farms			1		1	NRDP			1		NRDP
I.65 Creation of small non-agricultural businesses		2	1	1	4	NRDP, ROP, HCOP		2	1	1	NRDP, ROP, LIOP
I.66 Equipment for farms			1		1	NRDP			1		NRDP
I.67 Bottom-up initiatives for local development	2				2	NRDP, ACOP	2				NRDP
I.68 Afforestation of agricultural and non-agricultural land in DD			1		1	NRDP					
I.69 Conservation of local heritage and traditions			3	7	10	NRDP, ROP			3	4	ROP, LIOP, NRDP
I.70 Land leasing to local farmers				1	1	ROP					
I.71 Support for producer organisations				1	1	None					
I.72 Support short supply chains for tourism				1	1	None				1	NRDP
I.73 Certification / branding/ distribution of agricultural products				1	1	None					
I.74 Support for preserving agricultural activities in DD				1	1	None					
I.75 Rehabilitation flood infrastructure				1	1	None					
I.76 Risk management for farmers and producers				1	1	NRDP				1	NRDP
I.77 Modernisation education infrastructure (primary and secondary)				1	1	None				1	NRDP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	2	9	7	21	39		2	6 + 2 partially	4	10 + 1 very partially	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar II.3: Tourism

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.30 Tourism infrastructure	2			1	3	ROP, NRDP, LIOP, Other	1 + 1 partially				ROP, PNRR
I.31 Management Organisation for DD brand (OMD)		1		2	3	ACOP		1		1	ACOP
I.32 Programme for multiple destinations in DD	4				4	ROP, NRDP, COP, HCOP, FMAOP					
I.33 Innovative and sustainable tourism (culture and nature)		2			2	HCOP, ROP, FMAOP		2			ROP, FMAOP
I.34 Urban revitalisation		2		1	3	ROP		1 + 1 very partially			ROP, FMAOP
I.35 Quality accommodation and services				1	1	None					
I.36 Cultural heritage (conservation etc)		10		1	11	ROP, Other		3 + 3 partially + 1 very partially			ROP, FMAOP, National
I.37 Programme for learning destinations				1	1	None					
I.38 Emergency and first aid for workers in tourism and services				1	1	None					
I.39 Research observatory for tourism				1	1	None					
I.78 Revitalisation of localities (public spaces) in Central DD		2			2	ROP		1 + 1 very partially			ROP, FMAOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	6	14		8	28		1 + 1 partially	6 + 3 partially + 2 very partially			

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Pillar III. Connectivity

Table Pillar III.1: Transport

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.79 Modernisation national road DN 22 Constanța - Tulcea - Măcin - Brăila (also Braila-Măcin bridge)	1				1	LIOP	1				LIOP
I.80 Sustainable public transport in Central DD (<i>in fact local roads</i>)		1		2	3	ROP, Other		1		1 partially + 1 almost complete	ROP
I.81 Modernisation local road DJ229, sectorul I și II, Niculițel - Zebil - Sarichioi		2			2	ROP, Other		1 partially + 1 almost complete			ROP
I.82 Modernisation local road DJ222N, Tulcea - Pardina - Chilia Veche		2			2	ROP, Other		1 partially + 1 almost complete			ROP
I.83 Modernisation local road DJ226 Tronson DN22B - Corbu - Săcele - Istria - Mihai Viteazu		2			2	ROP, Other		1 partially + 1 almost complete			ROP
I.84 Modernisation ports Tulcea, Sulina, Măcin, Isaccea, Mahmudia și Chilia	6				6	LIOP, Other	3				LIOP
I.85 Modernisation airport infrastructure		1			1	LIOP		1			LIOP
I.86 Modernisation 4 local roads (DJ222B, DJ222, DJ223A, DJ226A)		2			2	ROP, Other		1 partially + 1 almost complete			ROP
I.87 Rehabilitation/modernisation Sulina channel		1			1	LIOP		1			LIOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	7	5			12		4	3 + 1 partially + 1 almost complete			

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar III.2: ICT

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.88 Broadband for sustainable tourism	2				2	COP	1 + 1 very partially				COP, National
I.89 E-government and public monitoring systems		1			1	ACOP, COP					
I.90 ITC for business				1	1	COP				1	NRDP
I.91 Open data policies			1		1	ACOP, COP					
I.92 Vertical integration of local ITC innovation			1		1	COP			1		NRDP, ROP
I.93 Private investments and demand for R&D&I			4		4	COP			1 very partially		COP
I.94 Research - private companies partnerships for knowledge transfer			4		4	COP			1		COP
I.95 R&D&I infrastructure development			4		4	COP					
I.96 Participation to Horizon 2020 and talent attraction in national R&D&I			1		1	COP					
I.97 ITC infrastructure and digital skills for education, health, culture, and digital inclusion			2	4	6	TAOP, COP, HCOP			1 + 1 very partially	3	COP, National, HCOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	2	1	13	5	20		1 + 1 very partially		2 + 1 very partially	4	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Pillar IV. Public Services

Table Pillar IV.1: Education

Intervention	Planned in the strategy						Implemented				Financing source
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.117 LLL in Community Centres for sustainable tourism, agriculture and fisheries		4		1	5	HCOP, NRDP, ROP, COP		1 + 2 partially			HCOP
I.118 Education and training for pupils in areas with less than 2000 inhabitants		3			3	HCOP, ROP, NRDP		1 + 2 partially			NRDP, ROP, National
I.119 New or modernised/ rehabilitated school infrastructure			3		3	HCOP, ROP, NRDP			2 + 1 partially		NRDP, ROP, National
I.120 Equipments and modernisation of childcare facilities			4		4	HCOP, ROP, NRDP			4 partially		NRDP, ROP, National
I.121 Back to school programmes addressing early school leaving		3	3		6	HCOP, ROP, NRDP		1 + 2 partially	1 partially + 1 very partially		NRDP, ROP, HCOP, National
I.122 Partnerships between schools and employers for labour market adaptation of education		7		1	8	HCOP, ROP, NRDP		2 + 3 partially			NRDP, ROP, HCOP, National
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level		8	5	2	15			2 + 4 partially	4 partially + 1 very partially		

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar IV.2: Health

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.106 Monitoring system for infectious diseases				1	1	None					
I.107 Modernisation/ rehabilitation of ITC health equipment and facilities				2	2	ROP, Other				1	ROP
I.108 Modernisation of Emergency Hospital Tulcea (ambulatory included) and Macin hospital			2		2	ROP, Other			1		ROP
I.109 Conversion of TBC section of Emergency Hospital Tulcea in residential care				1	1	None					
I.110 Rehabilitation of Babadag and Sulina hospital (for ambulatories)			2	1	3	ROP, HCOP, ACOP, Other			1		ROP
I.111 Telemedicine and e-health ((IT systems)				1	1	COP					
I.112 Reforms for health management (family doctors, telemedicine, ambulatories)		1	1	1	3	ACOP, HCOP, ROP, Other					
I.113 Public campaigns for a healthy and clean environment				2	2	ACOP, HCOP				1 + 1 partially	HCOP, COP
I.114 Ambulances for emergency health services and rehabilitation works				1	1	None				1	
I.115 Trainings for medical staff			1		1	HCOP					
I.116 Medical screening programmes			1		1	HCOP					
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level		1	4	6	11				1	2 + 1 partially	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar IV.3: Social Inclusion

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.123 Preschool infrastructure in areas with disadvantaged population groups			1	4	5	HCOP, ROP, NRDP			1 partially	3 partially	ROP, NRDP, National
I.124 Mediation programmes in schools with pupils from disadvantaged groups			1		1	HCOP			1 very partially		HCOP
I.125 Implementation of community subsidies for education			1		1	HCOP					
I.126 Facilitation reglementation of property rights				1	1	None					
I.127 SME support for NEET employment			1		1	HCOP					
I.128 Digital skills for minority and disadvantaged groups			1		1	HCOP					
I.129 Support for infrastructure and efficiency of social services	7			1	8	ROP, HCOP	2 + 1 very partially				HCOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level	7		5	5	17		2 + 1 very partially		1 partially + 1 very partially	3 partially	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar IV.4: Waste Management

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.100 Waste collection on river channels				2	2	Other				1	LIOP
I.101 Waste separation systems		1			1	LIOP		1			LIOP
I.102 Public education an awareness on waste management				2	2	ACOP				1	LIOP
I.103 Infrastructure for compost waste in rural areas				2	2	Other				1	LIOP
I.104 Treatment and removal of waste from construction				2	2	Other				1	LIOP
I.105 Recovery of collected waste				2	2	Other				1	LIOP
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level		1		1	2			1			

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Table Pillar IV.5: Water Management

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.98 Projects in areas with more than 2000 inhabitants		3			3	LIOP, NRDP, Other		3			LIOP, NRDP, National
I.99 Projects in areas with less than 2000 inhabitants		3			3	LIOP, NRDP, Other		3			LIOP, NRDP, National
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level		3			3			3			

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Pillar V. Administrative Capacity

Table Pillar V.1: Administrative Capacity

Intervention	Planned in the strategy					Implemented					
	Prioritisation (frequency)				Total	Financing source	Prioritisation (frequency)				Financing source
	High	Medium	Low	No Priority			High	Medium	Low	No Priority	
I.130 Consolidation of local administrative capacity		2			2	ACOP		1			ACOP
I.131 Ethics, integrity, transparency and reduced corruption in public administration		2			2	ACOP		1			ACOP
I.132 TA for ADI ITI		1			1	TAOP, ACOP		1			TAOP
I.133 Regulatory framework for better access to household subsidies				1	1	ACOP					
I.134 Services of better quality and access in the judicial system			1		1	ACOP					
I.135 Coordination of public institutions for the conservation and development of DD		1		3	4	TAOP, ACOP		1		2	ACOP
I.136 Development and implementation of online services				2	2	TAOP				2	National
Number projects/ types interventions at domain level		4	1	5	10			2		2	

Note: Authors' assessment of implementation.

Sources: ISDDD strategy August 2016; ADI ITI data on implementation action plan 31 December 2021; MA data on ITI projects 31 December 2021.

Annex Section 7

Regional Operational Programme (ROP)

Fund for OP ROP – ERDF

Figure ROP.1: Summary ITI implementation by priority axis



Source: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021

Table ROP.1: Allocations for ITI investments in OP ROP over time

Priority Axis	OP version 1.2 (July 2015)			OP version 5.3 (October 2018)			OP version 7 (Sept 2020)			Change over time (2020 vs 2015)	Share in OP (2020)
	EU amount (mill euro)	EU rate	EU+National (mill euro)	EU amount (mill euro)	EU rate	EU+National (mill euro)	EU amount (mill euro)	EU rate	EU+National (mill euro)		
PA2 SME Competitiveness	64	85%	75	74	85%	87	104	85%	123	163%	27%
PA3 Low carbon economy	116	85%	137	100	85%	117	69	85%	81	60%	18%
PA5 Urban environment and cultural heritage	45	85%	53	36	85%	43	36	80%	45	86%	10%
PA6 Regional road infrastructure	75	85%	88	75	85%	88	68	85%	80	91%	18%
PA7 Tourism	5	85%	6	14	85%	16	13	85%	15	251%	3%
PA8 Health infrastructure	21	56%	38	22	70%	31	48	70%	69	181%	15%
PA10 Education infrastructure	32	85%	38	32	85%	38	22	85%	26	70%	6%
PA13 Small and medium cities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	17	85%	20	10	85%	11	n.a.	3%
Total ITI	358	81%	434	369	83%	439	371	83%	451	104%	100%

Source: OP ROP, adopted versions

Table ROP.2: Rates selection and payments for ITI investments by axis

Priority axis	Number ITI projects	ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
PA2 SME Competitiveness	331	123	182	148%	130	72%
PA3 Low carbon economy	32	81	74	90%	5	6%
PA5 Urban environment and cultural heritage	9	45	28	62%	7	26%
PA6 Regional road infrastructure	6	80	60	75%	28	46%
PA7 Tourism	8	15	23	153%	1	3%
PA8 Health infrastructure	9	69	61	89%	3	5%
PA10 Education infrastructure	23	26	23	85%	2	10%
PA13 Small and medium cities	3	11	12	100%	1	11%
Total	421	451	461	102%	178	39%

Notes: a) Only priority axes with ITI allocations; b) 16 cancelled projects not included

Sources: OP ROP v7 (2020) for OP allocation; MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Status ITI projects in OP ROP: 49% finalized, 47% in implementation and 4% cancelled.

