



Analysis of ERDF support for inclusive growth in the 2014- 2020 programming period

Final Report

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ABSTRACT

[EN] The purpose of this study is to investigate how Member States have addressed in the 2014-2020 programming period the subject of inclusive growth in their ERDF-co-financed (both mono and multi fund) OPs and the Partnership Agreements. It begins with the identification of relevant inclusive growth OPs and assesses how the subject is strategically programmed in the Member States by analysing the inclusive growth intervention logic. The study also assesses the application of the horizontal principles and the territorial strategy from an inclusive growth perspective. It then identifies the main strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks in programming and initial implementation; and it concludes with the formulation of recommendations on how European Cohesion Policy should be adjusted in the future to better contribute to inclusive growth and to promote social inclusion, equal opportunities and non-discrimination of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

[FR] L'objectif de cette étude est d'examiner comment les Etats Membres ont abordé dans la période de programmation 2014-2020 le sujet de la croissance inclusive dans leurs PO (à la fois mono et multi fonds) co-financés par le FEDER et les Accords de Partenariat. Elle commence par l'identification de PO pertinents pour la croissance inclusive et évalue comment la thématique est programmée stratégiquement dans les Etats Membres en analysant la logique d'intervention de la croissance inclusive. L'étude évalue aussi l'application des principes horizontaux et la stratégie territoriale du point de vue de la croissance inclusive. Elle identifie ensuite les principales forces, faiblesses et les goulots d'étranglements dans la programmation et la mise en œuvre initiale ; et elle se conclue avec la formulation de recommandations sur la manière dont la Politique Européenne de Cohésion devrait être ajustée dans le futur pour mieux contribuer à la croissance inclusive et promouvoir l'inclusion sociale, l'égalité des chances et la non-discrimination des groupes désavantagés et vulnérables.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This study focuses on assessing how inclusive growth is programmed under the European Regional Development Fund in the 28 EU Member States in the period 2014-2020, and in particular how the new regulatory provisions on inclusive growth are reflected in the preparation of programmes and first implementation. The study was carried out by reviewing and analysing Partnership Agreements (PAs) and relevant Operational Programmes (OPs) regarding inclusive growth for the programming period 2014-2020. The study was also based on the findings emerging from primary data collection: a survey directed to the programmes' Managing Authorities and a number of in depth interviews carried out with Managing Authorities, Policy Ministries and the European Commission (REGIO and EMPL) desk officers involved in the programming, negotiation and implementation processes. By gathering quantitative and qualitative data, the study identifies the main strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks in the programming and first experience with the implementation of inclusive growth supported by the ERDF. Finally, the study draws conclusions and proposes recommendations regarding inclusive growth support for the next programming period.

Methodology

The study is structured along four tasks:

- desk review of certain elements of Partnership Agreements and ERDF (both mono and multi-fund) Operational Programmes;
- opinions collected from Managing Authorities, Policy Ministries, Third Sector Organisations and the European Commission officers via an online survey and a set of phone interviews;
- desk research of a number of calls for proposals;
- Analysing and summarising the collected data, providing conclusions and policy recommendations.

The collection of secondary data covered all 28 Members States. In total, 29 Partnership Agreements¹ were analysed as well as 138 ERDF funded Operational Programmes which allocated resources to Thematic objectives 1, 2, 8, 9, 10. The final list of the selected Operational Programmes was agreed upon with the European Commission. These programmes constitute in total 30% of all the 2014-2020 OPs and 44% of all ERDF co-financed Operational Programmes. Two structured databases containing PA and OP data related to inclusive growth measures were created for this purpose.

The collection of primary data - via survey and in-depth interviews with Managing Authorities, Policy Ministries, NGOs and the European Commission officers -

¹ One PA per Member State and one additional PA for Åland Islands, Finland

covered 16 Member States². In total 45 Managing Authorities replied to the survey and 111 respondents participated in the in-depth interview programme.

The negotiation process and first implementation measures were examined through three data collection methods: online survey, semi-structured interviews and desk research to gather quantitative and qualitative information. This information was then combined with the data collected from the OP and the PA mappings.

Finally, findings were triangulated, and all the results were synthesised in order to identify trends and patterns in the programming of inclusive growth objectives. Policy recommendations addressing the EU and Member States on how the ERDF could support inclusive growth objectives more efficiently are then provided.

Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Programmes and logic of intervention for inclusive growth

Inclusive growth represents a rather small share of the ERDF spending in the 2014-2020 programming period, consisting of 20.4 billion EUR - 11% of all ERDF allocations. The largest significant amount was allocated to Thematic Objective 9, followed by Thematic Objectives 10 and 8. The countries that allocated the highest ERDF amount to inclusive growth are Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Member States with a lower per capita GDP tend to allocate a higher share of their available ERDF financing to TO9 and TO10, however, no such link between the GDP and allocation was found for TO8. Moreover, inclusive growth tends to be addressed by regional Operational Programmes mostly. More than half of the analysed Operational Programmes were multifund, combining ERDF with ESF, but also with the Youth Initiative and the Cohesion Fund. The Operational Programmes are managed either centrally, by a ministry level, or their institutional framework is decentralised, with regional authorities in charge.

The results of processing secondary data from Partnership Agreements and the Operational Programmes have shown a rather weak linkage between the identified needs and challenges and the planned actions related to inclusive growth under the ERDF. This suggests that the actions are not always underpinned by needs in sufficient depth. For example, discrepancies were found between the needs and actions in replacing the institutional care with community based services. While 25 Operational Programmes have included such actions, only 7 OPs have specified such a need. A significant level of discrepancies was also found regarding social economy. It emerges that the Member States might have limited abilities in identifying and monitoring new societal challenges, which are then translated to needs.

Overall, it emerges that countries and regions have sometimes limited abilities in identifying and monitoring new and emerging societal challenges, translated in needs. At the same time the priorities and the actions suggested at EU level are perhaps too advanced and therefore they require more guidance, as well as a specific use of technical assistance, and more political willingness to be implemented.

² Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain.

Improving employability of disadvantaged groups and the long term unemployed (TO8), promoting social integration of vulnerable and marginalised group (TO9) and increasing the availability of early childhood education and care facilities and educational institutions (TO10) are the most mentioned needs under each of the inclusive growth-relevant Thematic Objectives. Inclusive growth consideration plays only a minor role under TO2, which addresses mostly the general population.

The links between the OPs and other strategies, such as relevant Europe 2020 headline targets and Country Specific Recommendations, prove to be vague. Several OPs refer to relevant Europe 2020 targets. These references are sometimes concrete, but in other cases some OPs remain unclear. Similarly, Country Specific Recommendations are mentioned only in a minority of the OPs. Nonetheless, this could be explained by the fact that five countries have not received any CSRs for this programming period and OPs implemented at the regional level do not cover CSRs.

Inclusive growth has a rather marginal role in the ERDF OPs, especially in more developed regions. The decision of certain Member States to allocate no or only little ERDF resources to one or more of the three Thematic Objectives focusing on inclusive growth (8,9 and 10) is to a large extent explained by the principle of 'thematic concentration' (focusing on Thematic Objectives 1,2,3 and 4).

Recommendations:

1. Given that inclusive growth issues are relevant but not a priority in ERDF OPs, it is recommended to concentrate resources on a small number of investment priorities related to inclusive growth, with a well-defined and robust logic of intervention.
2. A good intervention logic should ensure that the funds deployed and the actions put in place address the identified needs in the most relevant way. Based on the analysis it emerges that countries, regions and local authorities need to improve the identification of needs and challenges in their territories as regard to Inclusive growth. Likewise, actions need to follow the needs consistently.
3. Following the logic of a better alignment between needs and actions the identified investments should be tailored made to the particular territory characteristics.
4. The principle of concentration turns to be a factor that limits the alignment between needs and actions related to Inclusive growth. The thematic concentration on TOs 1,2, 3 and 4 limits the possibility to invest in TOs 8,9 and 10. In order to address inclusive growth issues, in compliance with the concentration principle, it is recommended to address inclusive growth also through actions under TOs 1, 2 and 3. These thematic objectives can offer for example possible rooms for exploiting the potential of ICT to enhance accessibility to public services for vulnerable groups.
5. Countries, regions and local authorities should also improve their ability to monitor and to qualitatively and quantitatively measure the achievement of their targets in the Inclusive growth area. In the next programming period an obligation to indicate in the OPs the results indicators should be included in the regulation.

Territorial strategy for inclusive growth

Member States make use of the three available territorial instruments (CLLD, SUD and ITI) to a varying degree. The Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies are the most frequently used territorial strategies, included in inclusive growth relevant OPs co-financed from the ERDF in almost all Member States. Countries with large urban agglomerations, such as Germany, France, Poland etc. make an extensive use of the SUD to address the needs of deprived neighbourhoods and to tackle unemployment and social exclusion. Community-led local development (CLLD) is used in 21% of the OPs, with an important presence in the regional Operational Programmes. It focuses on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty. The results of the data collection from the interviews show that the legal and guidance documents for the implementation of this territorial instrument were considered useful only to a certain extent, and the setting of the tool is perceived as being too burdensome. This latter was stated as the most common reason behind the scarce use of CLLD. On the other hand, the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) is present in many OPs, however, the majority of the ITIs are designed to complement the SUD strategies. Interventions under ITI and SUD target urban areas and focus on education, demography, access to public and health services and infrastructure. Almost all MSs also included specific approaches addressing geographical areas most affected by poverty or social exclusion (with the exception of Latvia and Lithuania).

Recommendations:

6. The territorial instruments ITI, which allows the combination of funding, and CLLD, which includes local actors, have been applied only to a limited extent because these instruments require a complex procedure to be set. It is therefore suggested to reduce the red tape associated with the application of these instruments and to provide training and technical assistance instruments for local actors for the implementation of these instruments.
7. The analysis has revealed that the implementation of the SUD strategies seems more relevant than other territorial instruments for programming inclusive growth actions. It is therefore recommended - especially for the EU 15 - to strengthen the development of urban development strategies linked to inclusive growth.

Application of the relevant horizontal principles

The promotion of equality between men and women, non-discrimination and accessibility are the horizontal principles closely linked to inclusive growth. Moreover, the ESIFs regulations require Member States to mainstream the horizontal principles in all the phases of the programming and implementation process and to fulfil the ex-ante conditionalities related to non-discrimination and gender equality.

ERDF promotes equality between men and women and non-discrimination by financing measures directly targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups, for example via supporting business start-ups and entrepreneurship of disadvantaged groups; and, indirectly, by upgrading public healthcare and social services. All of the analysed OPs observe these horizontal principles, which are also enshrined in the national legislations.

The analysis of the survey results and interviews shows that there is a clear difficulty to mainstream these principles in all ERDF intervention areas and to address certain forms of discrimination, such as discrimination on the ground of religion and sexual orientation, due to lack of knowledge or lack of experience. Likewise, a difficulty to move on from formal statements to the actual implementation was reported. In this context it can be observed that certain disadvantaged groups are mentioned in the horizontal principles sections in the PAs or/and the OPs, however, these same groups are hardly mentioned in the presentation of actions. The MAs also found it difficult to involve representatives of the relevant disadvantaged groups in the programmes design and implementation. Nonetheless, the MAs try to improve the application of these principles by knowledge sharing, providing trainings or taking different steps to raise general awareness.

Recommendations:

8. The analysis highlights that ERDF stakeholders are facing some challenges in the full application of the horizontal principles. It is suggested to provide support to Managing Authorities on how to implement relevant horizontal principles in the preparation of the calls, project selection, and control and monitoring in all the Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities covered by ERDF and ESF.
9. There is need to build institutional capacities to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination under ERDF by supporting Managing Authorities and intermediate bodies in the preparation of programmes and calls especially at regional level through: the use of Technical Assistance, the development of guidance tools, the exchange of knowledge and practices and the promotion of awareness raising measures on the importance of mainstreaming the horizontal principles in all the ERDF intervention fields for inclusive growth.
10. Technical assistance should also be provided to ERDF beneficiaries on how to enhance and improve the application of the horizontal principles in projects' implementation throughout the project life cycle.
11. At the same time, Managing Authorities and other involved bodies should implement specific mechanism for ensuring compliance of all programmes and projects with the horizontal principles.
12. Organisations representing the relevant discriminated groups should be more involved in the programmes' design and implementation, in order to guarantee a better alignment between the implemented actions and the needs of the discriminated groups.
13. Ex ante conditionalities on the horizontal principles and the coordination with national strategies are important and should be kept also in the coming programming period. Nonetheless, some safeguards should be put in place when there is lack of commitment towards the implementation of measures addressing forms of discrimination where prejudices are still strong, as in the case of ethnic minorities such as Roma.

Programming and negotiation of inclusive growth

The provisions for this programming period – general and inclusive growth specific – are perceived by Managing Authorities as useful. However, their consideration in

programming and their implementation was sometimes coupled with difficulties, perhaps for a matter of capacity in adapting to the new requirements. Rigidities in the use of funds or the conditions that shall be ensured before implementing some measures were mentioned as the most challenging aspects of the new legislative framework. The provisions being perceived as being the most challenging are those related to Health (especially transformation of the health system), Roma inclusion (especially the link to the National Roma Integration Strategy), and Education (especially the link to policy to reduce early school leaving). Shift to community-based services also records a low average score in terms of easiness of implementation, with a specific difficulty on the link to de-institutionalisation frameworks.

The Managing Authorities acknowledged the added value which the ERDF brings in complementing inclusive growth measures under the ESF. The support provided to the MAs by the Commission was considered very helpful, but too technical and extensive and at times arriving late. The involvement of partners in the programming process was done by several methods, varying from online public consultations to in-depth consultations. The advantage of the open online consultations was that they could reach a wider group of stakeholders, while deeper consultations were done by traditional partners like regions or NGOs. Overall, the implementation of the partnership principle was assessed as satisfactory. The negotiation process encountered more problematic issues, which included defining types of investments to be supported, implementation of ITIs and the CLLDs and the definition of result indicators. The Commission's approach during the negotiation was perceived in certain cases as formalistic, however, the general support provided by the Commission during the process was found helpful.

Recommendations:

14. The implementation of provisions related to certain elements of health, education and Roma inclusion was perceived as being the most difficult. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen the support of the Commission to MA regarding the alignment between the programme interventions and the national specific prioritization and strategies in these areas. Moreover, a detailed needs assessment on the ground is necessary including demographic data, possible stratification of population and epidemiological analysis. To do such a need assessment the national capacities should be increased.
15. ERDF investments should be combined with ESF interventions in order to exploit synergies and maximise the ERDF added value for example in the fields of education, training and urban development strategies. Synergies however shall be promoted and sustained, for example by ensuring a stricter dialogue and alignment between EMPL and REGIO on the support of multi-fund OPs as well as facilitating the combined use of funds. It is recommended to develop guidance, knowledge sharing and peer learning actions on how to best address the complementarity of ERDF and ESF in programming but also programme implementation (e.g. harmonising calls and deadlines, selection and implementation of projects that rely on funding from parallel ERDF/ESF calls, monitoring of projects, etc.)
16. In the programming and negotiation process, a more constructive interaction between the Commission and the MAs is recommended. In particular the former shall adopt a less formalistic approach to programmes

requirements. MAs, on the other side, shall develop a strategic framework and aligning it with the programmes.

17. In some cases, guidance fiches are too dense or too extended or not aligned with the programming time. Therefore, the Commission should simplify the guidance language and improve the time alignment between the issuance of the guidance and the start of the programming period.

18. Partnership consultations should be thoroughly prepared and accompanied, where needed, by a briefing of social partners.

RÉSUMÉ ANALYTIQUE

Introduction

Cette étude analyse la programmation de la croissance inclusive sous le Fonds Européen de Développement Régional (FEDER) dans les 28 Etats Membres de l'UE dans la période 2014-2020, et en particulier comment les nouvelles dispositions réglementaires sur la croissance inclusive se traduisent dans la préparation des programmes et leur première mise en œuvre. L'étude a été menée en examinant et analysant les Accords de Partenariat (AP) et les Programmes Opérationnels (PO) pertinents par rapport à la croissance inclusive sur la période de programmation 2014-2020. L'étude s'est aussi basée sur les résultats de collecte de données primaires : une enquête adressée aux autorités de gestion, ministères et les agents de la Commission Européenne (REGIO et EMPL) impliqués dans les processus de programmation, négociation et d'application. En regroupant des données quantitatives et qualitatives, l'étude identifie les principales forces, faiblesses et goulots d'étranglement dans la programmation et les premières expériences de mise en œuvre de la croissance inclusive soutenue par le FEDER. Enfin, l'étude tire des conclusions and propose des recommandations sur le soutien à la croissance inclusive pour la prochaine période de programmation.

Méthodologie

L'étude est structurée en quatre tâches:

- Etude documentaire de certains éléments des Accords de Partenariat et des Programmes Opérationnels (à la fois fonds uniques et fonds multiples) du FEDER ;
- Collecte des opinions des autorités de gestion, ministères, organisations non-gouvernementales et des agents de la Commission Européenne via une enquête en ligne et une série d'entretiens téléphoniques ;
- Examen d'un nombre d'appels à propositions ;
- Analyse et résumé des données récoltées, conclusions et recommandations stratégiques.

La collecte de données secondaires a couvert les 28 Etats Membres. Au total, 29 Accords de Partenariat³ ont été analysés ainsi que 138 Programmes Opérationnels financés par le FEDER qui ont alloué des ressources aux objectifs thématiques 1,2,

³ Un AP par Etat Membre et un AP additionnel pour les îles Åland, en Finlande.

8, 9, 10. La liste finale des Programmes Opérationnels sélectionnés a été validée par la Commission Européenne. Ces programmes constituent au total 30% de tous les PO 2014-2020 et 44% de tous les Programmes Opérationnels co-financés par le FEDER. Deux bases de données contenant les informations sur les AP et PO liées aux mesures de croissance inclusive ont été créées dans ce but.

La collecte des données primaires – via une enquête et des entretiens approfondis avec des autorités de gestion, des ministères, des ONG et des agents de la Commission Européenne – a couvert 16 Etats Membres.⁴ Au total 45 autorités de gestion ont répondu à l'enquête et 111 personnes ont participé au programme d'entretiens approfondis.

Le processus de négociation et les premières mesures d'application ont été examinés à travers trois méthodes de collecte des données : une enquête en ligne, des entretiens semi-directifs et une étude documentaire pour rassembler des informations quantitatives et qualitatives. Cette information a ensuite été regroupée avec les données collectées lors des mappings des PO et AP.

Enfin, ces données ont été triangulées, et tous les résultats ont été réunis pour identifier des tendances et des schémas dans la programmation des objectifs de la croissance inclusive. L'étude propose ensuite des recommandations stratégiques pour l'UE et les Etats Membres sur la manière dont le FEDER pourrait soutenir les objectifs de croissance inclusive plus efficacement.

Résultats, conclusions et recommandations

Programmes et logique d'intervention pour la croissance inclusive

La croissance inclusive représente une part plutôt limitée des dépenses du FEDER pour la période de programmation 2014-2020, à hauteur de 20,4 milliards d'euros – 11% de toutes les dotations du FEDER. La part la plus significative a été allouée à l'Objectif Thématique 9, suivi des Objectifs Thématiques (OT) 10 et 8. Les pays qui ont alloué le plus grand montant du FEDER à la croissance inclusive sont la Pologne, la Hongrie et la République Tchèque. Les Etats Membres avec un PIB par habitant plus faible ont tendance à allouer une plus grande part de leurs financements FEDER disponibles à l'OT9 et l'OT10, cependant, aucun lien similaire entre le PIB et l'attribution n'a été établi pour l'OT8. De plus, la croissance inclusive a tendance à être abordée principalement par les Programmes Opérationnels régionaux. Plus de la moitié des Programmes Opérationnels analysés étaient multi-fonds, combinant le FEDER avec le FSE, mais aussi avec l'Initiative pour la Jeunesse et le Fonds de Cohésion. Les Programmes Opérationnels sont gérés soit centralement, au niveau ministériel, soit leur cadre institutionnel est décentralisé, avec des autorités régionales en charge.

Les résultats de l'analyse des données secondaires des Accords de Partenariat et des Programmes Opérationnels ont montré un lien plutôt faible entre les besoins et défis identifiés et les actions planifiées en lien avec la croissance inclusive sous le FEDER. Cela suggère que les actions ne se fondent pas toujours suffisamment sur les besoins. Par exemple, des écarts ont été identifiés entre les besoins et actions pour remplacer les soins en institution par des services communautaires. Tandis que 25 Programmes Opérationnels incluent de telles actions, seuls 7 PO ont spécifié

⁴ Bulgarie, Croatie, République Tchèque, Estonie, France, Allemagne, Grèce, Hongrie, Italie, Lettonie, Lituanie, Pologne, Portugal, Roumanie, Slovaquie, Espagne.

un tel besoin. Un niveau important d'écarts a aussi été observé en ce qui concerne l'économie sociale. Il apparaît que les Etats Membres ont des capacités limitées à identifier et suivre les nouveaux défis sociétaux, qui sont ensuite transformés en besoins.

En général, il apparaît que les pays et régions ont parfois des capacités limitées pour identifier et suivre les nouveaux défis sociétaux émergents, transformés en besoins. En même temps les priorités et actions suggérées au niveau de l'UE sont peut-être trop avancées et requièrent par conséquent plus d'indications, ainsi qu'un usage spécifique de l'assistance technique, et plus de volonté politique pour être mises en place.

Améliorer l'employabilité des groupes désavantagés et le chômage de long terme (OT8), promouvoir l'intégration sociale des groupes vulnérables et marginalisés (OT9) et augmenter la disponibilité de l'éducation préscolaire, des centres de soins et des établissements d'enseignement (OT1) sont les besoins les plus mentionnés sous chacun des Objectifs Thématiques pertinents pour la croissance inclusive. La prise en compte de la croissance inclusive joue seulement un rôle mineur dans l'OT2, qui s'adresse surtout à la population en général.

Les liens entre les PO et les autres stratégies, telles que les grands objectifs pertinents d'Europe 2020 et les Recommandations Spécifiques par Pays, se révèlent flous. Plusieurs PO se réfèrent à des objectifs pertinents d'Europe 2020. Ces références sont parfois concrètes, mais dans d'autres cas certains PO demeurent vagues. De même, les Recommandations Spécifiques par Pays (RSP) ne sont mentionnées que dans une minorité des PO. Néanmoins, ceci peut être dû au fait que cinq pays n'ont pas reçu de RSP pour cette période de programmation et que les PO mis en place au niveau régional ne couvrent pas les RSP.

La croissance inclusive a un rôle plutôt marginal dans les PO du FEDER, surtout dans les régions les plus développées. La décision de certains Etats Membres de n'allouer aucune ou seulement une part limitée des ressources du FEDER à au moins l'un des trois Objectifs Thématiques se concentrant sur la croissance inclusive (8, 9 et 10) peut s'expliquer dans une large mesure par le principe de 'concentration thématique' (avec une concentration sur les Objectifs Thématiques 1, 2, 3 et 4).

Recommandations:

19. Etant donné que les questions de croissance inclusive sont pertinentes mais pas une priorité dans les PO du FEDER, il est recommandé de concentrer les ressources sur un petit nombre de priorités d'investissement en lien avec la croissance inclusive, avec une logique d'intervention bien définie et robuste.
20. Une bonne logique d'intervention devrait garantir que les fonds employés et les actions mises en place répondent aux besoins identifiés de la manière la plus pertinente. D'après l'analyse, il apparaît que les pays, régions et autorités locales doivent améliorer l'identification des besoins et défis sur leurs territoires en ce qui concerne la croissance inclusive. De même, il est nécessaire que les actions découlent des besoins de façon cohérente.
21. Suivant la logique d'un meilleur alignement entre les besoins et les actions, les investissements identifiés devraient être adaptés aux caractéristiques particulières du territoire.

22. Le principe de concentration s'avère être un facteur qui limite l'alignement entre les besoins et actions en lien avec la croissance inclusive. La concentration thématique sur les OT 1, 2, 3 et 4 limite la possibilité d'investir dans les OT 8, 9 et 10. Pour répondre aux questions de croissance inclusive, en conformité avec le principe de concentration, il est recommandé d'aborder la croissance inclusive aussi à travers des actions sous les OT 1, 2 et 3. Ces objectifs thématiques peuvent par exemple offrir un espace possible pour exploiter le potentiel des TIC pour augmenter l'accessibilité des groupes vulnérables aux services publics.
23. Les pays, régions et autorités locales devraient aussi améliorer leur capacité à suivre et à mesurer qualitativement et quantitativement la réalisation de leurs objectifs dans le domaine de la croissance inclusive. Dans la prochaine période de programmation, une obligation d'indiquer les indicateurs de résultats dans les PO devrait être incluse dans le règlement.

Stratégie territoriale pour la croissance inclusive

Les Etats Membres utilisent les trois instruments (CLLD, SUD et ITI) à leur disposition à des degrés divers. Les stratégies de Développement Urbain Durable (SUD) sont les stratégies territoriales utilisées les plus fréquemment, incluses dans les PO pertinents pour la croissance inclusive co-financés par le FEDER dans presque tous les Etats Membres. Les pays avec de larges agglomérations urbaines, tels que l'Allemagne, la France, la Pologne etc. utilisent particulièrement le SUD pour répondre aux besoins des quartiers défavorisés et s'attaquer au chômage et à l'exclusion sociale. Le Développement Local Mené par les Acteurs Locaux (CLLD) est utilisé dans 21% des PO, avec une présence importante dans les Programmes Opérationnels régionaux. Il se concentre sur la promotion de l'inclusion sociale et la lutte contre la pauvreté. Les résultats des entretiens montrent que les documents légaux et d'orientation pour la mise en œuvre de cet instrument territorial sont considérés utiles seulement dans une certaine mesure, et l'établissement de l'instrument est perçu comme trop contraignant. Ceci a été évoqué comme la raison principale de l'usage limité du CLLD. En revanche, l'Investissement Territorial Intégré (ITI) est présent dans beaucoup de PO, cependant, la majorité des ITI sont conçus pour compléter les stratégies SUD. Les interventions sous ITI et SUD ciblent les espaces urbains et se concentrent sur l'éducation, la démographie, l'accès aux services et infrastructures publics et de santé. Presque tous les Etats Membres incluent aussi des approches spécifiques s'adressant aux espaces les plus affectés par la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale (à l'exception de la Lettonie et la Lituanie).

Recommandations:

24. Les instruments territoriaux ITI, qui permet la combinaison de financements, et CLLD, qui inclue des acteurs locaux, ont été appliqués seulement de manière limitée car ces instruments requièrent une procédure complexe pour être mis en place. Il est donc suggéré de réduire la lourdeur administrative associée à l'application de ces instruments et de fournir des instruments de formation et d'assistance technique aux acteurs locaux pour la mise en œuvre de ces instruments.
25. L'analyse a révélé que la mise en œuvre des stratégies SUD paraît plus pertinente que d'autres instruments territoriaux pour la programmation d'actions de croissance inclusive. Il est donc recommandé – surtout pour

l'UE 15 – de renforcer le développement des stratégies de développement urbain liées à la croissance inclusive.

Application des principes horizontaux pertinents

La promotion de l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes, la non-discrimination et l'accessibilité sont les principes horizontaux liés de près à la croissance inclusive. De plus, les règlements des Fonds ESI⁵ demandent aux Etats Membres d'intégrer les principes horizontaux dans toutes les phases du processus de programmation et de mise en œuvre et de remplir les conditions ex-ante liées à la non-discrimination et à l'égalité entre les genres.

Le FEDER promeut l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes et la non-discrimination en finançant des mesures ciblant directement les groupes de population désavantagés et vulnérables, par exemple en soutenant l'entreprenariat et le lancement d'activités des groupes désavantagés ; et, indirectement, en modernisant le système de santé publique et les services sociaux. Tous les PO analysés observent ces principes horizontaux, qui sont aussi inscrits dans les législations nationales.

L'analyse des résultats de l'enquête et des entretiens montre qu'il y a clairement une difficulté à intégrer ces principes dans tous les domaines d'intervention du FEDER et à s'adresser à certaines formes de discrimination, telles que la discrimination basée sur la religion ou l'orientation sexuelle, dû au manque de connaissance ou au manque d'expérience. De même, on peut noter une difficulté à traduire des déclarations officielles en application concrète. Dans ce contexte, on peut observer que certains groupes désavantagés sont mentionnés dans les sections sur les principes horizontaux dans les AP et/ou les PO, cependant, ces mêmes groupes sont à peine mentionnés dans la présentation des actions. Les autorités de gestion ont aussi eu des difficultés à impliquer des représentants des groupes désavantagés concernés dans la conception et la mise en œuvre des programmes. Néanmoins, les autorités de gestion tentent d'améliorer l'application de ces principes par du partage de connaissances, des formations ou différentes mesures de sensibilisation.

Recommandations:

26. L'analyse souligne que les acteurs du FEDER sont confrontés à certains problèmes dans l'application complète des principes horizontaux. Il est suggéré de soutenir les autorités de gestion pour appliquer les principes horizontaux pertinents dans la préparation d'appels, la sélection de projet, et le contrôle et suivi de tous les Objectifs Thématiques et Priorités d'Investissement couverts par le FEDER et le FSE.
27. Il est nécessaire de construire des capacités institutionnelles pour promouvoir l'égalité des chances et la non-discrimination sous le FEDER en soutenant les autorités de régulation et les corps intermédiaires dans la préparation des programmes et appels surtout au niveau régional via : l'utilisation de l'Assistance Technique, le développement d'outils d'orientation, l'échange de connaissances et de pratiques et la promotion de mesures de sensibilisation sur l'importance d'intégrer les principes

⁵ Fonds structurels et d'investissement européens

horizontaux dans tous les domaines d'intervention du FEDER pour la croissance inclusive.

28. Une assistance technique devrait aussi être fournie aux bénéficiaires du FEDER sur la manière d'augmenter et améliorer l'application des principes horizontaux dans la mise en œuvre des projets à travers le cycle de vie du projet.
29. En même temps, les autorités de gestion et autres entités impliquées devraient appliquer un mécanisme spécifique pour garantir la conformité de tous les programmes et projets avec les principes horizontaux.
30. Les organisations représentant les groupes discriminés concernés devraient être plus impliqués dans la conception et la mise en œuvre des programmes, afin de garantir un meilleur alignement entre les actions mises en place et les besoins des groupes discriminés.
31. Des conditions ex-ante sur les principes horizontaux et la coordination avec les stratégies nationales sont importantes et devraient être maintenues aussi dans la prochaine période de programmation. Néanmoins, certaines garanties devraient être mises en place en cas de manque d'engagement envers la mise en œuvre des mesures s'adressant aux formes de discrimination où les préjugés sont encore forts, comme c'est le cas pour les minorités ethniques comme les Roms.

Programmation et négociation de la croissance inclusive

Les dispositions de cette période de programmation – générales et spécifiques à la croissance inclusive – sont considérées utiles par les autorités de gestion. Cependant, leur prise en compte dans la programmation et leur mise en œuvre s'est parfois accompagnée de difficultés, peut-être pour des raisons de capacité à s'adapter aux nouvelles exigences. Des rigidités dans l'utilisation des fonds ou des conditions à garantir avant d'appliquer certaines mesures ont été mentionnées comme les aspects les plus difficiles du nouveau cadre législatif. Les dispositions perçues comme les plus difficiles sont celles liées à la santé (surtout la transformation du système de santé), l'inclusion des Roms (surtout le lien avec la Stratégie Nationale d'Intégration des Roms), et l'éducation (surtout le lien vers la politique de réduction du décrochage scolaire). Le mouvement vers des services communautaires enregistre aussi un faible score moyen en termes de facilité de mise en œuvre, avec une difficulté spécifique concernant le lien vers les cadres de désinstitutionalisation.

Les autorités de gestion ont reconnu la valeur ajoutée que le FEDER apporte en complétant les mesures de croissance inclusive sous le FSE. Le soutien fourni aux autorités de gestion par la Commission a été considéré très utile, mais trop technique et extensif et parfois offert trop tard. L'implication des partenaires dans le processus de programmation a été menée de plusieurs manières, allant de consultations publiques en ligne à des consultations approfondies. L'avantage des consultations ouvertes en ligne était qu'elles pouvaient atteindre un plus grand groupe d'acteurs, tandis que les consultations plus approfondies ont été menées par des partenaires traditionnels comme des régions ou des ONG. En général, la mise en œuvre du principe de partenariat a été jugée satisfaisante. Le processus de négociation a rencontré des questions plus problématiques, dont la définition des types d'investissements à soutenir, la mise en œuvre des ITI et des CLLD et la définition d'indicateurs de résultats. L'approche de la Commission pendant la

négociation a été perçue comme formaliste dans certains cas, cependant, le soutien général offert par la Commission durant le processus a été considéré utile.

Recommandations:

32. La mise en œuvre des dispositions liées à certains éléments de santé, éducation et à l'inclusion des Roms a été jugée la plus difficile. Il est donc recommandé de renforcer le soutien de la Commission aux autorités de gestion concernant l'alignement entre les interventions du programme et la priorisation nationale spécifique et les stratégies dans ces domaines. De plus, un examen détaillé des besoins sur place est nécessaire incluant des données démographiques, une possible stratification de la population et une analyse épidémiologique. Pour conduire un tel examen, il est nécessaire d'augmenter les capacités nationales.
33. Les investissements du FEDER devraient être combinés avec les interventions du FSE afin d'exploiter les synergies et maximiser la valeur ajoutée du FEDER par exemple dans les domaines de l'éducation, formation et stratégies de développement urbain. Les synergies devraient cependant être encouragées et maintenues, par exemple en assurant un dialogue et un alignement plus stricts entre EMPL et REGIO sur le soutien de PO multi-fonds ainsi qu'en facilitant l'usage combiné des fonds. Il est recommandé de développer des actions d'orientation, de partage de connaissances et d'apprentissage par les pairs sur la meilleure manière d'utiliser la complémentarité du FEDER et du FSE dans la programmation mais aussi la mise en œuvre des programmes (e.g. en harmonisant les appels et deadlines, la sélection et mise en œuvre des projets qui s'appuient sur des appels parallèles FEDER/FSE, suivi des projets, etc.)
34. Dans le processus de programmation et de négociation, une interaction plus constructive entre la Commission et les autorités de gestion est recommandée. En particulier la première devrait adopter une approche moins formaliste aux exigences des programmes. Les autorités de gestion, d'un autre côté, devraient développer un cadre stratégique et l'aligner avec les programmes.
35. Dans certains cas, les fiches d'orientation sont trop denses ou trop extensives et pas alignées avec la période de programmation. La Commission devrait donc simplifier le langage des orientations et améliorer l'alignement entre la publication d'orientations et le début de la période de programmation.
36. Les consultations de partenariat devraient être préparées en profondeur et accompagnées, quand nécessaire, d'un briefing des partenaires sociaux.

ACRONYMS

Acronym	Explanation
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community-led local development
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
CSR	Country-specific recommendations
EAC	Ex-ante conditionality
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
FR	Financial Regulation
IP	Investment Priority
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
NUTS	Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Partnership Agreement
RDP	Rural Development Plan
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
TO	Thematic Objective
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

GLOSSARY

- **Cohesion Policy:** Union policy that aims at strengthening the Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion, in accordance with Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 89 CPR).
- **Common Provisions Regulation (CPR):** the main legislation implementing the Union's cohesion policy, setting out common rules for the five ESI Funds (Article 1 CPR).
- **Community-led local development (CLLD):** approach to local development which focuses on specific sub-regional areas; is led by local action groups composed of representatives of public and private local socio-economic interests; is designed taking into consideration local needs and potential, and is carried out through integrated and multi-sectoral area-based local development strategies (Article 32 CPR).
- **Country-specific recommendations (CSRs):** provide tailored advice to Member States on how to boost jobs and growth, while maintaining sound public finances. The Commission publishes them every spring as part of the European Semester, the EU's calendar for economic policy coordination.
- **Europe 2020 strategy:** EU's ten-year jobs and growth strategy, launched in 2010 to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Five headline targets have been set for the EU to achieve by end of 2020, covering employment; research and development; climate/energy; education; social inclusion and poverty reduction.
- **European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds:** the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). In accordance with the terminology of the CPR, whenever there is a reference to "the Funds" it covers only three funds of cohesion policy: the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund.
- **European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg):** one of the two goals of cohesion policy, Interreg provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. The overarching objective is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole.
- **Ex ante conditionality:** set of legal, policy and administrative requirements, which are a prerequisite for the effective and efficient achievement of the objectives of Cohesion policy (Article 19 CPR).
- **Financial instrument (FI):** instrument for financial support, which may take the form of equity or quasi-equity investments, loans or guarantees, or other risk-sharing instruments, and may, where appropriate, be combined with grants (Article 2 FR, Title IV CPR).
- **Horizon 2020:** financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 strategy flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly EUR 80 billion of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020).
- **Inclusive growth:** one of the three main priorities of the European Commission's Europe 2020 strategy⁶, described as: empowering people

⁶ EC (2010) 'COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION EUROPE 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'
Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change, and build a cohesive society

- **Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI):** tool to implement territorial strategies in an integrated way and allow Member States to draw on funding from several priority axes of one or more Operational Programmes.
- **Investment priority (IP):** each one of the detailed objectives set out in the ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund regulations, which are not mutually exclusive, to which these Funds are to contribute. They are specifically linked to the 11 thematic objectives laid down for the ESI Funds (Recital 7 of the ERDF regulation).
- **LEADER approach:** first developed by the Commission in 1990, this approach aims to harness energy and resources of people and bodies that could contribute to rural development by forming partnerships at a sub-regional level between the public, private and civil sectors.
- **Macro-economic conditionality:** mechanism ensuring consistency between cohesion policy and the Union's sound economic governance (the European Semester). It consists of two strands: 1. Commission may request a Member State to review its Partnership Agreement and relevant programmes in order to support implementation of relevant Council Recommendations or maximise growth and competitiveness impact of the ESI Funds. 2. Council may suspend part or all of the commitments or payments for a Member State in case of non-compliance with rules regarding the Excessive Deficit Procedure, the Excessive Imbalance Procedure or, for Member States under financial assistance, the related adjustment programme (Article 23 CPR).
- **NUTS:** NUTS classification (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU. At NUTS 3 level, territorial units are broken down to municipalities for specific diagnoses.
- **Operational Programme (OP):** document setting out a Member State or region's strategy for contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy through the ERDF, the ESF and / or the Cohesion Fund, consistent with both the Regulations and the Member State's Partnership Agreement (Articles 27 and 96 CPR). Programmes financed through EAFRD are called rural programmes.
- **Partnership Agreement (PA):** document setting out a Member State's framework for support from the ESI Funds. It lays down in particular the list of thematic objectives to be supported under the ESI Funds, the respective financial allocations and the links between the different programmes (Article 14 CPR).
- **Rural Development Plans (RDPs):** EU rural development policy is implemented through national and/or regional rural development programmes (RDPs) which run for seven years.
- **Structural Funds:** the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund (Article 1 CPR).
- **Territories with specific geographical features:** regions with very low population density and islands, cross-border and mountainous regions.
- **Thematic concentration:** obligation for Member States to concentrate support on interventions that bring the greatest added value in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy. A key focus is concentrating ERDF and ESF financial allocations on a limited set of thematic objectives or investment priorities (Article 18 CPR).
- **Thematic Objective (TO):** each of the 11 objectives set out in Article 9 CPR, through which Operational Programmes contribute to the Union

strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. They regard research & innovation, ICT, SME competitiveness etc. (Article 9 CPR).

