IMPLEMENTATION OF E-COHESION

General characteristics

PORTUGAL

No. of **targeted national/regional operational programmes** covering ERDF/CF: **10**

No. of **e-Cohesion systems**: **1**

At a glance:
e-Cohesion system: Balcão2020
Introduction of the system: Operational since 2015.
Type of the system: National system - it covers 10 national/regional OPs and does not support Interreg programmes.
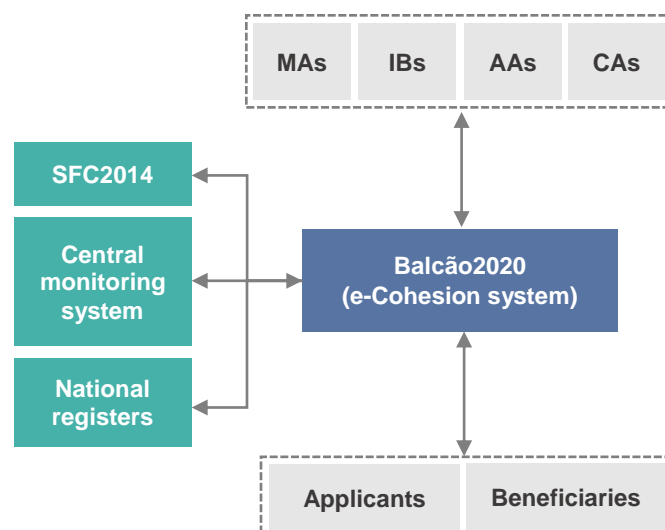**Implementation mode:** Highly centralised.
Use during 2021-2027: The system will be updated to adapt to the new regulations of the 2021-2027 programming period.
Fund coverage of the system: ☑ **ERDF** ☑ **CF**

Context and structure of e-Cohesion

- Portugal's implementation of e-Cohesion is **highly centralised** - Balcão2020 is the only system used in the country and covers all national/regional OPs;

- Balcão2020 is linked with the **central national monitoring system** and with several other national governmental registers (social security, tax authority etc.);

- Balcão2020 is also integrated with the **European Commission's System for Fund Management (SFC2014)**;

- All major **authorities have** access to the data submitted by applicants and beneficiaries through the system; MAs access Balcão2020 through their own information system;

- The e-Cohesion system supports not only the key processes related to implementation but also the application process - ESIF **applicants and beneficiaries** exchange information directly using Balcão2020.

| MAs | IBs | AAs | CAs |

SFC2014

Central monitoring system

National registers

Balcão2020 (e-Cohesion system)

| Applicants | Beneficiaries |

Key principles of e-Cohesion: interoperability and once-only encoding

Principles: Extensive reuse of information and interoperability with external registers.

Balcão2020 **supports once-only encoding at the program level**. Data and documents provided by beneficiaries are shared with all relevant authorities.
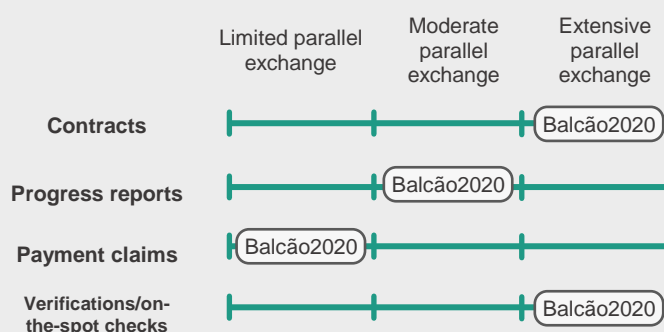
The system **extensively supports the pre-filling of information**:

- Information is pre-filled based on data entered during the project application, during previous steps of the operation and from some national registers;

- **The pre-filling of information is highly valued** – nearly all beneficiary respondents using Balcão2020 aware of this functionality perceived it as useful to their operations (resulting in efficiency gains and reducing the number of errors).

Parallel data exchanges: Moderate exchange of information outside of the system.

While the use of Balcão2020 is mandatory for project-management, **data exchanges outside the system are extensive for the preparation and signing of grants and verifications/on-the-spot checks,** and are moderate during progress reports.

	Limited parallel exchange	Moderate parallel exchange	Extensive parallel exchange
Contracts			Balcão2020
Progress reports		Balcão2020	
Payment claims	Balcão2020		
Verifications/on-the-spot checks			Balcão2020

Key processes: Support of project cycle from start to finish.

- **Balcão2020 supports all operations related to project application and implementation** (progress reports, modification requests, payment claims and management verifications/on-the-spot checks).

Functionalities: Support for all required functionalities, including interactive forms.

- **Balcão2020 supports all functionalities associated with user-friendliness** (interactive forms, automatic calculations, checks for incorrect/missing data, system-generated alerts, online status tracking and availability of previous data);
- **Nearly all beneficiary respondents are aware of the functionalities provided by Balcão2020 and consider them useful**, meaning that they result in notable time gains and reduce the number of errors.

Results of the introduction of e-Cohesion

Effectiveness – results and simplification

- The introduction of Balcão2020 has resulted in **extensive improvements and simplification**;
- Nearly all respondents agree that the introduction of the system has led to significant improvements in various areas and has simplified the way they handle information compared with paper-based processes or email exchanges.
- **Balcão2020 has extensively improved information exchanges between authorities and beneficiaries** – most respondents report that its use has reduced repeated transmission of the same information, indicating that once-only encoding is highly valued by users of the system.

Efficiency – benefits vs costs

- **The benefits of using Balcão2020 compared to its costs are extensive** across beneficiaries' key processes;
- Most respondents indicate that the benefits (reduced administrative burden, simplified procedures) of using the system outweigh any associated costs (the time and effort required to use it).

User–friendliness

- **Balcão2020 shows moderate user-friendliness** – most beneficiaries perceive the system as easy to navigate and operate, and consider it as clear and self-explanatory;
- Indication for high satisfaction among users of e-Cohesion systems is whether authorities continue to develop and improve the existing system. In the case of Balcão2020, **most beneficiary respondents feel that the system's functionalities and its overall functioning are being continuously improved, indicating moderate improvements.**