Table ROP.3: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	ITI Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD Centre	15	31	5	17%
DD UAT	323	350	131	37%
DD Neighbourhood	69	63	32	51%
Wider projects	2	12	5	44%
Not clear	12	5	4	81%
Total	421	461	178	39%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table ROP.4: Type ITI investments

Type ITI investment	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
Roads, bridges, tunnels	58	100	22%
Construction (services, equipment and materials)	155	88	19%
Emergency services	4	48	10%
Public transport	5	35	8%
Rehabilitation/ modernisation schools	24	30	7%
Other SME support	60	27	6%
Tourism	6	18	4%
Health infrastructure	4	17	4%
Cultural heritage	4	11	2%
Sports and leisure	9	10	2%
Energy efficiency - public buildings	8	10	2%
Public services	4	9	2%
Energ efficiency - street lights	3	6	1%
Energy efficiency -dwellings	9	6	1%
Transport	4	6	1%
Other machinery and equipment	7	4	1%
Cycle paths	1	4	1%
Utility projects for fluids	9	4	1%
Public spaces	1	4	1%
Childcare infrastructure	6	4	1%
ICT	8	3	1%
Electrical and electronic	2	1	0.3%
Engineering projects	2	1	0.3%
Waste management	2	1	0.2%
Medical services	2	1	0.2%
Electricity and gas	1	0.2	0.1%
Other (various)	23	14	3%
Total	421	461	100%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table ROP.5: Type beneficiaries for ITI projects

Type beneficiary	ITI projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payment (%)
Public Organization	85	259	45	17%
Private Company	330	181	129	71%
NGOs	6	22	4	18%
Total	421	461	178	39%

Note: Authors' classification.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table ROP.6: Main public beneficiaries of ITI projects

Beneficiary	ITI projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
JUDEȚUL TULCEA	16	101	39%
MUNICIPIUL TULCEA	14	40	16%
JUDEȚUL CONSTANTA	2	27	10%
ORAS ISACCEA	8	20	8%
ORAS MACIN	4	9	4%
ORAS BABADAG	3	6	2%
ORAS SULINA	3	6	2%
<i>Other beneficiaries</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>19%</i>
Total	85	259	100%

Note: Authors' classification.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Private beneficiaries of ITI projects in OP ROP – 80% of the ITI selection for 161 private beneficiaries (of 330 in total).

OP ROP – all project calls are ITI specific.

Table ROP.7a: Project calls for axes with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Share closed calls	Range selection rate	Share 100% selection rate	Projects selected		Year when call launched (number calls)					
					All	ITI	2016*	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Priority Axis 2												
Calls with ITI projects	3	100%	17%-79%	0%	347	347		1	2			
Calls without ITI projects	7	100%	3%-100%	14%	3671	0	1	2	1	2	1	
Priority Axis 3												
Calls with ITI projects	7	100%	33%-100%	43%	32	32		2	1	4		
Calls without ITI projects	20	90%	13%-100%	25%	927	0		8	7	3	2	
Priority Axis 5												
Calls with ITI projects	2	100%	7%; 89%	0%	9	9		1				1
Calls without ITI projects	12	75%	47%-100%	17%	270	0		9	3			
Priority Axis 6												
Calls with ITI projects	1	100%	100%	100%	6	6		1				
Calls without ITI projects	7	86%	38%-100%	14%	123	0		3	4			
Priority Axis 7												
Calls with ITI projects	1	100%	51%	0%	8	8			1			
Calls without ITI projects	4	75%	11%-75%	0%	43	0		3	1			
Priority Axis 8												
Calls with ITI projects	7	100%	50%-100%	57%	9	9		2	2	1	2	
Calls without ITI projects	11	100%	19%-100%	18%	344	0		4	5	1	1	
Priority Axis 10												
Calls with ITI projects	3	100%	50%-85%	0%	23	23			3			
Calls without ITI projects	13	100%	63%-100%	38%	586	0		2	11			
Priority Axis 13												
Calls with ITI projects	1	100%	100%	100%	3	3			1			
Calls without ITI projects	2	100%	33%; 79%	0%	211	0			2			

Note: Only priority axes with ITI allocations

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

Table ROP.7b: Examples of evaluation criteria for project selection (range of scores), by axis

	Contribution to investment priority	Quality, maturity, sustainability	Horizontal principles	Strategic concentration	Contribution to local development	Complementarity with other projects	Applicants' operational capacity
Priority axis 2	22-56	33-71	6-10	1	0	0-3	0
Priority axis 3	35-41	30-45	6-17	0-10	0	4-10	0-10
Priority axis 5	30	37	5	0	23	5	0
Priority axis 8	0	40	10	0	0	5	45

Sources: Applicants' guides for 15 selected calls with ITI projects.

Table ROP.8: Contracting and project duration for ITI projects by axis

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature (months)			Projects started before application		Total project duration (months)			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (%)
		Median	Min	Max	Number	%	Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)= % of (1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)=% of (1)
Priority Axis 2													
ITI projects	331	16	8	38	264	80%	35	9	76	21	4	47	63%
Projects other than ITI	3,450	14	1	58	1048	30%	22	2	95	13	0.2	71	71%
Priority Axis 3													
ITI projects	32	16	5	34	25	78%	52	18	78	25	5	50	3%
Projects other than ITI	904	13	0.2	39	440	49%	43	8	187	33	0.2	75	33%
Priority Axis 5													
ITI projects	9	11	7	16	9	100%	68	54	98	50	31	63	11%
Projects other than ITI	267	5	0.3	24	157	59%	51	5	110	46	5	73	27%
Priority Axis 6													
ITI projects	6	10	8	12	6	100%	63	63	75	44	32	53	33%
Projects other than ITI	122	5	0.4	20	66	54%	60	8	117	46	8	75	27%
Priority Axis 7													
ITI projects	8	18	14	27	7	88%	56	31	67	33	22	37	0%
Projects other than ITI	43	11	1	20	25	58%	53	26	95	45	26	75	26%
Priority Axis 8													
ITI projects	9	13	3	18	8	89%	67	35	109	37	30	51	11%
Projects other than ITI	343	11	2	38	146	43%	41	9	109	33	7	64	23%
Priority Axis 10													
ITI projects	23	13	11	26	23	100%	55	36	104	34	19	48	9%
Projects other than ITI	586	22	3	40	308	53%	48	9	122	31	7	61	8%
Priority Axis 13													
ITI projects	3	15	14	19	3	100%	60	43	61	42	23	45	0%
Projects other than ITI	211	24	5	38	123	58%	50	17	120	34	12	48	3%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021; MA list operations, 30 Sep 2021; SMIS for dates applications and contract signature.

Figure ROP.2: Distribution duration contract signature

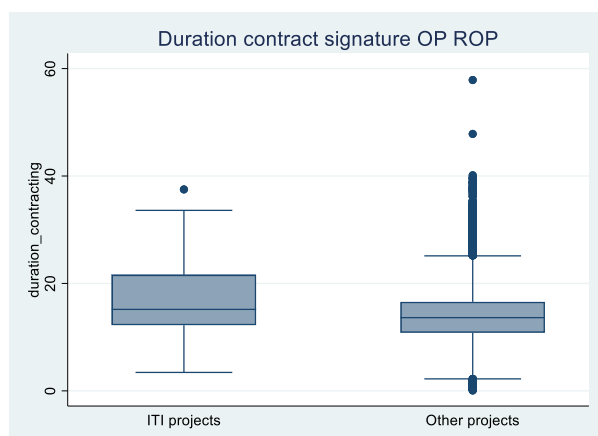


Figure ROP.3: Distribution project duration

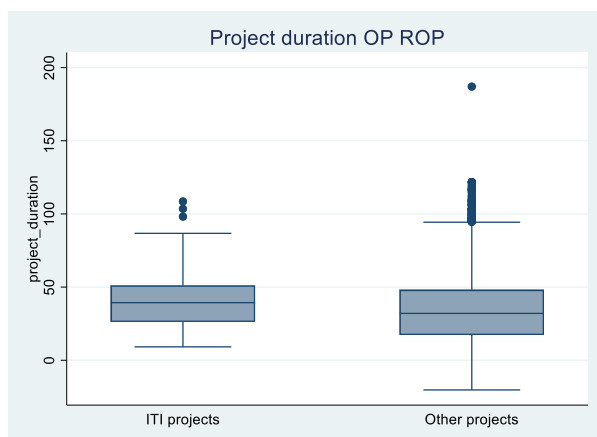
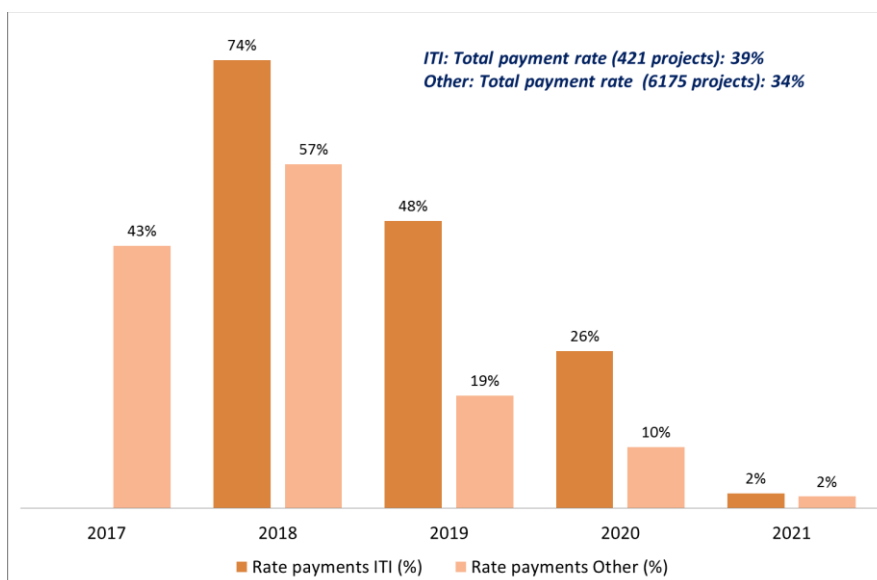


Figure ROP.4: Rate payments in axes with ITI projects, by date of contract signature



Note: Only axes with ITI projects

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021; MA list operations 30 Sept 2021.

Table ROP.9: Time schedule for ITI projects still in implementation

Year finalisation	Number projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Remaining (mill euro)
2020	2	2	1	0.3
2021	29	45	26	19
2022	136	185	51	134
2023	40	127	4	122
Total	207	358	83	275

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021.

Other ITI relevant projects in OP ROP – one project with wider coverage.

Other potentially relevant ITI projects in OP ROP – 3 projects with wider coverage.