- **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**: specific instrument whereby the ESF supports the fight against youth unemployment. It targets all young persons under the age of 25 not in employment, education or training, residing in eligible regions, who are inactive or unemployed including the long-term unemployed, and whether or not registered as seeking work (Article 16 ESF regulation).
- **Performance framework**: consists of milestones established for each priority, for the year 2018 and targets established for 2023. Milestones are intermediate targets, directly linked to the achievement of the specific objective of a priority. Milestones established for 2018 will include financial indicators, output indicators and, where appropriate, result indicators, which are linked closely to the supported policy interventions (Annex II, CPR).

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is the final report for the study "Analysis of ERDF support for inclusive growth in the 2014-2020 programming period", assigned by the European Commission to the consortium of VVA, CSIL, IRS and Oxford Research. The report analyses and presents the results of the data collection activities, draws the main conclusions of the study and suggests recommendations regarding the future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the study is to compile a solid base of evidence that allow to assess how and to what extent the regulatory provisions relating to inclusive growth have been incorporated and addressed in the PAs and the OPs for the 2014 – 2020 programming period. The findings stemming from the research will ultimately feed into the debate about the future of Cohesion Policy after 2020, and improve the implementation of inclusive growth in the current programming period 2014-2020.

More specifically the study seeks to:

- Assess how inclusive growth is strategically programmed in the MS by analysing certain elements of all PAs as well as the relevant OPs (OPs) for the current programming period;
- Get a deeper insight in the OPs by developing and conducting an on-line survey and identifying the main strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks in programming and first implementation of inclusive growth ERDF investments based on interviews;
- Draw conclusions to feed in the reflections about the future European Cohesion policy.

1.2. Scope of the study

To conduct the assessment of the integration of inclusive growth into the current programming period the study has taken as unit of analysis the PAs and the OPs financed by ERDF including multi-fund programmes, but excluding the cross-border, transnational or interregional cooperation programmes. The following documents and programmes were scrutinised: PAs, ERDF mono-fund OPs, OPs co funded by the ERDF and the ESF. OPs co funded by the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (CF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

The analysis of these documents has been conducted from the inclusive growth perspective, therefore the thematic scope of the study has ranged from health to deinstitutionalisation, from education and training to social regeneration of deprived communities, from social housing to support to social enterprises. The analysis of these priority areas examined both interventions to address the general population, as well interventions that targeted specific groups - that because of specific circumstances or because of their more vulnerable status - maybe be at higher risk of social exclusion and segregation when compared with the general population. This is the case for instance of women, children, young and elderly people, disabled and homeless persons and ethnic minorities such as Roma. For this purpose, the integration in the policy documents of additional horizontal principles has also been

considered: promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, accessibility and demographic change.

However, in terms of targets, the analysis has not involved these final beneficiaries, it rather collected primary data via a survey and interviews from: policy ministries, MAs, DG REGIO and DG EMPL desk officers that are responsible for specific countries, inclusive growth and multi-fund OPs.

Regarding the geographical scope, the study has involved the EU, however the analysis of the negotiation process, programming and first implementation of inclusive growth was based and enriched through a deeper analysis in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

1.3. Presentation of the report

This report is structured as follows:

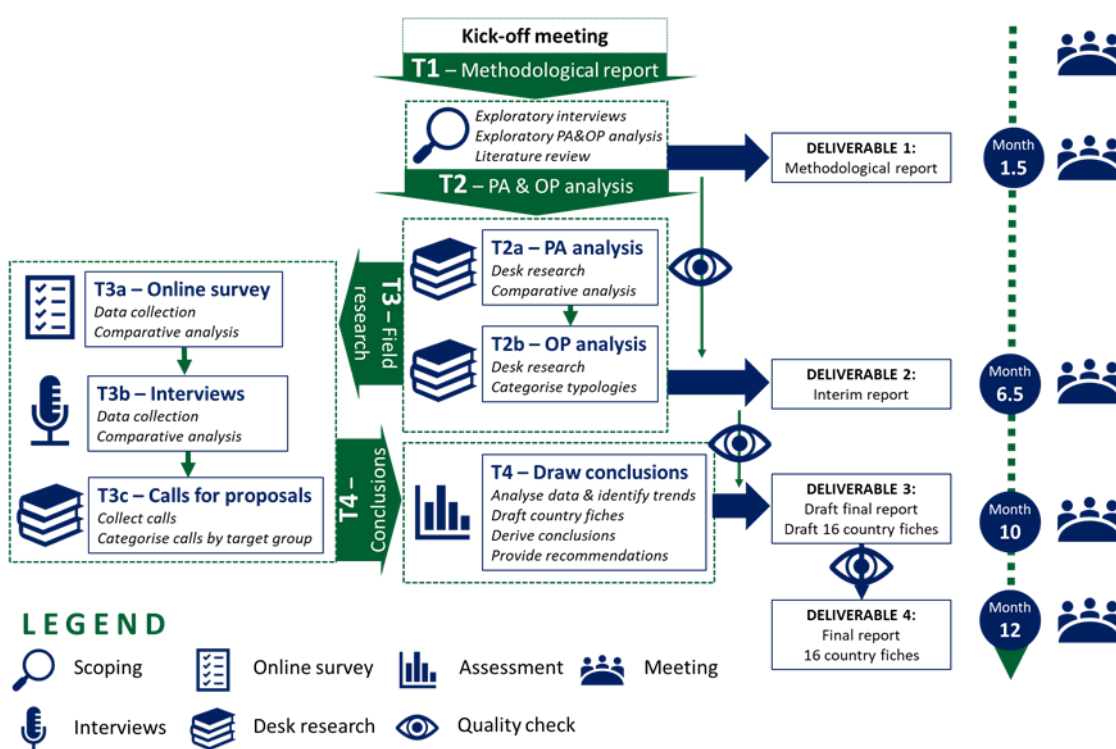
- Chapter 2 presents the methodology and approach to the study;
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Operational Programmes relevant to inclusive growth and the related budgetary allocation;
- Chapter 4 describes in detail the national and regional needs stated, target groups, actions, expected outcomes of the OPs assessed with the aim of illustrating their intervention logic in relation to the inclusive growth dimension;
- Chapter 5 and 6 provide a brief analysis on the way in which the territorial strategies and tools, as well as the horizontal principles, are applied from the inclusive growth perspective;
- Chapter 7 uses the results of the survey and the interviews with the MAs to describe the programming and negotiation process;
- Chapter 8 at the end draws the conclusions based on the data collection findings and suggests recommendations regarding the future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020.

2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology and the tools deployed to carry out the assignment. As planned in the methodological report (Task 1), the first nine months of the study were dedicated to a pan-European data collection effort. The data collection sought to understand the strategy of the programmes via document mapping (Task 2), as well as further information on the programming, negotiation and implementation processes from responsible Member State and Commission stakeholders (Task 3) in ERDF co-financed OPs that planned inclusive growth measures.

As a reminder, Figure 1 illustrates the methodology followed in this study, as described in the methodological report. According to this structure, this chapter will describe the results achieved within each task/sub-task.

Figure 1 Outline of the study's methodology



2.1. Task 1 Methodological report

2.2. Task 2a: Assessment of PAs

The objective of Task 2a was to conduct a comparative analysis of all 29 PAs to understand the different approaches taken by Member States towards supporting inclusive growth. The **PAs have been mapped and processed** via a centralised database of PA features (objectives for funding, partnership, approaches to ensure equality between men and women, and horizontal principles). The output of this task is a database of relevant PA characteristics, organised according to the national or regional needs identified for inclusive growth, the expected results

under each TO, the target groups covered by the partnership process, as well as the application of horizontal principles. Input from this analysis is used throughout this report.

2.3. Task 2b: Assessment of OPs

The objective of task 2b was to perform an in-depth desk research into the relevant OPs to understand the intervention logics in place to support inclusive growth – the needs addressed, target groups, actions, coherence of the strategy with the EU2020 strategy, Country Specific Recommendations and relevant national or regional strategies – as well as territorial strategies, and measures under relevant horizontal principles.

The **138 relevant ERDF co-financed OPs have been mapped and processed** via a centralised database. The quantitative information, and most of the qualitative information mapped and coded using standard high-level categories, has been analysed. The structure of the database follows the indications presented in the methodological report, and consists of 11 Excel sheets. Together, the Excel sheets cover all OP characteristics required in the Terms of Reference. In brief, the sheets could be divided into three groups:

- **Intervention logic** (sheets 1-4): the first set of sheets evaluates the identified national and regional needs that the OP seeks to address, its investment priorities for doing so, the specific actions planned, and the indicators used to measure progress.
- **Territorial strategies** (sheets 5-9): the second set assesses territorial strategies such as Community Led Local Development (CLLD), Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), along with specific strategies to deal with areas at risk of poverty or social exclusion, or areas suffering from severe/permanent handicaps.
- **Horizontal principles** (sheets 10-11): the final set of sheets describes the OPs arrangements to promote the horizontal principles required by the 2014-2020 ESIF regulations.⁷

2.4. Task 3a: Online survey

The objective of task 3a is to obtain input on the ERDF/multi-fund programming and negotiation process. Via an online survey, the task gathered the experiences of Managing Authorities (MAs) with the transposition of the regulatory framework obligations and the requirements in guidance documents, as well as their experiences of the negotiation process.

44 complete responses were collected from a target group of 138 OP MAs. The limited response rate is due to a lack of personal contact details of the target respondents, as well as to the beginning of the holiday season.

⁷ See Article 7 and Annex 1, point 5 of the common Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

The survey followed the objective of the task, and the broader study objectives by structuring the questions according to what type of input could complement results in other tasks. MAs were asked to evaluate both the ease of implementing inclusive growth provisions, as well as the usefulness of guidance documents. Respondents were also asked to reflect both on general and specific principles and new provisions related to inclusive growth like linkages to national health strategies, shift to community-based health and social services, inclusion principles in education such as fighting educational segregation, inclusion of the Roma, gender equality, accessibility of infrastructure and services, or demographic change.

To complete the analysis of the first implementation of the current programming period, selected lists of open calls were taken in consideration (Task 3c).

The survey addressed the MAs in charge of the 138 OPs relevant for this study. The survey has been developed and distributed using the online software SurveyMonkey. Respondents were also allowed to answer the survey online or in Word format, which they could submit to the study team by email. The questionnaire was available in five languages (English, French, Italian, Spanish and German), translated and checked by national experts.

The contact information of targeted respondents was prepared using:

- Contacts provided by DG REGIO and geographical desks within the Commission (generic addresses of the Managing Authorities);
- Contacts collected by the team from MA websites;
- Recalls, in selected cases, to collect direct addresses of the responsible person.
- Additional personal contacts provided by the Commission.

To increase the response rate, several email reminders were sent out to the MAs, and non-respondents were subsequently called by telephone to remind them to complete the online survey.

2.5. Task 3b: Interview programme

The objective of task 3b is to complement the feedback obtained through task 3a on the negotiation process and the main strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks in the programming of inclusive growth measures. In addition, task 3b also assesses the state of play of first implementation of such measures.

The planned interview programme targeted in the 16 selected Member States⁸ the following stakeholders:

⁸ Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain.

- one MA per relevant ERDF co-financed OP, including both mono- and multi-fund OPs (one person per MA);
- one relevant Policy Ministry per MS (one person per Policy Ministry);
- one third-sector stakeholder at national-level, in particular representatives of beneficiaries such as vulnerable groups (one person per MS).
- DG REGIO desk offices
- DG EMPL desk officer
- Children policy representative
- Migrant policy representative
- Roma policy representative

A total of 111 interviews were conducted.

The MAs targeted in this interview programme were a subset of those targeted by the task 3a survey. Out of the 138 relevant ERDF co-financed OPs, a total of 118 OPs were contacted under this sub-task, all in the 16 target MS. As regards relevant Policy Ministries that have contributed to shaping the OPs' strategies towards inclusive growth, and representatives of beneficiaries that are targeted by such strategies, suggestions came from national experts.

In addition, interviews have been held with DG REGIO and DG EMPL desk officers responsible for inclusive growth. The list of responsible officers was obtained from the Commission.

2.6. Task 3c: Analysis of a sample of call for proposals

Assessing the implementation of the inclusive growth actions in practice was done by analysing 16 calls for proposals in Central and Eastern European Member States: Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

The following areas of the calls were agreed upon with the Commission:

- Health;
- Shift to community-based services;
- Education and training;
- Access to childcare facilities and early childhood education and care;
- Social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas;
- Social housing;
- Support to social enterprises; and
- Educational and spatial segregation of marginalised communities (such as Roma, migrants and refugees)

Upon the agreement on the areas, 16 calls, minimum 2 per country, were selected based on the suggestions of the desk officers for each country.

The sample of countries and calls is purpose based. The calls were chosen based on a preliminary assessment in the thematic areas where some gaps had already been identified. Subsequently, a template for analysis was created and a team of experts analysed the calls in their native languages. The results of the calls' analysis are included in section 7.4.1 of this report.

2.7. Task 4: Reporting

The objective of this Task was reviewing and analysing the data and information gathered through the various tools and methods, and bringing the results together in order to draw lessons and make recommendations.

The core team has drafted conclusions aiming at identifying bottlenecks, as well as perceived difficulties, problems encountered during negotiation or during programming as well as fields for improvement. We have highlighted the added value of ERDF support for inclusive growth and which elements should be kept or strengthened in the future.

3. OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Key findings

KEY FINDINGS

- The main funding priorities that contribute to the 'inclusive growth' objectives are:
 - Thematic Objective 8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility (2.9 billion EUR from the ERDF);
 - Thematic Objective 9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination (11.4 billion EUR from the ERDF);
 - Thematic Objective 10. Investing in education, training and lifelong learning" (6.6 billion EUR from the ERDF).
- The share of allocation to TO8, 9 and 10 as compared to the total is 15.3% of ERDF contribution and 4.6% of all the ESIF OPs, which equals to 20.4 billion EUR.
- Moreover, interventions under Thematic Objective 1 "Strengthening research, technological development and innovation" and 2 "Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies" may also support inclusive growth. For instance, target research and innovation for helping vulnerable groups (e.g. in e-health initiative under TO1); or the provision of e-services (e-health, e-education, e-inclusion, under TO2).
- There are 456 Operational Programmes under the ESIF in the programming period 2014-2020, excluding the cross-border and transnational OPs. Our analysis revealed that 138 of these programmes support inclusive growth under the ERDF. This constitutes 30% of all 2014-2020 OPs and 44% of all ERDF co-financed OPs.
- The countries with the highest ERDF allocation for inclusive growth are Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. While on the other hand, Sweden, Austria and Cyprus have the lowest amount of ERDF allocation to support inclusive growth.
- There are 12 countries which have opted for a mono-fund approach and have not planned ESF funding in any of the analysed ERDF OPs: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania and the United Kingdom.

3.2. Introduction

The TFEU⁹ sets out economic, social and territorial cohesion as an overarching goal of the EU. This goal is pursued primarily through the Union's cohesion policy, based on the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds for the creation of infrastructure and productive job-creating investments, as well as the promotion of employment, social inclusion, and human capital.¹⁰

Cohesion policy is characterised as the EU's main investment policy with the objective to reduce social and territorial inequalities, targeting all regions and cities in the European Union in order to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens' quality of life.¹¹ It is delivered through three main funds:

- **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF):** aims to strengthen regional economic and social cohesion by investing in growth-enhancing sectors to improve competitiveness and create jobs. The ERDF also finances cross-border cooperation projects.
- **European Social Fund (ESF):** invests in people, with a focus on improving employment and education opportunities. It also aims to help disadvantaged people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- **Cohesion Fund (CF):** invests in green growth and sustainable development, and improves connectivity in Member States with a GDP below 90% of the EU-27 average.

In order to promote territorial cohesion, the EU's cohesion policy has traditionally allocated large amounts of funding to investment in regions identified as falling behind. In many countries and regions since the economic and financial crisis the ESIF have become the main financial source to tackle regional development issues.

These investments help to deliver EU policy objectives. In particular, cohesion policy provides the necessary investment framework and strategy to meet the agreed growth goals strategy. In the EU2020¹² strategy, which adopts an **inclusive growth** objective with renewed commitment to ambitious employment, education and social objectives on equal standing with the economic ones, inclusive growth is described as "empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, training and social protection systems so as to help people anticipate and manage change, and build a cohesive society. It is also essential that the benefits of economic growth spread to all parts of the Union, including its outermost regions, thus strengthening territorial

9 European Union (2010) Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union C83, 30.10.2010, Article 174.

10 European Union (2017) Regional Policy, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/what/investment-policy/

11 European Commission (2014), An Introduction to EU Cohesion Policy, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/basic/basic_2014_en.pdf

12 Communication from the Commission EU2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010) 2020 of 3 March 2010; European Council Conclusions of 17 June 2010.

cohesion. It is about ensuring access and opportunities for all throughout the lifecycle".¹³

In general, inclusive growth refers to one of the three general objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, which aims at "fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion". This involves the need to raise employment, skills levels, and to reduce poverty in Europe. Four headline targets are linked to this aim¹⁴:

- a) Raise the employment rate of 20-64-year-olds to 75%;
- b) Reduce school drop-out rates below 10%;
- c) Ensure that at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds complete third-level education;
- d) Ensure 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty/social exclusion.

Furthermore, within the strategic and regulatory¹⁵ framework for 2014-2020 for the European Structural and Investment Funds, 11 thematic objectives are supported:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT)
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning

13 Communication from the Commission EU2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010) 2020 of 3 March 2010; European Council Conclusions of 17 June 2010.

14 Communication from the Commission EU2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, COM (2010) 2020 of 3 March 2010; European Council Conclusions of 17 June 2010.

15 Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006.

11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

Out of the above mentioned Thematic Objectives, the funding priorities that have the closest connection to contributing to the high-level 'inclusive growth' objectives mentioned above are as follows:

- Thematic Objective 8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
- Thematic Objective 9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
- Thematic Objective 10. Investing in education, training and lifelong learning

Moreover, interventions under Thematic Objective 1 "Strengthening research, technological development and innovation" and 2 "Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies" may also specifically target, and have significant contributions to, inclusive growth. These would mainly target research and innovation helping vulnerable groups (e.g. in e-health initiative under TO1); or the provision of e-services (e-health, e-education, e-inclusion, under TO2).

3.3. Programmes supporting inclusive growth

In total, there are 456 Operational Programmes under the ESIF in the programming period 2014-2020, excluding the cross-border or transnational OPs (but including the programmes co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development /EAFRD/ and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund /EMFF/). Out of this number, 215 Operational Programmes are financed by the ERDF and co-funded by ESF, CF and the Youth European Initiative. Furthermore, based on the inclusive growth definition specified above and also based on the selection of the Thematic Objectives that contribute to the inclusive growth (TO1, 2, 8, 9, 10), there are 138 Programmes supporting inclusive growth in total, while being co-financed by the ERDF. These Programmes were analysed for the purposes of this study. The table below presents the OPs in total, the OPs co-financed by ERDF, ESF, YEI and CF, furtherly OPs which are co-financed by ERDF and the OPs supporting inclusive growth and falling within the scope of this study. The table presents this number per country as well as in total number.

Table 1 Number of OPs within the scope of this study by Member State

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Multi-fund OPs (Co-financed from ERDF, ESF, YEI, CF)	Co-financed from ERDF	OPs within scope
Austria	4	2	1	1
Belgium	10	7	3	3
Bulgaria	10	8	6	2

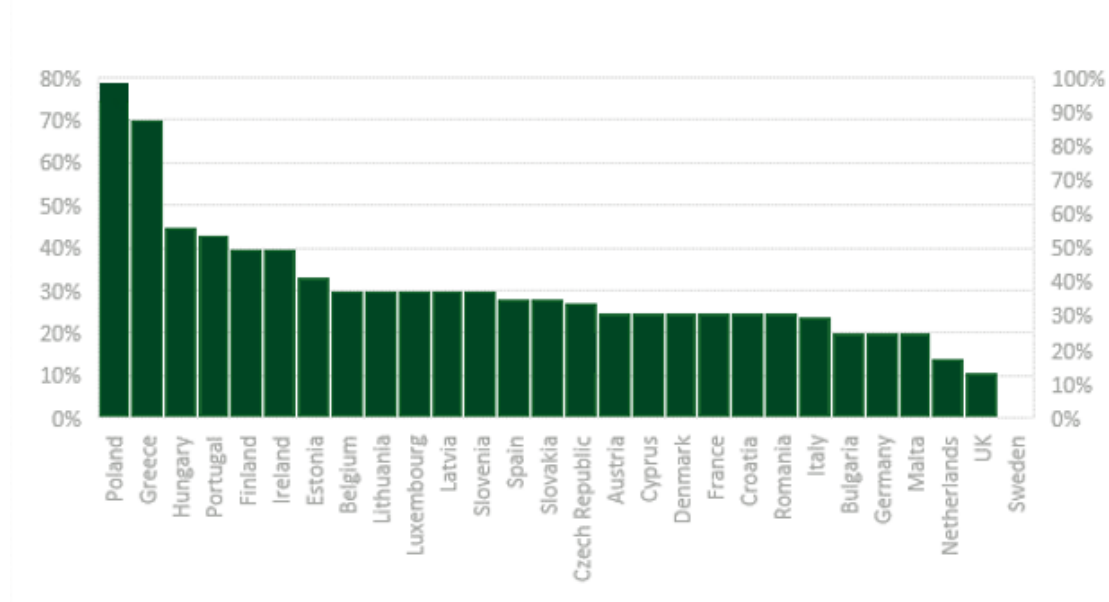
Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Multi-fund OPs (Co-financed from ERDF, ESF, YEI, CF)	Co-financed from ERDF	OPs within scope
Cyprus	4	2	1	1
Czech Republic	11	9	7	3
Germany	47	32	16	10
Denmark	4	2	1	1
Estonia	3	1	1	1
Spain	64	45	22	18
Finland	5	2	2	2
France	70	40	34	18
Greece	20	18	17	14
Croatia	4	2	1	1
Hungary	9	7	6	4
Ireland	5	3	2	2
Italy	75	51	30	18
Lithuania	3	1	1	1
Luxembourg	3	2	1	1
Latvia	3	1	1	1
Malta	5	3	2	1
Netherlands	7	5	4	1
Poland	24	22	20	19
Portugal	16	12	9	7
Romania	8	6	4	2
Sweden	13	11	10	1
Slovenia	3	1	1	1

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Multi-fund OPs (Co-financed from ERDF, ESF, YEI, CF)	Co-financed from ERDF	OPs within scope
Slovakia	9	7	6	2
United Kingdom	17	12	6	2
TOTAL	456	314	215	138

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs.

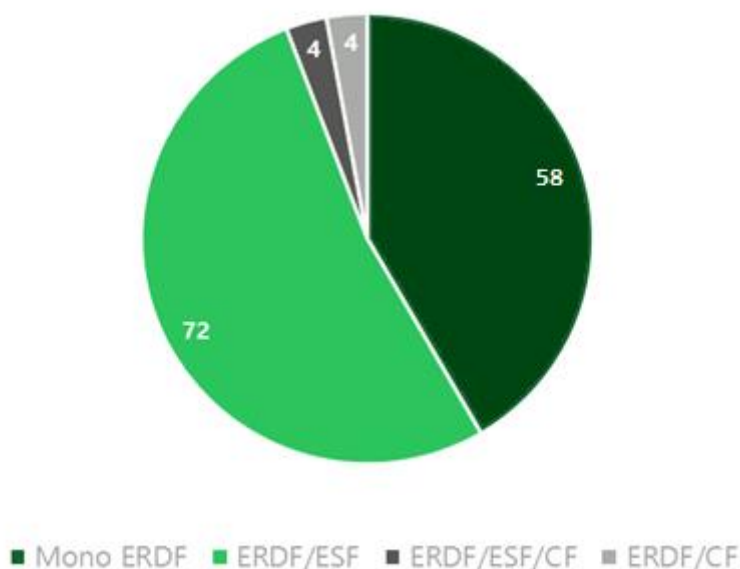
The 138 Programmes supporting inclusive growth in total constitute 30% of all 2014-2020 OPs and 44% of all ERDF co-financed OPs. In addition, 111 of the selected OPs are regional, 17 are sectoral and 10 national. The countries with the highest proportion of the OPs supporting inclusive growth in the programming period 2014-2020 are Poland, where 19 out of 24, or 79%, OPs support inclusive growth co-financed by the ERDF and Greece, where 14 out of 20, equalling to 70%, OPs in total support inclusive growth co-financed by the ERDF. On the other hand, Sweden (0.7%), United Kingdom (11%) and the Netherlands (14%) have the lowest share of the total number of the OPs that support inclusive growth. The rest of the countries range between 20% (Bulgaria, Malta and Denmark) and 45% (Hungary), as shown in the figure below.

Figure 2 Percentage of the Operational Programmes supporting inclusive growth per country



Most of the Operational Programmes supporting inclusive growth were ERDF and ESF co-financed (72). The number of the OPs that were financed solely by ERDF is 58, four OPs were co-financed by ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund and four more additional OPs were financed by the combination of the ERDF and CF, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3 Number of mono- and multi-fund OPs supporting inclusive growth, by type of funding



There are 12 countries which have opted for a mono-fund approach and have not planned in ESF funding in any of their ERDF OPs analysed: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania and the United Kingdom. However, even though the ERDF programmes may not be multi-fund, there is usually one or more corresponding national ESF OP, or a regional OP, with which its implementation is coordinated. The mapping of OPs has identified concrete linked ESF OPs in 6 of the above-mentioned countries:

- In Belgium, links have been established to the regional ESF OPs of Wallonia and Brussels, which address important socio-economic challenges, supporting in particular young people and disadvantaged persons;
- the Cypriot Operational Programme Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion promotes employment and social inclusion;
- the Operational Programme 'Efficient Human Resources' of Croatia aims to contribute to creating jobs and strengthening social cohesion;
- the Romanian Operational Programme 'Human Capital' aims to invest in employment, education, the fight against poverty and support for social services;
- in Germany, the Brandenburg ERDF OP has established a clear link to its ESF counterpart to support sustainable employment, promote social inclusion and invest in education and training;

- in Spain, 5 different regional ESF OPs (Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Ceuta, Melilla and Navarra) aim to facilitate access to the labour market.

The table below presents the number of mono-fund ERDF OPs by Member State that are linked to a corresponding ESF OP via coordinated calls, or other mechanisms.

Table 2 Number of ERDF OPs linking to an ESF OP

Member State	Number of OPs involving ERDF funding	Number of OPs that have referred to a ESF OP	ESF OP Name
Austria	-	-	-
Belgium	3	2	ESF OP of Wallonia Region
			ESF OP of Brussels region
Croatia	1	1	OP under the 'Investment for growth and jobs' goal
Cyprus	1	1	Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion
Germany	10	1	OP ESF Brandenburg
Denmark	1	-	-
Spain	14	7	Corresponding regional ESF OP
Ireland	2	-	-
Luxembourg	1	-	-
Malta	1	-	-
Romania	2	2	ESF Human Capital OP
			Competitiveness OP
United Kingdom	2	-	-

For several of the ERDF OPs reviewed, including all the OPs from six Member States (Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, and the United Kingdom), the researchers did not map any concrete link to an ESF counterpart. This does not necessarily mean that no such links exist, however. Coordinated calls may also be implemented among the rest of the OPs, even though the mapping could not confirm these.

3.4. Budgetary provisions for inclusive growth

In the current programming period 2014-2020 the EU has allocated 351.8 billion EUR (which equals to 32.5% of the overall EU multiannual budget of 1,082 billion EUR for this period) to ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund delivering its cohesion policy.¹⁶ The level of the EU investment per country depends on the development needs of each Member State. For these purposes the regions are categorised as follows:

- more developed: where GDP per inhabitant was less than 75 % of the EU-27 average;
- transition regions: where GDP per inhabitant was between 75 % and 90 % of the EU-27 average; and
- less developed: where GDP per inhabitant was less than 75 % of the EU-27 average.¹⁷

Depending on this criteria, the funding can then contribute from 50% to 85% of the total financing of the project, the rest of the funding being provided by either public (national or regional) or private sources.¹⁸ As seen in the table below, the largest amounts of the Cohesion policy budget are allocated to Poland, Italy, Spain, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Germany, Greece, France, and Slovakia.

Table 3 Total allocations of EU contributions by Member State (million EUR)

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Cohesion Policy OPs (co-financed from ERDF, ESF, YEI and CF)	OPs co-financed from ERDF	OPs within scope
Austria	4,923	978	536	536
Belgium	2,710	2,021	950	950
Bulgaria	9,878	7,423	6,199	1,555
Cyprus	874	702	562	292

¹⁶ European Commission (2014), An Introduction to EU Cohesion Policy, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/basic/basic_2014_en.pdf

¹⁷ Eurostat (2017), The NUTS classification – an objective basis for the allocation of funds, Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/regions>

¹⁸ European Commission (2014), An Introduction to EU Cohesion Policy, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/basic/basic_2014_en.pdf

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Cohesion Policy OPs (co-financed from ERDF, ESF, YEI and CF)	OPs co-financed from ERDF	OPs within scope
Czech Republic	24,204	21,867	19,497	1,671
Germany	27,873	18,269	11,061	9,278.7
Denmark	1,251	413	207	207
Estonia	4,459	3,535	3,535	1,874
Spain	37,401	27,942	19,409	17,747
Finland	3,759	1,304	1,304	768.3
France	26,736	14,763	10,664	1, 130.5
Greece	20,382	15,275	13,170	3867.2
Croatia	10,742	8,463	6,83	4,312.5
Hungary	25,014	21,544	20,749	904.8
Ireland	3,358	1,020	409	250
Italy	42,768	31,786	23,718	17,539
Lithuania	8,386	6,709	6,709	2,048.9
Luxembourg	140	40	20	19.5
Latvia	5,634	4,418	4,418	2,401.2
Malta	828	708	602	217.7
Netherlands	1,723	1,015	507	189
Poland	85,996	76,866	71,477	38,204
Portugal	25,793	21,405	13,864	224
Romania	30,838	22,541	17,661	6,600
Sweden	3,647	1,764	953	850

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Cohesion Policy OPs (co-financed from ERDF, ESF, YEI and CF)	OPs co-financed from ERDF	OPs within scope
Slovenia	3,875	3,012	3,012	1,309
Slovakia	15,329	13,768	13,490	1,754.5
United Kingdom	16,417	10,974	5,826	1,206.1
Total	444,938	340,525	277,340	81,897

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs.

Each country has then decided on the share of the budget which would be allocated to separate thematic objectives. **Thematic Objective 8** Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility, has in total been allocated 2.9 billion EUR from the ERDF funds. The country which has contributed the most to this Thematic Objective is Hungary (1.3 billion EUR) followed by Lithuania (421 million EUR). On the contrary, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia and Sweden have not allocated any ERDF funding to this Thematic Objective.

Thematic Objective 9 Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination, which has been allocated the most out of the three inclusive growth related TOs, was given 11.4 billion EUR of the ERDF in total. Almost all of the countries with the exception of Luxembourg, Ireland, Finland and Denmark have allocated ERDF funding to this TO. Poland (3 billion EUR), Czech Republic (1 billion EUR) and Italy (1.1 billion EUR) are amongst the other Member States the countries that have allocated the largest shares of the ERDF funding to this TO.

Lastly, **Thematic Objective 10**, Investing in education, training and lifelong learning have been allocated 6.6 billion EUR from the total ERDF budget. Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom have not allocated any ERDF finances for this TO. Countries allocating the most of the ERDF funding to this TO, out of the 28 Member States, are the Czech republic (906 million EUR), Italy (899 million EUR), and Poland (666 million EUR).

The rest of the ERDF allocations for the TO8, 9 and 10 as well as allocations from other ESI funds (ESF, YEI, CF, EAFRD and EMFF) for these Thematic Objectives per country are presented in the table below.

Table 4 Total allocations of EU contributions to T08-10 by Member State (million EUR)

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	T08		T09		T010		T08-10	
		ERDF	Other	ERDF	Other	ERDF	Other	ERDF	Other
Austria	4,923	10	93	11	542		268	21	903
Belgium	2,710		416	19	389	28	305	47	1,110
Bulgaria	9,878		620	233	967	170	317	403	1,904
Croatia	874		666	357	615	271	462	628	1,743
Cyprus	24,204		94	15	41		27	15	162
Czech Republic	27,873		1,397	1,049	941	906	1,054	1,955	3,392
Denmark	1,251		85		85		98		268
Estonia	4,459	166	320	254	215	218	206	638	741
Finland	37,401		347		248		199		794
France	3,759	48	2,475	312	2,908	128	1,923	488	7,306
Germany	26,736		2,320	596	4,570		2,550	596	9,440
Greece	20,382		1,823	239	1,230	287	1,021	526	4,074
Hungary	10,742	1,325	1,993	863	1,483	418	1,270	2,606	4,746
Ireland	25,014		308		351		175		834
Italy	3,358		5,022	1,127	2,914	899	3,200	2,026	11,136
Latvia	42,768		284	193	279	277	261	470	824
Lithuania	8,386	421	400	316	378	209	475	946	1,253
Luxembourg	140		11		11		4		26
Malta	5,634		24	55	37	27	42	82	103
Netherlands	828	12	126	22	401		7	34	534
Poland	1,723	233	5,563	3,000	3,874	666	4,105	3,899	13,542
Portugal	85,996	152	1,890	530	2,038	481	3,873	1,163	7,801

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	TO8		TO9		TO10		TO8-10	
		ERDF	Other	ERDF	Other	ERDF	Other	ERDF	Other
Romania	25,793	101	2,234	571	2,815	362	1,317	1,034	6,366
Slovak Republic	30,838	216	1,050	837	580	263	469	1,316	2,099
Slovenia	3,647		380	75	187	20	219	95	786
Spain	3,875	43	4,831	688	2,900	442	1,994	1,173	9,725
Sweden	15,329		464	8	306		259	8	1,029
United Kingdom	16,417	167	2,132	51	1,258		2,154	218	5,544
Total	444,938	2,894	37,372	11,420	32,562	6,071	28,255	20,385	98,189

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs.

Percentage-wise, as a total share of the ERDF funding compared to the Cohesion policy funding (includes ERDF, ESF, YEI, CF, EAFRD and EMFF) allocated per Thematic Objective, the largest share to the Thematic Objective 8 have been allocated in Estonia (3.7%), Hungary (5.3%) and Lithuania (5%). Thematic Objective 9 has gotten the largest share of the ERDF in the Czech Republic (4.3%), Estonia (5.7%), Malta (6.7%) and Slovakia (5.5%). Lastly, Thematic Objective 10 has been funded from the ERDF into a large extend in the Czech Republic (3.7%), Estonia (4.9%), Latvia (4.9%), Malta (3.2%), Lithuania (2.5%) and Croatia (2.5%), as illustrated in the chart overleaf.

The decision of certain Member States to not allocate ERDF resources – or only limited resources – to one or more of the three Thematic Objectives focusing on inclusive growth may be due to strategic consideration but can also be influenced by the need to comply with the ‘thematic concentration’ principle, especially in more developed regions. The principle aims at facilitating a better alignment of funded actions with the Europe 2020 strategy. For ERDF, the focus of spending was put on 4 Thematic Objectives: innovation and research (TO1); the Digital Agenda (TO2); support for SMEs (TO3; the shift towards a low-carbon economy (TO4). The regulation¹⁹ envisaged that at least 80% of ERDF had to focus on at least two of the above TOs in more developed regions, 60/ in transition regions and 50% in less developed regions. This left very little room for manoeuvre in the national envelopes especially in more developed regions, and in many places the authorities opted for not covering the inclusive growth-related Thematic Objectives.