Table ROP.10: Indicators used by ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	SIDD indicator	Programme indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with targets	Projects with extent to which target is met
Final energy consumption in renovated public buildings	result	YES		15	14	0
Travel time between localities Constanta, Braila, Galati	result	YES		6	6	0
Estimated level of CO2 emissions reduction	result	YES	YES	32	31	0
Renovated integrated centres for primary socio-medical assistance	output	YES		2	2	0
Renovated residential buildings	output	YES		8	8	0
Entities interested to participate in decision making and frequency	mixed?	YES		3	3	0
Individuals benefiting from medical assistance during last year	result	YES		2	2	0
Individuals benefiting from projects on good practices	result	YES		1	1	0
Number implemented projects	procedural	YES		420	420	138
Rehabilitated medical units	output	YES		3	3	0
Renovated public buildings	output	YES		15	15	0
Households with upgraded classification for energy consumption	result	YES		8	8	0
Enrollment rate in preschool/primary/secondary education in rural areas (% roma population)	result	YES		19	19	0
Monthly tourist arrivals (annual distribution)	result	YES		17	17	0

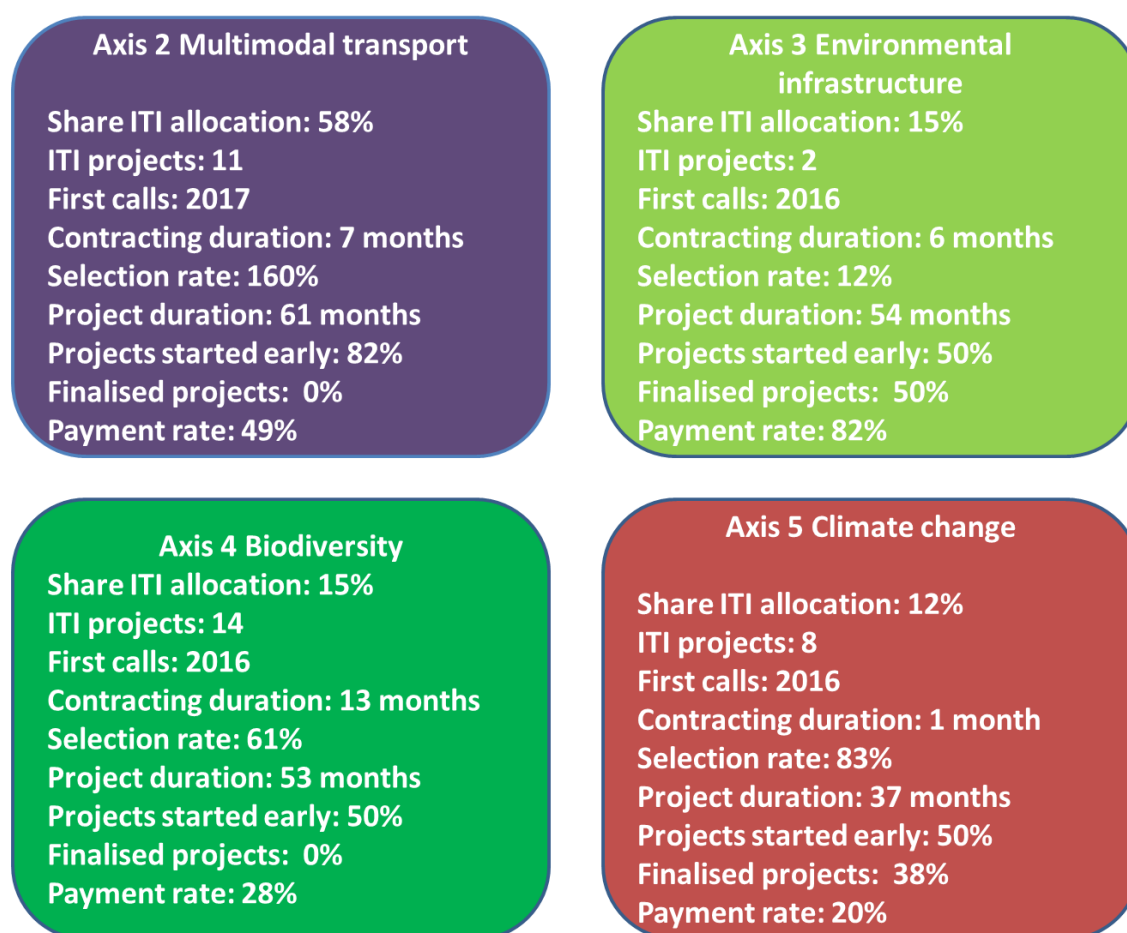
Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA files with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Large Infrastructure Operational Programme (LIOP)

Funds for OP LIOP – ERDF and Cohesion Fund.

Figure LIOP.1: Summary ITI implementation by priority axis



Source: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021

Table LIOP.1: Allocations for ITI investments over time

Axis	OP v1.3 (29 July 2015))			OP v4 (17 Dec 2018)			OP v7(2 Sept 2021)		
	Amount	EU rate	EU+National	Amount	EU rate	U+National	Amount	EU rate	EU+National
AP2 Multimodal transport	236	75%	315	236	85%	278	236	85%	278
AP3 Environmental infrastructure	60	85%	71	60	85%	71	60	85%	71
AP4 Biodiversity	60	85%	71	60	85%	71	60	85%	71
AP5 Climate change	48	85%	56	48	85%	56	48	85%	56
AP6 Renewable energy	4	85%	5	4	85%	5	0	85%	0
Total ITI allocation	404	83%	512	404	85%	480	404	85%	475

Source: OP LIOP, adopted versions

Table LIOP.2: Rates selection and payments for ITI investments by priority axis

Priority axis	Number projects	OP ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
AP2 Multimodal transport	11	278	444	160%	216	49%
AP3 Environmental infrastructure	2	71	8	12%	7	82%
AP4 Biodiversity	14	71	43	61%	12	28%
AP5 Climate change	8	56	47	83%	9	20%
Total	35	475	542	114%	245	45%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI allocations.

Sources: OP LIOP v7 (2021) for OP allocation, MA data on ITI projects end 2021.

Status ITI projects in OP LIOP: 4 finalized and 31 still in implementation

Table LIOP.3: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD Centre	2	18	2	9%
DD UAT	8	86	17	20%
DD Neighbourhood	2	14	11	77%
SIDD area	5	33	12	38%
Wider area	9	368	194	53%
National	9	24	9	38%
Total	35	542	245	45%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table LIOP.4: Type ITI investments

Type ITI investment	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
Braila bridge and feasibility studies (roads)	3	348	64%
Ports	6	82	15%
Protected areas and species	12	33	6%
Emergency services	6	21	4%
Airports	2	14	3%
Flood management	1	14	3%
Coastal erosion	1	12	2%
Management plan	2	10	2%
Waste treatment and disposal	1	7	1%
Strategy	1	2	0.3%
Total	35	542	100%

Note: Authors' classification of type ITI investments

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table LIOP.5: Type beneficiaries for ITI projects

Type beneficiary	ITI projects	Unique beneficiaries	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payment (%)
Public Organization	31	11	538	241	45%
Private Company	2	2	3	2	65%
NGOs	2	2	2	2	96%
Total	35	15	542	245	45%

Note: Authors' classification of type beneficiary.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table LIOP.6: Main public beneficiaries of ITI projects

Beneficiary	ITI projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
National Company for Road Infrastructure	3	348	65%
Judetul Tulcea	2	43	8%
Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration	7	35	6%
Free Zone Sulina Administration	2	31	6%
<i>Other beneficiaries</i>	17	81	15%
Total	31	538	100%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table LIOP.7: Projects calls for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Share closed calls	Range selection rate	Share 100% selection rate	Projects		Year when call launched (number calls)					
					All	ITI	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Priority Axis 2												
Calls with ITI projects	6	50%	50%-88%	0%	44	11		2	3	1		
Calls without ITI projects	13	38%	11%-100%	23%	54	0	1	10	2			
Priority Axis 3												
Calls with ITI projects	2	50%	91%-100%	50%	62	2	2					
Calls without ITI projects	4	50%	33%-100%	25%	58	0	2			1	1	
Priority Axis 4												
Calls with ITI projects	3	67%	32%-55%	0%	83	14	1	1		1		
Calls without ITI projects	3	67%	44%-100%	67%	16	0		1		1	1	
Priority Axis 5												
Calls with ITI projects	4	75%	86%-100%	75%	14	8	1		2	1		
Calls without ITI projects	2	50%	100%	100%	3	0		1	1			

Note: Only priority axes with ITI allocations

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

OP LIOP – national calls for ITI projects.

Table LIOP.7b: Examples of evaluation criteria for project selection (maximum scores), by axis

	Relevance and timeliness	Financial and administrative sustainability	Maturity and quality
Priority axis 2	20	20	60
Priority axis 3	20	20	60
Priority axis 4	40	20	40
Priority axis 5	20	20	60

Sources: Applicants' guides for 6 selected calls with ITI projects.

Table LIOP.8: Contracting and project duration for ITI projects by priority axis

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature (months)			Projects started before application		Total project duration (months)			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (%)
		Median	Min	Max	Number	%	Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)= % of (1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Priority Axis 2													
ITI projects	11	7	1	12	9	82%	61	24	105.67	33	6	59	0%
Projects other than ITI	87	8	0.5	29	55	63%	55	9	143.17	32	1	78	0%
Priority Axis 3													
ITI projects	2	6	2	11	1	50%	54	50	57	33	15	50	50%
Projects other than ITI	118	4	0.2	37	40	34%	56	16	121.7	50	9	86	8%
Priority Axis 4													
ITI projects	14	13	7	19	7	50%	53	32	88	37	25	52	0%
Projects other than ITI	85	12	3	26	29	34%	49	24	87	42	14	62	4%
Priority Axis 5													
ITI projects	8	1	0.3	6	4	50%	37	9	107.63	31	9	62	38%
Projects other than ITI	9	6	1	9	4	44%	36	17	67	31	16	42	11%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021; MA list operations, 30 Nov 2021; SMIS for dates applications and contract signature.

Figure LIOP.2: Distribution duration contract signature

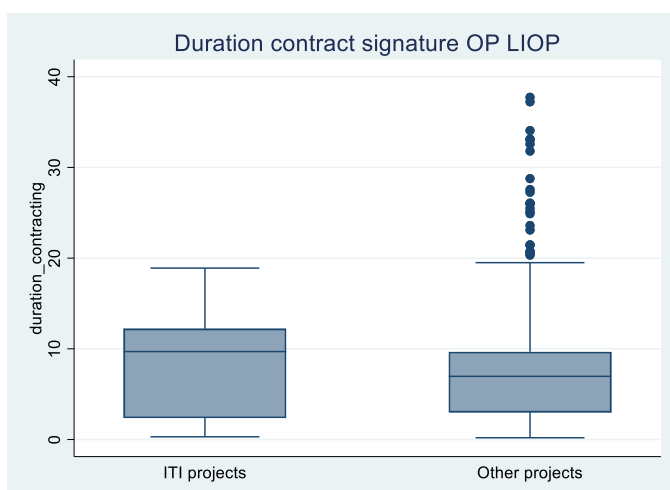


Figure LIOP.3: Distribution project duration

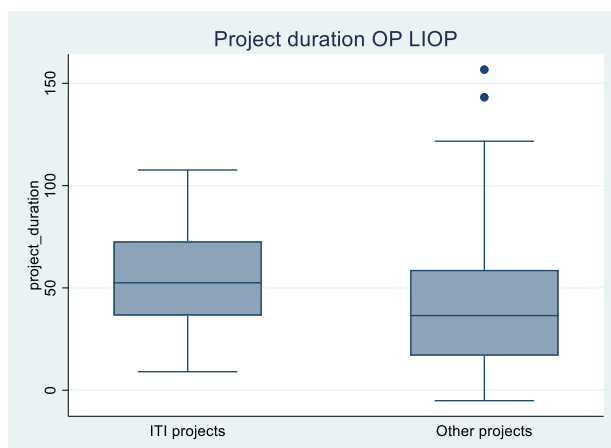
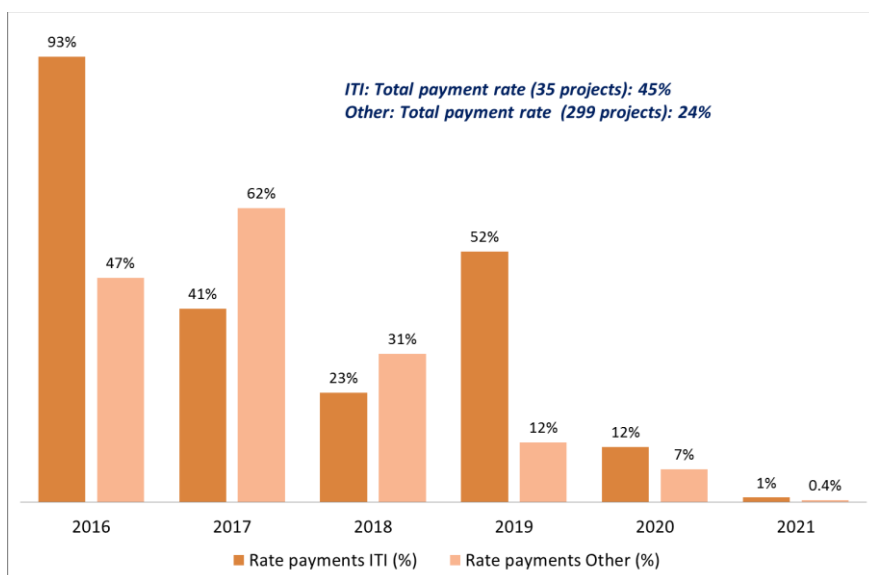


Figure LIOP.4: Rate payments for priority axes with ITI projects, by date of contract signature



Note: Only axes with ITI projects

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021; MA list operations 30 Nov 2021.