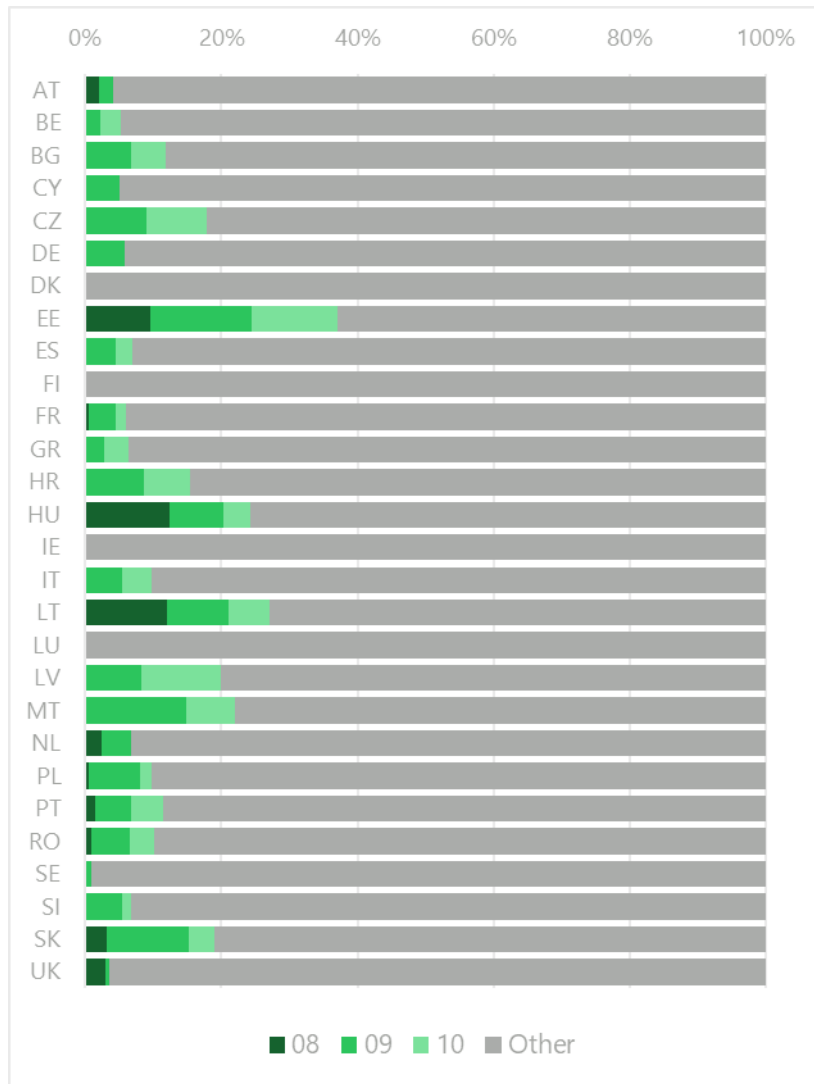
19 REGULATION (EU) No 1301/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006

Figure 4 Share of funding to Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10 within total EC contributions to national OPs (excluding cross-border and transnational OPs)



The Member States allocating the largest share of their ERDF financing envelope for supporting inclusive growth under TOs 8, 9 and 10 are: Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia and Malta. As presented in the figure below, TO 9 is the most funded of the three TOs among the EU28, followed by TO10 and TO8. Four MS, however, allocated 0% of their ERDF co-financing to any of the TO 8, 9 and 10: Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg. On average, the proportion of the ERDF funding allocated to these objectives is 14.7%.

Figure 5 Share of ERDF funding going to T08-10



Institutional framework

Cohesion policy in the EU touches all the Member States at all levels, having a national, regional and local scale. The programming and implementation of the OPs should rely on the partnership principle²⁰ following the regulatory requirement of the Cohesion Policy framework, which requires the involvement of regional and local authorities in the OPs formulation and their implementation. In this partnership principle, the role for the economic and social partners, NGOs and civil society bodies involved in the OP programming have been specified as well. The cooperation on several levels involving numerous partners have evolved into a multilevel governance, contributing to greater effectiveness, legitimacy and transparency and a greater commitment and ownership of the programme outputs.²¹

The interviews performed with the third sector organisations, managing authorities, policy ministries and the geo-desk officers in DG REGIO and DG EMPL have shown that in general, involving third sector organisations and civil society bodies in the programming process has proven to be a good practice. The partners get involved in elaboration of guidelines, evaluations of the projects, assessments, monitoring, selections of concepts, providing guidance, creating synergies with the ESIF actions and consultations. Where involved, the social partners are generally considered to contribute significantly to a better and more comprehensive programming by many policy ministries and managing authorities, bringing in field expertise. On the other hand, some countries also opted for the help and assistance of external experts. The Commission values the input of third sector organisations and their contact with the desk officers to better understand and prevent any potential misuse of funds and bad practices. In this sense, the desk officers interviewed consider the role of the third sector organisations valuable, as they themselves do not have direct access to assess the situation at the local level.

Despite these considerations not all the countries have applied a decentralised and more inclusive approach to the management of the funds. This section presents different types of approaches for managing the OPs across the selected 16 Member States.

Based on the involvement of these actors as well as the level of their involvement in the process and the type of the government managing the Operational Programme, the countries have been divided into two types²²:

20 Batory, A. (2011), Re-visiting the Partnership Principle in Cohesion Policy: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Structural Funds Monitoring, Available at:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/40100679/Revisiting_the_Partnership_Principle_in_20151117-20553-1ok4qoz.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1512411130&Signature=FqMsEvs1MkgP1x2PNADdv%2BWh6dw%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DRe-visiting_the_Partnership_Principle_in.pdf

21 European Parliament (2014), An Assessment of Multilevel Governance In Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/514004/IPOL-REGI_ET\(2014\)514004_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/514004/IPOL-REGI_ET(2014)514004_EN.pdf)

22 The countries divided into two parts include only the 16 countries

- **Centralised:** countries where the OPs are managed at a central ministry level; and
- **Decentralised:** countries where regional authorities run all, or most of the programmes as Managing Authorities.

The table below presents the summary of the level of centralisation in the 16 MSs assessed. As presented, the centralisation of the country depends on the country's administrative setting (for example, whether the country is a federation such as Germany or a devolved country such as Italy) as well as on the size of the country – where smaller states such as Slovakia, Croatia or Lithuania tend to be more centralised. In other words, the theme of the OPs, i.e. inclusive growth, does not determine the managerial level of the OP.

Table 5 Level of centralisation/decentralisation in the management of the OPs in the 16 Member States analysed

Centralised	Decentralised
Bulgaria	France
Latvia	Germany
Croatia	Greece
Czech Republic	Italy
Estonia	Poland
Hungary	Portugal
Lithuania	Spain
Romania	
Slovakia	

In **Bulgaria**, a total of eight managing authorities are responsible for the implementation of the OPs, all of them ministries, making Bulgaria a centralised country. There are two managing authorities responsible for the selected Operational Programmes, namely: the Ministry for Regional Development and Public Works, which also includes 39 Intermediate bodies – 39 municipalities) and the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Ministry of Finance manages the OP in **Latvia** with the help of other ministries such as Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Agriculture.

In **Croatia**, there is a single operational programme with ERDF funding, managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds.

Ministry of Finance is the Managing authority and the Audit Authority for the Operational Programme in **Estonia**.

The managing authorities responsible for the selected operational programmes in **Hungary** are the Ministry of Human Resources (HRDOP) and the Ministry of

National Economy (EDIOP, TSDOP, CCHOP – the latter two being managed by a different department).

Ministry of Finance acts as the Managing Authority in **Lithuania**. For the programming and implementation of TOs 8, 9 and 10 the MA is supported by the first level intermediate bodies (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and Science) and second level intermediate bodies (Central Project Management Agency, European Social Fund Agency, Lithuanian Research Council, Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology, Investment and Business Guarantees).

Two ministries are responsible for the Operational Programmes in **Slovakia**: the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

The Czech Republic involves two ministries (Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic and Ministry for Education, Youth and Sports) and the Prague City Council managing the OP Prague – Growth Pole.

In **Romania**, the OPS are managed at national level by the Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds, which acts as the Managing Authority. However, their implementation is partially realised through intermediary bodies, namely the Regional Development Agencies. Regional Development Agencies, corresponding to the NUTs III level, were created in 1998, through the voluntary association of existing counties, in order to ensure the achievement of the regional development objectives. There are 8 Regional Development Agencies in Romania: North-East, North-West, South-East, South-West, South-Muntenia, West, Centre and Bucharest-Ilfov.

In **France**, the OPs are managed by Regional Councils, which is a novelty compared to the past programming periods, when the OPs used to be managed by the regional representatives of the central governments in the region. This makes France a highly decentralised country.

In **Germany**, a total of twenty-five managing authorities are responsible for programming of the OPs, most of them regional ministries with the exception of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, responsible for the Operational Programme ESF Federal Germany 2014-2020.

In **Italy**, Regional OPs are managed by Regional Councils, sometimes in collaboration with local stakeholders (such as Chambers of Commerce). Moreover, Bolzano OP is managed by the relevant Autonomous Province government. MAs for National OP are Ministries or Government agencies selected for their expertise on specific topics.

In **Poland**, all regional programmes MAs are located in Marshals' offices (regional level self-government offices). These MAs are responsible for implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of their respective operational programmes. Overall coordination is provided by Ministry of Development. For the two national level programmes, Ministry of Development holds its MA role. For the OP Infrastructure and Environment, the role of Intermediate institutions for actions connected to TO 9 in the area of health care system is Ministry of Health.

Two Regional Governments and five Regional Coordination and Development Commissions are responsible for managing the seven selected Operational Programmes in **Portugal**.

Lastly, the Managing Authorities in **Spain** also consist of 16 regional offices and two Ministries for the national Operational Programmes.

Fourteen OPs have been selected for the purposes of this study for **Greece**, one national and thirteen regional programmes. The Ministry of Economy and Development is responsible for the OP Public Sector Reform 2014-2020 while the thirteen regional programmes are managed by the managing authorities located in the capital of each region, making Greece a mixed MS.

4. THE LOGIC OF INTERVENTION FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

4.1. Key findings

KEY FINDINGS

- In line with the budget allocation, OPs funding interventions in more developed regions are considerably less likely to contain measures under TOs 8, 9 and 10.
- There are apparent differences between the number of OPs addressing corresponding topics as 'needs' and as 'actions', suggesting that the actions are not always underpinned by the needs in sufficient depth in the OPs' strategy section. For example a small number of OPs spell out the clear need of the transition to community-based services in health and social care, whilst there are many more OPs that include deinstitutionalization actions .
- Inclusive growth considerations only play a relatively minor role under TO2. In addition, needs under TO2 are mostly related to the general population.
- Thematic Objective 9 is the most often addressed objective within the needs. It is included in 103 out of the 127 OPs where any inclusive-growth relevant need has been mapped.
- Thematic Objective 8 shows few needs and many actions. The most prevalent need associated with TO8 (59 OPs mentioned it) is improving employability of disadvantaged groups and the long-term unemployed (LTU): this need typically requires ESF interventions focused on training and complex mentoring initiatives to help those who are on the labour market and ready to work, but do not have access to employment opportunities. ERDF may play a supplementary role in addressing this need. Although, when looking at investments, actions are only programmed under ESF and YEI, or mentioned only as a strategic background to TO9 and TO10. More details about the complementarity between ESF and ERDF should be indicated in the OPs' strategies.

Together with the need of providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities and fighting housing segregation (mentioned in 51 OPs), promoting social integration of vulnerable and marginalised group is the most mentioned need under TO9 (71 OPs). These needs are more likely to be present in the OPs covering (predominantly) transition and less developed regions that face significant problems of social exclusion, including large numbers of migrant and Roma population concentrated in densely inhabited urban areas, but also elderly and disabled people.

- The needs to replace institutional care with community-based services, and to support the social economy are similarly more often identified in the OPs covering less developed regions. However, the degree of correspondence between needs and action in replacing institutional care with community-based services is low: 25 OPs have included actions concerning this need, but the mapping of their intervention strategy has found only 7 OPs where the need was specified. Similarly, there is a significant level of discrepancy in relation to interventions in the social economy.
- Under the last Thematic Objective relevant to inclusive growth, TO10, the type of action concern investments aiming to increase the availability of early childhood education and care facilities and education institutions. Whilst 49 OPs contain this type of action, only 28 OPs have identified the need to upgrade infrastructure for education and training. This may be partly explained by the fact that several of these actions are classified in the OPs under TO8.
- The level of quantification of inclusive growth-related needs mapped is especially high in Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Romania and France. At the other end of the scale, OPs from Lithuania, Germany, Hungary and Greece tend to quantify the needs to a lesser extent in the first strategy chapter.
- Overall, it emerges that countries and regions have sometimes limited abilities in identifying and monitoring new and emerging societal challenges, translated in needs. At the same time the priorities and the actions suggested at the EU level are perhaps too advanced and therefore they require more guidance, as well as a specific use of technical assistance, and more political willingness to be implemented.
- The guidance fiches issued by the Commission to support the programming and implementation processes are considered very useful by the stakeholders, although there was a lack of time alignment between the issuance of the guidelines and the draft of the programme. This has somehow neutralised the benefits of the guidance.
- Links with Country Specific Recommendations have been explicitly mentioned in a minority of OPs. 32 out of 97 OPs (33%) that have identified needs connected to TO8 have made a clear reference to a corresponding CSR. 36 OPs identified social inclusion related needs made the link to a corresponding CSR (35%), and 25 OPs describing education and training-related needs have referenced a relevant CSR (28%). One explanation for the low percentages of CSR coverage is the thematic concentration. The allocations of more developed regions are mainly focused on research and innovation, followed by support for SMEs and low carbon economy. This situation leads to smaller presence of recommendations linked to inclusive growth.

- A number of Member States referred to the recommendations in all of their relevant OPs: Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands – these being typically national OPs. The coverage of CSRs in the OPs is weaker in the Czech Republic (no CSR included), France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain – with several of the OPs not covering CSRs being at regional level.
- It has to be said that although the explicit link to relevant Country-Specific Recommendations has not been made in about half of the OPs analysed, according to the mapping, most of them do explain how they contribute to, or take into account, the key national or regional strategies in the inclusive-growth relevant areas with the OPs.

4.2. Introduction

The actions co-funded from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are all based – or ought to be based – on a clear intervention logic, in accordance with the EU’s relevant regulation and its strategic framework²³, and with the Commission’s guidance on the structure and content of Operational Programmes.²⁴

This intervention logic departs from the assessment and identification of the most pressing needs in the country or region covered by the Operational Programmes. Then it elaborates specific objectives and the concrete actions, where relevant directed at specific target groups, addressing these needs; allocates funding to the interventions; sets out expected outputs for the individual actions; and establishes the overall results that should be achieved through the combination of actions. A good intervention logic can ensure that the funds deployed will address the needs in an effective and efficient manner, and that the objectives and actions will be coherent internally, within the range of ESIF-co-financed interventions, and externally, with the EU’s goals and principles, as well as with the country’s or region’s policies and its specific context. It should not be a technical exercise developed specifically for the OP but be based on relevant national or regional strategies. The existence of such strategies has also been required by the legal background for the implementation of European cohesion policy in the 2014-2020 programming period (in the Common Provisions Regulation) - the requirement being defined as an ‘ex-ante conditionality’ (EAC) for the adoption of programmes, with most of these conditionalities demanding the existence of a strategic reference framework on a given topic.²⁵

To support the programming and negotiation process, the Commission has prepared thematic guidance fiches²⁶ related to individual Thematic Objectives; in

23 Annex I of the Common Provisions Regulation. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303>

24 Recital 88 of the Common Provisions Regulation stipulates that the guidance shall facilitate the presentation of a consistent intervention logic. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/guidance_op_140314.pdf

25 Ex ante conditionalities are introduced by Article 19 of the Common Provisions Regulation. General, and the applicable conditionalities are specified in the Annex XI.

26 Guidance on European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/guidance/

some cases, to subtopics. For TO9 and TO10, several such fiches discussing individual topics have been issued, such as on deinstitutionalisation and early school leaving. Topics such as 'health' are partly transversal, affecting the programming of multiple Thematic Objectives (e.g. TOs 1, 2, 8 and 10, apart from TO9 where the focus of investments related to health lies), thus the guidance fiche on health discusses relevant policy aspects pertaining to several Thematic Objectives. These fiches present to varying detail the relevant policy background, the main problems to be addressed and the drivers of these problems. Interviews with the managing authorities have shown that these guidance fiches are very appreciated; many managing authorities and Policy ministries finding them clear, useful and helpful. However, some weak points of the guidance expressed were that the documents were provided too late, which could cause setbacks in the implementation. In some cases, the guidance were issued after the Operational Programme had been written. Another problem mentioned was that the fiches are dense or too extensive. In practice, the abundance of the provided information outweighs the ability to absorb all the information by the MA staff. More concrete instructions would have been welcomed.

In essence, this section presents the main elements of the intervention logics of the OPs – the national and regional needs stated, the target groups, actions, and coherence with the EU's objectives – that are relevant to ERDF support to inclusive growth. The needs as well as the actions described in the OPs have been coded into a limited number of categories, developed for this study by the researchers in collaboration with the Commission. The section shows how often these categories appear in individual OPs, and tries to identify patterns by country, type of Operational Programme, and region category.

Both 'needs' and 'actions' address similar topics connected to ESIF support to inclusive growth, but they differ in where and how they are discussed in the OPs, and their place in the intervention logic.

- 'Needs', sometimes expressed in problems or challenges that the country or region faces, sometimes - in a more active voice - as a need for intervention, are described in the OPs' first section presenting their strategy to contribute to the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion. How needs are presented does not follow a strict pre-defined template: they may be grouped under Thematic Objectives or being structured differently, they have varying length and depth, with varying levels of quantification both within and across OPs. Their role is to underpin the strategic choices made – the selection of TOs and Investment Priorities and the funding allocated. The described needs were allocated to a given Thematic Objective by the researchers.
- 'Actions' are the planned support measures under individual priority axes, clearly categorised under a specific Thematic Objective, and under a specific Investment Priority. They explain what exactly will be done from the available budget, following the template given by the OP programming guide, specifying inter alia: target groups, types of beneficiaries, principles for project selection, the type of support provided.

The next sub-sections report on the identified national and regional needs; the investment priorities chosen, and the types of funded actions connected to them;

as well as the linkages established in the OPs to the Europe 2020 strategy and Country Specific Recommendations.

In exploring intervention logics, apart from mapping the programming documents, the study has also made use of available data from the European Structural and Investment Funds' Open Data Portal regarding the funding allocated to programmes.

4.3. National and regional needs

4.3.1. Identified needs at the level of Thematic Objectives

The first chapter of the documents - the description of the Operational Programmes' strategies for contributing to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - start with the identification of the relevant regional or national needs that the OP wants to address. The needs may be targeted by investments from ERDF, ESF/YEI or both of these funds under a given Operational Programme.

In some programmes this description of needs has been already grouped under Thematic Objectives, in others they follow a different structure. But in both cases, the needs can be linked to individual Thematic Objectives:

- Challenges and needs related to supply of e-government, e-health and e-education services with a social inclusion angle (not counting e-services to businesses, for instance); and access to, and use of, these services by disadvantaged target groups are classified as TO2-relevant needs.
- TO8-relevant needs include addressing challenges directly connected to access to, and discrimination on, the labour market.
- The group of TO9-relevant needs concern the provision of health and (community-based) social care to those in need, adequate and non-segregated housing, and local services (including new forms of services provided by the solidarity economy) for households and communities facing poverty and social exclusion.
- Needs related to the provision of, and access to, quality education and training for all, including the fight against segregation in education, are related to TO10.

The table overleaf presents the number of mapped OPs in the EU28 that contain national and/or regional needs relevant for inclusive growth, associated with given TOs. The total number of OPs containing relevant needs is broken down by the category of region (or the 'predominant' category) the OP covers, i.e. 'less developed', 'transition', 'more developed'.

Overall, the 138 OPs mapped contain needs belonging to TO8, 9 and 10 in comparable numbers, while inclusive-growth relevant needs pertaining to TO2 are rare. A total of 98 OPs (71% of all OPs mapped) described needs that could be classified under TO8, 105 (76%) contained TO9-relevant needs, and 92 (66%) listed needs pertaining to TO10. In contrast, only 8 OPs (6%) gave a clear indication of inclusive growth-related needs connected to TO2's ICT theme (note that further deployment of broadband infrastructure support to the development of the ICT sector, and e-services that were not specifically relevant to social inclusion).

Table 6 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth-related needs grouped under relevant Thematic Objectives (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

TO	Thematic Objective	All ESIF OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
2	Information and Communication Technologies	8	3	1	3	1
8	Employment	98	43	21	28	6
9	Social inclusion	105	48	22	30	5
10	Education and training	92	49	21	20	2
Total		138	57	25	48	7

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

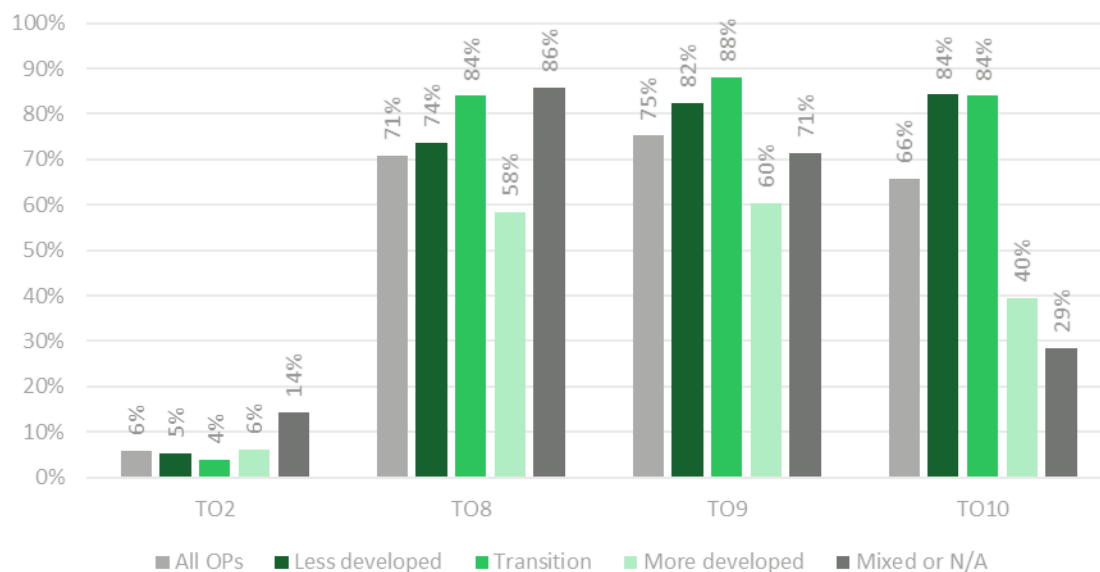
Note: the OPs were classified to given regional category by looking at which regional category had the predominant share in the planned allocation of EC contributions (i.e. 75% or more). For instance, OPs where at least 75% of EC contribution is allocated to less developed regions are in the "Less developed" column. OPs covering several regions or the whole country where none of the categories reached a share of 75%, or the shares could not be calculated lacking data, were categorised as 'mixed' or not applicable' (N/A).

Consistently with the budget allocation (Chapter 3) **OPs funding interventions in more developed regions are considerably less likely to contain needs for TOs 8 to 10**, while there is only little difference between the relative figures of OPs covering less developed regions (exclusively or primarily) and those covering transition regions. This is also explained by the decision of some Member States to opt for a strict observation of the principle of concentration.

The lower proportions in this category is to a large part explained by the fact that several of the OPs in the two last columns of the table selected for the mapping were ultimately not sufficiently relevant for the inclusive growth subject. Whilst they are included in the total figures, no needs with a clear social inclusion angle were identified in them. These were added to the list of OPs within scope because they contained some reference to e-health research and innovation actions under TO1, which was initially considered an interesting topic to explore, but was later excluded from the analysis due to its generally weak relevance to the subject.

However, even after account for the above bias, more developed regions are still less likely to cover needs under all of the three main inclusive growth relevant TOs (8 to 10), especially TO10-related needs. They tend to be more focused, discussing needs (and later interventions) related to only one or two of the TOs.

Figure 6 Proportion of OPs containing inclusive growth-related needs grouped under relevant Thematic Objectives (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)



The breakdown of needs formulated in the OPs to country level shows some significant differences in thematic orientation. Only 8 OPs from 6 countries (Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Spain) expressed needs in relation to Thematic Objective 2. Needs allocated under TO8 are present across a large majority the OPs. The two Member States where they were not covered in the OPs mapped are Luxembourg and Bulgaria: these ERDF-funded OPs do not include interventions under TO8.

Thematic Objective 9 is the most often addressed category of needs, being included in 105 out of the 127 OPs where any inclusive-growth relevant need has been mapped. Four countries, however, did not formulate key challenges or needs that would fall under this topic. This includes Denmark, Finland which do not have relevant ERDF interventions at all in their programmes, but also Austria and the Netherlands, which have OPs that have programmed actions specifically under TO9 (the national Investments in Growth and Employment Austria OP, and the regional OP for the West-Netherlands). As for TO10, Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK do not formulate needs classified under the education and training topic.

The table below presents for each Member State the number of programmes that contain inclusive-growth-relevant national or regional needs connected to Thematic Objectives 2, 8, 9 or 10.

It is important to observe that the large number of the inclusive growth-related OPs for countries such as France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, or Spain reflect the overall large number of (regional) OPs in these countries. Hence it is only partly an indication of the weight of ERDF allocations to inclusive-growth.

Table 7 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth-related needs grouped under relevant Thematic Objectives (by Member State)

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Relevant Thematic Objective			
		T02	T08	T09	T010
Austria	1	-	1	-	-
Belgium	3	-	3	3	1
Bulgaria	2	-	-	1	2
Croatia	1	1	1	1	1
Cyprus	1	-	1	1	-
Czech Republic	3	-	1	2	3
Denmark	1	-	1	-	-
Estonia	1	-	1	1	1
Finland	2	-	2	-	-
France	18	1	14	15	13
Germany	11	-	10	7	6
Greece	14	-	13	13	12
Hungary	4	1	4	3	3
Ireland	2	-	2	2	1
Italy	13	1	8	12	11
Latvia	1	-	1	1	1
Lithuania	1	-	1	1	1
Luxembourg	1	-	-	1	-
Malta	1	-	1	1	1
Netherlands	1	-	1	-	-
Poland	16	1	14	16	15
Portugal	6	-	5	6	5

Member State	All ESIF OPs*	Relevant Thematic Objective			
		TO2	TO8	TO9	TO10
Romania	2	-	2	2	2
Slovakia	2	-	1	1	1
Slovenia	1	-	1	1	1
Spain	15	3	7	11	11
Sweden	1	-	1	1	-
UK	2	-	2	2	-
Total	127	8	98	105	92

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

A more detailed look into what types of needs were articulated in the Operational Programmes reveals further differences among types of regions and Member States. To undertake the detailed analysis, qualitative information provided by the national researchers during the mapping of OPs was coded into 20 standard categories, all aligned with Thematic Objectives 2, 8, 9 and 10. The results are presented in the subsequent sections.

4.3.2. National or regional needs associated with TO2

Whilst investments into enablers of ICT uptake and direct support to the ICT ecosystem are in the focus of many OPs, the needs and actions they elaborate (deployment of broadband infrastructure, developing e-commerce) are related in first line to the objective of smart growth, rather than having an inclusive growth angle. For **TO2**-related national or regional needs, the two inclusive-growth-relevant categories elaborated were:

- *Expanding supply of e-services*: OPs talk here primarily about expanding and improving the supply of e-government services, and occasionally e-health and e-education offerings, either with a view at the direct needs of citizens to use these services (e.g. various administration tasks), or – more indirectly – by aiming at making public service delivery systems more effective and efficient, improving quality and timely access (notably to health care and lifelong learning); and
- *Promoting the use of e-services*: here the programmes want to promote the uptake of e-services by the population in general or targeted subgroups, usually by developing skills (this is dominantly an area financed from ESF), but the upgrading of the related advisory or other public service infrastructure, community access points (which may involve ERDF financing) can also be covered.

As inclusive growth considerations only play a relatively minor role under TO2, the mapping identified only 8 OPs that highlighted to the above needs.- The first category addressing the supply of e-services has been highlighted as a key need in

seven OPs²⁷ including 3 in more developed regions, while the second on promoting the use of e-services is covered as a priority need by three OPs²⁸.

Table 8 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth-related needs under TO2 (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

National and regional need	OPs (total)*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
		Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
Expanding supply of e-services	7	3	1	3	-
Promoting the use of e-services	3	1	1	-	1
Total	8	3	1	3	1

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

The analysis of which target groups have been specifically mentioned in relation to the priority needs shows that for increasing the supply of e-services, needs are commonly articulated **with a view at serving the general population in the OPs** (4 OPs do not restrict the scope to a specific target group), sometimes more narrowly at the population living in deprived areas where access to public services is otherwise limited or coupled with high transaction costs: travel cost and time, waiting time (3 OPs). Two disadvantaged or vulnerable groups mentioned are the elderly (2), and persons with disabilities, most notably sight impairment (1).

Table 9 Target groups associated with inclusive growth-related needs under TO2

National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
Expanding supply of e-services	7	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	4
Promoting the use of	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

27 The national ERDF OP (Investment for Growth and Jobs) for Croatia, the Hungarian Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme, ROPs for Franche-Comté and Jura (FR), Asturias and the Balears (ES), Cantabria (ES) and Lodzkie Voivodeship (PL).

28 Hungarian Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme, ROP Franche-Comté and Jura (FR), and the Italian National Operational Programme on Metropolitan Cities.

National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
e-services															
Total	8	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	3	5

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Promoting the use of e-services is a need identified either for the population in general - those who may have not yet taken up e-services primarily because of a lack of the necessary digital skills and/or trust – (2 OPs), or in a more targeted way for the elderly (2 OPs), and in once case (the Italian National OP on Metropolitan Cities) for migrants.

On the supply of e- services, the ROP for Asturia (ES) emphasises the need to further develop digital communication and information transmission services with public administration, especially in the educational and health fields to increase the efficiency of systems and to improve usability and utility of the services to citizens, especially those with impaired mobility or living in remote rural areas (difficulties to visit service providers personally). The Croatian national OP contains the need to develop public e-services, as only 50% of basic online services to citizens were available in 2010, far below the EU average of 81%).

As for the demand side, the Metropolitan Cities OP of Italy establishes the difficulties of migrant and elderly population to use e-government services as a key challenge to address. The uptake of digital solutions, especially among the elderly, is mentioned as a need in the ROP for Franche-Comté.

4.3.3. National or regional needs associated with TO8

The labour-market related needs belonging to **TO8** were grouped into seven distinct categories:

- *Raising activity levels among vulnerable groups*: the first category of labour market-related needs is addressing the challenge of high inactivity in general, or in certain groups, relative to the EU or a national average (identified in 32 OPs). This may be connected to skills mismatch or other factors leading people who could be on the labour market to not pursuing employment (normally addressed by ESF interventions), but also to a lack of local services and infrastructure helping people make themselves available for jobs (tackled by ERDF);
- *Improving employability of disadvantaged groups and the long-term unemployed (LTU)*: this need typically requires ESF interventions focused around training and complex mentoring initiatives to help those who are on the labour market and ready to work, but don't have access to jobs. ERDF may however play a supplementary role in addressing the need (this is the most prevalent need associated with TO8, present in 60 OPs);

- *Supporting the transition of the labour force from declining sectors to new sectors with development potential:* several regions are affected by structural unemployment and underemployment, with key sectors previously offering jobs being in decline. 12 OPs have identified the need to re-orient and re-train the workforce affected towards new sectors, e.g. tourism or the green economy;
- *Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship:* self-employment and setting up companies are considered suitable employment alternatives for certain population groups (in first line groups with specific family circumstances, with difficulties in working as an employee, or facing discrimination on the labour market), but at the same time entrepreneurship is at relative low levels in many countries and regions and needs facilitation (30 OPs);
- *Improving the effectiveness of employment services:* 2 regional OPs (Andalucia, Malopolska) articulate investments in their employment services, upgrading its infrastructure or improving collaboration with the relevant local actors as a key strategic need;
- *Supporting the competitiveness of the labour force, the adaptive capabilities of workers and workplaces:* several programmes identify needs around addressing ageing for instance through the adaptation of workplaces, the introduction of atypical employment contracts (often ESF-co-financed interventions). This need may also include the facilitation of labour mobility, so that labour supply can meet the corresponding demand (33 OPs);
- *Fighting discrimination on the labour market, and enhancing the harmonisation of work and family life:* the last category of needs, present in 8 OPs, revolves around alleviating discrimination of socially excluded or vulnerable groups in access to jobs and during employment (including equal pay for women for equal work), as well as catering for the specific needs of these groups at the workplace, and the harmonisation of work and family life especially for workers with care responsibilities.

Table 10 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth-related needs under TO8 (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

National and regional need	OPs (total)*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
		Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
Raising activity levels among vulnerable groups	32	19	6	6	1
Improving employability of disadvantaged groups and LTU	60	32	14	12	2
Supporting the transition of the labour force from declining sectors to new sectors with development potential	12	3	2	6	1
Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship	30	8	8	12	2
Improving the effectiveness of employment services	2	1	1	-	-
Supporting the competitiveness of the labour force, the adaptive capabilities of workers and workplaces	33	16	8	6	3
Fighting discrimination on the labour market, and enhancing the harmonisation of work and family life	8	5	1	2	-
Total	97	42	21	28	6

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

The proportion of OPs covering more developed regions is higher among programmes that put specific emphasis on supporting the transition of the labour force to new sectors (the CLLD for Sweden, the Austrian OP, the ROP for West Netherlands, regions in Germany); and on **promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship** (the ROPs for Åland /FI/, West Netherlands, Bolzano /IT/, several French regions, the ERDF OP for England, the Danish national OP) than among programmes addressing TO8-related needs in general. Conversely, more developed regions are underrepresented among programmes which want to raise activity levels, and to support the competitiveness of the labour force and the adaptive capabilities of workers and workplaces.

With regard to the specific target groups identified in connection with the needs, women are often mentioned both in relation to raising activity levels and combatting unemployment, as well as to gender discrimination (e.g. lower remuneration for women than for men, low weight of women in managerial positions) and the reconciliation of work and family life.

Young people are identified in several OPs under the need of reducing inactivity levels in the population, but a much more prominent need is fighting youth unemployment - a key need in almost half of the OPs that aim at fighting unemployment by improving employability of the relevant target groups.

The elderly is the most important target group under the adaptability of the workforce and workplaces category, as this need is mostly focused on current challenges connected to ageing populations.

The Roma, as well as migrants, are mentioned mainly under the need to fight unemployment, including long-term unemployment by improving employability. These two groups (the former mostly in Central and Eastern Europe's less developed regions, the latter in the EU15 which have seen increased levels of migration) are the most exposed to unemployment, in first line due to the lack of (recognised) qualifications and skills, language barriers, limited mobility, and discrimination from employers.

Table 11 Target groups associated with inclusive growth-related needs under T08

National or regional need	OPs (total) *	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
Raising activity levels among vulnerable groups	32	10	-	8	2	1	-	-	3	1	18	-	-	3	8
Improving employability of disadvantaged groups and LTU	60	12	-	27	7	4	-	5	14	6	57	1	1	8	6
Supporting the transition of the labour force from declining sectors to new sectors with development potential	12	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	-	6	5
Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship	30	3	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	11	-	-	-	18
Improving the effectiveness of employment services	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2

National or regional need	OPs (total) *	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
Supporting the competitiveness of the labour force, the adaptive capabilities of workers and workplaces	33	2	-	3	21	-	-	-	5	-	4	-	-	-	8
Fighting discrimination on the labour market, and enhancing the harmonisation of work and family life	8	5	-	2	2	1	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	6
Total	97	24	-	35	30	5	-	7	24	8	74	1	1	14	43

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

People with low qualifications are addressed as a specific group in relation to the need to improve employability, while the population of deprived areas is often named as a target group in association with the need to facilitate the transition of the workforce from declining sectors to new sectors.

The unemployed are naturally identified first when the programmes discuss the need of improving employability, but they are also a key target group under the need to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. The latter need, as well as the need about supporting the reconciliation of work and family life are the areas where the OPs are most likely to leave their target groups unspecified, discussing challenges and goals only with a view of the general population.

The ROP of Campania (IT) talks generally about the historically low employment rates as a major development challenge, and the Estonian national OP, the ROPs for Corsica or Malopolska (PL) also focus on the **employment rates in the general population**. Other OPs are targeting the problem more specifically to certain population groups. For instance, the ROP for the Canary Islands (ES), Calabria (IT), various Greek ROPs, or the Slovenian OP focus on low activity and employment rates among the young (people not in education, employment or training), the OPs for Western Greece, Extremadura (ES) and Basilicata (IT) specifically address women.

The Hungarian national Human Resource Development OP refers to the Roma population as specific target group with regard to the challenge of high unemployment, as well as the low qualified. It also acknowledges the territorial concentration of vulnerable groups: people living in disadvantaged geographic areas are specifically mentioned as target groups. Hungary has been designating

disadvantaged areas based on a set of socio-economic indicators for many years, already before its accession to the EU.

With relation to supporting the competitiveness of the labour force and the adaptive capabilities of workers and workplaces, addressing ageing has been named as a pressing need in several ROPs, including the ones for Åland /FI/, Canary Islands, Extremadura, Galicia /ES/, Sardinia /IT/, Western Greece and Crete. The ROP for the Opole region /PL/, and also the Maltese OP follow a holistic **approach to addressing ageing**: seeking to promote healthy lifestyles of seniors and healthy aging, and postponing retirement policies.

Fighting discrimination on the labour market may be linked to the gender gap in salaries, such as in the OP for Cantabria (ES), or to persons living with disabilities, as identified in the ROPs for the Ionian Islands (GR) or the Lodz region (PL).

With regard to enhancing the harmonisation of work and family life, the ROP Opole (PL) explains that women typically face the "double burden" of regular salaried work and uncompensated household work. Increasing childcare responsibilities up to the age of 3 lead to decreasing labour market activity (of women), partly due to an insufficient number of workplaces in the region that allow the reconciliation of work and family life for young mothers.

4.3.4. National or regional needs associated with TO9

Under **TO9**, six categories of needs were established:

- *Improving availability, quality and efficiency of health care services*: several programmes articulate the need to upgrade health care infrastructure and operations to better serve the population, especially those who live in areas with an undersupply of quality services, and those who cannot afford private healthcare services (a key strategic need in 46 OPs). The expressed needs do not necessarily distinguish between different types and forms of healthcare services, although interventions will mostly focus on prevention and primary care, or non-stationary secondary care, rather than hospitals;
- *Improving availability, quality and efficiency of social services*: this need concerns various support services such as sheltered and assisted housing, advisory and family visitor services – targeted at diverse target groups: children, youth in foster or institutional care, the elderly in need of nursing, persons with mental health problems and disabilities, migrants, the homeless (in 38 OPs);
- *Replacing institutional care with community-based services*: The need to replace institutional social care with community-based services were only identified in 8 OPs in the description of the programme's strategy, although many more (24 OPs) contain concrete deinstitutionalisation actions under a corresponding priority axis. Several of the OPs do not seem to discuss deinstitutionalisation needs (for which they have far less indicators and a far less robust evidence base than for institution-based health and social care infrastructure) in the strategic section, or only in very generic terms, which led the OP mapping to not pick it up as a clearly expressed need;

- *Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, fighting housing segregation*: this need is connected to challenges around the availability and quality of accommodation in deprived communities - whether in rural areas or urban neighbourhoods – as well as local administrative, social and cultural services, including the availability of facilities used for such activities, needed to activate the areas and make them attractive to residents and investors. The need also addresses the challenge of segregated communities, especially the segregation of Roma and migrants (51 OPs)²⁹;
- *Promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups*: this category contains a broad range of problems of social exclusion of vulnerable groups (elderly, Roma, migrants, people with disabilities, households at-risk of poverty), formulating the need for complex interventions aiming the social activation of such groups (these are usually led by ESF, but they may also rely on complementary ERDF interventions) (73 OPs); and
- *Supporting sustainable forms of the social economy*: the social economy has been identified in 5 OPs as having the potential to increase employment and combating poverty. The articulated needs focus on the development of economically sustainable forms of social entrepreneurship, decreasing their continuous dependence on external funding. (5 OPs).

Table 12 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth-related needs under TO9 (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

National and regional need	OPs (total)*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
		Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
Improving availability, quality and efficiency of health care services	46	30	5	10	1
Improving availability, quality and efficiency of social services	38	24	6	8	-
Replacing institutional care with community-based services	8	6	1	1	-
Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, fighting housing segregation	51	24	11	12	4

29 The number 51 refers to the number of OPs addressing the overarching need " Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, fighting housing segregation ". The specific challenge of segregated communities is only a subset of that. The number is not broken down.

National and regional need	OPs (total)*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
		Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
Promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups	73	31	17	21	4
Supporting sustainable forms of the solidarity economy	5	3	1	-	1
Total	103	47	22	29	5

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Less developed regions have significantly more OPs that describe needs related to the availability, quality and efficiency of health care services and of social services than other region categories. This group includes most of the less developed Greek and Polish regions, the corresponding national OPs from the Central and Eastern members (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic states); as well as the programmes for the French overseas territories and a few Spanish (Cantabria, Ceuta, Galicia) and Italian ROP (Basilicata, Calabria).

The needs to replace institutional care with community-based services, and to support the social economy are similarly more often identified in the OPs covering less developed regions than in others. On the other hand, the two remaining need categories - providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, and fighting housing segregation; as well as promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups - are more likely to be present in the OPs covering (predominantly) transition and more developed regions at least in relative terms. The health and social care infrastructure is likely to be up to standard in these regions, or they can be adequately funded from national or regional budgetary sources. These regions often face significant problems of social exclusion, including large numbers of migrant population concentrated in densely inhabited urban areas, as well as elderly and disabled, that face the challenges of living in declining industrial regions. This scenario puts additional pressure on these services.

Associated with Thematic Objective 9, the identified need to improve the availability, quality and efficiency of health care services is very often targeted at the general population only (36 out of 46 OPs), or at the population living in deprived areas (presumably with an undersupply of accessible healthcare facilities and services), although several OPs also link in specific vulnerable groups: children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, people at-risk of poverty. This large presence of the 'unspecified' group may be explained by the fact that less developed regions often face significant challenges concerning the quality and efficiency of their health care services (also present in many Country Specific Recommendations) and these services target everybody in the population.

The picture is very similar for needs related to social services. In 28 OPs out of 38, this need – or at least one key need in this category – is not specifically targeted at any vulnerable group. From the target groups

mentioned, the elderly (13 OPs) and children (10 OPs) are the most prominent, followed by persons with disabilities (8), people at-risk of poverty and those living in deprived areas (6 each).

Replacing institutional care with community-based services is also often presented as a need without clearly specifying which groups in institutional care would be targeted. Where the specification is done, the expected groups - disabled, children, and elderly persons - are primarily named in the programmes, as well as three further groups: women (as mothers of small children in need of care), migrants³⁰ and homeless persons.

Table 13 Target groups associated to the inclusive growth-related needs under T09

National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
Improving availability, quality and efficiency of health care services	46	1	8	3	9	4	-	1	1	6	1	9	1	9	36
Improving availability, quality and efficiency of social services	38	4	10	4	13	1	-	2	1	8	2	6	2	6	28
Replacing institutional care with community-based services	8	1	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	-	4
Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, fighting housing segregation	51	3	3	6	3	9	1	1	1	1	4	14	1	37	16
Promoting the social	73	8	7	12	9	7	1	8	3	10	10	44	3	16	39

³⁰ These are however not migrants from outside Europe but refugees, displaced persons and returnees to Croatia in the aftermath of the Balkans conflicts.

National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups															
Supporting sustainable forms of the solidarity economy	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
Total	105	14	22	20	23	13	2	10	4	18	14	55	5	55	78

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, and fighting housing segregation is associated with population living in deprived areas: 37 out of 51 OPs target this population group. Additional target groups include persons at-risk of poverty, the Roma (this is the category of needs where the Roma are most often identified as a target group) and young people.

Promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups is not only the need category with the most OPs in total including it (73), but also the only category in which all target group categories elaborated in the mapping have been mentioned in at least one programme. The distribution is more or less balanced for women, children, young and older persons, people with disabilities, unemployed persons, and inhabitants of deprived areas - while people at-risk of poverty are described as target group in a larger number of OPs (44). In many programmes, at least one need is described without linking it to a specific target group (39).

From the 5 OPs putting forward as a key need the support for sustainable forms of the social economy, 4 left the target groups unspecified, and one has mentioned the unemployed.

The Polish national OP Infrastructure and Environment identifies significant regional imbalances in the area of health care services provision. The programme seeks to facilitate the access of marginalized groups and individuals to healthcare services, and improving the general availability of healthcare service in all regions. This covers for this national OP mainly institutional services in the area of strategic health infrastructure.

In the Slovakian Integrated Regional OP, the progressive implementation of the process of deinstitutionalisation of social services is highlighted as a key need. This involves **the abolition of legacy institutional care services and the need to further develop community-based services to reduce the negative effects of institutionalisation, together with creating an effective network of such alternative community services. While the need concerns all population groups, the main target group specified in the programme are children.**

The Hungarian Human Resource Development OP, as well as the integrated regional OP addresses inadequate living conditions in deprived communities (which includes housing segregation), specifically making reference to the Roma.

The Pomeranian ROP (PL) identifies as a key challenge with regard to activation of, and care for, vulnerable groups the small number of actors in the social economy, as well weak capacities and a low level of their independence, also showing considerable territorial differences.

A territorial approach, linked to the **territorial concentration of vulnerable groups**, has been identified in the Flemish ROP. The programme seeks to address high inactivity in two urban centres - Antwerp and Ghent - which issue is to a large extent connected to the high migrant population in these cities. Similar approach has been identified in the OP Human Resources and IROP for Slovakia, where the OPs address integration of segregated Roma communities on the NUTS III level. Planned actions of this territorial approach aim for better integration and higher employment rates among the Roma population. In order to target those who need it the most, Atlas of Roma Communities, a sociographic detailed mapping of Roma communities in Slovakia, their occurrence, location and nature of the communities perceived as Roma, in Slovakia was prepared by the Slovak Liaison Office for Research.³¹

4.3.5. National or regional needs associated with TO10

The articulated needs associated with **TO10**, investments in education and training systems, were grouped into five categories:

- Upgrading infrastructure for quality and inclusive education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL): this category concerns national or regional challenges with the inadequate capacity and quality of education buildings and equipment, taking also in account physical access for students with disabilities (identified in 53 OPs);
- Promote participation in education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL): the need addresses the propensity and possibilities of families to let their children participate in early childhood education and care, and for young and older persons to participate in higher levels of education and training, including Life Long Learning (40 OPs);
- Enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education: 27 OPs identify as a key need to improve the quality of education and training and bringing curricula and training methods closer to the needs of the labour market - focusing mostly on how schools work and curricula are developed (to a large extent an ESF-relevant intervention);
- Fighting early school leaving (also a Europe 2020 headline target): early school leaving is a key European challenge, and taken up by several national and regional OPs (36 OPs); and

31 Mušinka A., Škobla D., Hurrle J., Matlovičová K., Kling J. (2014), Atlas rómskych komunit na Slovensku 2013. Bratislava, UNDP, 2014.

- Alleviating education segregation: 6 OPs in total have formulated the need to enable and promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups in mainstream education and training, fighting the creation of parallel structures, identifying as target groups the Roma and the disabled.

As seen in the table presenting the breakdown of figures by the predominant category of region covered, OPs in less developed regions are more likely than programmes covering transition or more developed regions to contain the following three specific needs: (i) promoting participation in education and training at all levels (although they often focus on tertiary education); (ii) enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education; and (iii) alleviating education segregation – although this latter need has only been expressed in 6 OPs.

The percentage of OPs from less developed regions that formulate the need for upgrading education and training infrastructure and for fighting early school leaving is comparable to the corresponding figures of transition and more developed regions.

Table 14 Inclusive growth-related national and regional needs under T010

National and regional need	OPs (total)*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
		Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
Upgrading infrastructure for quality and inclusive education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	53	28	12	11	2
Promote participation in education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	40	28	6	5	1
Enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education	27	20	3	4	-
Fighting early school leaving	36	20	10	5	1
Alleviating education segregation	6	5	-	1	-
Total	91	49	21	19	2

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Under Thematic Objective 10, children (for early childhood education and care and primary education), young people and people with low qualifications (for life-long learning) are clearly identifiable as primary target groups: being still in the education system or having a in particular need for further education.

Of the 52 OPs that have formulated the need to upgrade education infrastructure, 46 target young people, 11 children, and 9 OPs target people with low qualifications, while 23 contain needs linked to the

general population. Women are a target group identified in 4 OPs – in their role as mothers of children, in need of accessible and affordable early childhood education and care facilities.

Table 15 Target groups associated to the inclusive growth-related needs under TO10

National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Women	Children	Young	Elderly	Roma	Other ethnic minorities	Migrants	Low qualified	Disabled	Unemployed	At-risk of poverty	Homeless	Deprived areas	Unspecified
Upgrading infrastructure for quality and inclusive education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	52	4	11	41	3	3	-	-	9	3	5	1	-	2	23
Promote participation in education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	40	1	12	29	1	2	-	-	12	-	3	1	-	6	19
Enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education	26	-	3	24	-	-	-	-	13	-	4	1	-	-	8
Fighting early school leaving	36	-	-	36	-	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alleviating education segregation	6	-	3	6	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1
Total	91	4	23	83	3	4	-	-	53	3	11	1	-	8	39

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Promoting participation in education and training is directed – apart from the three main target groups for all education-related needs – also at people living in deprived areas (6 OPs), the unemployed (3), 2 OPs specifying Roma and 1 OP each is specifying women, the elderly, and people at-risk of poverty. Unemployed persons and the poor are also non-standard target groups for the need to enhance the quality and labour market relevance of education.

Needs formulated on the basis of challenges in the areas of educational segregation are linked specifically to the Roma and students with disabilities in 2 OPs each.

The Romanian regional development programme includes a list of challenges related to education infrastructure: the low quality of educational infrastructure and education; a low number of nurseries and early childhood education and care facilities; limited levels of investment in early childhood education and care infrastructure; and the inadequate accessibility to early childhood education and care. These challenges affect especially poorer rural areas, and disproportionately Roma children.

The ROP for the Opole region (PL) recognises that many education and training establishments, including higher education institutions, do not meet the requirements of the labour market, their graduates finding it difficult to find jobs in their profession, adequate to their level of qualification.

The Hungarian Human Resource Development OP identifies challenges in the area of education outcomes – notably progression of students belonging to vulnerable groups in the education system, and low enrolment in higher education – as well as education segregation, affecting children in families with multiple disadvantages and living in deprived areas. This problem affects disproportionately rural Roma population, however the programme does not specifically refer to Roma students under this need.

OP Human Resources in Slovakia, under the priority axis 6 which deals with improving the conditions of marginalised Roma communities financed from the ERDF, allocated 10.37% of its ERD funding to access to social and early childhood education and care infrastructure. The OP plans on increasing the number of pupils from marginalised Roma communities in early childhood education and care. These investments will concentrate primarily on dissemination of information about the importance of early childhood education and care, cooperation between educators and Roma assistants in schools and supporting activities to support cooperation between parents and education facilities.

4.3.6. The quantification of needs

Many, but not all the important needs identified in the OPs are quantified (i.e. supplemented with one or more indicators³²) and compared to a suitable benchmark value³³, to characterize the magnitude of the problem to be addressed. For each of the key inclusive-growth-relevant needs mapped, the researchers indicated whether or not they were underpinned by at least one indicator (quantified), and whether or not they were benchmarked. For each the identified

32 Mostly standard survey-based socio-economic statistics, or administrative data on number of facilities etc.

33 Typically EU28 or a national average, depending on the OP and the need

need categories, the percentage of identified needs that were quantified/benchmarked was calculated.

Based on these percentage values, the need categories were then ranked as follows:

- 'Low' indicates need categories where below 60% of the needs appearing in the OPs were quantified/benchmarked;
- 'High' denotes need categories between 60-80% of the needs quantified or benchmarked; and
- 'Very high' denotes categories with above 80% of needs quantified or benchmarked.

Table 16 Degree of quantification of relevant national and regional needs

TO	National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Degree of quantification	Degree of comparison with benchmark	% needs quantified	% need s benchmarked
2	Expanding supply of e-services	7	High	High	71%	71%
	Promoting the use of e-services	3	Very high	High	100%	67%
8	Raising activity levels among vulnerable groups	32	High	High	76%	62%
	Improving employability of disadvantaged groups and LTU	60	Very high	High	80%	64%
	Supporting the transition of the labour force from declining sectors to new sectors with development potential	12	Low	Low	36%	27%
	Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship	30	High	Low	64%	46%
	Improving the effectiveness of employment services	2	Very high	Very high	100%	100%
	Supporting the competitiveness of the labour force, the adaptive capabilities of workers and	33	High	Low	56%	42%

TO	National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Degree of quantification	Degree of comparison with benchmark	% needs quantified	% need s benchmarked
	workplaces					
	Fighting discrimination on the labour market, and enhancing the harmonisation of work and family life	8	High	Low	54%	46%
	Improving availability, quality and efficiency of health care services	46	Low	Low	50%	34%
	Improving availability, quality and efficiency of social services	38	Low	Low	50%	38%
	Replacing institutional care with community-based services	8	High	No	60%	0%
9	Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, fighting housing segregation	51	High	Low	70%	44%
	Promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups	73	High	Low	63%	43%
	Supporting sustainable forms of the solidarity economy	5	High	Low	60%	40%
10	Upgrading infrastructure for quality and inclusive education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	53	High	Low	52%	39%

TO	National or regional need	OPs (total)*	Degree of quantification	Degree of comparison with benchmark	% needs quantified	% need s benchmarked
	Promote participation in education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	40	High	High	72%	65%
	Enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education	26	Low	Low	41%	33%
	Fighting early school leaving	36	High	High	76%	62%
	Alleviating education segregation	6	High	Low	57%	29%

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

The table above shows **considerable differences in the degree to which the national or regional needs are quantified in the OPs**. Needs around

- supporting the transition of the labour force from declining sectors to new sectors with development potential;
- improving the availability, quality and efficiency of health care services;
- improving the availability, quality and efficiency of social services; and
- enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education

are not often quantified or benchmarked across OPs in the EU28 (both the degree of quantification and the degree of benchmarking with the EU or national average are 'low').

On the other hand, the needs related to the use of e-services, the employability of disadvantaged groups and long-term unemployed (standard indicators of employment and unemployment in the region is always given, but the programmes targeting specific groups such as women, Roma, persons with disabilities usually also give sub indicators accordingly), as well as the effectiveness of employment services are highly quantified in the OPs, with comparisons to the EU average as a suitable benchmark.

Differences are also visible between Member States. **From the 16 countries selected for fieldwork, the level of quantification of the key inclusive growth-related needs mapped is especially high in Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Romania and France**. At the other end of the scale, OPs from Lithuania, Germany, Hungary and Greece tended to quantify the needs to a lesser degree in the first strategy chapter. This does not mean, however, that there is generally an

absence in these countries of quantified information on the scale of the problems that the interventions will seek to address – this information is also needed to define output and result indicators – as they could be included for instance in the underlying national, regional or sectoral strategies.

Table 17 Degree of quantification of relevant national and regional needs, by Member State

Member State	OPs (total)*	Degree of quantification	Degree of comparison with benchmark	% needs quantified	% need s benchmarked
Bulgaria	2	Very high	High	100%	67%
Croatia	1	Very high	Low	100%	33%
Czech Republic	3	Very high	Low	82%	47%
Estonia	1	Very high	Very high	91%	82%
France	18	Very high	High	97%	79%
Germany	11	Low	Low	20%	11%
Greece	14	Low	Low	45%	21%
Hungary	4	Low	Low	44%	35%
Italy	14	Very high	Very high	98%	96%
Latvia	1	Very high	High	100%	67%
Lithuania	1	Low	Low	13%	13%
Poland	16	High	High	58%	51%
Portugal	6	Low	Low	50%	38%
Romania	2	Very high	Low	100%	47%
Slovakia	2	High	High	67%	67%
Spain	15	High	High	74%	68%

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Note: Data is presented only for the 16 Member States

4.4. Investment priorities and funded actions

The main information mapped on what will be done on the ground under the Operational Programmes concerns the planned actions, all mandatorily assigned to a specific investment priority, grouped under priority axes. Most of these priority

axes – in line with the Commission’s guidance – are mono-fund, they cover only one Thematic Objective and one category of regions. But EU regulation allows for the departure from these default rules, and several OPs have made use of this possibility, especially under integrated territorial approaches for deploying the funds. While the needs were not linked to the intervention of a given fund, this section only discusses investment priorities and actions co-financed from ERDF.

The programmed inclusive-growth-relevant ERDF actions in the OPs mapped have been classified into a total of 25 high-level types of action. These categories are somewhat similar to, but distinct from, the classification developed for national or regional needs. A given OP would often identify a need corresponding to the actions it intends to implement, but this correspondence is not perfect.

The method assigned the actions described in the OPs to the investment priority they best fit, which is not necessarily the one in which the action was originally placed. An example is the provision of more accessible and affordable early childhood education and care facilities in regions lacking such capacities. This is clearly a key enabler of the employability of women and is mentioned (as a strategic objective) in the Commission’s thematic guidance on TO8 as well as the TO9 “Social inclusion” guide. Several OPs have corresponding actions under TO8 or TO9 originally, but the need and the action type was registered under TO10 in the mapping database, as this is where ERDF ought to fund investments into education and early childhood education and care facilities (as explained in the Commission’s guide for the TO10 “Early childhood education” topic).

The mapping has in justified cases broken down a given action into two or more types of action, when different issues were present in the description of a single action (such as support to institution-based social care and the transition to community-based services under the same action; or education infrastructure development to enhance accessibility and investments in support of improving the quality of education).

4.4.1. Actions under TO2

Thematic Objective 2 contains three ERDF investment priorities, but only one of these – 2c “Strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health” – was considered relevant for promoting inclusive growth. The coding of actions in the OPs mapped has led to the identification of two types of action: the first one aims at developing the applications for e-services and putting them to use, in order to improve access to, and the quality, as well as efficiency, of various public services (this may include the development of basic infrastructure and support to projects, companies and organisations working on e-services); the second type includes complementary actions facilitating the usage of e-services.

Table 18 Examples for actions under TO2

Type of actions	Examples for actions
2c.1 Development of e-services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of computer and audiovisual tools for the provision of basic e-government services • Development of digital services for citizens, especially in the sectors of Justice, Health and

Type of actions	Examples for actions
	<p>Urban Planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a Government cloud covering e-Health, e-Land and spatial planning Administration, e-Culture, e-Tourism, e-Justice, e-Inclusion applications • Implementing a single system of medical history, to replace existing systems in hospitals and in primary care • Development of an integrated system for quality management and patient safety, for the management of the nursing care process • Installation of digital classroom technologies in primary education • Realisation of e-learning platforms, of the virtual library, of the national e-catalogue as well as of other national programmes
2c.2 Encourage the use of e-services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects aiming at increasing the use of e-government applications by citizens and companies • Improve the use of ICTs as a mechanism to develop public digital services • Complementary training programs for tutors to promote digital literacy aimed at all citizens, especially the adult population and the elderly, with special emphasis on women • Social Inclusion Programme targeting the population in less developed communities, including interventions improving access to internet and citizens' digital skills

The inclusive growth-relevant investment priority 2c has been included in a large number of OPs: altogether 81 programmes. These all contained actions focused on the supply: developing and deploying e-services (2c.1), and 19 OPs have programmed supplementary demand-oriented actions, aimed at facilitating the uptake of e-services. **This latter category has typically not been implemented in less developed regions, whilst the more prolific supply-oriented actions are rather concentrated here.**

Table 19 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under T02 (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
2c	2c.1 Development of e-services	81	40	14	23	4
	2c.2 Encourage the use of e-services	19	4	7	7	1

Despite the large number of OPs containing actions under IP 2c, this covers only about half of the Member States: Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, as well as Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia do not include these types of action. In addition, only OPs from France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain contain actions targeted towards encouraging the use of e-services (2c.2).

Table 20 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under T02 (by Member State)

Member State	Total OPs	Action types	
		2c.1	2c.2
Croatia	1	1	-
Cyprus	1	1	-
Czech Republic	2	1	-
Estonia	1	1	-
France	18	11	5
Greece	14	14	1
Italy	13	11	1
Latvia	1	1	-
Malta	1	1	-
Poland	18	16	1
Portugal	7	6	2

Member State	Total OPs	Action types	
		2c.1	2c.2
Romania	2	1	1
Slovenia	1	1	-
Spain	18	16	8

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

4.4.2. Actions under TO8

TO8 includes four investment priorities under ERDF, and the first two of these were further broken down to five different types of actions. Under IP 8a "Supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation", two types of action have been distinguished: one targeting the provision of infrastructure and supporting services to local business creation, the other giving direct support to businesses to establish and grow. These investments rarely target certain vulnerable groups specifically (exceptions are for instance plans to establish business incubators for social enterprises), but intend to serve the needs of the population in general in areas with limited employment opportunities.

Table 21 Examples for actions under TO8a

Type of actions	Examples for actions
8a.1 Setting up incubators and support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incubator houses to host and help local start-ups and young micro-enterprises, as well as social enterprises • Upgrading infrastructure and available services in industrial parks to attract investment and create jobs • Subsidies for other services improving the local business environment
8a.2 Support to entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small scale support to the creation of local small and micro-enterprises • Support to small scale investments aimed at business expansion, including social enterprise projects • Support to companies in selected sectors with development potential (e.g. the creative industry) • Incentives to strengthen collaborations between local firms

Actions under IP 8b “Supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources” were classified into three high-level types.

Table 22 Examples for actions under T08b

Type of actions	Examples for actions
8b.1 Conversion of infrastructures and areas, development of public infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site conversion, extension and restoration measures • Upgrading existing business support infrastructure and services to attract and expand economic activities, utilising vacant sites and idle infrastructures
8b.2 Support to new economic activities (incl green economy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of economic valorisation strategies based on regional endogenous resources • Investments in enterprises active in the green economy • Reimbursable support to investments creating local jobs with difficulties to access finance, including social enterprises
8b.3 Developing the tourism industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and reconstruction of tourism infrastructure, adaptation of existing facilities to tourism needs • Small-scale road, transportation and physical accessibility investments to improve access to touristic attractions • Product development, investments in local attractions, and promotion of local tourism attractions • Support to job-generating projects aimed at the sustainable exploitation of local cultural and natural assets for tourism purposes

The two remaining IPs, 8c “Supporting local development initiatives and aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create jobs (outside the scope of ESF)” and 8d “Investing in infrastructure for employment services” were not broken down.

Table 23 Examples for actions under T08c

Type of actions	Examples for actions
8c.1 Support to local development initiatives and neighbourhood services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of neighbourhood early childhood education and care services and other family-friendly institutions and public services to promote employability of caretakers (women) and the quality of life of families • Funding for small and micro enterprises via a micro-finance instrument • Advisory services for small and micro enterprises (covering inter alia their social orientation; location marketing, vacancy management, coordination of social activities and groups)
8d.1 Infrastructure for employment services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding and upgrading the infrastructures of regional public employment services • Improving the quality and accessibility of infrastructure in employment services' premises

ERDF actions under T08 are generally rare, not many countries have allocated ERDF funds to T08. Overall, less than ten OPs across the EU28 have planned investments under any of the investment priorities and types of actions of this Thematic Objective. Setting up incubators and local business services (8a.1), support to new economic activities including the green economy (8b.2) and support to the development of the tourism industry (8b.3) play the most significant role, all appearing in 9 OPs. For the latter two, the **OPs concerned typically cover less developed regions, while more developed regions are more frequently programming actions aiming at setting up and upgrading incubators and local support services.**

Table 24 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under T08 (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
8a	8a.1 Setting up incubators and support services	9	3	2	4	-
	8a.2 Support to entrepreneurship	4	3	1	-	-

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
8b	8b.1 Conversion of infrastructures and areas, development of public infrastructure	4	4	-	-	-
	8b.2 Support to new economic activities (incl green economy)	9	6	1	2	-
	8b.3 Developing the tourism industry	9	8	1	-	-
8c	8c.1 Support to local development initiatives and neighbourhood services	3	1	1	1	-
8d	8d.1 Infrastructure for employment services	2	1	1	-	-

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

12 Member State have programmed ERDF actions under T08. The breakdown by country shows that most countries have restricted the scope of interventions, only programming one or two types of action. Only Hungary and Portugal have planned in a broader range of actions.

Table 25 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under T08 (by Member State)

Member State	Total OPs*	Action types						
		8a.1	8a.2	8b.1	8b.2	8b.3	8c.1	8d.1
Austria	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Estonia	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
France	18	2	-	1	1	-	-	-
Germany	9	1	-	-	-	-	2	-
Hungary	4	1	-	1	1	1	1	-
Lithuania	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1
Netherlands	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Poland	17	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
Portugal	6	4	4	-	4	2	-	-
Romania	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
Slovakia	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Spain	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

4.4.3. Actions under TO9

The four investment priorities under TO9 have been broken down to altogether 12 types of actions. IP 9a "investing in health and social infrastructure, promoting social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services and the transition from institutional to community-based services" contains no less than five types of actions as a result of the coding of OP information. Investments into the health care system was separated into non-stationary services (mostly prevention and primary care), and hospital-based services (stationary care) – with retaining a general category for investments that could not be classified into these two categories. These three are complemented by investments in social infrastructure, and deinstitutionalisation has been defined as a separate type of action.

Table 26 Examples for actions under TO9a

Type of actions	Examples for actions
9a.0 Investments in health infrastructure (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various investments in the health system's demand-oriented infrastructure, aiming at effective and efficient coverage of health care needs, based on integrated strategies and social planning • Upgrading the infrastructure of emergency services • Supporting cities in adapting to the effects of demographic change in health care
9a.1 Investments in primary health infrastructure, outpatient care and prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New infrastructures with the aim of improving health care, especially in those areas with coverage problems and the risk of exclusion of vulnerable groups • Investments in primary health care infrastructure with specific focus on prevention: GPs, paediatrics, dentist, health visitors (providing public health advice to homilies at their home) • Reconstruction and adaptation of the existing

	<p>facilities (construction of new infrastructure only in exceptional cases) in support of psychosocial programs war veterans and victims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for infrastructure aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of public health-care services and integrating them with personal health-care and social services • Providing nursing services and palliative care at patients' homes
<p>9a.2 Investments in hospital-based health services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investments related to the hospital infrastructure and / or equipment (including adaptation to the needs of the disabled) • Creation of specialist care units. • Acquisition of advanced technology in the areas of oncology, cardiology and ophthalmology, allowing the modernization of diagnostics and therapeutics
<p>9a.3 Investments in social infrastructure, incl. day centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the infrastructure of social welfare homes, social welfare centres and other social service providers, targeting persons with disabilities, children and youth with behavioural disorders and children and youth without adequate parental care • Investments in the infrastructure of basic social care, ensuring the provision and accessibility of services for all • Establishment of new services (including day-care services) in areas with insufficient provision of social care facilities, extending capacities, and improving the quality of existing facilities • Modernisation and development of infrastructure of social care homes for the elderly • Financial support to private investments in social care
<p>9a.4 Deinstitutionalisation, improving supply of community-based services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual deinstitutionalisation of social care by setting up social services infrastructure in municipalities and local communities • Creation of community-based social care facilities primarily in disadvantaged regions,

	<p>replacing large social institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in social inclusion clubs, social inclusion centres and workplaces • Construction of new family health units, and enlargement and rehabilitation of buildings to be used as family health units
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The investment priority 9b “Providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas” includes four types of actions.

Table 27 Examples for actions under T09b

Type of actions	Examples for actions
9b.1 Construction and upgrading of shelters, temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building accommodation for homeless people • Development of open structures for migrants (GR, Eastern Macedonia OP)
9b.2 Increasing supply and management of social housing, rehabilitation of housing stock, especially in segregated areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction, reconstruction and modernisation of buildings to adapt them for social housing purposes • The purchase of flats, apartment buildings, non-residential premises and their adaptation for the needs of social housing • Integrated national programme combining ERDF and ESF funding, aiming at the renovation of dilapidated dwellings in Roma segregates, or support to relocation of families living in segregates closer to jobs. The programme includes job counselling for the households assisted, other support activities and regular monitoring. • Improvement public space and the nearby housing stock, with the aim of making the area more attractive and mixing people of different origins, age and social situation • Contributing to the financing of the costs of acquiring and rehabilitating the housing needed to relocate beneficiary families living in shanty towns
9b.3 Investments in protected housing, assisted living and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting accommodations and infrastructure to provide care services for dependents, including the elderly and the disabled; creation of

innovative housing models	protected/assisted/trained housing
9b.4 Investment in infrastructure and services for deprived communities and vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions for functional reuse of old and idle real estates, including assets seized from organized crime, for the social purposes of the community • Establishment of local social infrastructure such as day-care support facilities for children and youth, recreation facilities, cultural facilities, facilities for the social and vocational activation of residents • Establishment and upgrading of local public services and community spaces via the purchase or renovation of idle private or state-owned real estate, conversion of municipality-owned properties. • Conversion of the urban infrastructure of public open spaces, preparing abandoned or inefficiently used territories for investments, promoting commercial activities in these territories (e.g. small industrial areas, markets, etc.), adapting public spaces for self-expression, communication, learning, health promotion

The third ERDF-co-financed IP under this Thematic Objective, 9c “Providing support for social enterprises”, has not been further broken down to different types of action.

Table 28 Examples for actions under T09c

Type of actions	Examples for actions
9c.1 Strengthening the social economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of loans with loan guarantee, and combined grants and loans for social enterprises, as part of the financial instrument supporting entrepreneurship and job creation among companies with difficulties to access finance • Creating housing conditions for doing business and developing services; adapting public spaces to new functions; investment support of social enterprises • Support to local, social and cooperative entrepreneurship through the creation of companies

The last IP is 9d “Undertaking investment in the context of community-led local development strategies”, with actions classified into two main types: CLLD-driven investments into infrastructure and supporting services, and direct support to enterprises.

Table 29 Examples for actions under T09d

Type of actions	Examples for actions
9d. 1 Investments in local small-scale infrastructural and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of community centres and cultural establishments within the context of CLLD • Development of a network of services supporting local communities Small-scale local projects to promote energy efficiency, the development of renewable sources of energy, or to support and link environmentally friendly modes of transport
9d. 2 Support to enterprises and entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of new corporate strategies, regional value-added chains through cooperation projects or SME start-ups • Consolidation and revitalisation of the local economy through entrepreneurship, self-employment and modernisation of business initiatives

TO9 is of major importance in supporting inclusive growth from ERDF, with substantial funding being allocated to it in most countries. In comparison to TO8, the number of actions connected to TO9 is also much higher within the OPs analysed.

The action type “Investments in primary health infrastructure, outpatient care and prevention” (9a.1) was programmed by 35 different OPs, while “Investments in hospital-based health services” (9a.2) was included in 28 programmes, both with a very clear dominance of OPs covering less developed regions. Actions containing “investments in social infrastructure, incl. day centres” (9a.3) appears in 43 OPs, mostly also in less developed regions. The action “Deinstitutionalisation, improving supply of community-based services” (9a.4) has been included in 25 OPs, of which 21 are predominantly covering less developed regions.

Under IP 9b, actions aiming at “Construction and upgrading of shelters, temporary accommodation” (9b.1) have been planned in by 7 OPs. “Increasing supply and management of social housing, rehabilitation of housing stock, especially in segregated areas” (9b.2) is included in 34 OPs. The third type of action, “Investments in protected housing, assisted living and innovative housing models” (9b.3) appears in 9 programmes, mostly in less developed regions. The action

“Investment in infrastructure and services for deprived communities and vulnerable groups” (9b.4) appears in 63 OPs.

Investments supporting the ecosystem of social enterprises (9c.1) have a visible presence in the OPs (14), as well as the two types of actions under ERDF investments in the context of community-led local development strategies (9d.1 and 9d.2), with 13 OPs supporting small-scale infrastructure, while 12 OPs giving direct support to enterprises). These three actions are appearing in programmes targeting the different categories of regions in fairly balanced proportions.

Table 30 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under T09 (by ‘predominant’ category of regions covered)

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
9a	9a.0 Investments in health infrastructure (general)	16	6	4	6	-
	9a.1 Investments in primary health infrastructure, outpatient care and prevention	35	26	7	2	-
	9a.2 Investments in hospital-based health services	28	21	2	5	-
	9a.3 Investments in social infrastructure, incl. day centres	43	27	8	7	1
	9a.4 Deinstitutionalisation, improving supply of community-based services	25	21	-	3	1
9b	9b.1 Construction and upgrading of shelters, temporary accommodation	7	3	-	3	1
	9b.2 Increasing supply and management of social housing, rehabilitation of housing stock, especially in segregated areas	34	20	3	10	1
	9b.3 Investments in protected housing, assisted living and innovative housing models	9	7	1	-	1

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
	9b.4 Investment in infrastructure and services for deprived communities and vulnerable groups	63	31	14	17	1
9c	9c.1 Strengthening the social economy	14	8	3	2	1
9d	9d.1 Investments in local small-scale infrastructural and services	13	7	3	3	-
	9d.2 Support to enterprises and entrepreneurship	12	4	3	4	1

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

The first category of actions, generic investments into health care infrastructure (9a.0) is only sporadically present in the EU28: outside programmes from Poland and Spain it is only contained in one OP each from Bulgaria, France, Germany and Greece, and two from Portugal. More OPs focus on prevention and non-stationary primary care (9a.1), present in all programmes from the three Baltic countries, Malta, Romania and Slovakia. About half of the programmes in the scope from Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Portugal contain this type of action, and only 1 from France. Two countries with a large number of OPs, Germany and Spain, have not programmed this action.

Hospital-based care (9a.2), which is generally enjoying a lower priority than non-stationary care in the Commission's strategic framework, is contained in slightly fewer OPs. However, ROPs in Poland and Spain cover this type of action more often than prevention and non-stationary (usually primary) care.

Investments in social infrastructure (9a.3) are the most frequently programmed action in the OPs analysed. This category is prominent in Greece, Poland, Portugal, and also included in the Bulgarian, Croatian and Latvian national OPs allocating ERDF resources to inclusive growth. On the other hand, it is not, or less frequently included in OPs from rich countries - Germany, France or Belgium. In addition, four countries - Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK - did not programme any action connected to investment priority 9a.

Deinstitutionalisation (9a.4) is included in OPs from most Member States with the exception of Belgium, Cyprus, Germany and Spain, although it is part of only a few regional programmes in countries with many ROPs (France, Greece, Poland).

Table 31 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under TO9 – health and social infrastructure (by Member State)

Member State	Total OPs*	Action types				
		9a.0	9a.1	9a.2	9a.3	9a.4
Belgium	3	-	-	-	-	-
Bulgaria	1	1	-	1	1	1
Croatia	1	-	-	1	-	1
Cyprus	1	-	-	-	1	-
Czech Republic	2	-	-	-	1	1
Estonia	1	-	1	-	-	1
France	18	1	1	1	3	2
Germany	9	1	-	-	1	-
Greece	13	1	9	7	11	3
Hungary	4	-	2	-	3	2
Italy	12	1	5	-	5	1
Latvia	1	-	1	1	-	1
Lithuania	1	-	1	-	1	1
Malta	1	-	1	-	-	1
Poland	17	4	8	11	7	5
Portugal	6	2	4	4	5	2
Romania	1	-	1	-	1	1
Slovakia	1	-	1	-	-	1
Slovenia	1	-	-	-	1	1
Spain	14	5	-	2	2	-

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

For the remaining social inclusion-relevant investment priorities under TO9, five countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia) did not plan in any action.

In general, richer Member States with a small number of relevant OPs tend to use only one or two of them (Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK): the types of actions commonly selected by them are: investments in infrastructure and services for deprived communities and vulnerable groups (9b.4) or support to enterprises and entrepreneurship under a CLLD approach (9d.2).

Some of the Member States with lower GDP per capita figures also focus their investments, but the types of actions they programme are somewhat different: while 9b.4 is present in Bulgaria, Estonia and Romania, increasing supply and management of social housing, rehabilitation of housing stock, especially in segregated areas (9b.2) has also been included. Greece, Italy, Portugal and especially Poland – countries with several regional OPs – have made use of most of the types of actions in their programmes.

Table 32 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under T09 – social inclusion (by Member State)

Member State	Total OPs*	Action types						
		9b.1	9b.2	9b.3	9b.4	9c.1	9d.1	9d.2
Austria	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Belgium	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Bulgaria	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Czech Republic	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	-
Estonia	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
France	18	1	3	-	14	1	-	-
Germany	9	-	1	-	8	-	1	1
Greece	13	1	-	-	3	4	3	1
Hungary	4	-	3	-	3	1	1	-
Italy	11	3	8	5	6	3	-	-
Lithuania	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Malta	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Poland	17	1	8	4	16	2	2	1
Portugal	6	-	2	-	3	2	3	5
Romania	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-

Member State	Total OPs*	Action types						
		9b.1	9b.2	9b.3	9b.4	9c.1	9d.1	9d.2
Spain	14	-	4	-	3	-	1	1
Sweden	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
UK	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

4.4.4. Actions under TO10

IP10a "Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure" is the sole ERDF investment priority under Thematic Objective 10. The coding of actions has established four major types of action here.