Table LIOP.9: Time schedule for ITI projects still in implementation

Year finalisation	Number projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Remaining (mill euro)
2020	1	1.11	1.10	0.00
2021	7	10	5	5
2022	9	68	23	45
2023	14	451	205	247
Total	31	531	234	297

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021.

Other ITI relevant projects in OP LIOP: 5 (1 in DD Centre, 2 in DD UAT, 1 wider area) – axes 1, 3, 4. + 1 project potentially relevant.

Table LIOP.10: Indicators used in ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	SIDD indicator	Programme indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with indicator target	Projects with extent to which target is met
Household waste collected and transported	result	YES		1	1	1
Travel time between Tulcea and Constanta, Braila, Galati	result	YES		2	1	0
Number legislative measures/initiatives for the management and use of RBDD resources	output	YES		4	4	0
Airport passengers	result	YES		1	1	0
Number implemented projects	procedural	YES		32	32	4
Management plan for RBDD - approved and upgraded during implementation period	output	YES		1	1	0
Management plans for other Natura 2000 sites in Danube Delta	output	YES		3	3	0
Surface of habitats supported for better conservation status	output	YES	YES	6	6	0
Average reaction time in emergency situations	result	YES	YES	5	5	3
Freight transported on waterways	result	YES		3	3	0

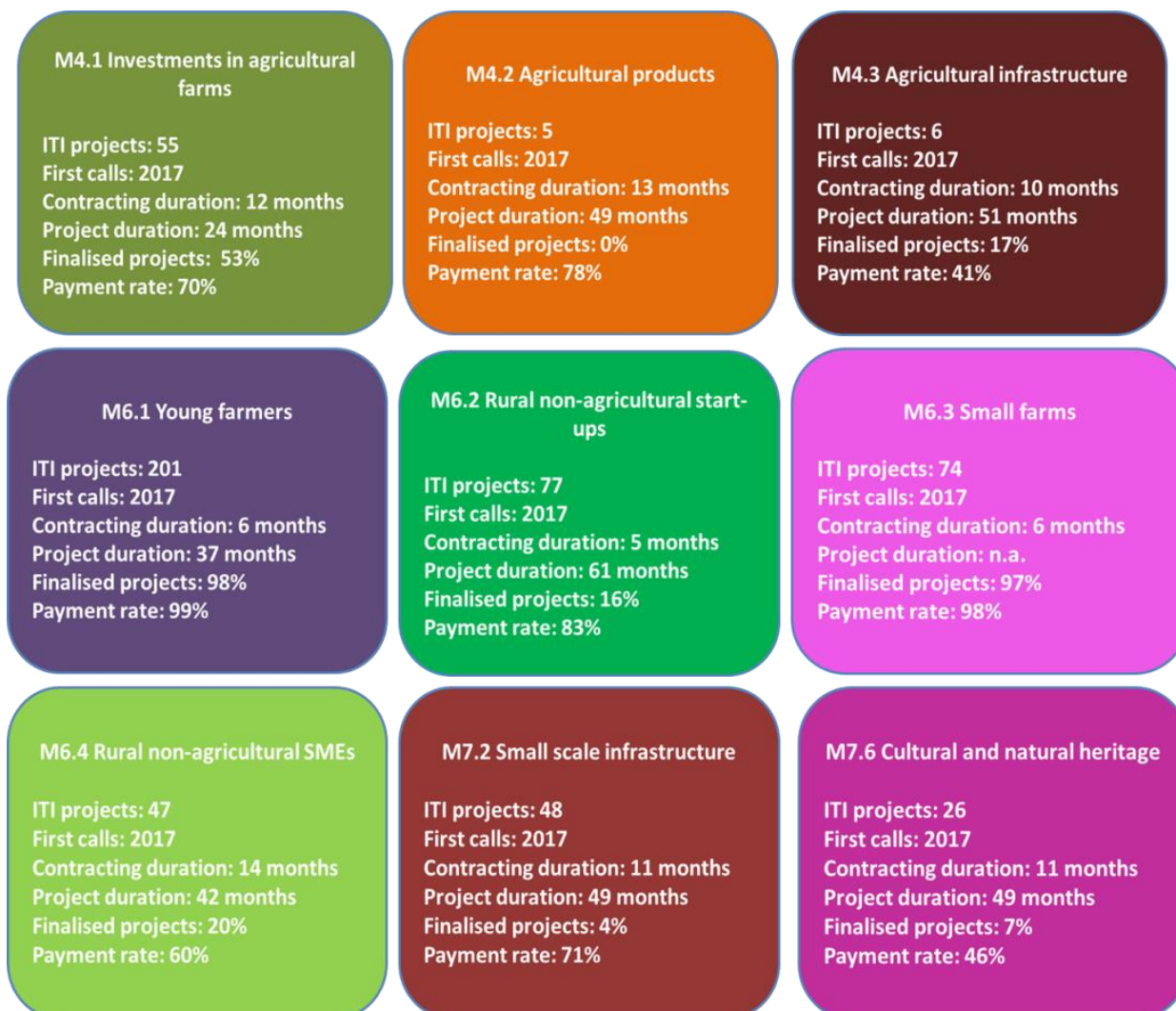
Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA file with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

National Rural Development Programme (NRDP)

Fund for OP NRDP – EAFRD

Figure NRDP.1: Summary ITI implementation by measure



Source: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Table NRDP.1: Rates selection and payments for ITI investments by measure

Sub-measure	Number ITI projects	ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
M4.1 Investments in agricultural farms	55	n.a.	26	n.a.	18	70%
M4.2 Processing and commercialisation of agricultural products	5		8		78%	
M4.3 Agricultural infrastructure	6		5		41%	
M6.1 Young farmers	201		8		99%	
M6.2 Rural non-agricultural start-ups	77		12		83%	
M6.3 Small farms	74		1		98%	
M6.4 Rural non-agricultural SMEs	47		8		60%	
M7.2 Small scale infrastructure	48		45		71%	
M7.6 Cultural and natural heritage	26		8		46%	
Total	539		168		121	72%

Notes: a) Measures with ITI allocations; b) n.a.=not available; c) 14 cancelled projects not included.

Sources: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Status ITI projects in OP NRDP: 329 (60%) finalized, 210 (37.5%) in implementation, 14 (2.5%) cancelled.

Table NRDP.2: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	ITI Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD Centre	35	9	7	74%
DD UAT	399	86	61	71%
DD Neighbourhood	105	26	18	72%
Total	539	121	86	71%

Source: MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

Table NRDP.3: Type ITI investments

Type ITI investment	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
Local roads	29	28	23%
Water and wastewater	11	14	12%
New production capacity	7	12	10%
Agrotourism accommodation	105	12	10%
New farms	46	11	9%
Farm modernisation	95	8	7%
Modernisation community centres	23	7	6%
Irrigation	7	7	6%
Other (various)	216	22	18%
Total	539	121	100%

Note: Authors' classification of type ITI investments

Source: MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

Table NRDP.4: Type beneficiaries for ITI projects

Type beneficiary	ITI projects	Unique beneficiaries	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payment (%)
Individuals	359	354	32	25	80%
Public organisations	79	34	59	40	67%
Private companies	92	89	23	15	65%
Other	9	7	7	6	87%
Total	539	484	121	86	71%

Note: Authors' classification of type beneficiary.

Source: MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

Concentration of funding: 22 public beneficiaries with 81% of the financing for this category.

Table NRDP.6: Project calls for measures with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Range selection rate	Share 100% selection rate	Projects selected		Year when call launched (number calls)							
				All	ITI	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Measure 4.1													
Calls with ITI projects	2	38%; 89%	0%	58	58			2					
Calls without ITI projects	9	0%-71%	0%	1802	0	1	2	3	1	1			1
Measure 4.2													
Calls with ITI projects	1	86%	0%	6	6			1					
Calls without ITI projects	11	0%-85%	0%	1066	0		4	2	2	1			2
Measure 4.3													
Calls with ITI projects	2	100%	100%	6	6			2					
Calls without ITI projects	5	0%-88%	0%	322	0		1	2		1			1
Measure 6.1													
Calls with ITI projects	1	87%	0%	201	201			1					
Calls without ITI projects	7	7%-100%	14%	10326	0	1	1	1	2				2
Measure 6.2													
Calls with ITI projects	3	30%-100%	33%	81	81			2	1				
Calls without ITI projects	8	0%-96%	0%	609	0			2		3	2		1
Measure 6.3													
Calls with ITI projects	1	87%	0%	76	75			1					
Calls without ITI projects	3	21%-82%	0%	8464	0		1	1					1
Measure 6.4													
Calls with ITI projects	2	52%; 54%	0%	49	50			1	1				
Calls without ITI projects	12	0%-75%	0%	378	0		4	3		2			3
Measure 7.2													
Calls with ITI projects	2	89%-100%	50%	49	49			1		1			
Calls without ITI projects	21	0%-100%	5%	11308	0	8	4	3	2	1	2		1
Measure 7.6													
Calls with ITI projects	2	100%	100%	27	27			1		1			
Calls without ITI projects	3	64%-93%	0%	659	0	1	1	1					

Note: Only measures with ITI allocations. Components of a project are counted as projects.

Source: MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021; AFIR mid Dec 2021 for all operations.

All calls for ITI projects for NRDP are ITI specific.

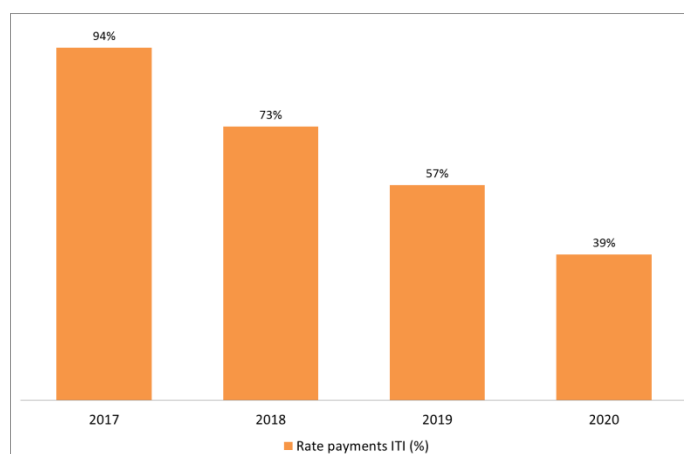
Table NRDP.7: Contracting and project duration for ITI projects by measure

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (8)=% of (1)
		Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	
Measure 4.1								
ITI projects	58	12	5	35	24	24	61	53%
Measure 4.2								
ITI projects	6	13	8	17	49	37	55	0%
Measure 4.3								
ITI projects	6	10	10	13	51	49	55	17%
Measure 6.1								
ITI projects	201	6	4	11	37	20	45	98%
Measure 6.2								
ITI projects	81	5	1	15	61	37	62	16%
Measure 6.3								
ITI projects	75	6	3	8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	97%
Measure 6.4								
ITI projects	50	14	7	28	43	24	54	20%
Measure 7.2								
ITI projects	49	11	5	17	49	37	61	4%
Measure 7.6								
ITI projects	27	11	9	16	49	37	55	7%

Notes: a) Only priority axes with ITI projects; b) Data not available for non-ITI projects.