Table 33 Examples for actions under TO10

Type of actions	Examples for actions
10a.1 Increasing availability of early childhood education and care facilities and education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding and upgrading early childhood education and care facilities in disadvantaged regions, with special focus on improving access for poor households Modernization, improvement and expansion of accommodation infrastructure in higher education to improve access and completion for disadvantaged students Support of early childhood education and care infrastructure and equipment to increase the availability and quality of early childhood education and care
10a.2 Renovation and upgrading school buildings and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in construction, construction and acquisition of equipment to ensure equal access to quality education and emphasis on the development of pupils' key competencies. Infrastructural / investment measures in the area of integrated labour market support and informal education policies, such as the model development of a "campus school" as a network node of the local education landscape in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, in order to develop local strategies and, in coherent co-operation, the transition of pupils and school-leavers into the vocational training Construction and extension of education centres

Type of actions	Examples for actions
	<p>(primary and secondary education and vocational formation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of sectoral practical training centres; investments into dormitories of vocational training institutions that operate sectoral practical training centres to ensure accommodation for the students from other institutions and participants of continued training programmes; investments into other related educational spaces of the centres • Investment in construction, construction and acquisition of equipment to ensure equal access to quality education and emphasis on the development of pupils' key competencies. • Rehabilitation and conversion of educational facilities, including the adaptation of equipment.
<p>10a.3 Ensuring physical accessibility, adapting infrastructure for the integrated education of pupils with special education needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and adaptation of the study environment for students with an emphasis on people with special needs, socio-economically disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities, thereby increasing their number at university level. • Investments in existing education infrastructure, enabling access students with disabilities and special education needs (often Roma and other socio-economically disadvantaged groups) to participate in integrated education. • Redevelopment, construction of early childhood education and care, preschools in primary schools and other forms of pre-school education along with the provision of necessary equipment, including adaptation to the needs of persons with disabilities • Arranging the infrastructure of the children's socialisation centres network by facilitating individualised integrated support for children with different special needs. • Investments to: improve the experimental learning in science and technology; acquire new equipment; promote the inclusion of students with special needs; and create or improve sport infrastructures

Type of actions	Examples for actions
10a.4 Digitalisation of schools, e-Learning, ICT infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing digitally mature schools ready to use the potential of ICT in education and development of 21st century skills needed on the job market Spread ICT use in school structure and adopt innovative schooling approach Development of the physical infrastructure needed for the functioning of information systems, national registries and databases of education Investments in technological equipment, laboratories, and ICT in schools

TO10 is another important area of ERDF investments in support of inclusive growth. 49 OPs contain actions aiming at increasing the availability of early childhood education and care (sometimes appearing under TO8 or TO9 in the OPs) and education institutions; and 57 support the renovation and upgrading of school buildings and equipment. A highly targeted inclusive-growth oriented type of action concerns investments into ensuring physical accessibility, and adapting infrastructure for the integrated education of pupils with special education needs enabling students with disabilities can learn together with other students (14 OPs); and finally, 12 OPs contains specific actions targeting the digitalization of schools and e-learning infrastructure (note that e-learning actions also appear in the OPs under IP 2c). OPs covering less developed and transition regions are more likely to include actions under IP10a than OPs targeting more developed regions.

Table 34 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under TO10 (by 'predominant' category of regions covered)

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
10a	10a.1 Increasing availability of early childhood education and care facilities and education institutions	49	29	10	10	-
	10a.2 Renovation and upgrading school buildings and equipment	57	37	13	6	1

IP	Categorisation of actions	Total OPs*	Predominant category of NUTS2 region covered by OP			
			Less developed	Transition	More developed	Mixed or N/A
	10a.3 Ensuring physical accessibility, adapting infrastructure for the integrated education of pupils with special education needs	14	12	-	1	1
	10a.4 Digitalisation of schools, e-Learning, ICT infrastructure	12	8	1	1	2

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

As for TO10, almost all countries that had programmed interventions under this objective contain actions aimed at increasing the availability of early childhood education and care facilities (10a.1), and almost the same number of Member States have also included actions addressing the renovation and upgrading of school buildings and equipment (10a.2). Actions in support of physical accessibility and the integrated education of pupils with special education needs (10a.3) are typically only present in the OPs of less developed Central and Eastern European countries, as well as Italy and Portugal. The same applies to the last type of action, the digitalisation of schools (10a.4), although the group of CEE countries is slightly different here.

Austria, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK did not include actions under TO10 in their programmes.

Table 35 Number of OPs containing inclusive growth actions under TO10 (by Member State)

Member State	Total OPs*	Action types			
		10a.1	10a.2	10a.3	10a.4
Belgium	3	1	1	-	-
Bulgaria	1	1	1	1	-
Croatia	1	1	-	-	1
Czech Republic	2	2	2	2	-
Estonia	1	1	1	1	-
France	18	4	3	-	-
Germany	9	1	2	-	-

Member State	Total OPs*	Action types			
		10a.1	10a.2	10a.3	10a.4
Greece	13	9	12	-	3
Hungary	4	2	1	1	-
Italy	11	3	6	2	2
Latvia	1	-	1	1	1
Lithuania	1	1	1	1	1
Malta	1	1	-	-	-
Poland	17	9	14	4	1
Portugal	6	3	5	1	1
Romania	1	1	1	-	-
Slovakia	1	1	1	-	1
Slovenia	1	-	-	-	1
Spain	14	8	5	-	-

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

4.4.5. Categories of intervention

The allocation of inclusive-growth-related ERDF funding into categories of intervention, as required from the programmes for each of the priority axes, resulted in a very large and diverse set of categories. In fact, most of the pre-defined ERDF categories of intervention are covered in at least one of the OPs reviewed.

As shown in the table below, the most often identified categories of intervention under the relevant ERDF Investment Priorities include:

For TO8

- 67 SME business development, support to entrepreneurship and incubation (including support to spin offs and spin outs) (8 OPs)
- 91 Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas (7)
- 92 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets (7)

For TO9

- 52 Infrastructure for early childhood education and care (22)
- 53 Health infrastructure (43)
- 54 Housing infrastructure (41)
- 55 Other social infrastructure contributing to regional and local development (66)
- 97 Community-led local development initiatives in urban and rural areas (22)

For TO10

- 49 Education infrastructure for tertiary education (40)
- 50 Education infrastructure for vocational education and training and adult learning (49)
- 51 Education infrastructure for school education (primary and general secondary education) (59)
- 52 Infrastructure for early childhood education and care (36)

Based on the funding regulation the categories of investment are not aligned with the TOs. The analysis reveals that many interventions are very specific, and not relevant for the investments supporting inclusive growth: e.g. those related to renewable energy, waste management, TEN-T infrastructure. In many cases the chosen interventions are connected to another Thematic Objective, rather than that they would normally belong to. For instance, the intervention 'health infrastructure' being identified for investments under TO10. Furthermore, infrastructure for early childhood education and care is present among the top intervention fields under both TO9 and TO10. This finding shows that the categories of investments are not necessarily linked to one Thematic objective only. The system of allocating the interventions by TO thus does not appear clear.

Table 36 Categories of intervention regarding inclusive growth under TO2 (IP 2c only), and TO 8, 9 and 10

Category of intervention with code)	Thematic Objective			
	2	8	9	10
49 Education infrastructure for tertiary education				40
50 Education infrastructure for vocational education and training and adult learning			1	49
51 Education infrastructure for school education (primary and general secondary education)			4	59

Category of intervention with code)	Thematic Objective			
	2	8	9	10
52 Infrastructure for early childhood education and care		1	22	36
53 Health infrastructure			43	23
54 Housing infrastructure			41	9
55 Other social infrastructure contributing to regional and local development		3	66	25
58 Research and innovation infrastructure (public)	1	2		
73 Support to social enterprises (SMEs)		5	14	6
78 e-Government services and applications (including e-Procurement, ICT measures supporting the reform of public administration, cyber-security, trust and privacy measures, e-Justice and e-Democracy)			4	5
79 Access to public sector information (including open data e-Culture, digital libraries, e-Content and e-Tourism)	1		4	5
80 e-Inclusion, e-Accessibility, e-Learning and e-Education services and applications, digital literacy			4	6
81 ICT solutions addressing the healthy active ageing challenge and e-Health services and applications (including e-Care and ambient assisted living)	1		11	5
97 Community-led local development initiatives in urban and rural areas		1	22	3

4.5. Link between needs and actions

There are apparent differences between the number of OPs addressing corresponding topics as 'needs' and as 'actions', suggesting that the actions are not always underpinned by the needs in sufficient depth in the OPs' strategy section. For instance, a small number of OPs spell out the clear need of the transition to community-based services in health and social care, whilst there are many more OPs that include deinstitutionalization actions. To this regard Chapter 7 explains the difficulty of applying the new requirements in this area. Patterns of correspondence are presented in cross-tables - by Thematic Objective - between the key needs and

the types of actions mapped by researchers and categorised into the standard categories explained above.

As for the relevant investment priority under TO2, investments expanding the supply and use of e-services, the cross-table suggests gaps in the intervention logic approach used. While seven OPs talk about the need to expand the supply of e-services, only 4 have corresponding actions in place, i.e. falling under the category "Development of e-services" (2c.1). As there are altogether 9 OPs which have actions directed at the supply of e-services, the other 5 OPs did not clearly talk about the development of applications as a key need.

An example of such a gap is that of Croatia, where the Partnership Agreement and the analysed Operational Programme express the need to address low IT skills and ICT literacy among the population. In fact, ICT literacy in Croatia is considerably lower than the EU average. However, the actions chosen under the TO2 include only financing the 'Paperless Government' strategy, which implies development of government e-services (such as e-health, e-tourism, e-justice etc.). These actions do not correspond to increasing the ICT literacy of the general population. The Operational Programme slightly addresses this need also under the Thematic Objective 10 via digitalisation of schools in order to equip students with modern day skills. Yet, this action targets students and teachers, not the general population. OPs have identified the low level of uptake of e-services as a problem and about the need to promote their use; and there are equally three OPs which contain actions encouraging the use of e-services, there is no overlap between these two groups.

Table 37 Correspondence between needs and actions under TO2

National or regional need	Total OPs* specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs	
		2c.1 Development of e-services	2c.2 Use of e-services
Expanding supply of e-services	7	4	-
Promoting the use of e-services	3	-	-
Number of OPs containing action		9	3

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

The correspondence table for needs and actions under Thematic Objective 8 shows few actions and many needs: while labour market needs are very important in many OPs, actual actions are often only programmed under ESF and YEI, or mentioned only as a strategic background to TO9 and TO10 actions.

Poland has the highest inconsistencies under the Thematic Objective 8. According to its Partnership Agreement and OPs, the country faces high rates of long term

unemployment, low activity levels among the vulnerable groups, ineffective employment services, low competitiveness of its labour force, lack of support for self-employed people, poor effectiveness of the employment services and discrimination on the labour market. Yet, the actions under this Thematic Objectives concentrate on tourism development and supporting new economic activities, particularly in green economy.

Table 38 Correspondence between needs and actions under T08

National or regional need	Total OPs*specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs						
		8a1	8a2	8b1	8b2	8b3	8c1	8d1
Raising activity levels among vulnerable groups	32	2	1	2	3	3	2	1
Improving employability of disadvantaged groups and LTU	60	5	3	2	6	6	2	1
Supporting the transition of the labour force from declining sectors to new sectors with development potential	12	2	-	-	3	-	2	-
Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship	30	2	-	1	1	1	1	-
Improving the effectiveness of employment services	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Supporting the competitiveness of the labour force, the adaptive capabilities of workers and workplaces	33	2	-	1	1	3	2	-
Fighting discrimination on the labour market, and enhancing the harmonisation of work and family	8	1	-	-	-	1	-	-

National or regional need	Total OPs*specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs						
		8a1	8a2	8b1	8b2	8b3	8c1	8d1
life								
Number of OPs containing action		9	4	4	9	9	3	2

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

For needs related to the health and social sectors under TO9, there are again significant discrepancies between the number of OPs expressing needs and those specifying actions is also present here. For the 15 OPs that have planned in investments in health infrastructure (9a.0; at a general level, or where this could not be broken down to stationary and non-stationary care), a corresponding need was only mapped for 7. Similarly, only 19 OPs out of 35 that contain investments in primary health infrastructure, outpatient care and prevention (9a.1); and only 19 OPs out of 28 that include investments in hospital-based health services (9a.2) have identified health care services as a key national or regional need.

The degree of correspondence between needs and actions is comparable: 43 OPs have programmed investments in social infrastructure (9a.3), but the mapping has identified the corresponding need for only 26 of them. The discrepancy is even greater in the area of deinstitutionalisation and community-based services: 25 OPs have included actions in this area (9a.4), but the mapping of their intervention strategy has found only 7 OPs where this need was specified.

Table 39 Correspondence between needs and actions under TO9 (health and social infrastructure)

National or regional need	Total OPs*specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs				
		9a.0	9a1	9a2	9a3	9a4
Improving availability, quality and efficiency of health care services	46	7	20	19	26	15
Improving availability, quality and efficiency of social services	38	5	20	15	26	14
Replacing institutional care with community-based services	8	1	3	4	5	7
Number of OPs containing action		15	35	28	43	25

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

The remaining social inclusion interventions under TO9, that are not closely linked to health and social systems, show significantly better correspondence.

7 OPs plan the construction and upgrading of shelters, temporary accommodation (action type 9b.1), and 4 of them formulate the need to provide accommodation to those in need, while 5 of them contain the other relevant need in this TO, the promotion of the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups. There are 34 OPs that have programmed actions aimed at increasing the supply of social housing, rehabilitation of housing stock, especially in segregated areas (9b.2), and of these 23 talk about accommodation and housing segregation as a key need.

From the 9 OPs planning investments in protected housing, assisted living and innovative housing models (9b.3), 7 have expressed the need of promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups, and this need has also been spelled out by 43 out of 63 OPs including investments in the local infrastructure and services in deprived communities and vulnerable groups (9b.4).

There is a significant level of discrepancy in relation to interventions in the social economy. While there are 14 OPs that include actions aimed at strengthening the social economy (9c.1), only one of these has actually included the need to support sustainable forms of the solidarity economy in its strategy; the other four OPs which identified a corresponding challenge do not contain this type of action.

All in all, it emerges that countries and regions have at times limited abilities in identifying new and emerging societal challenges to be translated in needs. At the same time the priorities and the actions suggested at EU level are perhaps too advanced vis a vis to the administrative capacity and level of development of some regions. Such actions may require more guidance (and more political willingness) to be implemented. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 describe in detail some of these limitations in implementing these actions and provide possible explanations.

Table 40 Correspondence between needs and actions under TO9 (social inclusion)

National regional need or	Total OPs* specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs						
		9b1	9b2	9b3	9b4	9c1	9d1	9d2
Providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities, fighting housing segregation	51	4	23	6	27	7	6	4
Promoting the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups	73	5	26	7	43	11	9	4
Supporting sustainable forms of the solidarity economy	5	1	1	-	1	1	-	-

National or regional need	Total OPs* specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs						
		9b1	9b2	9b3	9b4	9c1	9d1	9d2
Number of OPs containing action		7	34	9	63	14	13	12

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Under the last Thematic Objective relevant to inclusive growth, TO10, the first type of action (10a.1) concerns investments to increase the availability of early childhood education and care facilities and education institutions. Whilst 49 OPs contain this type of action, only 28 OPs have identified the need to upgrade infrastructure for education and training. This may be partly explained by the fact that several of these actions are classified in the OPs under TO8. Out of 57 OPs aiming to renovate school buildings and upgrading equipment, only 30 have contain the relevant need.

For instance, Romania's actions do not address the most pending needs under this Thematic Objective: early school leaving and relevance of education for the labour market. The actions specified in the Operational Programmes concentrate on the education and training infrastructure consisting of renovations and increasing the capacities of early childhood education and care. Likewise, the Czech Republic omitted relevance of education for the labour market, Roma integration to education and early school leavings from its actions, although these were specified as needs in the Partnership Agreement and the Operational Programmes.

It can be concluded that in these examples the link between the needs and the actions planned is too vague and indirect.

Ensuring physical accessibility, adapting infrastructure for the integrated education of pupils with special education needs (10a.3) has been programmed by 14 OPs. Here the corresponding needs category is again the upgrading of infrastructure, specifically with a view to inclusion – and 8 OPs out of the 14 relevant OPs cover this need.

Three needs – promoting participation, enhancing the quality of education, and fighting early school leaving - is most often addressed by ESF interventions rather than ERDF.

Table 41 Correspondence between needs and actions under TO10

National or regional need	Total OPs* specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs			
		10a.1 early childhood education and care	10a.2 School buildings & equipment	10a.3 Accessibility	10a.4 Digitalisation
Upgrading infrastructure for quality and inclusive	53	28	31	8	7

National or regional need	Total OPs* specifying need	Frequency of the actions in the OPs			
		10a.1 early childhood education and care	10a.2 School buildings & equipment	10a.3 Accessibility	10a.4 Digitalisation
education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)					
Promote participation in education and training (early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, LLL)	40	20	30	7	7
Enhancing the quality and labour market relevance of education	26	11	16	2	4
Fighting early school leaving	36	14	24	5	6
Alleviating education segregation	6	2	5	3	-
Number of OPs containing action		49	57	14	12

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

4.6. Links to other policies and strategies

4.6.1. Links to Europe 2020 targets

The OPs, as required, duly refer to policies and strategies at EU, interregional, national and regional level, although the degree of specificity of these links differ. Several of the OPs have explicitly referred to the relevant Europe 2020 headline targets when describing the challenges, needs and strategies. These targets are:

- 'Employment': 75% of the population aged 20 to 64 years to be employed

- 'Skills 1': Share of early school leavers to be reduced under 10%;
- 'Skills 2': At least 40% of 30 to 34 years old to have completed tertiary or equivalent education.
- 'Poverty': Poverty to be reduced by lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Naturally needs relatable to TO8 would refer to the Europe 2020 employment target most often (25 OPs) – but this connection is far from exclusive. Reference is also made to the poverty (11 OPs) and the two skills targets. Also, relatively often (20 OPs) the reference to the Europe 2020 strategy remains general.

For needs that can be classified as TO9-relevant, the reference to the EU's poverty reduction target is the most prevalent (in 29 OPs); while for education and training-related needs, the reference most often made relates to early school leaving (21 OPs) and tertiary education targets (17 OPs). But here again, apart from general links, the connection with other Europe 2020 targets is also often established in the documents.

Inclusive growth-relevant strategies that concern TO2 activities tend not to be linked with the Europe 2020 targets.

Table 42 Links between programme strategies (by Thematic Objectives) with inclusive growth relevance and EU2020 targets

TO	Thematic Objective	Relevant OPs*	OPs with link to EU2020 targets				General reference to EU2020
			Employment	Early school leaving	Tertiary education	Poverty and social exclusion	
2	Information and Communication Technologies	8	1	-	-	1	7
8	Employment	97	25	5	2	11	20
9	Social inclusion	103	7	7	2	29	21
10	Education and training	90	10	21	17	9	16

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

4.6.2. Links to Country Specific Recommendations

The Commission's guidance on the content of the OPs asks for a description of the needs to address the challenges identified in the relevant Country Specific Recommendations in the strategy for programme. Considering the timing of OP programming, the latest round of CSRs available was the one from 2013.

The recommendations cover a range of areas that are not closely connected to inclusive growth – public finances, financial sector and structural policies in other

sectors and policies (for instance competition law, public procurement, services of general economic interests) – but they also contain items for each country that should be informing the programming of inclusive growth, and which would be expected to be mentioned in the OPs. In this study these were defined as recommendations as those related to employment and social policies (including education and training), and implying public investments over a sustained period of time. Regulatory action such as reforms of pension systems and unemployment benefits were excluded, as well as concrete public actions with short deadlines (such as certain recommendations in the case of Spain).

The following table gives an overview of whether the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) from 2013 for a given Member State contain recommendations linked to the key Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10. The classification is based on a review of the original text of the CSR, broken down to sub-themes (single sentences or sometimes parts of sentences, if several themes were combined in one sentence) in the European Parliament’s monitoring study.³⁴ The list covers 23 countries: five Member States have not received CSRs under the European Semester as they were either under EU financial assistance programmes in 2013 (Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal), or in the case of Croatia, joined the EU on 1 July 2013 only.

Table 43 Coverage of TOs by relevant Country Specific Recommendations (2013)

Member State	Thematic Objective		
	TO8	TO9	TO10
Austria	yes		yes
Belgium	yes	yes	
Bulgaria	yes	yes	yes
Czech Republic	yes		yes
Denmark	yes		yes
Estonia	yes	yes	yes
Finland	yes		
France	yes		yes
Germany	yes		yes
Hungary	yes	yes	yes

³⁴ European Parliamentary Research Service (2015), Country-Specific Recommendations: Scorecard for 2013 - How far are EU Member States meeting their European Council commitments?

Member State	Thematic Objective		
	TO8	TO9	TO10
Italy	yes	yes	yes
Latvia	yes	yes	yes
Lithuania	yes	yes	yes
Luxembourg	yes		yes
Malta	yes		yes
Netherlands	yes		
Poland	yes		yes
Romania	yes		
Slovakia	yes		yes
Slovenia	yes		yes
Spain	yes	yes	yes
Sweden	yes		yes
United Kingdom	yes		yes

Note: Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal were under EU financial assistance programmes in 2003 and did not receive CSRs.

Overall, links with Country Specific Recommendations have been explicitly mentioned in a minority of OPs. 32 out of 97 OPs (33%) that have identified needs connected to TO8 have made a clear reference to a corresponding CSR. 36 OPs identified social inclusion related needs made the link to a corresponding CSR (35%), and 25 OPs describing education and training-related needs have referenced a relevant CSR (28%).

Table 44 Links between identified needs with inclusive growth relevance and CSRs (TO8-10)

TO	Thematic Objective	Relevant OPs	OPs with link to Country-Specific Recommendations	As % of all relevant OPs
8	Employment	97	32	33%
9	Social inclusion	103	36	35%

TO	Thematic Objective	Relevant OPs	OPs with link to Country-Specific Recommendations	As % of all relevant OPs
10	Education and training	90	25	28%

The low percentages of CSR coverage are partly explained by the fact that five countries had not received CSRs in 2013, although one of these, Ireland, has been retained in the analysis as their two OPs mapped did refer to CSRs. Omitting the remaining four countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal), the number of OPs that include needs relatable to Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10 falls to 105, and 49% of these (51) do make the reference to one or more CSRs that are connected to these TOs and address issues that imply the need for public investment. More specifically, 46% of OPs containing needs related to TO8 do invoke relevant recommendations. The corresponding figure is 43% for TO9, and 36% for TO10.

Other reason to explain the low percentages of CSR coverage is the thematic concentration. The results of a previous study³⁵ show a substantial degree of concentration of ERDF on Thematic Objectives 1, 3 and 4. Altogether, 56% of ERDF budget was allocated to these TOs which received the highest funding. The allocations of more developed regions are mainly focused on research and innovation, followed by support for SMEs and low carbon economy. On the other hand, less developed regions allocated the highest amount to research and innovation, network infrastructure, SME support and low carbon economy. This situation leads to smaller presence of recommendations linked to inclusive growth.

A number of Member States referred to the recommendations in all of their relevant OPs: Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands – these being typically national OPs. The coverage of CSRs in the OPs is weaker in the Czech Republic (no CSR included), France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain – with several of the OPs not covering CSRs being at regional level.

Table 45 Number of OPs per Member State identifying relevant needs under TO 8-10 and connected CSRs

Member State	Total OPs* with relevant needs	OPs with reference to CSRs (TO8-10)	TO8		TO9		TO10	
			OPs with needs	OPs with CSR	OPs with needs	OPs with CSR	OPs with needs	OPs with CSR
Austria	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Belgium	3	2	3	1	3	1	1	1

35 European Commission, 2017. "The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds", p. 12

Member State	Total OPs* with relevant needs	OPs with reference to CSRs (TO8-10)	TO8		TO9		TO10	
			OPs with needs	OPs with CSR	OPs with needs	OPs with CSR	OPs with needs	OPs with CSR
Bulgaria	2	2	-	-	1	1	2	2
Czech Republic	3	-	1	-	2	-	3	-
Denmark	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Estonia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Finland	2	1	2	1	-	-	-	-
France	18	6	14	4	15	2	13	3
Germany	11	2	1	1	7	2	6	1
Hungary	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	2
Ireland	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	-
Italy	13	2	7	-	10	-	9	2
Latvia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lithuania	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luxembourg	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Malta	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
Netherlands	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Poland	16	11	14	10	16	11	15	7
Romania	2	1	2	-	2	1	2	1
Slovakia	2	1	-	-	1	-	1	1
Slovenia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-
Spain	15	8	7	1	11	7	11	3
Sweden	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-
UK	2	2	2	1	2	1	-	-
Total	105	51	67	31	82	35	72	26

* Excluding cross-border and transnational OPs. ** May also include YEI and Cohesion Fund financing

Note: Table does not include four countries that did not receive Country Specific Recommendations (Croatia, which became member in 2013; Cyprus, Greece and Portugal, which were under EU financial assistance), but includes Ireland, which was under financial assistance in 2013 but received CSRs in 2014.

Although the explicit link to relevant Country-Specific Recommendations has not been made in about half of the OPs analysed, according to the mapping – most of them do explain how they contribute to, or take into account, the key national or regional strategies in the inclusive-growth relevant areas addressed by the OP strategy.³⁶

³⁶ The list of countries that have relevant CSRs but have not referred to them in their OPs will be cross-checked with results of the recent study on how Country Specific Recommendations were addressed in the Operational Programmes.

5. TERRITORIAL STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

5.1. Key findings

KEY FINDINGS

- Community-led Local Development (CLLD) was encountered in 29 OPs or in 21% of cases. These relate to 17 Member States, with a total value of EUR 1,496 billion from ERDF (81% of the total amount allocated) and ESF (19%) resources. The low incidence in the use of CLLD could be imputed to the fact that MAs considered the tool complex and the related guidance not very useful.
- Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies are more relevant for a significant share of the OPs reviewed than any other instrument. SUD is the most common of the three main territorial strategies (CLLD, SUD and ITI), with 40% of the OPs within scope making use of it. In the majority (56%) of cases, the ERDF is coupled with the ESF to deliver these strategies, even though a considerable number of OPs (38% of those using SUD) rely solely on the ERDF.
- Countries such as Germany, France, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic, which present large urban agglomerations, make an extensive use of SUD to address the needs of deprived neighborhoods, as well as the fight against unemployment and social exclusion.
- Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) is widely addressed in many countries' OPs, although in many cases the ITI actions are designed to complement the Sustainable Urban Development strategies, which is the case of France and Poland. From the inclusive growth perspective, a strong focus of many countries' actions lies either on improving education infrastructure and outcome or on tackling demographic challenges.
- Most countries recognise specific approaches for geographical areas most affected by poverty or social exclusion. Greece, Poland, France and Spain include these specific approaches in many of their regional OPs. Lithuania and Latvia are the only countries that do not apply any specific approaches in their OPs.

5.2. Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)

Community-led local development (CLLD), financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds, is a specific tool for funding use at sub-regional level, which is complementary to other development support at local level. CLLD can mobilise and involve local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe

2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, fostering territorial cohesion and reaching specific policy objectives³⁷.

The research team has clustered the countries and related OPs subject of the analysis in four main groups when it comes to the use of CLLD. The first group of countries makes limited use of CLLD; the second relates to countries that have implemented CLLD in OPs managed at central level; for the third group of countries, CLLD has an important presence among OPs; and in the fourth group no OP mentions this instrument. One country, Estonia, does not fit into any of these groups: even though CLLD is included in the country's only Operational Programme, there is no reference to inclusive growth.

In the first group of countries, we can find some of the biggest countries in the European Union. Even though these are countries that have a large number of OPs, the use of CLLD is limited:

- In **Spain**, a country with 21 Operational Programmes – one for each of the nineteen regions and 2 national programmes – only the OP Aragon uses the Community-Led Local Development as an instrument, where it focuses on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty under TO9. The rest of the Operational Programmes are not planning to implement local development strategies in the programming period 2014-2020.
- In **Germany**, the Community-Led Local Development instrument is used only in two Operational Programmes: the OP Sachsen ERDF and the OP Sachsen-Anhalt ERDF. Social inclusion is not supported as a stand-alone objective in German ERDF programmes 2014-2020, and it is only supported in some regional ERDF OPs in the context of sustainable urban development strategies.
- In **Italy**, the Community-Led Local Development instrument is used in ROP Puglia and ROP Sicily. Interviewed MAs complained about the performance framework (especially its strict deadline) and the design of CLLD, which are perceived as long and complex. This was stated as the reason why the instrument is not very used among OPs.
- In **Poland**, the CLLD instrument is used only in two regional OPs: Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podlaskie. CLLD activates local communities in the creation and implementation of various bottom-up initiatives and enables them to increase their capacity to build social capital, which is a significant factor in improving the competitiveness in areas that are lacking jobs and suffer from deteriorating living conditions and cumulating other social problems.

The research team has identified a second group of countries where CLLD is mentioned in national OPs:

- In **Lithuania**, CLLD can be implemented to tackle challenges such as social exclusion and poverty in urban areas through its only Operational Programme for the EU Funds' investments. To achieve the headline target of the EU2020 in relation to poverty reduction, Lithuania needs to cut the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion down to 814,000 by 2020.

37 DG REGIO (2014), Community-led Local Development. Available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2014/community-led-local-development.

- **Romania** uses CLLD in its Regional Operational Programme (ROP) for the development of marginalised urban areas in less developed regions, covering the whole country. Interventions foreseen by CLLD actions target disadvantaged communities in marginalised urban areas (e.g. Roma, old people, children, people from rural and marginalized communities, disabled people, etc.).
- **Hungary** only uses CLLD in one of its OPs – the Territorial and Settlement Development OP – where it is specifically oriented at addressing social inclusion (under TO 9). The main aim is to strengthen communities and the collaboration between the public sphere, companies and civil organisations through community-building and a broadening supply of cultural services.
- **Slovakia** makes only minor references to the CLLD in two national Operational Programmes: OP Human Resources and the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP). The CLLD will be used mainly for rural areas or mid-sized towns. Material deprivation in rural areas is higher in Slovakia than the EU average.
- The **Czech Republic** makes explicit reference to the Community-Led Local Development instrument in its Integrated Regional Operational Programme, where it focuses on the integrated development of rural areas. One of the particularities of the Czech Republic is the considerable development gap between Prague and the other 7 NUTS2 regions of the country. Likewise, there are strong socio-economic differences between rural and urban areas
- **Bulgaria** will implement an integrated territorial approach under the CLLD in the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth" (SESG). OP SESG provides conditions and resources for building and developing early childhood education and care and schools to implement an inclusive education. Inclusive growth is an important priority for Bulgaria for the 2014-2020 programming period with a view to helping to overcome major development problems such as demographic risks and higher poverty rates than other EU countries.

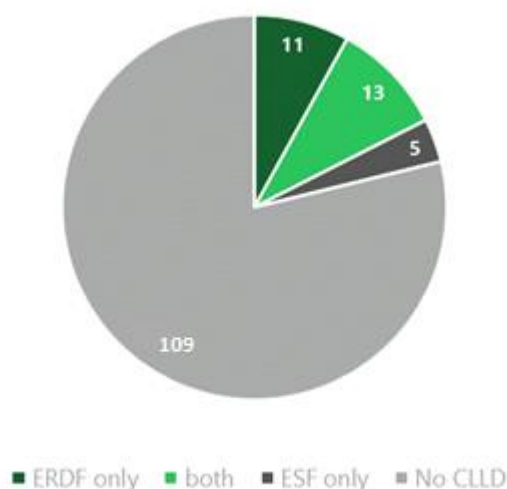
For the third group of countries, CLLD has an important presence among OPs:

- In **Portugal** 5 out of 7 OPs include CLLD: ROP North, ROP Centre, ROP Lisbon, ROP Alentejo and ROP Algarve, with the exception of ROP Azores and ROP Madeira. Major challenges are identified particularly in the areas of integration of marginalised groups, fighting unemployment and the qualification of active adult population.
- In **Greece**, CLLD is incorporated in every Operational Programme according to the framework set by the Partnership Agreement in the programming period 2014-2020.

The fourth group of countries is formed by France, Croatia and Latvia. No CLLD initiatives have been adopted in any of the 18 French OPs analysed for this study. This is also the case for Croatia and Latvia. The Croatian strategies and interventions for inclusive growth are implemented centrally, without making use of integrated territorial strategies, hence no CLLD, SUD or ITI initiatives have been implemented in the country. Latvia, on the contrary, makes a large use of ITI, which is implemented in the development centres of national importance: Riga, Daugavpils, Jelgava, Jekabpils, Jurmala, Liepaja, Rezekne, Valmiera, Ventspils. The support for inclusive growth actions is planned under TO 9 and TO 10 to improve study environment of general education institutions, increase the number of modernised vocational education institutions and to develop infrastructure as well as services for families like early childhood education and care infrastructure and support for persons with disability for an independent life and integration into the community.

Within the 138 OPs under this study's scope, CLLD was encountered in 29, or in 21% of cases. These cover 17 Member States, with a total value of EUR 1,496 billion from ERDF (81% of the total amount allocated) and ESF (19%) resources³⁸. For the most part, such territorial strategies tend to be financed by a combination of ERDF and ESF (45% of cases where CLLD exists), although a considerable number of them (38% of cases) are solely funded by the ERDF. Interviewed MAs complained about the complexity and difficulty of the strategy. Similarly most respondents also consider legal and guidance documents concerning CLLD no very useful³⁹. On the other hand, the implementation of CLLD resulted from particularly problematic negotiations. These reasons can help to understand why the use of CLLD is not very extended among the OPs. Figure 7 displays these trends.

Figure 7 Use of CLLD in the 138 OPs in scope, by fund



5.3. Sustainable Urban Development (SUD)

The 2014-2020 period has put the urban dimension at the centre of Cohesion Policy. At least 50% of the ERDF resources for this period will be invested in urban areas.⁴⁰ The use of SUD exceeds the regulatory minimum defined by Article 7 of the ERDF regulation, which states that at least 5% of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) must be invested in integrated sustainable urban development at national level. The average level is around 7,7%, with Cyprus

38 European Commission (2016), The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds. p. 107

39 See Chapter 10 for a description of respondents and details on survey results.

40 DG REGIO (2017), Urban development. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/.

(around 20,6%) and Bulgaria (around 20%) being the Member States investing the largest proportion of their ERDF allocation⁴¹.

The total amount allocated to SUD is EUR 15,47 billion. EUR 14,2 billion (92,5%) of the total amount for SUD is to be financed by the ERDF and EUR 1,27 billion (7,5%) by the ESF⁴². Integrated sustainable urban development strategies are more relevant for a significant share of the OPs reviewed than any other instrument, but there are nevertheless some exceptions. Croatia does not mention SUD in its Operational Programmes at all. Slovakia and Estonia foresee SUD for the programming period 2014-2020, however the OPs do not provide any further information.

In the case of integrated sustainable urban development strategies, the countries can be clustered in two main groups. The first group of countries makes relevant use of SUD, in the second group the instrument is mentioned to a limited extent⁴³.

The implementation of Sustainable Urban Development strategies is very relevant in the approach of the following countries:

- In **France**, 15 out of the 18 OPs reviewed have a SUD strategy included, just with the exceptions of the two UPR Guadeloupe and Réunion, and the interregional OP Pyrénées. In general, ERDF mobilised over SUD strategies comes as a complement to the existing urban strategies defined at national level. The core of ERDF support to inclusive growth focuses on TO9, around the implementation of integrated urban strategies.
- In **Germany**, eight operational programmes use SUD, which are all ERDF regional OPs: Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Saarland, Sachsen and Thüringen. The only exception among the OPs analysed is the OP Sachsen-Anhalt. The operational programmes take into account measures aimed at the integrated urban development and the attention to deprived neighbourhoods, as well as the fight against unemployment and social exclusion
- For **Italy**, SUD are also relevant in a significant share of OPs. This strategy is applied both in national and regional OPs as well as in both less and more developed regions. The ERDF allocation to SUD is significant for all the OPs, including the multi-fund ones. The typology of designated territory varies according to the region. However, they are mostly implemented in big municipalities. For this reason, the highest amount of SUD concerns the NOP on Metropolitan Cities. Less developed regions generally have a higher fund allocation to SUD. For instance, in Lombardy, SUD interventions tackling inclusive growth are implemented in disadvantaged communities in the metropolitan area of Milan and Bollate, focused on housing problems. Also in Calabria, where SUD actions aim to face social problems within the city.
- In the **Czech Republic**, SUD is mentioned in two of the three OPs reviewed. The Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) will use SUD

41 European Commission (2016), The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds. p. 123

42 European Commission (2016), The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds. p. 118

43 The grouping of the countries is based on the number of OPs which include SUD. However, it must be taken into account that certain Member States allocated significant funding to SUD (such as Spain, Hungary and Bulgaria) within a limited /or only one OP

covering the regional capital cities. The IROP is directly linked to the poverty and social exclusion EU 2020 target, aiming to reduce poverty and social exclusion in the Czech Republic. Although the country has been performing among the best of the EU28 in most quantified measures of social exclusion, the situation has not been improving in recent years. The OP Prague – Growth Pole will implement SUD combining funds from the ERDF and the ESF, focusing on specific problems that the capital faces – homelessness, social exclusion, and lack of preschool facilities.

- In **Portugal**, the SUD instrument is used in four regional OPs: ROP North, ROP Centre, ROP Lisbon and ROP Alentejo (all of them covering TOs 4, 6 and 9). The country introduced SUD for urban centres of higher hierarchical levels according to the Regional Territorial Planning documents and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs). The Operational Programmes take into account measures aimed at reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion under TO 9.
- In **Romania**, SUD is included in the Regional Operational Programme under investment priorities TO 4, 6, 9 and 10. SUD interventions tackling inclusive growth are implemented in marginalised areas in regional capital cities, in particular in less developed regions. The main target groups of SUD interventions relevant for inclusive growth are marginalized communities in regional capital cities (09b) and vulnerable groups (TO10).
- In **Greece**, all regional operational programmes include financial resources allocated to Sustainable Urban Development. Some OPs planned actions in order to face specific needs of disadvantaged social groups or of deprived areas,
- In **Poland**, the SUD instrument is widespread among regional OPs. As highlighted in the Partnership Agreement, the country needs to apply comprehensive regeneration activities in the peripheral and degraded urban and rural areas. This is why actions under this instrument will be oriented to the revitalisation of degraded areas and to combatting exclusion.