Source: MA list operations, 31 Dec 2021.

Figure NRDP.4: Rate payments for ITI projects, by date of contract signature



Notes: a) ITI projects cancelled not included; b) Data for contract signature not available for non-ITI projects.

Source: MA list operations, 31 Dec 2021.

Table NRDP.8: Time schedule for the ITI projects still in implementation

Year finalisation	Number projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Remaining (mill euro)
2020	7	1.68	1.66	0.02
2021	8	2	1	1
2022	147	72	47	24
2023	47	20	12	9
Total	209	96	62	34

Source: MA list operations, 31 Dec 2021.

Table NRDP.9a: Other ITI relevant projects by project location

Location project	Projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD Centre	31	2	2	90%
DD Neighbourhood	164	13	11	84%
DD UAT	418	50	39	77%
Total	613	65	51	79%

Note: cancelled projects not included

Source: AFIR mid Dec 2021.

Table NRDP.9b: Other ITI relevant projects by measure

Measure	Projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
M4.1	72	24	20	85%
M4.2	7	9	5	52%
M4.3	8	8	4	46%
M5.1	4	0.16	0.02	10%
M6.1	224	9	9	96%
M6.2	66	4	4	94%
M6.3	197	3	3	96%
M6.4	21	3	3	88%
M7.2	5	3	3	100%
M7.6	4	1	1	91%
M16.4	5	0.46	0.29	63%
Total	613	65	51	79%

Note: cancelled projects not included

Source: AFIR mid Dec 2021.

Other relevant projects: 124 (26%) beneficiaries of ITI projects also have ITI relevant projects.

Table NRDP.10: Indicators used in ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with indicator target	Projects with extent to which target is met
% farmers who opened a non-agricultural activity	output	113	113	8
% projects for cultural heritage in the area	output	26	26	0
% modernised rural infrastructure	output	62	62	2
Average expenditure per tourist in one holiday	result	1	1	0
Average duration of stay (nights)	result	3	3	0
Travel time between Tulcea and Constanta, Braila, Galati	result	2	0	n.a.
Satisfaction of visitors	result	1	1	0
Return of visitors (%)	result	1	1	0
Number rehabilitated/maintained traditional houses included in touristic circuit	result	40	40	1
Farmers/ associations with access to promotional networks	output	209	209	152
Inhabitants working in tourism	result	61	2	1
Participants to educational programmes	output	208	208	182
Number implemented projects	procedural	541	541	322
Number and weight of jobs in tourism	result	75	75	3
Share of wastewater treated properly (%)	result	11	11	0
Share of irrigation infrastructure rehabilitated	output	7	7	0
Share of population to centralised water networks	result	11	11	0
Share of population to centralised wastewater networks	result	11	11	0
Share accommodation places opened throughout the year	output	1	0	n.a.
Share of local products and services	result	12	12	0
Annual rate of children in pre-school education	result	1	0	n.a.
Share of roma enrolled in education (%)	result	6	2	0
Occupancy rate in official accommodation	result	2	2	0
Share revenues generated from tourism in local economy	result	4	4	n.a.

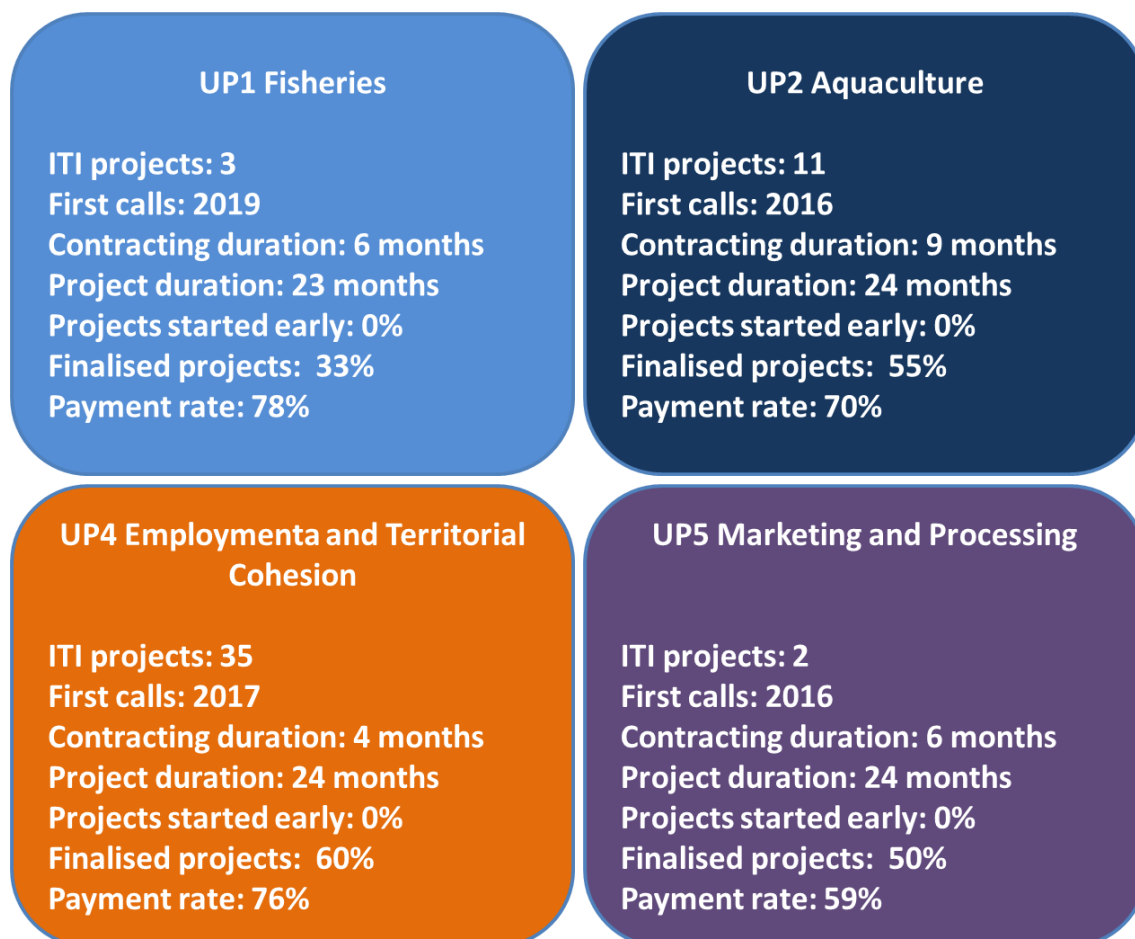
Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA file with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Operational Programme (FMAOP)

Fund for FMAOP – EMFF

Figure FMAOP.1: Summary ITI implementation by union priority



Source: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021

Table FMAOP.1: Rates selection and payments for ITI investments by union priority

Union Priority	Number ITI projects	ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
UP1 Fisheries	3	n.a.	2	n.a.	1	78%
UP2 Aquaculture	11		13		9	70%
UP4 Employment and Territorial Cohesion	35		7		5	76%
UP5 Marketing and Processing	2		1		0.5	59%
Total	51	49	23	46%	16	72%

Note: a) Only union priorities with ITI allocations; b) 14 ITI projects cancelled not included.

Sources: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Status ITI projects in OP LIOP: 29 finalized (45%); 22 (34%) still in implementation; 14 (21%) cancelled.

Table FMAOP.2: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	ITI Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD Centre	22	12	7	59%
DD Centre, DD UAT	1	1	1	99%
DD UAT	28	10	8	85%
Total	51	23	16	72%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table FMAOP.3: Type ITI investments

Type ITI investment	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
SME support	20	16	68%
Local development plan	1	2	8%
Transport	12	2	7%
Public service	2	1	6%
Leisure	3	1	4%
Emergency services	5	1	3%
Water and wastewater	1	0.3	1%
Street lights	4	0.2	1%
Health	1	0.2	1%
Culture	1	0.2	1%
Church	1	0.02	0.1%
Total	51	23	100%

Note: Authors' classification of type ITI investments

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table FMAOP.4: Type beneficiaries for ITI projects

Type beneficiary	ITI projects	Unique beneficiaries	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payment (%)
Public Organization	19	11	3	2	67%
Private Company	28	24	16	12	72%
NGO	4	4	3	3	77%
Total	51	39	23	16	72%

Note: Authors' classification of type beneficiary.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Main public beneficiaries of ITI projects in FMAOP – 7 public beneficiaries have 87% of project selection in 14 projects. Main private beneficiaries of ITI projects in FMAOP – 7 private beneficiaries have 83% of project selection in 11 projects.

Table FMAOP.6a: Project calls for union priorities with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Share closed calls	Range selection rate	Share 100% selection rate	Projects selected		Year when call launched (number calls)						
					All	ITI	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Union Priority 1													
Calls with ITI projects	1	100%	86%	0%	6	4					1		
Calls without ITI projects	4	100%	44%-100%	75%	12	0			2	1			1
Union Priority 2													
Calls with ITI projects	6	100%	29%-65%	0%	130	15	1	1	2		2		
Calls without ITI projects	15	100%	50%-100%	47%	87	0	1	5	6	1	1		1
Union Priority 4													
Calls with ITI projects	7	86%	89%-100%	71%	58	43		1			4	1	1
Calls without ITI projects	135	100%	9%-100%	76%	283	0		3	18	78	36		
Union Priority 5													
Calls with ITI projects	3	100%	67%-100%	33%	15	3	1	1			1		
Calls without ITI projects	4	100%	25%-100%	25%	5	0	1		3				

Note: Only union priorities with ITI allocations

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

Table FMAOP.6b: Examples of evaluation criteria for project selection (maximum scores), by union priority

	Union Priority 1	Union Priority 2	Union Priority 4	Union Priority 5
Contribution to the measure	40	30	25	
Investment per tonne		20	10	13
Income diversification		15		
Increased turnover		15		
Job creation	20	5		7
Co-financing capacity			20	10
Increased processing capacity			45	25
Fishermen in the project area	17			
Increased land production	13			
Collection of marine litter	10			
Energy savings and environmental protection				14
Indigenous raw materials used				13
Product diversification				12
Organic aquaculture				6

Source: Applicants' guides for 10 selected calls with ITI projects.

Mixed calls for ITI in FMAOP.

Table FMAOP.7: Contracting and project duration for projects, by union priority

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature (months)			Projects started before application		Total project duration (months)			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (%)
		Median	Min	Max	Number	%	Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)= % of (1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)=% of (1)
Union Priority 1													
ITI projects	3	6	4	7	0	0%	23	18	24	23	18	24	33%
Projects other than ITI	12	4	3	7	0	0%	24	12	26	12	3	24	75%
Union Priority 2													
ITI projects	11	9	7	11	0	0%	24	19	24	21	6	24	55%
Projects other than ITI	183	7	0.0	15	2	1%	24	12	44	16	2	37	47%
Union Priority 4													
ITI projects	35	4	0.4	9	0	0%	24	12	39	21	3	77	60%
Projects other than ITI	278	5	0.1	21	6	2%	21	3	40	18	2	77	43%
Union Priority 5													
ITI projects	2	6	4	9	0	0%	24	24	24	23	23	24	50%
Projects other than ITI	16	7	2	17	0	0%	24	12	27	23	2	26	63%

Note: a) Only union priorities with ITI projects; b) Only projects with available data included; c) Cancelled projects not included.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021; MA list operations, 17 Dec 2021; SMIS for dates applications and contract signature.