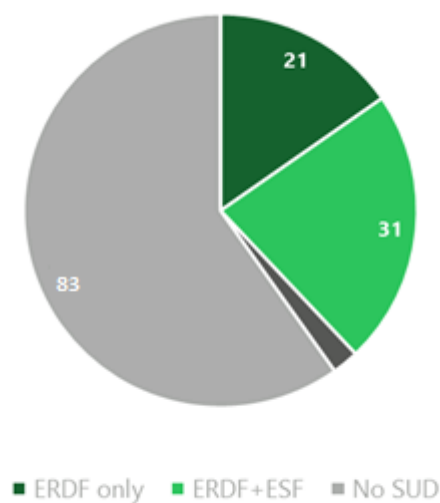
The research team has identified a second group of countries where SUD is only mentioned by one national OP.

- In **Spain**, as in the case of CLLD, the Sustainable Urban Development strategy is integrated in only one of the Operational Programmes and at national level. Under the Pluri-regional ERDF Operational Programme, the integrated actions for sustainable urban development should be focused on improving the social dimension, targeting population living in the municipality/urban areas which exceed 20,000 people.
- In **Bulgaria**, in accordance with Bulgaria's Partnership Agreement, the integrated approach for urban development (SUD territorial strategies under art. 7 ERDF) will be implemented through an Integrated Priority Axis under the OP Regions in Growth. SUD actions will be implemented under TO 9, improving social infrastructures and TO 10, investing in education, training and vocational training.
- In **Latvia**, SUD is used in the OP Growth and Employment for the promotion of employment and improvement of social infrastructure and vocational education. As mention in the Partnership Agreement, the country has a problem with high poverty and unemployment rates, especially long-term and youth unemployment. Latvia will tackle this issue through the implementation of SUD.
- In **Hungary**, the Territorial and Settlement Development OP is the only relevant programme which uses the SUD instrument as a form of integrated territorial investment. The main objective of the integrated approach is to

contribute to multi-centric urban development in the country by strengthening the role of the 22 cities as regional growth engines. Furthermore, actions aim at promoting the transition to a green economy, developing sustainable transport and urban environment, improving urban public services and reversing the decline of deprived urban areas, strengthening local social co-operation and communities.

SUD is the most common of the three main territorial strategies (CLLD, SUD and ITI), with 40% of the OPs within scope making use of it. In the majority (56%) of cases, the ERDF is coupled with the ESF to deliver this strategy, even though a considerable number of OPs (38% of those using SUD) rely solely on the ERDF. Very few OPs (3, or 5% of those using SUD) rely only on the ESF to deliver SUD in the context of inclusive growth. Figure 8 summarizes these results.

Figure 8 Use of SUD in the OPs within scope, by fund



5.4. Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)

Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) is a means in the cohesion policy framework that enables the combination of investments from several priority axes. The goal of ITI is to make it possible for Member States to implement a territorial approach that is integrated across sectors, priorities and OPs. As a simplified mechanism to use financing from several OPs, ITI allows Member States more flexibility. ITI can be implemented for territories where an integrated territorial strategy exists. Overall, 20 Member States (94 programmes) are using ITI. The amount allocated to ITI is EUR 14.77 billion, with 68% being under SUD, and 87% coming from ERDF⁴⁴.

Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) are widely addressed in many countries' OPs (with the exception of **Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Croatia** and **Estonia** which do not include ITI in any of their OPs). Most actions target urban areas and

⁴⁴ European Commission (2016), The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds. p. 115

focus on education, demography, access to public and health services, and infrastructure to address, for instance, inadequate infrastructural connectivity, unemployment and low inactivity due to inadequate qualifications, or demographic challenges such as ageing and depopulation. In many cases the ITI actions are designed to complement the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies laid out in the previous chapter. A strong focus of many countries' actions lies either on improving education infrastructure and outcome or on tackling demographic challenges.

In the bigger or more regionalised countries, ITI is mostly used in the regional OPs:

- In **France**, ITI are mostly considered in the context of Sustainable Urban Development (SUD). In these cases, beneficiaries concerned, TOs involved and funds mobilised are the same as under the SUD approaches, ERDF support to inclusive growth focuses on TO9. Only two regional OPs (Limousin and Guadeloupe) include ITI actions that target also rural areas. In the case of Guadeloupe, ITI actions cover the entire island, helping people who live in more rural areas to take advantage of tourism. The Guadeloupe OP expects that this economic activity will help improve living standards and social well-being of all people in the island.
- In **Poland**, ITI is closely integrated with SUD measures as well. ITI actions in Poland target large regional agglomerations with local municipalities and counties, while focusing mostly on improving education infrastructure on one side, and investments on health infrastructure or revitalisation on the other side.
- In **Spain**, ITI that are relevant for Inclusive Growth are addressed in three regional OPs (Andalucía, Aragon and Castilla-La Mancha) and two national OPs (Smart Growth and Sustainable Growth) to tackle unemployment that has resulted from the financial crisis, and demographic challenges such as ageing and depopulation.
- In the case of **Italy**, the implementation of ITI is a common feature in seven of the regional OPs. They mostly target infrastructure in badly connected inner areas, both in more and less developed regions.
- In **Portugal**, ITI is used in the four ROPs North, Centre, Lisbon and Alentejo to respond to increasing marginalisation of certain vulnerable groups currently outside of the labour market. One of the funding priorities is to increase the recognition of the personal, social and professional competences of these groups, in order to facilitate their employability and their social and cultural integration (e.g. through training actions focused on young NEET).
- Ten regional OPs use ITI in **Greece**. The variety of target areas is rather large, according to the regions' individual needs, and includes urban areas, rural areas, coastal areas with hinterland extension, one area with industrial concentration (OP Continental Greece) and one area with specific environmental interest (OP Western Macedonia). The primary issues addressed are low population density, social disparities, exclusion of Roma, and infrastructure.

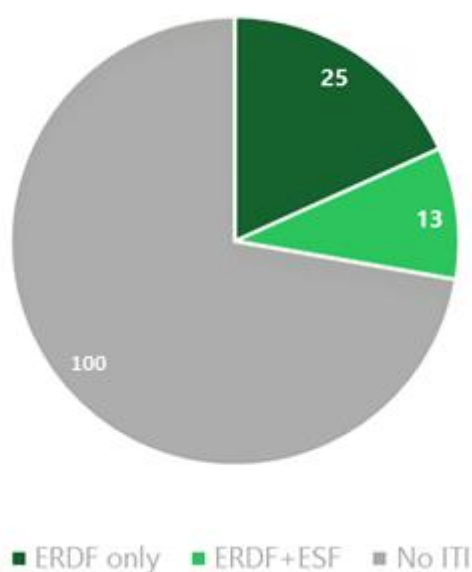
The smaller countries mention ITI in their national OPs:

- The **Lithuanian** OP singles out small and medium-sized towns as primary targets for ITI (as the five major cities are already integrated in the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategy). Depopulation and low economic activity have been identified as the major issues.
- **Latvia** uses ITI in their OP for the nine largest urban centres of national importance, including the capital Riga.

- In the **Czech Republic**, three OPs address ITI in metropolitan areas (including the OP Prague for the capital) to invest, for instance, in educational facilities such as the capacity of schools in order to reduce distances of the ways to school.
- Two **Romanian** national OPs target ITI specifically in the Danube Delta region with a focus on improving education infrastructure and promoting the regional tourism sector in order to benefit from regional potential and resources.
- **Slovakia** includes ITI in its Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP), concentrating on NUTSIII territories, covering TO1 and2, through regional integrated territorial strategies.

ITI can be financed only by ERDF, however they can also combine ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Funds, and be complemented by financial support from other funds like the EARDF or EMF. The support under an ITI must contribute to the objectives of each of the programmes from which funding have been undertaken⁴⁵. The figure bellow illustrates the share of OPs financed only by ERDF and a combination of ERDF and ESF.

Figure 9 Use of ITI in the OPs within scope, by fund



5.5. Specific approaches for geographical areas most affected by poverty/target groups at highest risk of discrimination or social inclusions

Most countries recognise specific approaches for geographical areas most affected by poverty or social exclusion. **Lithuania** and **Latvia** are the only countries that do

⁴⁵ European Commission, 2016. "The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds", p. 115

not apply any specific approaches in their OPs. On the contrary, not many countries adopt specific approaches for territories with specific geographical features⁴⁶. There are no such regions in **Croatia**, the **Czech Republic**, **Hungary**, **Germany** and **Slovakia**. The OPs for **Bulgaria**, **Lithuania**, **Latvia**, **Estonia** and **Romania** also do not apply any specific approaches. In the six countries that develop specific approaches (Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Poland and Greece), the number of relevant OPs is however significant.

Greece, Poland, France and Spain include specific approaches in many of their regional OPs:

- In **Greece**, all thirteen regional OPs include specific approaches for areas most affected by poverty and social exclusion, focusing mainly on actions under TO9 and targeting such marginalised groups as Roma, refugees, or people living in remote areas and islands. Most actions aim at the job market, with investments in the social economy, combatting discrimination and improving access to marginalised groups. Moreover, eight out of thirteen OPs in **Greece** include specific approaches for territories with specific geographical features, referring either to mountainous areas or islands and focussing on the improvement of competitiveness and better accessibility.
- All but one of the **Polish** regional OPs include specific approaches for geographical areas most affected by poverty and social exclusion. Nine out of sixteen regional OPs of **Poland** include specific approaches for territories with specific geographical features, touching upon issues of employment and integration, exclusion, and depopulation. Actions include investments in road infrastructure and social infrastructure, and a strong focus on supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment.
- In **France**, all OPs reviewed except three (Franche-Comté, Limousin, Pyrénées) adopt specific approaches. In general, they refer to the SUD or ITI approach, thus focusing mostly on urban areas. Some OPs mention specific marginalised target groups such as Roma or young and elderly people. In **France**, specific approaches are adopted in ten regional OPs, which are mostly the OPs of ultra-peripheral regions (overseas regions), with the addition of a few mountainous regions (like Midi-Pyrénées or Franche-Comté).
- Six **Spanish** regional OPs address social exclusion (especially the ageing population), high unemployment, and access to social infrastructure. Moreover, In **Spain**, seven regional OPs address specific geographical features of either island or mountainous regions. Relevant issues relate mainly to geographical isolation, communication infrastructure, access to public services, and demographic challenges. The Balears islands, for instance, suffer from structural problems which are inherent to the region's insularity, like market isolation.
- In **Portugal**, seven OPs describe actions such as the construction of long-term care facilities (targeting elderly people), support to local consortiums that promote social inclusion, or support to companies that employ people

46 European Commission (2009), Working Paper on Territories with Specific Geographical Features (02/2009). Available at: http://www.insuleur.com/documentos/D_23.pdf

with disabilities. Madeira and Azores (two of the outermost regions in the EU) design measures to address the challenges faced because of their remoteness, insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate, and economic dependence on a few products. The two ROPs of these regions thus include specific actions, e.g. compensation for companies for the costs caused by the ultra-periphery location.

The issue is however less relevant for the other strongly regionalised countries Italy and Germany:

- In **Italy**, only three OPs include specific approaches (the regional OP for Lombardy and the two national OPs on Education and Metropolitan cities). However in **Italy**, all the regional OPs except one (for the Bolzano region), as well as the National OP on Education, include specific approaches for territories with specific geographical features.
- Only one **German** OP (the regional OP for North Rhine-Westphalia) partially includes areas that are affected by poverty or social exclusion, targeting primarily unemployed people and small children. The other German OPs do not include such areas.

The smaller countries widely mention specific approaches for geographical areas most affected by poverty or social exclusion in their national OPs:

- **Croatia** recognises significant regional differences in this regard and adopts several objectives to reduce social inequality, exclusion and poverty by improving community and economic infrastructure in affected areas.
- The **Czech Republic** addresses poverty and social exclusion in two OPs (the Integrated Regional OP and the OP on Research, Development and Education), with a strong focus on access to education and education infrastructure.
- In **Romania**, the national ROP identifies marginalised urban areas and the Danube Delta region as the most affected.
- The **Slovakian** OPs primarily target marginalised Roma communities.
- Three **Hungarian** OPs mention specific approaches for most affected regions (covering 34% of the Hungarian population).
- In **Bulgaria**, two national OPs include measures to reduce the disparities between the capital Sofia and the other parts of the country, with such key challenges as highly depopulated areas and the marginalisation of Roma. Actions to address these issues include the improvement of road infrastructure and social and health infrastructure, the promotion of the tourism sector, or the retraining of teachers and administrative staff in the education system to work in multicultural environments.
- **Estonia** includes actions to increase employment and improve the attractiveness of the investment and living environment, targeting all regions outside the Tallinn and Tartu areas.

6. APPLICATION OF THE RELEVANT HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

6.1. *Key Findings and conclusions*

KEY FINDINGS

- The ERDF has an important role in the promotion of the equal opportunities and gender equality principles in several intervention areas. These include measures supporting the creation of business and research activities developing new products and services to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged groups; supporting the accessibility and adaptation of existing housing, education, health care and cultural facilities, as well as adapting ICT, transportation and social infrastructures to the needs of disadvantaged groups.
- The triangulation of data gathered shows that all the PAs and the surveyed OPs mention the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. They also provide some indications on the application of these principles and underline potential synergies with the ESF and national strategies. However, there are differences in the level of detail on how these principles are to be implemented.
- Accessibility and gender equality are the most addressed principles in the reviewed OPs, thanks to the fact that there is a greater experience in their application in most of the ERDF intervention fields. Conversely, policy issues on which social prejudices are still strong and political commitment is low: e.g. discrimination on grounds of ethnicity/race, and especially religious and sexual orientation, appear to be less developed, beyond interventions aimed at supporting social housing and reducing school segregation in the case of ethnicity/race.
- The evidence on the calls for proposals shows that the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination are usually internalised in the selection criteria in a rather generic way, mainly focusing on the accessibility needs of people with disabilities, especially when dealing with infrastructural investments, and gender equality. Only few countries have introduced specific scoring mechanisms in their selection criteria.
- All public authorities and socio-economic partners dealing with gender equality and non-discrimination issues are involved, as relevant stakeholders, in the monitoring committees or have been involved in ad hoc consultations. Some countries have implemented specific training and capacity building measures to address the insufficient knowledge and know-how on implementing horizontal principles in ERDF supported actions.

- Countries face difficulties to mainstream the equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles in all the ERDF intervention areas. The addressed policy areas mainly concern education and social infrastructures/services and their accessibility. Little attention is given to supporting research and business in the development and provision of products and services improving the quality of life of disadvantaged groups; or to addressing their needs in the design of transportation and ICT facilities, housing facilities, or cultural and tourism facilities and services. Moreover, Member States reported difficulties in the implementation of measures addressing some forms of discrimination, for example, discrimination on grounds of religion and beliefs and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation; and in involving representatives of the discriminated groups in programmes' design and implementation.
- The difficulty to move from formal statements to actual implementation is likely to reduce the potential effects of the provisions adopted in the programming phases. While usually a large number of forms of discrimination and of disadvantaged groups are mentioned in the sections on horizontal principles in the PAs and OPs, these same groups are hardly mentioned in the presentation of actual actions and/or no systematic arrangement is identified on how to apply the horizontal principles.
- The difficulty to actively involve representatives of the concerned discriminated groups in the programmes' design and implementation may reduce the effectiveness of the implemented actions in addressing the needs of the discriminated groups.
- Overall, these difficulties are largely due to the lack of experience on the use of ERDF Funds to address these horizontal principles among both programme managing institutions and beneficiaries. The time and effort needed to ensure political commitment and to accommodate the necessary regulatory and legislative changes is another critical factor. In the case of measures to support the inclusion of Roma and of ethnic minorities, strong barriers are also linked to the difficulty to combat social prejudices and ensure political commitment.

6.2. Introduction

In the current programming period, the **promotion of equality between men and women (hereafter gender equality) and non-discrimination** are the horizontal principles closely linked to inclusive growth that according to Art.7 of the Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013, these principles have to be mainstreamed in all interventions and all funds.

In addition, Art. 5 of the CPR states that "relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination"

have to be included in the partnership and be supported in strengthening their institutional capacity⁴⁷.

In the Common Strategic Framework, these principles are declined to include accessibility and addressing demographic change. **Accessibility** regards the provision of products, goods, services and infrastructures cofinanced by the ESI Funds that have to be accessible to all citizens including those with disabilities⁴⁸; while **addressing demographic change** relates particularly access to education, social support, and health care, to enhance active ageing and job opportunities for the elderly and young people⁴⁹.

These horizontal principles are closely related to the challenges and needs addressed by the TOs considered in this study e.g.:

- TO2 - addressing access to, and use of, e-services by disadvantaged target groups. These needs are specifically addressed by Investment Priority 2c which supports the development of e-services (2c.1) and encourages their use (2c.2).

47 European Commission- Regional and Urban Policies, European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020: Official texts and Commentaries, November 2015, pp. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fb4e979d-b377-11e5-8d3c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

48 The CSF under the accessibility point 5.4, states that: "Member States and the Commission shall, in accordance with Article 7, take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on disability. Managing authorities shall ensure by means of action throughout programme lifecycles that all products, goods, services and infrastructures that are open or provided to the public and are cofinanced by the ESI Funds are accessible to all citizens including those with disabilities in accordance with applicable law, thereby contributing to a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities and the elderly. In particular, accessibility to the physical environment, transport, ICT in order to promote inclusion of disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities, shall be ensured. Actions to be undertaken may include directing investments towards accessibility in existing buildings and established services."

49 The CSF under the accessibility point 5.5 states that:"Member States shall use the ESI Funds, in line with relevant national or regional strategies to facilitate inclusion of all age groups, including through improved access to education and social support structures with a view to enhancing job opportunities for the elderly and young people and with a focus on regions with high rates of youth unemployment in comparison to the Union average rate. Investments in health infrastructures shall be aimed at ensuring a long and healthy working life for all of the Union's citizens.

To address challenges in the regions most affected by demographic change, Member States shall in particular identify measures to:

- (a) support demographic renewal through better conditions for families and an improved balance between working and family life;
- (b) boost employment, raise productivity and economic performance through investing in education, ICT and research and innovation;
- (c) focus on the adequacy and quality of education, training and social support structures as well as where appropriate, on the efficiency of social protection systems;
- (d) promote cost-effective provision of health care and long-term care including investment in e-health, e-care and infrastructure."

- TO8 - addressing challenges directly connected to access to, and discrimination on, the labour market. Four investment priorities address these needs under the ERDF: IP 8a, 8b, 8c, and 8d.
- TO9-concerning the provision of health and community-based social care to those in need, adequate housing to contrast segregation, and local services for households and communities facing poverty and social exclusion. All the four ERDF IPs are relevant in this respect, as well as ERDF contribution in integrated development strategies for deprived urban areas, including building and housing renovations and improvements to reduce segregation and improve quality of life. ERDF projects also support deinstitutionalization and the shift to community based care services, and infrastructure improvements.
- TO10 actions concerning the provision of, and access to, quality education and training for all, including the fight against segregation in education. All the ERDF IPs are relevant in this respect, especially when supporting investments in: education & training infrastructures and equipment facilities in areas with a disadvantaged pupil population; transportation (bussing) and road infrastructures, facilitating access to education and training and reducing educational segregation; new technologies (such as ICT applications for e-learning); the accessibility of existing structures for people with reduced mobility.

Given the close linkages between these horizontal principles and inclusive growth, to avoid repetition within this report, the focus of this chapter is on how these horizontal principles have been addressed in the programming phase, based on the information resulting from the desk analysis of the OPs conducted in chapter 4, the survey on Managing Authorities (MAs) analysed in depth in chapter 7, and the 16 country fiches that are corollary to this study.

An extensive evaluation of the actual implementation of these principles is instead not within the scope of this study, although some evidence is provided, based on what emerges from the interviews conducted in the countries case studies and the analysis of selected calls for proposals.

6.3. Overview

The ESIFs regulations for the 2014-2020 programming period require Member States to mainstream the horizontal principles in all the phases of the programming and implementation process,⁵⁰ and to:

- **Fulfil the ex-ante conditionalities for non-discrimination and gender equality principles**, showing the existence of administrative capacity for the implementation and application of the Union gender equality and antidiscrimination laws and policies in the field of ESI Funds. In the case of disability, MSs have also to demonstrate administrative capacity for the implementation and application of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in the field of ESI Funds in accordance with Council decision (2010/48/EC).

50 European Commission Implementation Guidance 2014-2020 Mainstreaming of Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination
Version 2 – 24/03/2014, Available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/implementation_gender_equality.pdf.

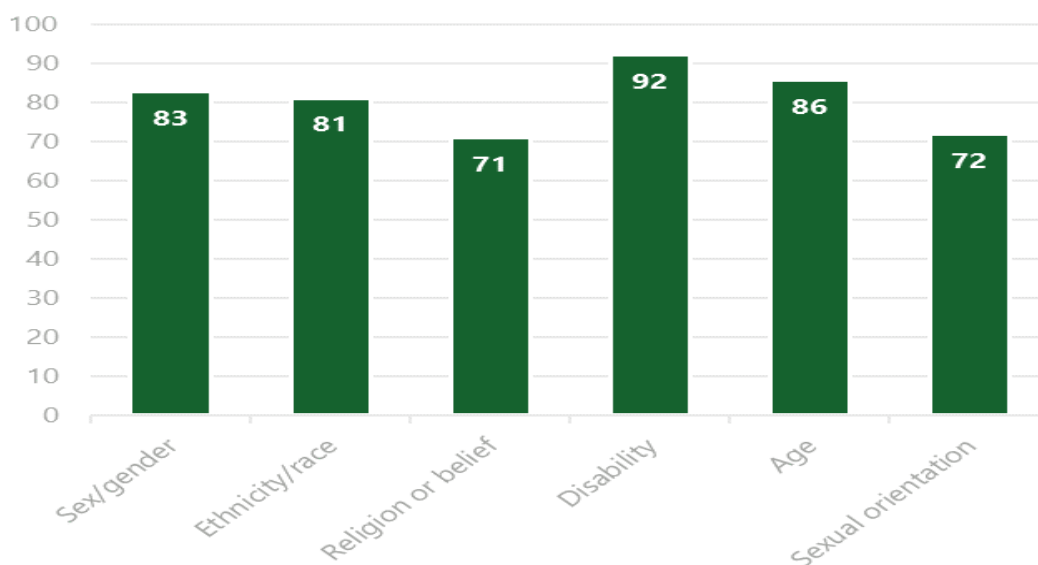
- **Involve relevant bodies responsible for promoting gender equality and non-discrimination in the partnership.** According to the CPR and the regulation on the European Code of Conduct on Partnerships, relevant bodies representing civil society, NGOs and bodies responsible for gender equality and non-discrimination should be involved in the preparation and implementation of programmes, in Monitoring Committees, in the assessment of ex-ante conditionalities and in the implementation of the horizontal principles. In addition, Member States have to ensure that Monitoring Committees examine actions to promote the horizontal principles, that adequate structures are set up to advise on gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility, and that the institutional capacity of partners is strengthened.
- **Ensure the adoption of selection procedures and criteria** that are non-discriminatory and transparent and take into account gender equality and non-discrimination principles. MAs must also make sure that project proposals include an analysis of the needs of men and women and of groups which suffer from discrimination, as well as the expected impact of the proposed project on these groups.
- **Produce annual implementation reports** that include an assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the principles of gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility, as well as **monitoring and evaluation systems assessing the adequacy of planned measures** to support the horizontal principles, also providing whenever possible **disaggregated data**⁵¹.

The concrete application of the horizontal principles may be however constrained by the lack of dedicated resources (technical, human and financial) and knowledge on how they could be mainstreamed in ERDF interventions. In addition, the ways these principles are internalised into Operational Programmes depends on the Member States and regions' decision on which investment priorities to concentrate ERDF funding.

As shown in Figure 10 below, out of the 138 surveyed OPs providing information on the application of the horizontal principles of gender equality and non-discrimination, the majority, 92 (72%), address specifically the application of the non-discrimination principle for people with disabilities, and 86 refer to age (67%). Gender equality and ethnicity were referred to in 65% and 63% of the surveyed OPs respectively, while sexual orientation and religion/belief were addressed in 56% and 55% of the surveyed OPs respectively.

⁵¹ ESF Managing authorities have to ensure that- data are broken down by gender (annex I of ESF regulation), although there is no longer a specific requirement for all funds to have statistics broken down by sex.

Figure 10 Number of surveyed OPs with references made to key target groups in connection with ensuring the equal opportunities and non-discrimination horizontal principles



The lower number of OPs addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation and religion or beliefs is probably due to the lack of knowledge and experience among MAs and beneficiaries on how to address these forms of discrimination in ERDF related interventions.

The debate and experience on how ERDF interventions can address gender equality issues and the accessibility problems related to disability and age are indeed rather widespread, particularly in relation to accommodation, mobility issues and social infrastructures. **On the contrary, knowledge on how to address the other forms of discrimination is less widespread, particularly in the framework of ERDF interventions not targeted to individuals (e.g. infrastructure; research; environment, etc.).**

Differences in the consideration of the various forms of discrimination is also evident when looking at the **target groups** that are mentioned in the reviewed OPs. As shown in chapter 4 and in the country fiches, most OPs mention: Women, People with disabilities; Children from disadvantaged households; elderly people; Young NEETs and early school leavers; the Roma people; the long term unemployed; migrants. In a few cases (e.g. Hungary) the OPs also mention inmates, addicts and the homeless as key groups at risk of discrimination.

Consistently, in all the reviewed OPs, accessibility issues for disadvantaged target groups are the needs and intervention areas most frequently mentioned, and the measures mentioned are usually targeted to the elimination of barriers and the adaptation of housing, education, social care, health, transportation and ICT facilities, and workplaces to the specific needs of disadvantaged groups.

A similar conclusion may be derived from the survey results⁵²: **accessibility, demographic change and gender equality** show high scores both on the

⁵² See Chapter 7 for a description of respondents and details on survey results.

perception of usefulness of requirements and on easiness in implementation, thanks also to the fact that there is a greater experience in their application in the ERDF intervention fields.

Difficulties in implementation are instead perceived as particularly strong in relation to the new policy areas introduced in the 2014-2020 programming period and closely related to the non-discrimination and equal opportunity principle: e.g. **Health, Social housing, Shift to community-based services, and Roma inclusion**. This confirms the findings emerging in Chapter 4, according to which Health and Shift to community-based services are the requirements suffering from the main discrepancies between needs and actions.

These difficulties that can arise from the **lack of experience** on how to use the ESI funds and to mainstream their horizontal principles in these policy areas. However, in the case of measures to support the Roma and migrants' inclusion, difficulties in implementation are also due to the **difficulty to address prejudices and ensure social and political commitment**. The significant share of "No opinion" responses both in usefulness and easiness, particularly high (above 50%) for Roma Inclusion, shift to community-based services and Health, is also probably due to fact that these themes are addressed in a minority of ERDF OP, and to a greater extent in the ESF OPs or in national strategies.

Findings resulting from the assessment of the **selected 16 countries** are consistent with these patterns: attention to non-discrimination is more focused on disability, age, gender, and ethnicity and less on discrimination based on sexual orientation, and religion/beliefs. The implementation of the horizontal principles of non-discrimination and gender equality is particularly problematic when dealing with Social housing, New community based services, Roma inclusion.

The assessment of a number of **call of proposals** in six of the selected countries shows that the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, are usually internalized in the selection criteria in a rather generic way, with focus on the accessibility needs of people with disabilities, especially when dealing with infrastructural investments, and gender equality.

6.4. Prevention of discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and accessibility

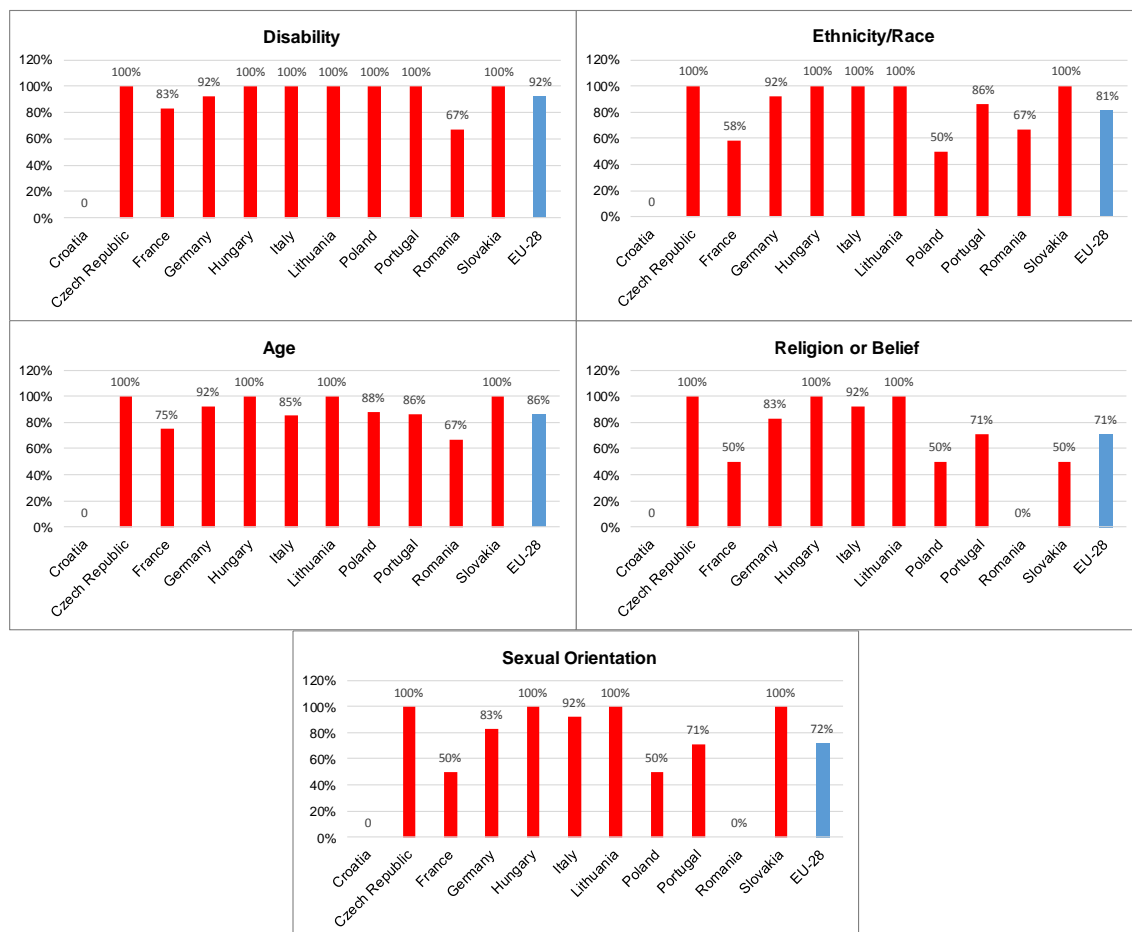
All the reviewed OPs to different extents state that the application of the horizontal principles follows the standard ESIF requirements:

- Identification of target groups at risk of discrimination and with limited access to education, housing, health care, transport and ICT infrastructures, etc.
- Involvement of representatives of NGOs engaged in the fields of non-discrimination and accessibility in Monitoring Committee;
- Introduction of mandatory criteria for project selection assessing compliance with non-discrimination and accessibility principles.
- Provision of guidelines on the application of the principles of non-discrimination.

- Design of monitoring and evaluation systems including tools for the assessment of the implementation of non-discrimination and equal opportunity principles.

As shown in Figure 11 below, the reviewed OPs in the 16 selected countries are **more likely to mention discrimination based on disability, age and ethnicity rather than the other forms** of discrimination, e.g. discrimination based on religion or beliefs, and on sexual orientation.

Figure 11 Share of OPs addressing discrimination and equal opportunities by country and form of discrimination



ERDF investments aimed at supporting **social infrastructures and improving access to and quality of services**, are those more likely to mention and address the horizontal principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. These include for example infrastructure and equipment modernization, measures to improve the accessibility of service centres (e.g. building wheelchair ramps or providing transportation facilities for the elderly or people with disabilities, etc), investments in e-services, including telemedicine, particularly important for ensuring access to health care by people with disabilities, or old age or living in remote areas.⁵³

Disability is mentioned in the OPs of all the considered countries, although to a different extent. While 12 out of the 16 countries mention it in all the reviewed OPs,

53 ESIF's support to health related investments, Available at: http://www.esifforhealth.eu/pdf/Mapping_Report_Final.pdf

Bulgaria, Romania and France show a lower share of OPs mentioning this form of discrimination compared to the average. As shown in Chapter 4, people with disabilities are a target group mentioned under all the TOs of interest, and accessibility for people with disabilities is usually mentioned among the mandatory criteria in the surveyed calls for projects. For example, in **Spain** the ROP for Asturias emphasises the need to further develop digital communication and information transmission services, especially in the educational and health care fields also to improve access for people with impaired mobility or living in remote rural areas. In **Slovakia** the two considered OPs (IROP and OP Human Resources) underline the importance of ensuring barrier free access in buildings, and accessibility to information. The IROP in particular, requires that the adherence to the principle of accessibility is considered addressed in the projects' evaluation process and/or stated by a competent authority and reported in the application for a financial contribution. In **Croatia**, the OPCC mentions the need of taking into account access to transport infrastructures for disadvantaged groups and persons with reduced mobility when funding transport projects. In addition, the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities are also explicitly mentioned in training actions targeted to the staff of the authorities involved in the management and control of the ESI Funds and in measures to support the application of the UN Convention on the rights of the persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) in the field of ESI Funds. Interviews conducted in some countries (e.g. **Bulgaria**), however underline that the needs of people with disabilities are still not adequately addressed in selected projects, although, according to the programme MAs, some constraints may be due to the constraints imposed by ERDF eligibility rules.

Ethnicity and Age are mentioned in the OPs of 15 countries out of 16. **Ethnicity** is not mentioned in the **Latvian** OP, while among the other countries, 11 mention this issue in all their selected OPs. As described in chapter 4, it is the Roma population that is generally mentioned under TOs 8,9 and 10, particularly in Eastern European countries, while other ethnic groups and migrants are mentioned to a lesser extent. For example, 6 OPs have formulated the need to reduce educational segregation identifying as target groups the Roma and the disabled. The Roma (largely in Eastern European countries) and migrants (mainly in the EU15) are mentioned under TO8 with measures to support their employability and reduce labour market discrimination. The Roma and, to a lesser extent migrant, are also mentioned in TO9 for measures to contrast housing segregation and provide accommodation and service infrastructures in deprived communities. An interesting example of integrated programme for the inclusion of the Roma was launched in **Bulgaria**, developing on a former 2007-13 pilot project for marginalised communities living in social housing. Three operational programmes - OPHRD, OPRED, OPRG - are involved to support social inclusion through: Promoting labour market integration of marginalised groups (Strand 1); Providing access to education and training (Strand 2); Improving access to social and health services (Strand 3); Developing local communities and overcoming negative stereotypes (Strand 4); Construction of social housing (Strand 5). In addition, in Bulgaria municipalities are implementing ERDF funded projects in the field of educational infrastructures targeted to children from ethnic minorities and / or seekers or beneficiaries of international protection. The **Hungarian** Human resources development OP and the Integrated Regional OP also make specific reference to the Roma when addressing inadequate living conditions and housing segregation.

Age discrimination is mentioned in all the 16 analysed countries, with the exception of **Bulgaria**, although also in this country measures planned to support the Deinstitutionalisation of social services are targeted to children at risk.

Disadvantaged children are also the target groups of projects for "Pre-school education and preparation of disadvantaged children". Among the other 15 analysed countries, 10 mention this issue in all their selected OPs. For example, with reference to TO2, the Metropolitan Cities OP of **Italy** underline among the challenges to be addressed, the difficulties encountered by the elderly population to use e-government services. In **France** the ROP for Franche-Comté also mentions the uptake of digital solutions among the elderly. In TO8 older workers are the main target group under the adaptability of the workforce and workplaces category, while young people are the main target group for measures supporting employability and entrepreneurship. The elderly and children are the main target group of measures aimed at replacing institutional care with community-based services, social and (health) care services and accessibility under TO 9. Disadvantaged young people are the main target group for TO10 educational investments.

Discrimination on grounds of **sexual orientation, or of religion or beliefs** is mentioned in the OPs of 12 out of the 16 analysed countries. **Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia and Romania** do not mention these forms of discrimination in their OPs. Among the other 12 countries, only 6 mention these two forms of discrimination in all their OPs (**Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Spain, and Slovakia** for sexual orientation), while in **Italy and Germany** these forms of discrimination are mentioned in a relatively high number of OPs (although not all of them).

It is difficult to assess at this stage if the attention to horizontal principles emerging from programming documents, represents a real policy commitment to be concretely translated into specific tools and measures.

We can expect that those countries providing for **measures to support capacity building** on the mainstreaming of the horizontal principles are more likely to effectively implement these principles. There are initiatives in certain Member States to improve the application and mainstreaming of these horizontal principles via knowledge sharing, training and general awareness raising. For example, the **Croatian** OPs provide for dissemination and training activities targeted to managing authorities and other institutions involved in the management and control of the ESI Funds in the fields of antidiscrimination law and policy, gender equality law and policy, gender mainstreaming, legislation and policy related to the integration of people with disability. In **Slovakia**, too, the OP Human Resources plans specific training activities on non-discrimination in order to improve the programme implementation. Other countries (e.g. **Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland**) mention the provision of guidelines and technical and methodological support on the application of the non-discrimination principles to applicants, projects' promoters and evaluators, as well as to the institutions involved in the management and control of ESI Funds. Support to capacity building sometimes comes also from non-governmental stakeholders and representative bodies involved in the programme partnership. An example of this approach can be found in **Greece** where the Greek National Confederation of Disabled Persons (NCDP) supported the MAs, with a tool kit including practical indications on how to address the accessibility principle in the ESI Funds and implement targeted actions for persons with disabilities. The NCDP also organised training session to improve their members' contribution in Monitoring Committees, and it is planning to prepare a Manual (in GR & EN) on how to engage in monitoring and implementation of ESIFs.

Linked to the NGOs engagement one interesting finding emerge from the country fiches the **difficulty to involve representatives of all the discriminated**

groups in the programmes' design and implementation, although an effort is emerging in recent years to extend participation to Monitoring Committee also to representatives of groups that were not involved in the programming phase.

According to information reported in the country fiches, the most active stakeholders both in the programming and implementation phases have been those representing people with disabilities and gender equality bodies, which are usually well structured and have a long tradition and experience in participating to policy making. Representatives of other disadvantaged groups have been less involved in the programming phase, often due to the lack of umbrella organisations and lack of experience. Interviews carried out for the **Hungarian** report underline this problem. The Monitoring Committees include organisations representing the interests of various inclusive growth-related target groups, however newcomers have not yet worked on monitoring - and co-designing - EU programmes and need capacity building on these programmes in order to build an active participation. In addition, as underlined in the **Polish** report regarding regional programmes, the influence of third sector stakeholders was minimal on the programmes content and funding, because these aspects were mainly shaped during negotiations with EC.

There are however examples of involvement of less "traditional" stakeholders representatives in Monitoring Committees and calls of proposals. For example: in **Greece**, the Monitoring Committees includes also the ROM Network; in **Portugal** the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI) and the National Institute For Rehabilitation. In **Romania** the Roma National Contact Point (NCPR), the Contact Point for Persons with Disabilities, and the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption are members of the Monitoring Committee. According to stakeholders interviewed, in this country both the National Contact Point for Roma and the Contact Point for Persons with Disabilities are involved in the design of the guidelines for the calls for projects foreseen by the ROP. In particular, the NCPR was consulted for feedbacks when launching the 4.1 and 4.2 calls on Social Inclusion and fighting poverty, with regards to integrated services for Roma and non-Roma population. These stakeholders are also involved in the evaluation of local development strategies funded within Axis 5 of the ROP, while the National Authority for Children's Right and Adoption has been involved in the evaluation of proposals under the calls regarding deinstitutionalization. In **Bulgaria**, a good practice is the recent establishment of a permanent Roma Integration Subcommittee to the Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee, whose main objective is to discuss the coordination of Roma integration operations, co-funded by European funds, as well as to monitor the progress of the envisaged measures. In the interviews, it was emphasized that the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues of the Council of Ministers (NCCEII) consider positively the ERDF and ESF integrated approach adopted for the inclusion of Roma in society, although this process needs to be further developed. Representatives of the Child Protection Agency did not participate in the programming process, they however participated in the Monitoring Committees of the both programmes. **Hungary and Lithuania** set an ad hoc Horizontal Monitoring Committee and a Horizontal Working Group for the monitoring of the implementation of horizontal principles. However in Lithuania, the Working Group, which was set up already in the 2007-13 programming period, was terminated. In 2017.

The gap between programming and implementation is another critical aspect.

While usually a large number of forms of discrimination and disadvantaged groups are mentioned in the sections on horizontal principles in the PAs and OPs, these

same groups are hardly mentioned in the presentation of actual actions and/or no systematic arrangement is identified. For example, in the **French** case, the expert underlines that even if disability is invoked in relation to the fight against discrimination, it is not among the most commonly identified needs underlying OP actions. In **Germany** too, none of the analysed ERDF OPs describes specific actions targeted to any given target group, except for the OPs Bremen, Saarland, Sachsen and Thüringen which include specific actions to ensure the accessibility for people with disabilities to the subsidized infrastructure. In **Poland**, delays in implementation are observed in territorial revitalisation, health and social services, largely due to the time needed for needs' mapping, as required by ex-ante conditionalities. Similarly in the **Czech Republic**, while all of the operational programmes mention the most common target groups with regard to the equal opportunities and non-discrimination principle, only the OP Research, Development and Education mentions specific actions concerning these target groups.

Notwithstanding these implementation difficulties, the EC Strategic Report 2017 on the implementation of ESI Funds⁵⁴ reports that in the first years of implementation, the ERDF has supported social and health investments, in particular through integrated development strategies for deprived urban areas, including building and housing renovations and improvements to urban spaces to improve quality of life. There is however no specific indication in the report on how the non-discrimination and accessibility principles have been addressed in the implementation of these infrastructures, although some ERDF projects have supported the construction of educational facilities ensuring full accessibility to people with physical disabilities.

Among the possible factors behind the **difficult implementation** of the ERDF inclusive growth projects there is surely the **lack of experience and expertise** among both MAs and beneficiaries. But there is also the **negative social attitudes of the population and the lack of strong political commitment** at the national and local level especially when dealing with the sensitive issues of the inclusion of the Roma and other ethnic minorities. Some interviewees conducted for the **Bulgarian** report, underline, for example, that actions such as social housing for disadvantaged groups, including the Roma, may face implementation difficulties due to the negative social and cultural attitudes of the population and beneficiaries. Similarly, in **Slovakia**, according to the experience of the ERDF desk officer, municipalities tend to avoid implementing programmes targeted to the Roma, and rather prefer measures that target the overall population, to avoid unpopularity. In **Hungary** there have been cases where investments serving social inclusion (of the Roma), funded by the Structural Funds in the 2007-2013 period, were later used for other purposes, even involving discriminatory practices against the Roma. Also in the **Italian** case, the interviewed representative of the Department for Minority Rights, underlines the low number of applications submitted for Roma Inclusion. This is likely to be due both to lack of expertise and lack of commitment.

According to interviewees, social inclusion programmes related to the Roma, migrants and ethnic minorities need to tackle the prejudices and negative social attitudes on a comprehensive basis at different levels with ad hoc comprehensive actions.

54 COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Accompanying the Strategic report 2017 on the implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds {COM(2017) 755 final} Brussels, 13.12.2017 SWD(2017) 452 final. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/strat_rep_2017/strat_rep_2017_swd_en.pdf

The calls for proposals analysis confirm the above findings. The reviewed calls of proposals confirm the focus on accessibility needs for people with disabilities when dealing with the horizontal principles of non-discrimination. For example, in **Bulgaria** the calls for proposals on vocational schools and on the deinstitutionalisation of social services for children require that all potential beneficiaries include a mandatory horizontal activity "Improving accessibility for people with disabilities" in their proposals. In addition, the main performance indicator in the first mentioned call is the number of people from marginalised communities, including the Roma, benefiting from modernised educational infrastructure. In **Hungary**, the call on Improving the transition from institutional care to community-based services requires that the representatives of discriminated groups be involved in the design and implementation of the projects. In addition, project-related accessibility is compulsory for the construction/renovation of buildings for community-oriented services. An interesting scoring system is adopted in some **Polish** calls, where projects that directly or indirectly are expected to contribute positively to the horizontal principles get higher scores. According to interviews, however, checking this positive influence on selected projects is difficult. Also, in this case, the **involvement of partners** representative of discriminated groups in the design of the calls of proposals is particularly important to ensure a better targeting of the interventions. For example, in the **Czech Republic** calls for proposals on social housing did not initially include specific criteria to support access to social housing by marginalised groups. Following the activation of NGOs and the Commission, the selection criteria were narrowed down to target the socially excluded and homeless population.

6.5. Gender equality

Past experience on the implementation of gender equality as a horizontal principle in ESI Funds is much stronger than for other forms of discrimination. There is also some evidence emerging from the evaluations of past programming periods⁵⁵, showing that women are among the main beneficiaries of ESIF measures, even if often little attention has been paid to their specific needs in the intervention design, and in defining accessibility conditions. For example, measures supporting female entrepreneurship were often not designed with attention to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs (like, for example the need for maternity support, the greater difficulties compared to men in access to credit, the lack of social networks, etc.) and this reduced their effectiveness. ERDF support for child and elderly care facilities were instead more effective both in creating jobs for women and in improving women's work-life balance. Finally, women were often the main beneficiaries of the ERDF interventions in rural or urban regeneration. The ex-post evaluation of the promotion of gender equality in the ERDF and CF 2007-2013⁵⁶ found that these funds promoted equal opportunities in SME support, public transport infrastructure, social infrastructure (childcare facilities), and in some cases also on other policies that could potentially promote equal opportunities. The

55 Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale and CSIL, Gender mainstreaming in the use of Structural Funding. Study for the European Parliament, May 2007; Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale and CSIL, Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2000-2006 co-financed by the European Fund for Regional Development (Objectives 1 and 2) - Work package 7: Effectiveness of the Cohesion Policy: Gender Equality and Demographic Change, for EC-DG REGIO, September, 2009.

56 Ex post evaluation of the ERDF and CF – Study on the translation of Article 16 of Regulation EC 1083/2006 on the promotion of gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility for disabled into Cohesion policy programmes 2007-2013 co-financed by the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, Public Policy Institute, Net Effect, Racine, for the European Commission – Info Regio, 2009.

main critical aspect was in many cases the presence of only formal statements, without a clear indication of how to intervene.

This study shows similar findings. Gender equality is among the horizontal principles most addressed by the considered ERDF OPs, with 83 out of 138 reviewed OPs explicitly mentioning it. As shown in chapter 4, women are always mentioned as a target group under all the TOs considered in this study.

The survey on MAs also shows that mainstreaming the gender equality principle is considered less difficult to implement compared to the non-discrimination principle. The share of 'no opinion' is particularly low as compared to the other themes, and positive opinions are generally higher than negative ones. These perceptions reflect the fact that this principle is not new and has been addressed in ESIFs programmes for a long time.

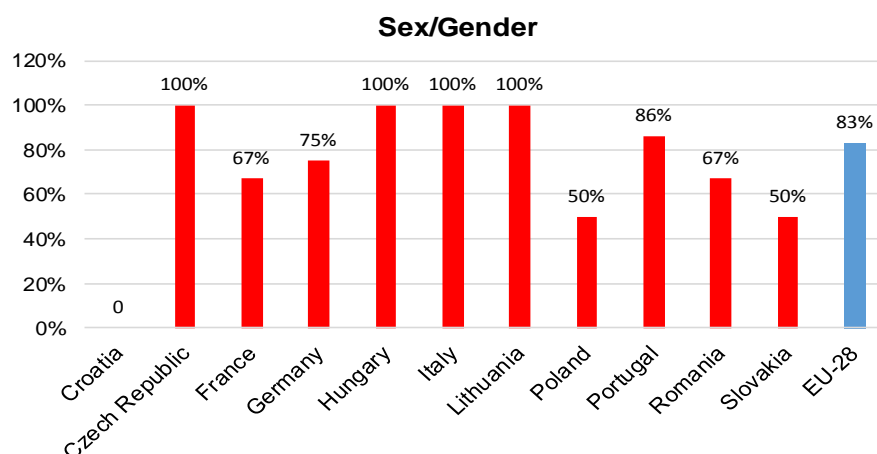
However, its implementation in the ERDF programmes is still perceived as very difficult or difficult by almost 30% of respondents. And the provision for gender disaggregated analysis is considered difficult by almost 25% of respondents, while only 35% consider it as easy or very easy.

The analysis of the 16 selected countries provides some additional insights.

As shown in Figure 12 below, Gender Equality is explicitly addressed in the reviewed OPs of all the 16 considered countries, although to a different extent. While in 9 countries out of 16 (Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and Spain) all the reviewed OPs explicitly address gender equality in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia gender equality is addressed only in half of their selected OPs. The other considered countries are placed between these two extreme.

In some cases, as for example in Croatia and Greece, although the OPs do not include specific reference to challenges regarding equality between men and women, they mainstream Specifications and Investment Priorities related to gender equality, as well as gender equality criteria in projects' selection procedures. In other countries, instead, specific challenges are underlined, as in Hungary where the reviewed OPs mention Roma women, young women, and women above 50 years, inactive or migrant women and single mothers.

Figure 12 Share of OPs addressing gender equality



Most of the reviewed OPs describe the application of the horizontal principle of gender equality according to the standard ESIF requirements, e.g. through the:

Identification of the specific challenges regarding equality between men and women. Only in **Slovakia**, according to the country expert, none of the two reviewed Operational Programmes mention any specific challenges regarding gender equality, although in both OPs specific measures are envisaged to support gender mainstreaming;

In all the reviewed OPs representatives of gender equality bodies and women's associations are involved in the Monitoring Committees. For example, in **Estonia**, the Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre (ENUT) was involved in the programming of ERDF co-funded Operational Programmes and the Partnership. In **Hungary and Lithuania**, the already mentioned Horizontal Monitoring Committee and the Horizontal Working Group also address the topic of equality between men and women.

Introduction of mandatory criteria in calls of proposals for project selection, assessing compliance with the gender equality principle. For example, in **Croatia**, although the OPCC does not directly refer to any specific challenges regarding equality between men and women, it encourages applicants to take full account of equal opportunities and all projects are required to show how they will contribute to equal opportunities, describing in their application form how the issue has been taken into account. In **Germany** besides specific selection criteria, OP Nordrhein-Westfalen promotes an equal representation of men and women in selection committees. In **Hungary**, in competitive calls a selection criterion asks for assessing the level of contribution of the proposed project activities to promoting the principle of gender equality. In **Romania**, the guidelines drafted within the call for projects provide guidance on how equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles can be mainstreamed in projects proposed for funding. In **Poland** some calls have introduced additional points for projects with a potential positive effect on gender equality.

Design of monitoring and evaluation systems including gender disaggregated indicators and gender equality assessment tools.

Mainstreaming gender equality with specific measures. An example is **Hungary**, where gender equality in employment and pay is mainstreamed in the selection and training of staff and managers employed in the institutional system managing the Programmes. In addition, selection criteria in non-competitive calls requires that local governments applying for grants must have a local equal opportunities programme in place that is in accordance with the Act on Equal Treatment and Promotion of Equal Opportunities. Similarly, if the applicant is a budgetary body or a state-owned enterprise employing more than fifty workers, the applicant has to provide evidence of the existence of an equal opportunity plan in accordance with the same Act. In some cases, guidelines, training and awareness rising measures are provided to support beneficiaries. In **Estonia** ENUT is currently cooperating with the Estonian Equality Competence Centre of the Cohesion Policy Funds in providing support in gender mainstreaming and non-discrimination into ESF, ERDF and CF programmes and projects. Also, in **France**, training is provided, and awareness raising and information is used to promote gender equality

The main **policy fields** where the gender equality principle is mainstreamed are often consistent with national non-discrimination legislation and Gender Equality

Strategies and Action Plans, and ask for a strong complementary between ERDF and ESF funding. The main policy fields addressed in the reviewed countries are:

Gender equality in the labour market and the reduction of gender segregation in occupations and sectors. For example, in **Germany** OP Bremen ERDF promotes the development of specific toolboxes for companies/clusters. OP Nordrhein-Westfalen intend to support women presence in future-oriented sectors, such as engineering and ICT. In **Hungary** the focus is on making workplaces more family-friendly. In **Latvia** the focus is also on promoting; the use of gender disaggregated indicators in labour market analysis and forecasts; a gender balance in the healthcare sector; and the reduction of gender disparities in health conditions and life expectancy (now much lower for men). The reduction of the gender digital divide among women and men is mentioned in the **Spanish** case through measures supporting accessibility to information, e-services.

Support to women entrepreneurship and business startups, as in **Portugal** where the OPs have specific actions to promote women entrepreneurship and the creation of their own employment

Support to the work-life balance with investments in child-care and elderly care facilities, as a way to support women employment. These measures are mentioned especially in **Eastern European countries**, as well as in **Germany** (the OP Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ERDF); **Portugal**, and **Spain**.

The **critical aspects** emerging from the country fiches mainly relate to:

The scarce attention to the implementation of the gender equality principle in ERDF measures supporting social investments, transportation systems and environment. A possible explanation is the lack of experience in mainstreaming gender relevant issues in these interventions.

The still scarce attention to ERDF measures supporting women entrepreneurs and women in research and development.

The differences in implementation of the gender equality principle across regional and thematic OPs. For example, in the **French** case, the degree of commitment varies across regions. A few regions are extremely active and provide a comprehensive diagnostic as well as indications on possible interventions along the different dimensions of programming (e.g. Aquitaine). Others have instead a very modest approach in particular the UPR reviewed (except Guadeloupe). Also in **Germany**, only three of the OPs analysed mention specific challenges on gender equality.

7. PROGRAMMING AND NEGOTIATION PROCESS OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH

7.1. Key findings

KEY FINDINGS

- The findings of this section are mainly based on the survey conducted with the managing authorities. While there is a general consensus on the usefulness of the new provisions, which may have in principle facilitated the programming of inclusive growth, the actual implementation of such provisions remains challenging, perhaps for a matter of capacity in adapting to the new requirements. Rigidities in the use of funds or the conditions that shall be ensured before implementing some measures were mentioned as the most challenging aspects of the new legislative framework.
- The most challenging provisions (50% or more of those providing an opinion declaring they are very difficult or difficult to implement) are those related to Health (especially transformation of the health system), Roma inclusion (especially the link to the National Roma Integration Strategy), and Education (especially the link to policy to reduce early school leaving). Shift to community-based services also records a low average score in terms of easiness of implementation, with a specific difficulty on the link to de-institutionalisation frameworks.
- In line with the overall findings in the report according to which there is some lack of political commitment, the implementation of requirements related to Roma inclusion (prevention of segregation, link to mainstream actions and link to national strategy) are provisions perceived as being the most problematic.
- The opinions regarding the usefulness and easiness of implementation of the accessibility and gender equality provisions are mostly positive.
- With regard to education, certain provisions are considered not particularly easy to implement. The link to a policy framework for early school living, the concentration on areas allowing for measurable impact and the segregation theme are the ones being commented on most critically. In general, the issue of quantifying impacts is perceived as being difficult to implement. Linked with that the interviewees mentioned in a few cases ex-ante conditionalities as a challenge, in particular when asking to develop mapping and needs assessment exercises, less so if related to the development of sectoral strategies which are perceived as useful. In relation to demographic change the inclusion of all age groups is perceived as difficult to implement.
- The main added value of ERDF in the area of Inclusive growth is related to social infrastructures support and the urban development strategies.

- While inclusive growth-oriented measures have a low weight in many of the ERDF-co-financed OPs, and are outside the main focus of the Managing Authority, it is acknowledged by them that ERDF brings important added value in complementing ESF. Synergies between ERDF and ESF were reported to be an improvement of this programming period as compared to the previous one.
- The implementation of the partnership principle in programming and implementation was assessed as more or less satisfactory by interviewees in most of the 16 countries investigated in detail (generally positive views were obtained among others from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Latvia) – although significant differences between regions and/or OPs can be observed with regard to the effectiveness of partnership (as expressed by French stakeholders). The work of the social inclusion subcommittees of the Monitoring Committees has been assessed as particularly useful. Although the involvement of third parties is more related to the selection of specific measures, only in exceptional cases it is mentioned that they have contributed at a more strategic level in the definition of priorities and selection of relevant indicators.
- Most of the difficulties are encountered by MAs from less developed and in transition regions. Limited institutional capacity, which can be assumed being higher in more developed than in less developed regions, is possibly providing the explanation for such result.
- The definition of performance indicators and the establishment of ITI and CLLD resulted particularly problematic during the negotiations.
- Some interviewees expressed the wish that a more effective dialogue between the Commission and the MAs could be developed in order to overcome difficulties in the negotiation phase. An indication by some respondents was a limited understanding of the regional specificities and needs by the Commission officers.
- No major difficulties have been reported during the implementation phase, the main obstacle constituting of minor delays. The analysis of some calls for proposals has not identified any major problems with the launched calls. However, some Member States, in particular the Czech Republic and Slovakia, report capacity problems and a general reluctance of the municipalities to apply for Roma specific calls.

7.2. Programming

7.2.1. Implementation of inclusive growth provisions

The 2014-2020 regulatory framework for Cohesion Policy as well as DG REGIO's guidance documents have set out a number of new provisions for programming interventions that are relevant for programming inclusive growth:

- General requirements, common to all programmes and policy areas, and indirectly affecting the strategies and available instruments for inclusive growth, and the programming process itself; and

- Specific content-related provisions addressing the question how the EU's goal of promoting inclusive growth should be taken into account in the programmes.

While the first set of requirements relate to provisions such as thematic concentration, stronger alignment with EU2020 targets, the performance framework and others, the latter refer, for example, to an explicit link to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health, to the link to frameworks like de-institutionalization or national poverty reduction and others.

It is therefore relevant to understand the extent to which such new provisions have affected the programming of inclusive growth measures and how much they were perceived useful⁵⁷ and easy (burdensome) to implement⁵⁸ by Managing Authorities. The aim was to collect data on perceptions on the significance and effects of these requirements on programme content, the process of programming and the negotiations with the Commission. In particular, respondents were asked to consider whether they had to outline the inclusive growth content of their programme differently than they would have done under the old 2007-2013 regulatory framework and, if so, whether this was an improvement on, or limitation of, the likely impact of the programme to inclusive growth.

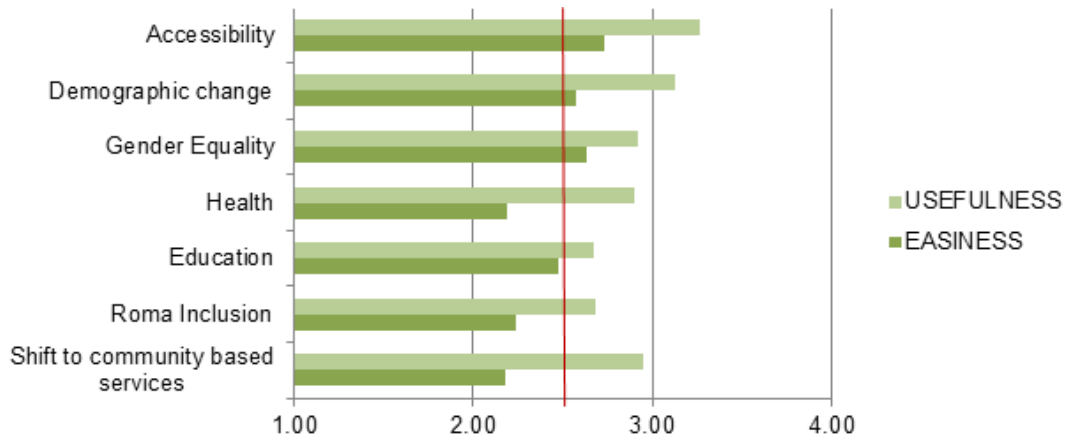
This section explores this aspect by reporting the survey results and complementing them with more qualitative feedback obtained with semi-structured interviews. This section refers to the specific requirements, while general requirements are addressed in the previous section related to the territorial development strategy.

Specific requirements cover 7 themes particularly relevant to Inclusive Growth: Actions to ensure accessibility to everybody, demographic change, gender equality, health, education, Roma inclusion, shift to community-based services. Each theme contains different specific requirements and respondents were asked to evaluate on a scale both their usefulness and their easiness in implementation, with the possibility to mark "no opinion" in case the topic was not perceived as pertinent for their specific OP.

57 The precise formulation of the question in the questionnaire was the following: What effect (if any) did the following general/specific requirements have on how the Operational Programme can now contribute to inclusive growth, in comparison to the 2007-2013 regulatory framework?

58 The precise formulation of the question in the questionnaire was the following: How easy or difficult to implement were each of these specific requirements?

Figure 13 Average of specific requirements usefulness and easiness (value)



Source: Own survey results

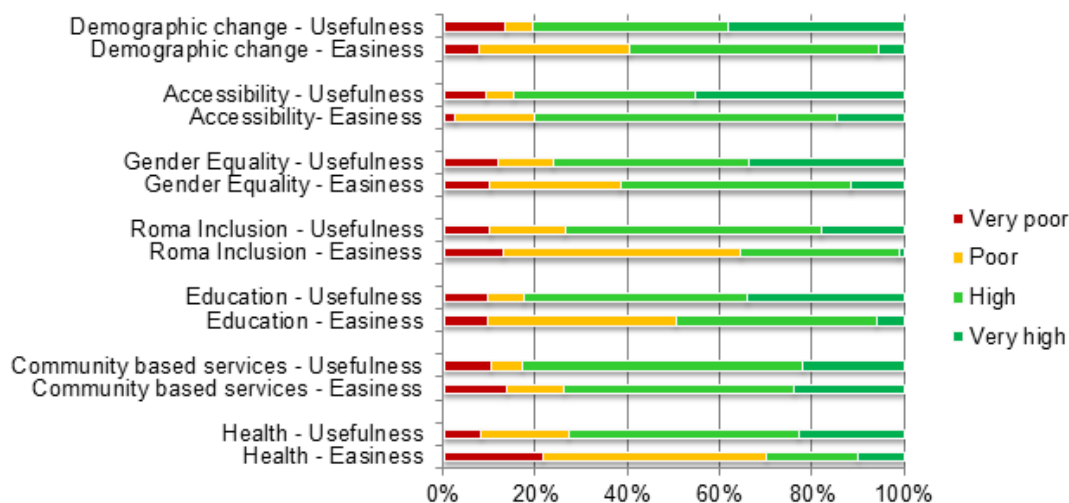
If we consider average scores survey result show that specific requirements are perceived as useful yet difficult to implement (see Figure12). Indeed, average usefulness always exceeds average easiness, with the latter scoring always below the average score except for Accessibility, gender equality and, to a less extent, demographic change. Negative scores instead are particularly evident for some themes, in particular for Health and Shift to community based services.

It is worth distinguishing the two aspects of usefulness and easiness related to the implementation of the new provisions. **Their comparison shows that, while there is on average a positive attitude towards the introduction of such provisions, there could possibly be some obstacles of constraints when it comes to putting them into practice.** This may also be due to the time and effort needed at the beginning to accommodate the regulatory and legislative changes as compared to the previous practice. A learning process may be assumed in the way MAs react to new provisions.

If we consider distribution of answers, without considering the 'no opinion', negative feedback concerning easiness consistently outnumbers those for usefulness. Particularly worrying are the results related to the 'health' theme, for which almost 70% of those expressing an opinion declare that (implementing specific requirements⁵⁹ was uneasy or very uneasy. The second worst score on easiness is reported by Roma inclusion, followed by Education, for which more than, respectively, 60% and 50% declare that implementing the specific provision proved to be uneasy or very uneasy. In all the cases, however, specific provisions were considered useful or very useful by more than a half of respondents.

59 Specific requirements related to health included: 1) Link to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health; 2) Transformation of the health system (reform); 3) Balance between institutional and community-based health services

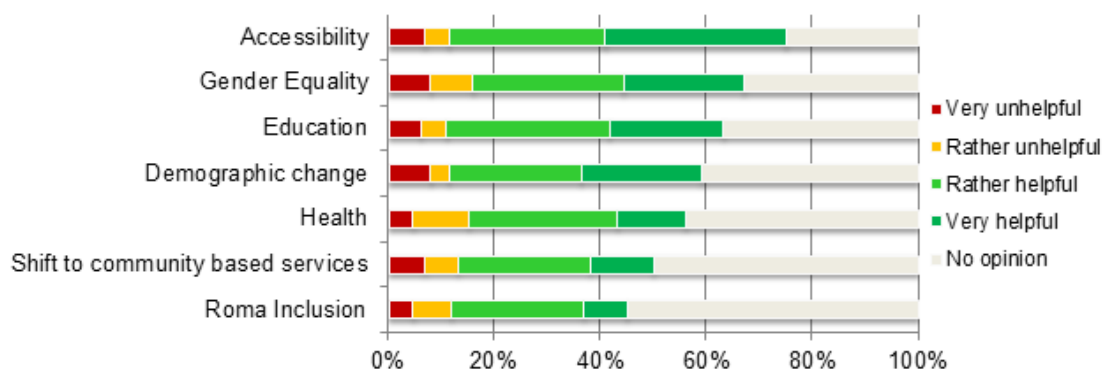
Figure 14 Comparison between usefulness and easiness of specific requirements - % of answers (different from "No opinion")⁶⁰



Source: Own survey results

Focusing now on the usefulness aspect only, the first striking evidence is the significant share of "No opinion" which ranges from 25% for Accessibility to 55% for Roma inclusion. This might be due to the fact that they are very specific themes which do not concern all the relevant OPs. Indeed, they might be addressed through national resources and strategies or using other EU funds (such as ESF). Moving to the analysis of scores, on average all specific requirements are perceived helpful. Amongst specific requirements, those concerning Accessibility and Education received the highest share of positive scores while Roma Inclusion and Shift to community based services appear to be the most critical.

Figure 15 Specific requirements – Usefulness (N° of respondents 44)



Source: Own survey results

Figure above analyses the scores of each specific requirement included in the above-mentioned relevant themes. Regardless their degree of relevance – somehow proxied by the share of 'no opinion' – all specific requirements are considered more helpful than unhelpful. Yet, some significant disparities emerge.

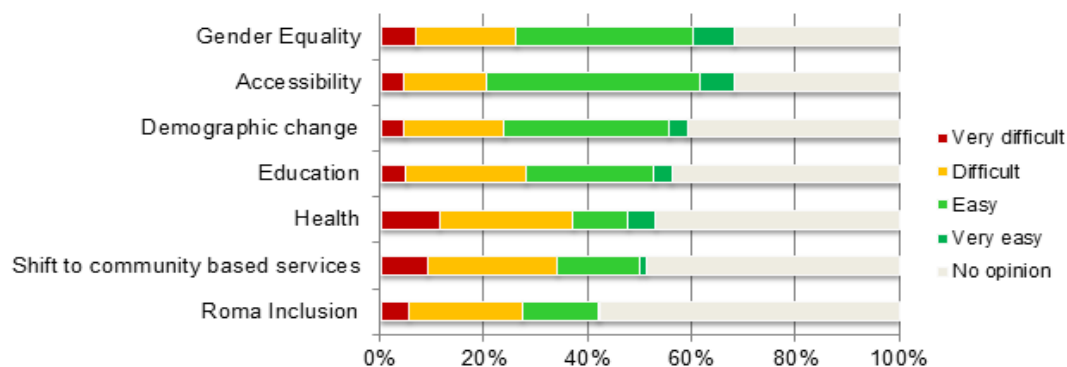
⁶⁰ This figure is not comparable with the following ones since they report also the 'no opinion'.

For instance, Health and Gender equality record the highest share of negative scores⁶¹, provided in total by almost 15% of total respondents. Also, the shift to community based services appears more problematic than others.

In line with the findings previously mentioned in the report, when analysing the **easiness** of specific requirements, the share of negative feedbacks is significantly higher, and they exceed positive ones in some cases (see figure 16). While Accessibility and Gender equality point to clearly positive scores, Demographic change and Education show mixed answers, while Health, Shift to community-based and Roma inclusion have clearly negative scores on easiness.

Another common finding is the scarcity of 'very easy' scores, as compared to the previous questions, which shows that – in general – the implementation of specific requirements is clearly a complex issue. The share of "no opinion" is in line with the one recorded for usefulness, confirming the previous findings in terms of relevance of each theme.

Figure 16 Overall easiness of specific requirements - % of answers (N° of respondents: 44)

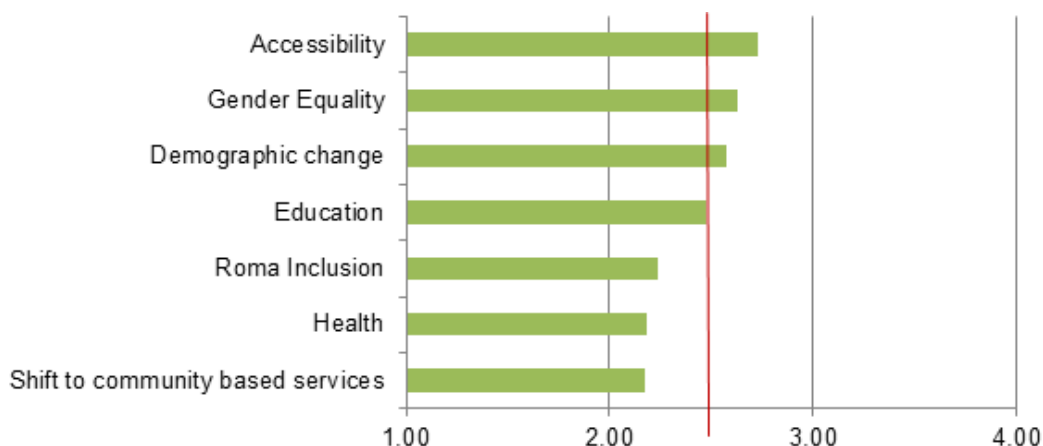


Source: Own survey data

Figure below shows the average score on easiness for each category of specific requirements: most of the listed items score below the average value of 2.5. – meaning that they are considered difficult to implement. **The average is particularly poor for Health and Shift to community based services**, and this is due to the relatively high share of 'very difficult' responses as compared to the other themes. Only Accessibility, Gender equality and Demographic change reach a positive score.

61 Including both 'very unhelpful' and 'rather unhelpful' scores

Figure 17 Overall easiness of specific requirements - % of answers (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Elaboration on own survey data

Splitting now the specific aspect of requirements under each theme, additional and more fine-grained finding can be highlighted and the level of sub-themes.

7.2.2. *Shift to community based services*

Together with Health, the Shift to community based services is the most critical theme for inclusive growth. Specific provisions for community based services relate to:

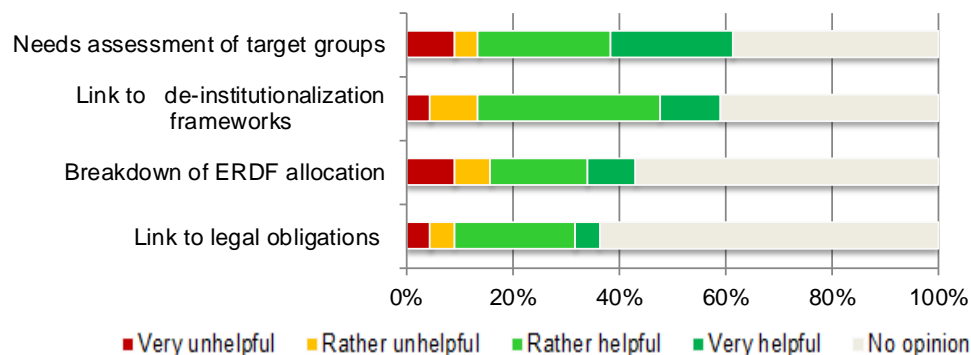
- Link to frameworks like **de-institutionalisation** or national poverty reduction
- Link to legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Breaking down ERDF allocations to institutional and community-based care
- Needs assessment of target groups

Survey results show that, by one side, this is possibly a less relevant theme, given the high number of 'no opinion'. By the other side however there is wide scope for improvement in terms of easiness of implementation of the specific provisions. While there is a shared opinion that that specific provisions are overall useful, especially those regarding needs assessment of target group and the link to de-institutionalisation framework, there is also a vast consensus about the opinion that they are general difficult if not very difficult to implement.

This is mirrored somehow in the findings of previous studies, according to which, only 12 Member States have in place and implement activities supporting the

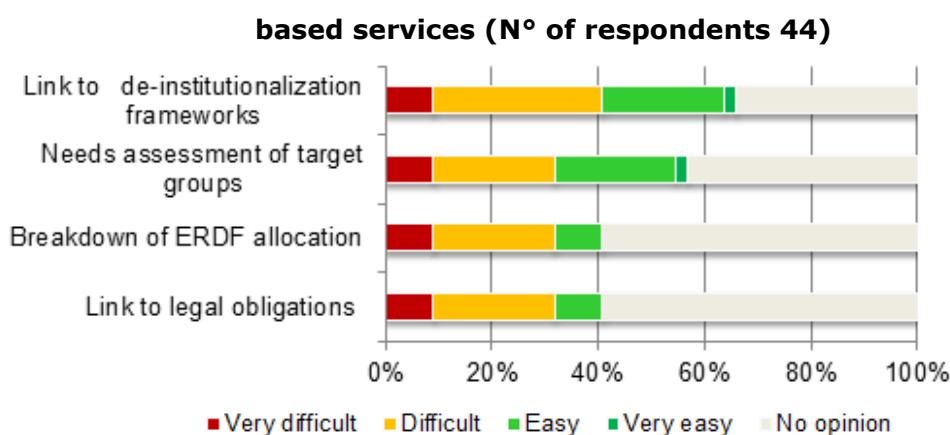
transition from institutional care to community-based living with the aim of “promoting social inclusion, combatting poverty and any discrimination”.⁶².

Figure 18 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Shift to community based services (N° of respondents 44)



The link to de-institutionalisation is the provision with the highest share of problematic scores (40% of total responses), however, if we do not consider the number of no opinion and focus on actual scores, the breakdown of ERDF allocation and the link to legal obligations record the highest share of negative scores on total scores. All the provisions record approximately 10% of ‘very difficult’ scores, indicating a highly critical area of implementation.

Figure 19 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Shift to community based services (N° of respondents 44)



7.2.3. Health

The same pattern can be detected for specific provisions related to Health. They refer to:

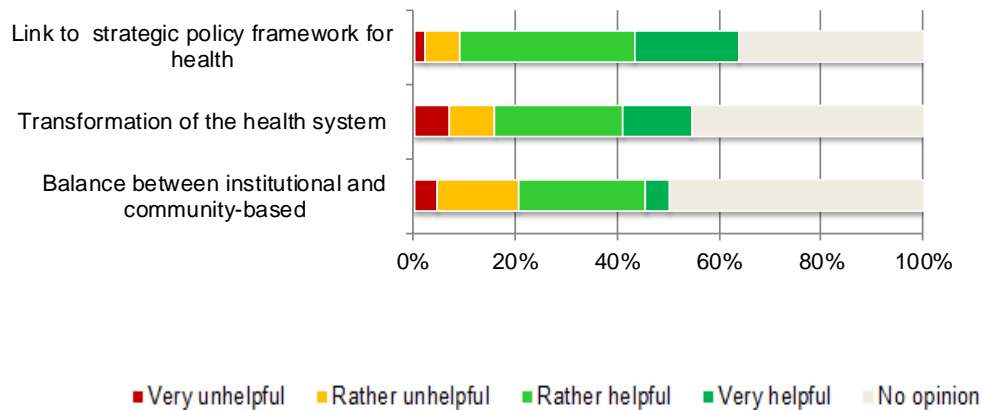
- Link to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health
- Consistency with the transformation of the health system (health reform)

⁶² Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Croatia – Community Living for Europe: Structural Funds Watch, 2017. “Opening up communities, closing down institutions: Harnessing the European Structural and Investment Funds”, p. 12

- Balance between institutional and community-based health services

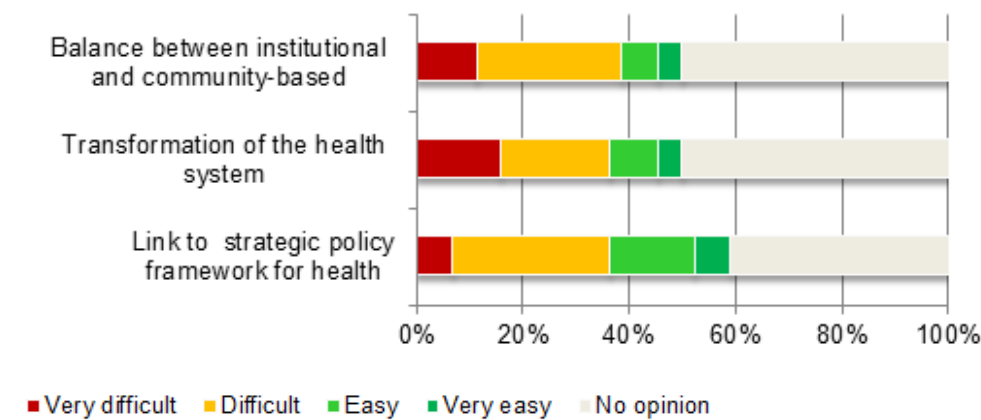
The majority of respondents declare that the specific provisions related to Health are on average rather or very helpful. **The most critical provision is the one related to the balance between institutional and community-based health services**, for which more than 20% of respondents declare that the provisions are rather of very unhelpful. On contrary, the link national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health is generally regarded as useful or very useful, with only less than 10% of negative scores.