Figure FMAOP.2: Distribution duration contract signature

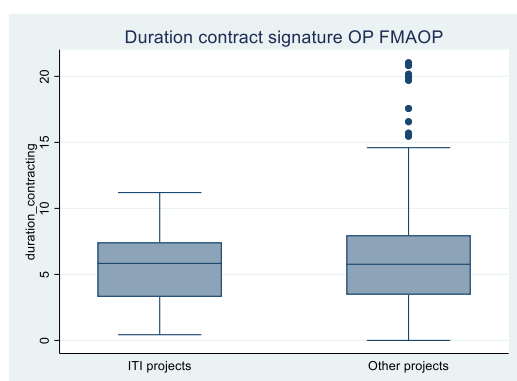


Figure FMAOP.3: Distribution project duration

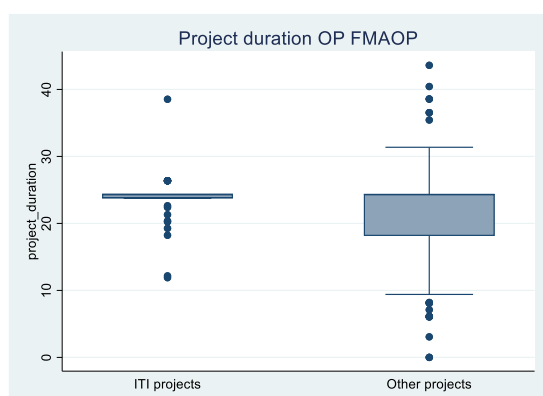
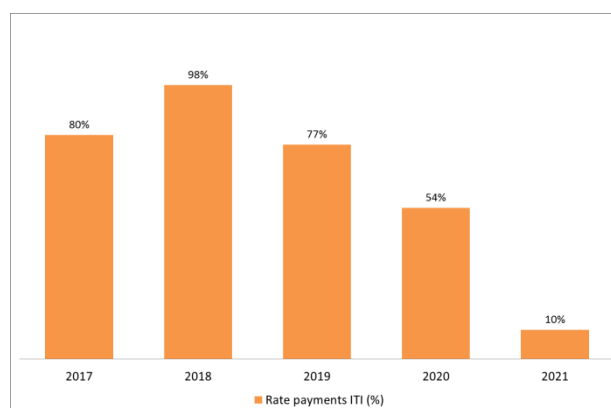


Figure FMAOP.4: Rate payments for union priorities with ITI projects, by date of contract signature



Note: a) Only union priorities with ITI projects; b) Payments to beneficiaries not available for non-ITI projects.
Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021.

Table FMAOP.8: Time schedule for the ITI projects still in implementation

Year finalisation	Number projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Remaining (mill euro)
2021	9	6	3	3
2022	6	4	2	2
2023	7	2	1	1
Total	22	12	6	6

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021.

Table FMAOP.9a: Other ITI relevant projects, by location

Location project	Projects	Project selection (mill euro)
DD Centre	7	2
DD Neighbourhood	2	0.3
DD UAT	4	1
Total	13	3

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted and their location by 30 Sept 2021.

Table FMAOP.9b: Other ITI relevant projects, by union priority

Union Priority	Projects	Project selection (mill euro)
Union Priority 1	1	0.1
Union Priority 2	9	3
Union Priority 4	2	0.3
Union Priority 5	1	0.2
Total	13	3

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021.

Table FMAOP.9c: Other projects potentially relevant for SIDD, by location

Location project	Projects	Project selection (mill euro)
DD Centre	2	1
DD Neighbourhood	1	0.03
DD UAT	5	2
Wider projects	5	1
Total	13	5

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted and their location by 30 Sept 2021.

Table FMAOP.9d: Other projects potentially relevant for SIDD, by union priority

Union Priority	Projects	Project selection (mill euro)
Union Priority 1	1	0.2
Union Priority 2	6	4
Union Priority 4	6	1
Total	13	5

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021.

Table FMAOP.10: Indicators used in ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	SIDD indicator	Programme indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with target value	Projects with extent to which target is met
Number projects in aquaculture	procedural	YES		19	19	5
Number implemented projects	procedural	YES		58	58	21
New jobs in fisheries	result	YES	YES	52	52	6
Jobs maintained in fisheries	result	YES	YES	9	9	4

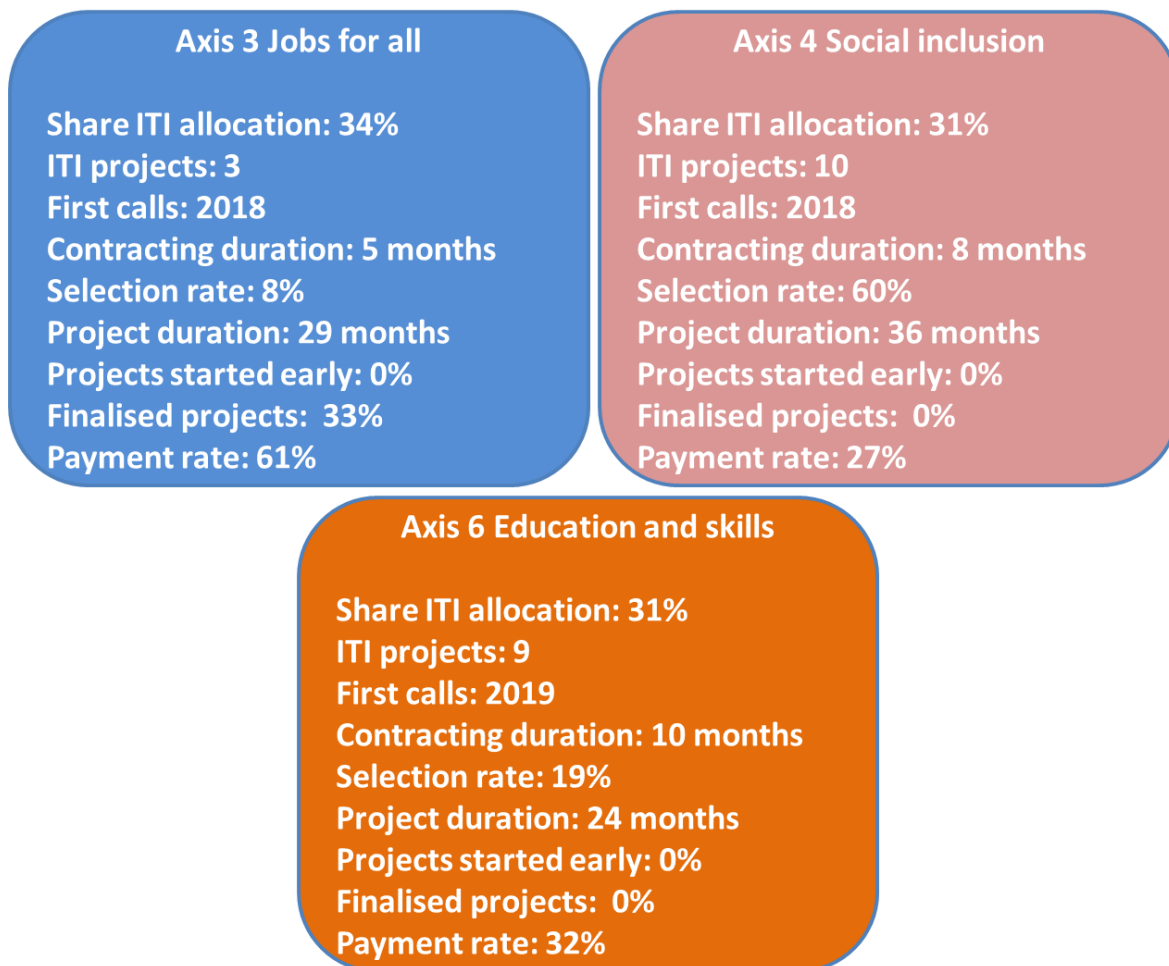
Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA file with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP)

Funds for HCOP – ESF and YEI.

Figure HCOP.1: Summary ITI implementation by priority axis



Sources: SMIS, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021

Table HCOP.1: Allocations for ITI investments in over time

Axis	OP version 1.4 (Feb 2015)			OP version 4 (Sept 2018)			OP version 10 (Dec 2020)		
	Amount	EU rate	EU+National	Amount	EU rate	EU+National	Amount	EU rate	EU+National
AP1 Jobs for young people	2	92%	2	3	92%	3	3	91.89%	3
AP3 Jobs for all	18	85%	21	18	80%	23	21	85%	24
AP4 Social inclusion	20	85%	24	20	85%	24	19	85%	22
AP6 Education and skills	20	85%	24	20	85%	24	19	85%	22
Total ITI allocation	60	87%	70	61	85%	73	61	87%	72

Source: HCOP, adopted versions

Table HCOP.2: Rates selection and payments for ITI investments by priority axis

Priority axis	Number ITI projects	ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
AP1 Jobs for young people	0	3	0	0%	0	n.a.
AP3 Jobs for all	3	24	2	8%	1	61%
AP4 Social inclusion	10	22	13	60%	4	27%
AP6 Education and skills	9	22	4	19%	1	32%
Total	22	72	19	27%	6	31%

Notes: a) Only priority axes with ITI allocations; b) n.a.=not applicable

Sources: HCOP v10 (2020) for OP allocations, MA data on ITI projects end 2021.

Status ITI projects in HCOP: 1 finalized and 21 still in implementation.

Table HCOP.3: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	ITI Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD UAT	13	15	4	28%
Wider projects	9	5	2	42%
Total	22	19	6	70%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table HCOP.4: Type ITI investments

Type ITI investment	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
Support for unemployed	5	8	43%
Smart specialisation	10	5	26%
Elderly care	6	3	17%
Education	1	3	14%
Total	22	19	100%

Note: Authors' classification of type ITI investments

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table HCOP.5: Type beneficiaries for ITI projects

Type beneficiary	ITI projects	Unique beneficiaries	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payment (%)
Public Organization	5	4	6	1	17%
Private Company	4	4	2	1	57%
NGO	13	12	11	4	34%
Total	22	20	19	6	31%

Note: Authors' classification of type beneficiary.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Main public beneficiary – Municipiul Tulcea, with 74% of the public project selection in 2 projects.

Main NGOs – five organisations with 71% of the project selection for this category.

Table HCOP.6a: Project calls for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Share closed calls	Range selection	Share 100%	Projects selected		Year when call launched (number calls)					
					All	ITI	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Priority Axis 3												
Calls with ITI projects	2	100%	29%; 54%	0%	45	3			2			
Calls without ITI projects	21	100%	25%-100%	33%	435	0	2	5	7	3	4	
Priority Axis 4												
Calls with ITI projects	2	100%	56%; 86%	0%	10	10			1	1		
Calls without ITI projects	44	100%	1.05%-100%	50%	455	0	4	6	15	8	11	
Priority Axis 6												
Calls with ITI projects	1	100%	75%	0%	9	9				1		
Calls without ITI projects	24	100%	32%-100%	38%	820	0	3	1	7	9	3	1

Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

General calls for Axis 3, and ITI specific calls for Axes 4 and 6.

Table HCOP.6b: Examples of evaluation criteria for project selection (maximum scores), by priority axis

	Relevance	Cost efficiency	Efficacy	Sustainability
Priority axis 3	30	30	30	10
Priority axis 4	30	30	30	10
Priority axis 5	30	30	30	10

Source: Applicants' guides for 4 selected calls with ITI projects.

Table HCOP.7: Contracting and project duration for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature (months)			Projects started before application		Total project duration (months)			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (%)
		Median	Min	Max	Number	%	Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)= % of (1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)=% of (1)
Priority Axis 3													
ITI projects	3	5	5	9	0	0%	29	23	32	29	23	32	33%
Projects other than ITI	470	9	1	18	4	0%	26	5	101	27	10	55	86%
Priority Axis 4													
ITI projects	10	8	7	9	0	0%	36	30	42	37	30	42	0%
Projects other than ITI	440	8	0.2	18	2	0%	40	6	120	40	6	68	31%
Priority Axis 6													
ITI projects	9	10	8	14	0	0%	24	24	30	24	24	30	0%
Projects other than ITI	815	13	0.2	26	1	0%	26	11	61	26	8	61	26%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021; MA list operations, 31 Dec 2021; SMIS for dates applications and contract signature.

Figure HCOP.2: Distribution duration contract signature

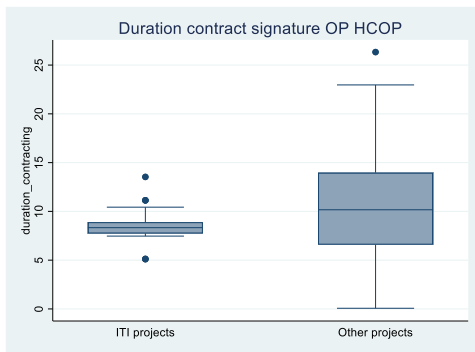


Figure HCOP.2: Distribution project duration

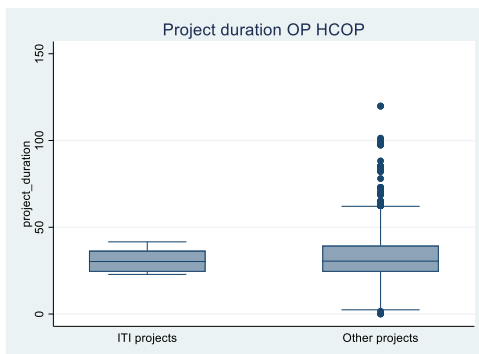
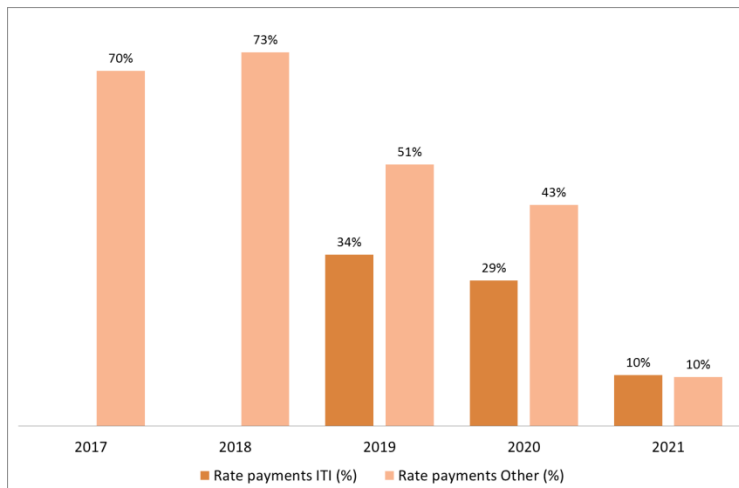


Figure HCOP.3: Rate payments for priority axes with ITI projects, by date of contract signature



Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021; MA list operations 31 Dec 2021.

Table HCOP.8: Time schedule for the ITI projects still in implementation

Year finalisation	Number projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Remaining (mill euro)
2021	1	0.50	0.36	0.1
2022	15	16	5	11
2023	5	3	0.4	2
Total	21	19	5	13

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021.

Other ITI relevant projects in HCOP: 7 DD UAT, 6 with larger coverage (in SIDD area or national); in priority axes 4 and 6.

Table HCOP.9a: Other potentially ITI relevant projects, by location

Location project	Projects
DD UAT	8
DD Neighbourhood	1
Wider projects	35
Total	44

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021.

Table HCOP.9b: Other potentially ITI relevant projects, by priority axis

Priority axis	Projects
Priority axis 3	31
Priority axis 4	4
Priority axis 5	2
Priority axis 6	3
Priority axis 7	4
Total	44

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021.

Table HCOP.10: Indicators used in ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	SIDD indicator	Programme indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with target value	Projects with extent to which target is met
Household waste collected and transported	result	YES		1	0	0
Employees benefiting from training for skills	result	YES		1	1	1
Renovated integrated centres for primary socio-medical assistance	output	YES		3	3	0
Children/young/adults completing the "Second chance" programme	result	YES	YES	7	7	0
Children enrolled in complementary education (after school, summer school etc)	result	YES		6	6	0
Children enrolled in childcare from disadvantaged groups	result	YES		3	3	0
Number kindergardens and other educational services for children under 6 years of age from disadvantaged groups	output	YES		1	1	0
Inhabitants working in tourism	result	YES		1	1	1
Inhabitants and visitors enrolled in educational programmes for waste management	output	YES		2	2	0
Students/ pupils supported to make the transition from school to active life	output	YES		3	3	0
Roma students/ trainees supported to participate in education	output	YES	YES	12	12	0
Individuals benefiting from primary medical assistance during last year	result	YES		8	8	0
Individuals benefiting from projects on property rights	result			2	1	0
Individuals benefiting from projects on good practices	result	YES		15	15	2
Number of projects implemented in the Danube Delta	procedural	YES		22	22	1
Entities (schools, NGOs) implementing complementary education	output	YES		7	7	2
Annual rate of children integrated in preschool education	result	YES		1	1	0
Annual rate of school leavers (%)	result	YES		1	1	0
Rate enrollment in education of roma population	result	YES		2	2	0

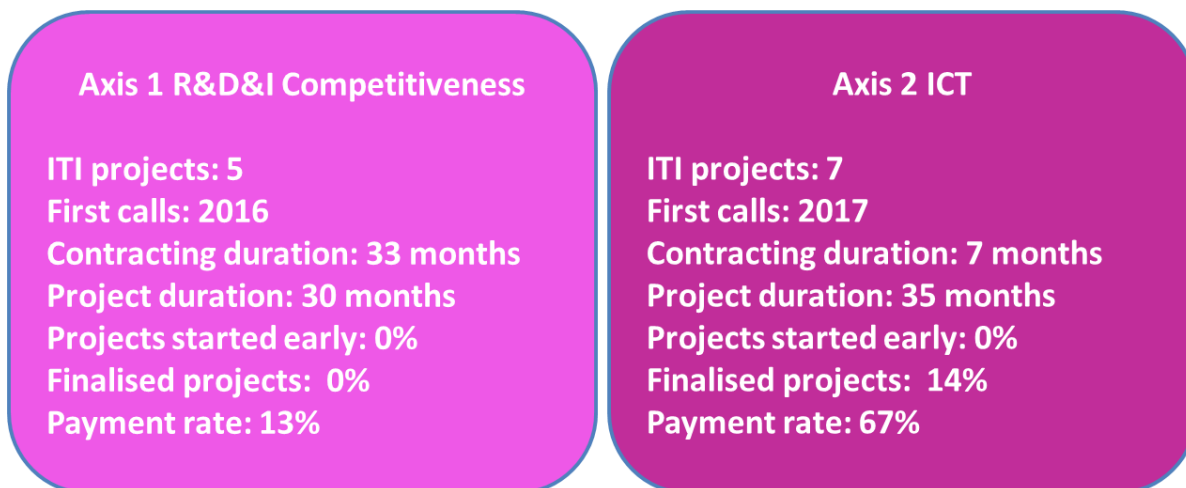
Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA file with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Competitiveness Operational Programme (COP)

Fund for OP COP – ERDF.

Figure COP.1: Summary ITI implementation by priority axis



Source: MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021

Table COP.1: Rates of selection and payments for ITI investments by priority axis

Priority axis	Number projects	ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
AP1 R&D&I for Competitiveness	5	40	17	42%	2	13%
AP2 ICT	7	20	2	9%	1	67%
Total	12	60	19	31%	3	18%

Note: One project selected and cancelled not included.

Sources: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 30 Dec 2021.

Table COP.2: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD UAT	2	4	1	23%
DD Neighbourhood	2	0.2	0.04	25%
SIDD area	1	5	0.02	0%
Wider area	5	9	2	20%
National	2	1	0.4	74%
Total	12	19	3	18%

Note: One project selected and cancelled not included.

Sources: SMIS online for projects contracted and project location 30 Sept 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 30 Dec 2021.

Table COP.3: Type ITI investments

Type ITI investment	Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	% in total
DANUBIUS RI	1	5	25%
SME support	2	7	39%
Digitalisation	3	4	23%
Broadband	1	1	4%
Cultural heritage	1	0.5	2%
ICT	3	0.3	1%
Various	1	1	5%
Total	12	19	100%

Note: Authors' classification of type ITI investments

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Table COP.4: Type beneficiaries for ITI projects

Type beneficiary	ITI projects	Unique beneficiaries	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payment (%)
Public Organization	8	6	6	1	24%
Private Company	4	4	12	2	15%
Total	12	10	19	3	18%

Note: Authors' classification of type beneficiaries.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

Main public beneficiaries – the National Institute for R&D in Biological Sciences – 86% of all ITI selection for public organisations for 2 projects.

Table COP.6a: Project calls for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Share closed calls	Range selection	Share 100% selection rate	Projects selected		Year when call launched (number calls)					
					All	ITI	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Priority Axis 1												
Calls with ITI projects	3	100%	31%-100%	67%	45	6	1	1			1	
Calls without ITI projects	23	100%	21%-100%	39%	335	0	16	3	4			
Priority Axis 2												
Calls with ITI projects	4	100%	24%-100%	25%	491	7		1	2		1	
Calls without ITI projects	12	67%	13%-100%	50%	242	0	3	2	4	1	2	

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

General and mixed calls for OP COP.

Table COP.6b: Examples of evaluation criteria for project selection (range scores), by priority axis

	Relevance and timeliness	Maturity and quality	Financial and administrative sustainability
Priority axis 1	40	30	30
Priority axis 2	15-40	20-85	20-30

Source: Applicants' guides for 5 selected calls with ITI projects.

Table COP.7: Contracting and project duration for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature (months)			Projects started before application		Total project duration (months)			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (%)
		Median	Min	Max	Number	%	Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)= % of (1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Priority Axis 1													
ITI projects	5	33	5	51	0	0%	30	0.1	36	29	0.1	36	0%
Projects other than ITI	359	12	0.03	51	172	48%	30	12	89	28	2	78	44%
Priority Axis 2													
Calls with ITI projects	7	7	1	9	0	0%	35	7	43	36	7	43	14%
Calls without ITI projects	702	8	0.03	19	92	13%	12	3	68	12	3	68	16%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects.

Source: SMIS online for list of projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021; MA list operations, mid-Nov 2021; SMIS for dates applications and contract signature.

Figure COP.2: Distribution duration contract signature

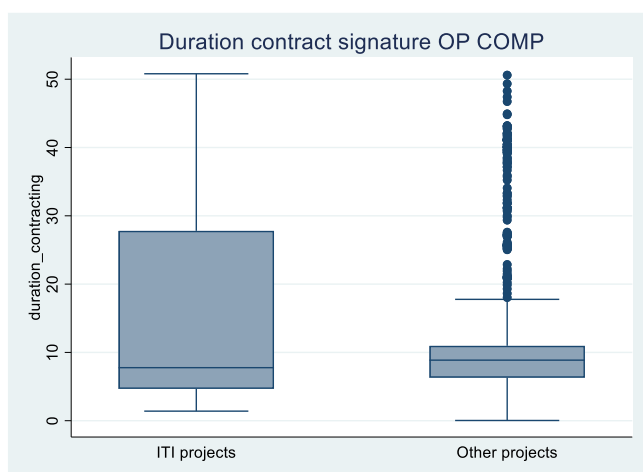
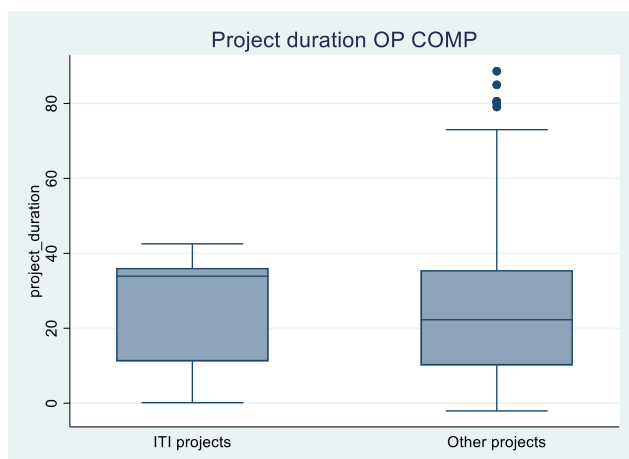


Figure COP.3: Distribution project duration



Rate of payments for beneficiaries for all operations are not reported by the MA in the list of operations. Payments are reported in separate files but not in a format comparable with the other OPs.

Table COP.8: Time schedule for the ITI projects still in implementation

Year finalisation	Number projects	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Remaining (mill euro)
2021	4	2	1	1
2022	3	5	1	4
2023	4	11	1	10
Total	11	18	3	15

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021.

Table COP.9: Other ITI relevant projects

LocationInvestment	Projects
DD Centre, Outside SIDD	1
DD UAT	2
National	5
Total	8

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021 and project location.

+ 1 more project potentially relevant for SIDD.

Table COP.10: Indicators used in ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	SIDD indicator	Programme indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with indicator target	Projects with extent to which target is met
Coverage / availability of NGA broadband	result	YES	YES	1	1	0
Population regular use of internet	result	YES	YES	1	0	0
Institutions and local and international researchers involved in research relevant for the Danube Delta	output	YES		1	0	0
Number of implemented projects in the Danube Delta	procedural	YES		8	8	0
Number of schools using OER, WEB2.0 in education	result	YES	YES	2	0	0

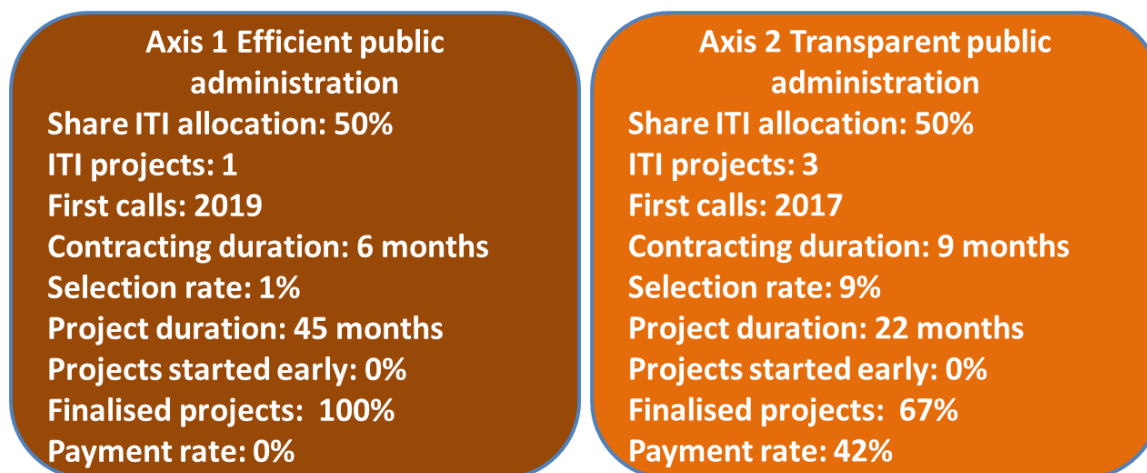
Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA file with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Administrative Capacity Operational Programme (ACOP)

Fund for ACOP – ESF.

Figure ACOP.1: Summary ITI implementation by priority axis



Sources: SMIS, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021

Table ACOP.1: Allocations for ITI investments over time

Priority Axis	OP version 1.2 (Jan 2015)			OP version 2 (Mar 2017)			OP version 3.1 (Aug 2020)		
	Amount	EU rate	EU+National	Amount	EU rate	EU+National	Amount	EU rate	EU+National
AP1 Efficient public administration and justice system	8	85%	9	8	85%	9	8	85%	9
AP2 Transparent and accessible public administration and justice system	8	85%	9	8	85%	9	8	85%	9
Total ITI	16	85%	19	16	85%	19	16	85%	19

Source: ACOP, adopted versions

Table ACOP.2: Rates selection and payments for ITI investments by priority axis⁴⁷

Priority axis	Number ITI projects	ITI allocation (mill euro)	ITI selection (mill euro)	Rate selection (%)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Payment rate (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=(3)/(2)	(5)	(6)=(5)/(3)
AP1 Efficient public administration and justice system	1	9	0.1	1%	0.0	0%
AP2 Transparent and accessible public administration and justice system	3	9	0.8	9%	0.3	42%
Total	4	18	0.9	5%	0.3	37%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI allocations.

Sources: ACOP v3.1 (2020) for OP allocation, MA data on ITI projects end 2021.

Status ITI projects in ACOP: 3 finalized and 1 still in implementation

⁴⁷ According to the MA data, 2 other projects partially financed from the ITI allocation were selected during the period 31 September 2021 - mid February 2022.

Table ACOP.3: Location ITI investments

Location ITI project	ITI Projects	ITI selection (mill euro)	ITI payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)
DD UAT	3	0.78	0.33	42%
National	1	0.11	0.00	0%
Total	4	0.89	0.33	37%

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted and project location, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, end 2021.

All beneficiaries of ITI projects in ACOP are public organizations.

Table ACOP.6: Project calls for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project call	Number calls	Share closed calls	Range selection	Share 100% selection rate	Projects selected		Year when call launched (number calls)						
					All	ITI	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Priority Axis 1													
Calls with ITI projects	1	100%	78%	0%	40	1					1		
Calls without ITI projects	17	100%	42%-100%	71%	225	0		7	3		4	2	1
Priority Axis 2													
Calls with ITI projects	3	100%	77%-83%	0%	107	3		2	1				
Calls without ITI projects	19	100%	2%-100%	37%	214	0		8	7		2	1	1

Note: Only priority axes with ITI allocations

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021.

Table ACOP.6b: Evaluation criteria for project selection (maximum scores), by priority axis

	Relevance and timeliness	Implementation methodology	Cost efficiency	Sustainability
Priority axis 1	36	34	24	6
Priority axis 2	36	34	24	6

Source: Applicants' guides for 4 calls with ITI projects.

General calls for ACOP.

Table ACOP.7: Contracting and project duration for priority axes with ITI projects

Type project	Number projects	Duration contract signature (months)			Projects started before application		Total project duration (months)			Duration operation (months)			Finalised projects (%)
		Median	Min	Max	Number	%	Median	Min	Max	Median	Min	Max	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)= % of (1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)=% of (1)
Priority Axis 1													
ITI projects	1	6	6	6	0%	0%	45	45	45	44	44	44	100%
Projects other than ITI	264	11	0.03	23	40%	15%	30	12	83	24	0.2	73	53%
Priority Axis 2													
ITI projects	3	9	2	11	0	0%	22	15	38	20	15	38	67%
Projects other than ITI	318	5	0.03	16	9	3%	24	8	67	24	2	67	56%

Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects.

Source: SMIS online for list projects contracted, 30 September 2021; MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021; MA list operations, 30 Nov 2021; SMIS for dates applications and contract signature.

Figure ACOP.2: Distribution duration contract signature

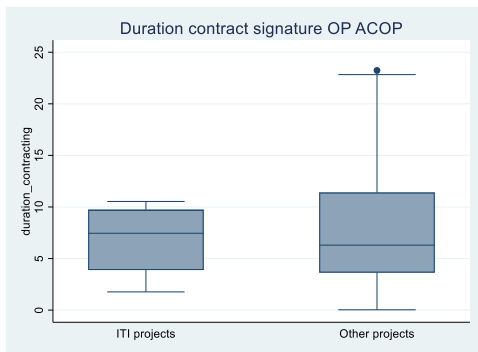


Figure ACOP.3: Distribution project duration

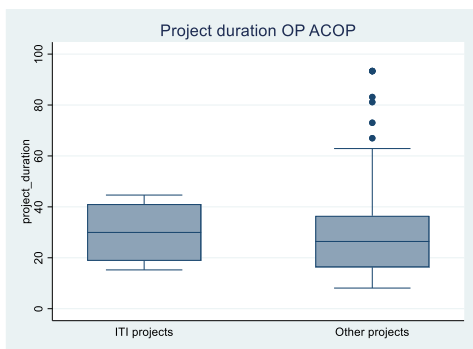
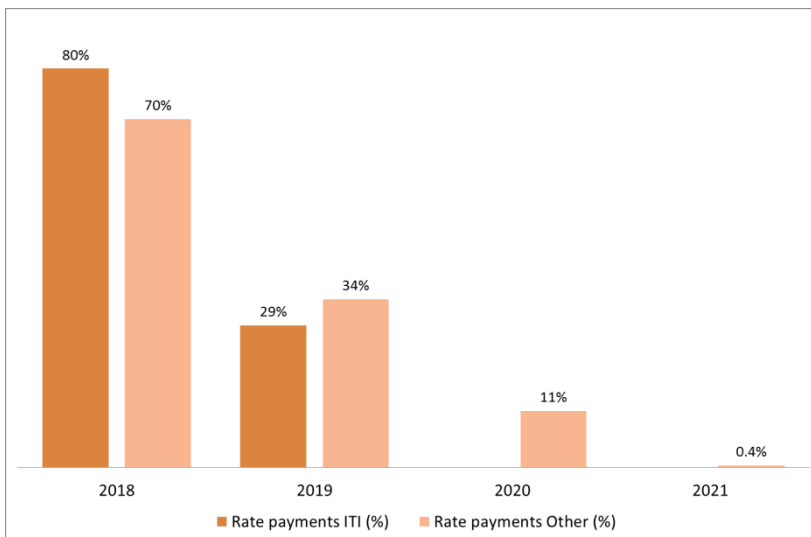


Figure ACOP.4: Rate payments for priority axes with ITI projects, by date of contract signature



Note: Only priority axes with ITI projects

Source: SMIS online for projects contracted by 30 Sept 2021; MA ITI data end 2021; MA list operations 28 Jan 2022.

ITI projects still in implementation: one project to be finalized by 2022.

Other ITI relevant projects in ACOP: 2 wider projects in priority axis 1.

Table ACOP.10: Indicators used in ITI projects

Name indicator	Type indicator	SIDD indicator	Programme indicator	Projects using the indicator	Projects with target value	Projects with extent to which target is met
Authorities and public institutions implementing measures for reducing administrative burden and introducing performance and quality management	output	YES	YES	4	4	2
Number projects implemented in the Danube Delta	procedural	YES		4	4	2

Note: Includes only projects identified based on MA file with ITI projects.

Source: ADI ITI mid Feb 2022, MA data on ITI projects 31 Dec 2021.

Technical Assistance Operational Programme (TAOP)

Includes two projects for technical assistance for ADI ITI.

Table TAOP.2: Technical assistance for ADI ITI

Project	Project selection (mill euro)	Payments (mill euro)	Rate payments (%)	Status project
Technical assistance ADI-ITI 2016-2018	1.6	1.6	100%	Finalized
Technical assistance ADI-ITI 2019-2023	3.9	1.9	49%	In implementation
Total	5.5	3.6	64%	

Sources: MA data on ITI projects, 31 Dec 2021

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