Figure 20 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Health (N° of respondents 44)



When turning to the implementation aspect, however, negative scores are much higher than the ones related to the opinion on usefulness. All the specific provisions related to health record a high share of negative scores, which, while remaining below 40% of total responses, they systematically overweight the positive scores (the difference being the high number of 'no opinions'). In particular, the transformation of the Health system records the highest share of 'very difficult', followed by the balance between institutional and community-based. The link to strategic framework remains instead the best performing one.

Figure 21 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Health (N° of respondents 44)



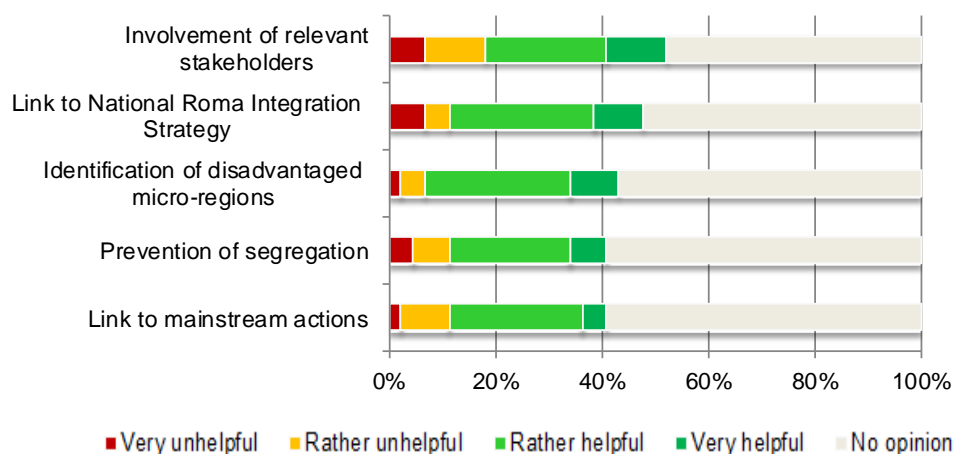
7.2.4. Roma Inclusion

When looking at the Roma inclusion theme, specific provisions relate to:

- Link to National Roma Integration Strategy and any other relevant strategy framework
- Link to mainstream actions, relevance to structural reforms
- Prevention of segregation, physical isolation of Roma in educational and housing facilities
- Identification of disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders

It is important to stress here the high share of 'no opinion' reaching more than 50% of total respondents and highlighting the relatively limited relevance of the theme for ERDF OPs. With the exception of the involvement of relevant stakeholders, in general all the specific provisions record positive opinions regarding usefulness.

Figure 22 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Roma Inclusion (N° of respondents 44)

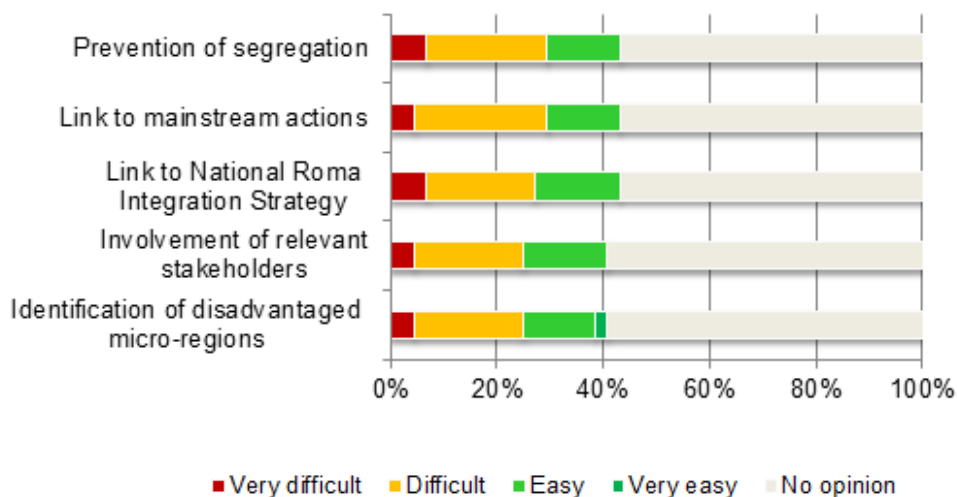


Again, however the implementation is the weak aspect of such provisions: negative scores are always more than positive ones, with almost no scores for 'very easy'. Prevention of segregation, link to mainstream actions and link to national strategy are the most problematic provisions, while the identification of disadvantaged micro-regions performs slightly better than the other provisions. This sounds even more problematic when considering that in comparison with the 2007-2013 period, "greater focus on Roma issues at EU level was reflected in the ESIF framework for 2014-2020"⁶³. Overall, the design of the ERDF and ESF for the 2007-2013 barely mentioned the inclusion of Roma population. However, Roma-related integration measures are more present in the current framework. Indeed, in the 2014-2020 programme period "Roma integration has been explicitly referred to in the ESIF

63 European Court of Auditors, 2016. "Eu policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade but additional efforts needed on the ground", p.39.

legislation” and “an investment priority makes reference to it⁶⁴”. In addition, the Member States with CSRs related to Roma integration are obliged to devote funds to promoting it. Most of the CSRs about Roma integration concerned education matters. According to a European Commission’s report⁶⁵, the Roma strategy has been considered as applicable in only 14 Member States and only a few of the MS foresee actual regional activities for better implementation.

Figure 23 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Roma Inclusion (N° of respondents 44)



7.2.5. Education

Education-related provisions are manifold and varied. They relate to:

- Concentration on areas within the overall strategy allowing for measurable impact and added value
- Link to strategic policy framework to reduce early school leaving
- Link to national or regional strategic policy framework to increase tertiary education attainment, quality and efficiency
- Link to national or regional strategic policy framework for lifelong learning
- Link to national or regional strategic policy framework for increasing the quality and efficiency of vocational education and training (VET) systems
- Segregation in education cannot be financed by ERDF

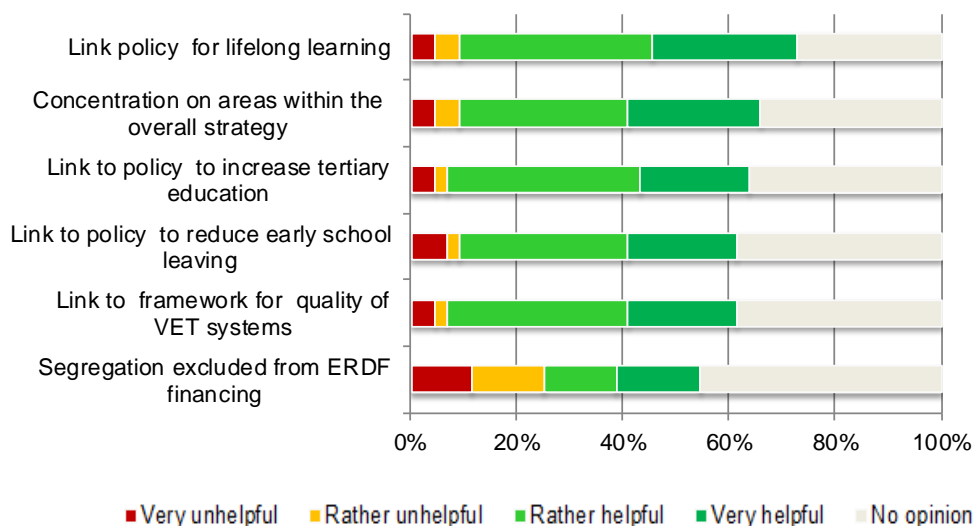
Opinions related to the usefulness of provisions related to the link to policy frameworks are particularly positive, especially the ones related to the VET system

64 European Court of Auditors, 2016. “Eu policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade but additional efforts needed on the ground”, p.68.

65 European Commission, 2016. “The implementation of the provisions in relation to the ex-ante conditionalities during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment (ESI Funds)”. p, 69

and to the increase of tertiary education. For instance, the Swedish government announced a wide range of interventions based on schools and training centres assessment, with the aim to better match labour market needs and skills. In the case of Hungary, a specific project called “Developing the quality and content of VET and adult education” has been launched to set up a quality control system⁶⁶. On the contrary the provisions excluding segregation from ERDF financing has not been welcomed in a positive way, with half of the respondents pointing to it as not useful.

Figure 24 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Education (N° of respondents 44)

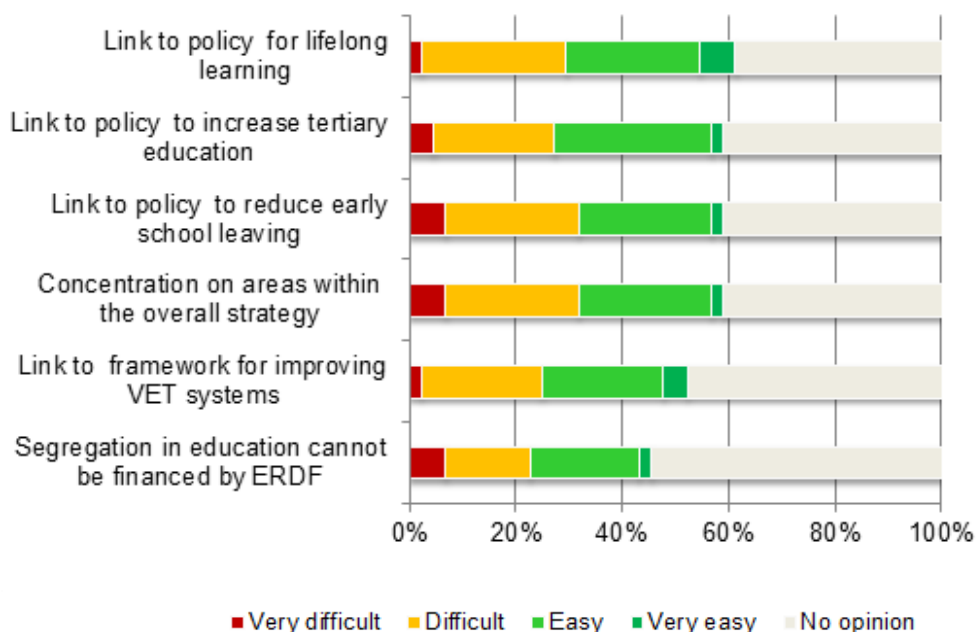


Provisions are considered not particularly easy to implement even in the case of education-related themes. The link to policy for early school leaving, the concentration on areas allowing for measurable impact and the segregation theme are the most critical ones. As a result, in terms of measures to tackle early school leaving, only few PAs have included different activities than ensuring the existence of a database. An example of this situation is France, where a national database system has been established, providing support to early school leavers and facilitating access to training, skills and employment⁶⁷.

66 European Commission (2016), The implementation of the provisions in relation to the ex-ante conditionalities during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment (ESI Funds), p. 70

67 European Commission (2016), The implementation of the provisions in relation to the ex-ante conditionalities during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment (ESI Funds), p. 70

Figure 25 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Education (N° of respondents 44)



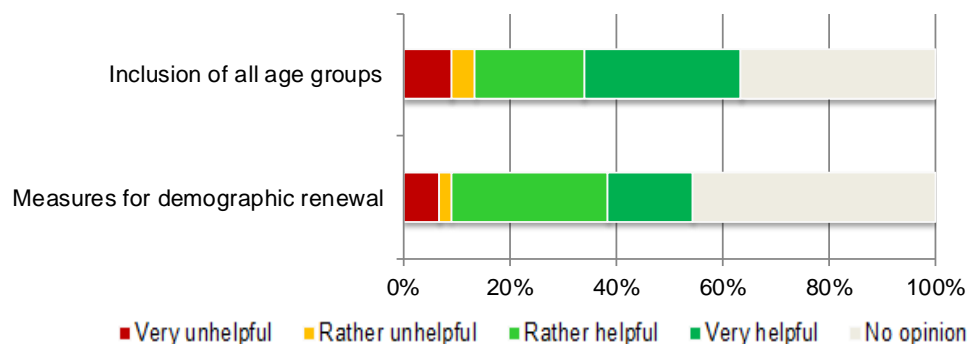
In particular, the negative scores on the concentration on areas allowing for measurable impacts and added value are in line with the ones recorded on general requirements on the performance framework: in general, the issue of quantifying impacts is of difficult implementation. Again, the restriction of the scope of ERDF funding excluding now the segregation in education has possibly introduced some constraints in the design of inclusive-growth strategy and are perceived then difficult to implement.

7.2.6. Demographic change

With regard to demographic change, there are only two specific provisions related to it:

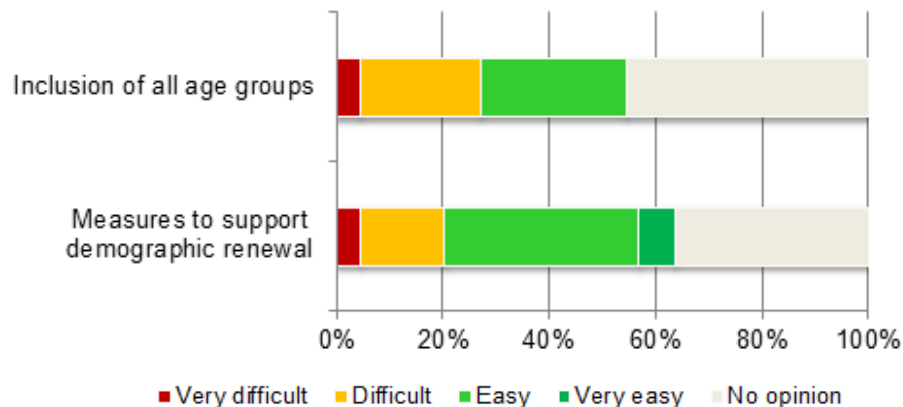
- Inclusion of all age groups
- Identification of measures to support demographic renewal

Figure 26 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Demographic change (N° of respondents 44)



Neither of the two provisions are significantly critical, nor in terms of usefulness or easiness. However, in terms of implementation, the inclusion of all age groups is indicated as difficult to implement by almost 30% of total respondents.

Figure 27 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Demographic change (N° of respondents 44)



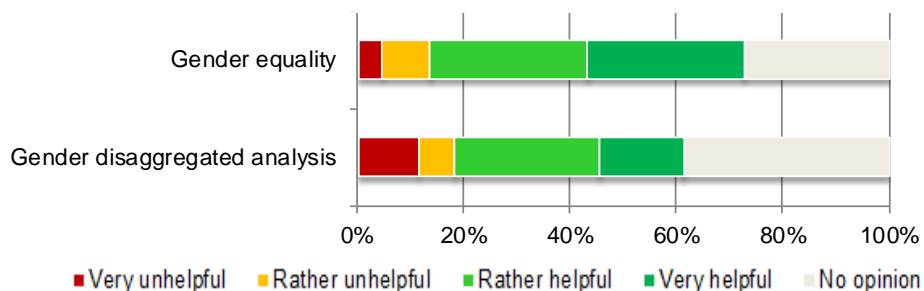
7.2.7. Gender equality

Gender equality related provisions refer to:

- Gender equality as a mainstreamed horizontal principle
- Gender disaggregated analysis where appropriate

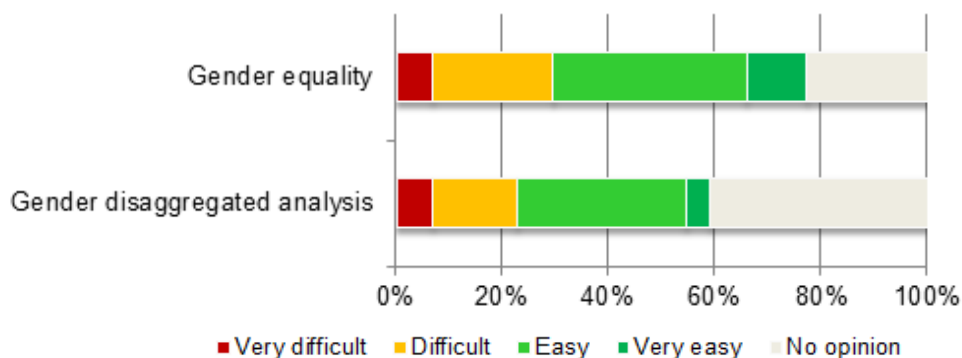
They are not particularly new provisions, and this is reflected in the overall positive opinions on them by the respondents. Not only the share of 'no opinion' is particularly low as compared to the previous themes, but positive opinions are generally higher than negative ones, both on usefulness and on easiness.

Figure 28 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Gender equality (N° of respondents 44)



On the implementation side, however, it is worth mentioning that gender equality as a mainstreamed horizontal principle is still perceived as very difficult or difficult to implement by almost 30% of respondents, against almost a half declaring instead that it is easy or very easy to implement. The gender disaggregated analysis instead is considered difficult by almost 25% of respondents, while 35% considers it as easy or very easy.

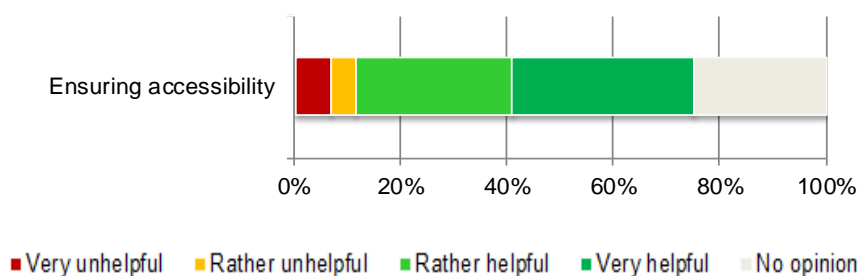
Figure 29 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Gender Equality (N° of respondents 44)



7.2.8. Accessibility

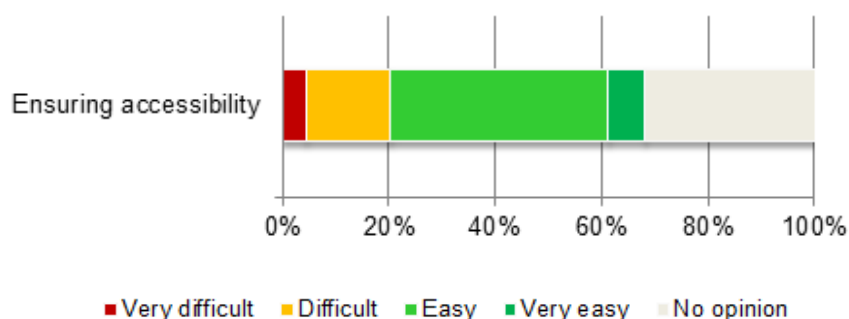
Finally, actions addressed to ensure accessibility receive rather positive scores, especially as regards usefulness.

Figure 30 Specific requirements – Usefulness of provisions related to Accessibility (N° of respondents 44)



On implementation, 20% of respondents believe that provisions related to ensuring accessibility to everybody are difficult to implement, while 45% consider them easy or very easy.

Figure 31 Specific requirements – Easiness of provisions related to Accessibility (N° of respondents 44)



More findings on the programming process were also collected through interviews with MAs and Policy Ministries. They add some flavours on the already mentioned challenges in the programming phase.

Evidence from interviews on the support of new provisions to inclusive growth programming is less positive than the survey results. In some cases, no improvement were recorded, and in some other cases the stress was on more negative aspects related, according to interviewees, to more conditions and restrictions in undertaking program interventions. For example, it was claimed that thematic concentration on TO1-4 limited the possibility to invest in TO 8, 9 and 10, especially for more developed regions. While generally recognising that the new conditions were important for the effective and efficient implementation of programmes, it is also underscored that they nevertheless constituted a barrier in the quick disbursement of funds.

In a few cases ex-ante conditionalities were mentioned as a challenge, in particular when asking to develop mapping and needs assessment exercises, less so if related to the development of sectoral strategies which are perceived as useful.

At the national level different policy ministries were involved in the programming of inclusive growth measures, usually central authorities (ministries for EU funds or Ministry of Economy or Regional Development) with line ministries with specific sectoral mandates (ministry of labour and social policies, ministry of health, ministry of education, etc.). The relations were indicated to be usually good, but in some cases the necessity of coordination and association with sectoral policies and sectoral ministries, especially those in charge of ESF-related measures (such as Ministry of Labour and Social Policy), was also reported to be a challenge when programming inclusive growth interventions.

The existence of national strategies proved to be a support when programming inclusive growth measures. The lack of them was mentioned as an obstacle to a smooth programming, since the lack of a shared strategic vision opened the door to more fragmented and poor planning process. In this regard, the existence of ex-ante conditionalities calling for strategy development was seen as a good point of the regulatory framework (although in some cases it is also mentioned that the strategy would have been prepared in any case).

In the programming process mixing of ERDF and ESF funding was seen as a positive aspect allowing integrated approach for complex problems. At the same time, however, it was also mentioned that these joint ESF/ERDF measures face challenges in the implementation phase (see more in the section below on implementation).

During the programming process it was mentioned that the contact with the EC services were continuous and generally proved to be useful. They were particularly useful in the support and stimulus provided to highlight the overall justification of the policy, the logical underpinnings and the way the intentions could be reflected in the system of indicators for monitoring and evaluation. The organisation of thematic working groups with experts was also pointed as a useful support provided by the EC. On the other hand, some interviewees complained about a lack of specific thematic knowledge on social inclusion measures of some of the EC officials during the negotiation processes, as well as a poor understanding of local contexts and specific needs. They would have appreciated a more active role in content-related issues. Some interviewees noted a different approach in the interactions with the Commission as compared to the previous programming period when exchanges were apparently more focused on key concepts and methodologies than in this programming period.

Involvement of third parties is more related to the selection of specific measures, and only in exceptional cases it is mentioned that they have contributed at a more strategic level in the definition of priorities and selection of relevant indicators.

In some cases external consultants were involved to prepare studies aimed at informing the policy decision-making process (in Bulgaria for example they were used to prepare a socio-economic analysis feeding into the preparation of the National Concept for Spatial Development), in some other cases assistance was provided by other bodies (in Greece the World Health Organization carried out a study of the current situation in the health sector. In Croatia TA by the World Bank was used in the past to improve the involvement of third parties in project preparation). The role of stakeholders in the programming phase varies depending on the institutional context, with a stronger coordinating role played by the national authorities in some countries as e.g. Bulgaria and a more decentralised approach in countries such as France where regional MAs have a stronger role and national authorities holding a coordinating role only at the PA level.

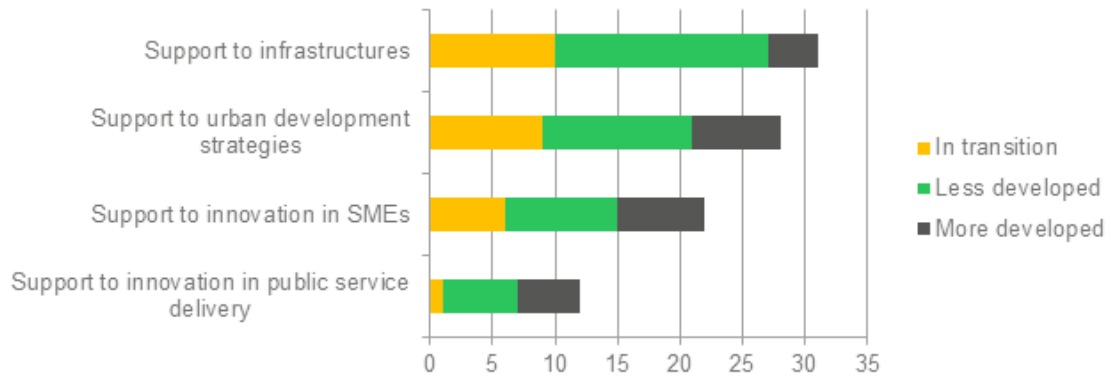
7.2.9. Added value of ERDF for inclusive growth

To the scope of this research, it was important to understand what could be the added value of ERDF supporting inclusive growth objectives as compared with ESF funding. When designing strategies for inclusive growth, which generally are residual in terms of financial scale and reach within the ERDF as compared to thematic objectives related to smart and sustainable growth, development and improvement of existing physical infrastructures leading to the reduction of disparities in the quality and access to regional education and health. As also highlighted by interviews, support to social infrastructures can be seen in combination to ESF measures addressed to social service delivery. Such synergies between ERDF and ESF were reported to be an improvement of this programming period as compared to the previous one. At the same time, as rightly pointed out during the interviews, this potential synergy cannot be exploited across the board for all types of measures. A good practice in this field was mentioned during the interviews in Croatia in the field of education where they aim to improve IT literacy in primary and secondary schools covered by a large national project, supported by both ERDF and ESF. This project, which covers 80% of primary schools in Croatia, does not only seek to bring the equipment to schools and provides them with adequate internet access and hardware but focuses also on content development, training to teachers and networks between schools.

In the same way, urban development strategies can include 'hard' measure supporting the construction and renovation of physical facilities in combination with more 'soft' interventions addressed to service delivery. Integrated approaches to urban development were also mentioned during the interviews as a clear added value of the new regulatory provisions.

Clearly, since the support to physical infrastructures and facilities are not covered by ESF funding, they can only be provided through the ERDF as a valuable component of a broader social inclusion strategy. As a matter of fact, few respondents believed that the added value of ERDF support stems on the support in public service delivery, since this is perhaps better done with ESF.

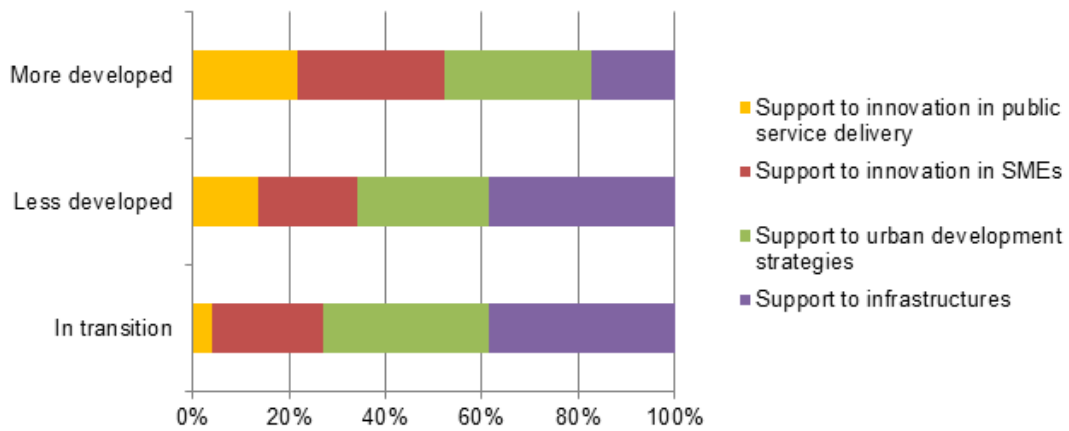
Figure 32 As compared to ESF, where lays the added value of ERDF support for inclusive growth? (N° of respondents 44⁶⁸) – Regional breakdown.



Source: Own survey results

The analysis at regional level (Figure X) shows some interesting, thus not surprising, findings. The added value of ERDF support is particularly significant for less developed regions. This finding shows how ERDF support might be used to overcome structural deficiencies in areas related to Inclusive Growth. On the other hand, ERDF support to innovation in SMEs appears to be particularly important in the more developed regions. The transition regions appear to follow the same trend of less developed ones.

Figure 33 As compared to ESF, where lays the added value of ERDF support for inclusive growth? (N° of respondents 4469) – Regional distribution.



Source: Own survey results

⁶⁸ More than one option available.

⁶⁹ More than one option available.

8. PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

8.1. *Approaches to partnership*

The inclusion of partners in programming and implementing the Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes is an important principle to be observed by national authorities, as per the relevant EU regulation.⁷⁰ During the elaboration of the programmes, the approaches taken to the mandatory involvement of partners were usually combining

- a generic – online – public consultation on the drafts, or various consecutive draft versions of the operational programmes, open to everyone;
- more in-depth consultations with invited key organisations representing traditional social partners, municipalities, and the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups that the programmes were addressing (these organisations were often participating in the Monitoring Committees in the 2007-2013 period, and continuing to be involved post-2013);
- consultations on underlying national or regional strategies; and
- consultations on sub-areas and past interventions that were planned to be continued, partner involvement in summative and formative evaluations.

The depth of partner involvement in the programming phase can range from a one-off consultation of the final draft of the programmes to co-designing the OP as equal participants. Consultations tend to be deeper in countries with more established partnership and co-decision mechanisms and more prepared partners. But even within the same country, there were often notable differences between individual OPs with regard to the depth and organisation of partnership consultations (this was the case for instance in France, Germany, Greece or Hungary).

The generic public consultation was often conducted in several rounds, with a new version of the OPs as soon as they were prepared (taking on board also feedback from the Commission). Accordingly, the OPs were generally open to consultation at all stages, in many different drafts (Greece, Hungary).

In the online consultations all interested organisations or individuals could comment on the programming documents (this was a very typical method in the countries reviewed). The advantage of this approach is that the consultation can reach the broadest possible audience, but its disadvantage is that it is not steered and facilitated, so that no contributions may not be to the point, and key partners are not necessarily encouraged to spend the time and effort on assembling valuable feedback.

Deeper consultations on the content of the OPs usually involve the traditional partners of the ministries leading the planning (regions, counties, municipalities; social partners; NGOs), who are consulted either in conferences, workshops, regular or one-off meetings, or in writing. Such consultations took place in several countries including Hungary, Latvia, Estonia. However, there was usually no specific focus on inclusive growth while discussing the OPs with social partners, unless a specific thematic working group was created for this purpose (see for instance Latvia).

⁷⁰ Set out in Article 5 of the Common Provisions Regulation

As for consultations on the key underlying strategies (these documents are usually required as ex-ante conditionalities), the involvement of partners may be even more important than for the OPs themselves, as the combination of the Partnership Agreement and these strategies already sets out the content of the programmes to a great detail. Such consultations have been generally implemented in the countries assessed. In Greece, there has been considerable partnership effort put in place for the elaboration of the Social Inclusion Strategy.

The involvement partners for the backward-looking assessments of past initiatives, and forward-looking discussions on how to continue them is similarly important. In Hungary, the programming of certain actions was informed by series of workshops evaluating and discussing predecessor programmes (for instance the programme on the winding down of Roma camps and ghettos). A special preparatory partnership consultation was also implemented for the action supporting social enterprises under a financial instrument. In Croatia, associations and other representatives of targeted social groups were not deeply involved in the programming process, but thematic expert working groups were formed by the responsible ministries in order to better understand of the inclusive growth related needs and issues.

An interesting development is the emergence of cross-regional or cross-country partnership consultations. During the programming of the integrated regional programmes for the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the two countries have put in place coordination events and exchanges, led by the authorities responsible for the programme, but also involving partners to a certain extent. There is similar collaboration between the Baltic states. On the other side, no collaboration has been reported with stakeholders in neighbouring regions or countries in Greece or Poland.

In the implementation phase, partners – as members of Monitoring Committees or outside of implementation structures – can participate in designing the calls, in supporting applicants and beneficiaries, and in monitoring and evaluating the programme. In several countries (including Bulgaria, Hungary), subcommittees for addressing social inclusion issues have been set up under the Monitoring Committees for the Partnership Agreement or individual OPs.

In Hungary, the draft versions of all individual calls are posted online, and everybody can comment upon them. The consultations on the more popular calls receive more attention, and more designated capacity, than consultation on the original programming documents. As feedback from Hungary however shows, unfacilitated online public consultation of these calls is likely to attract applicants and grant writers who will be commenting more on technicalities than on strategic issues.

8.2. *Partners involved*

According to the CPR (Article 5), the relevant partners to be involved are competent urban and other public authorities; economic and social partners; and relevant bodies representing civil society, including non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

The Monitoring Committees usually include associations of large and small municipalities and organisations representing the interests of various inclusive growth-related target groups (women, disabled persons, the elderly).

Depending on the country, this list may be extended by Roma and migrant groups. In Bulgaria, the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues of the Council of Ministers (NCCEII) has participated in the entire programming process and is currently involved in the Monitoring Committee of the two relevant programmes. In addition, a permanent Roma Integration Subcommittee has been established under the Partnership Agreement Monitoring Committee, whose main objective is to discuss the coordination of Roma integration operations, co-funded by European funds and the State budget, as well as to monitor the progress of the envisaged measures.

There are also examples for the inclusion of additional specific vulnerable groups. In Hungary, the Human Resource Development OP involves as a member of its Monitoring Committee an NGO supporting persons facing mental health problems. In Bulgaria, representatives of the Child Protection Agency participate in the Monitoring Committees of both inclusive-growth relevant OPs.

In Latvia, an Interim Committee for Supervision of CP Funds was established to ensure better implementation of the partnership principle. This committee consisted of representatives from all involved partners in the programming, planning and implementation of the ESI funds. A system of committees, expert working groups and special interest groups were set up in Estonia.

In the consultations on the programmes and calls a much larger circle of partners participate (propensity differs however from country to country and topic to topic). A conceptual problem emerging from interviews is that the organisations consulting on these documents, that could be the voice of vulnerable groups are often applicants and beneficiaries themselves, thus they may have conflict of interest issues, possibly shaping calls that are better suited for them. There is a lack of independent umbrella organisations for all target groups, who could provide a good representation of the vulnerable groups, independently of vested interests with the programmes (this problem has been mentioned in Hungary). A similar issue reported in France concerns the role of public urban authorities, which are at the same time part of the partnership and potential beneficiaries of the programme.

8.2.1. *The preparedness of partners*

According to the experience of several Member States – including Greece, Hungary, Germany - certain social partners are very active and well prepared, with a lot of experience with ESIF, but such organisations do not cover all vulnerable groups. There are a number of important target groups which do not have sufficiently prepared representations, and hence cannot add the same value to the consultations (problems were flagged up inter alia in Poland).

Greek authorities commented that the process could have been more successful if the consultation was accompanied by a briefing of social partners on the content of the Partnership Agreement, the strategic goals for ESIF interventions in the country, specifically on the topic of inclusive growth, either directly by the EU or through the Ministry of Economy and Development.

The Czech MA mentioned partners' inflexibility in terms of capacity as a problem. They were often sending different representatives to meetings, and their internal communication was not optimal.

8.2.2. *Results*

The implementation of the partnership principle in programming and implementation was assessed as more or less satisfactory by interviewees in most of the 16 countries investigated in detail (generally positive views were obtained among others from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Latvia) – although significant differences between regions and/or OP can be observed with regard to the effectiveness of partnership (as expressed by French stakeholders). The work of the social inclusion subcommittees of the Monitoring Committees has been assessed as particularly useful.

The consultations with social partners influenced the design of the programmes, including inclusive growth, although not in the same depth in all cases. Successful partner inputs were given with regard to specific needs, coherence issues, and possible implementation bottlenecks. In Bulgaria for instance, feedback from partners emphasised the necessity to highlight the needs of people with disabilities and to better address these needs with appropriate measures. The consultations with third party stakeholders helped the Croatian MA and the line ministries to better understand absorption capacity.

More critical opinions were voiced in Greece. According to Greek authorities interviewed, the interventions of the partners consulted were not as helpful as expected. The Polish regional authorities succeeded in establishing a permanent dialogue with partners and an effective way of communication, but they regard the influence of partner contribution on the programmes as marginal only – the European Commission has steered the content of programmes to a much larger extent, especially ESF. For EDRF interventions, there was some margin for manoeuvring on the side of regions, but negligible space was left for inputs from public consultations.

Not all contributions could be taken on board. According to Bulgarian authorities, some requests made by representatives of vulnerable groups cannot be addressed, as they concern actions or implementation modalities that are not eligible under the regulations. Representatives from Italian third sector organisations made important points that were not addressed: a lack of synergies between OPs addressing issues related to a specific vulnerable group, insufficient funding of certain actions, a strong influence of purely political rather than strategic decisions on actions.

Spanish Managing Authorities interviewed stressed that the delays in initiating the OP programming process has negatively impacted on the available consultation time with the relevant partners.

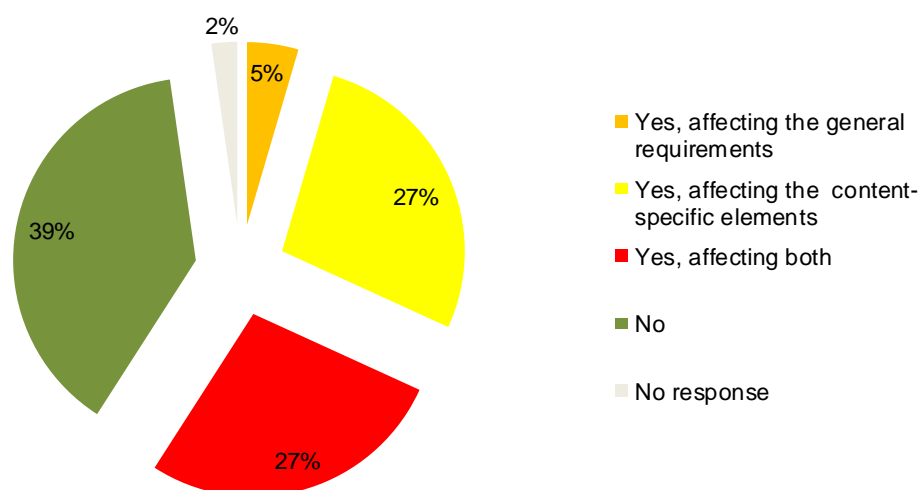
8.3. *Negotiation process*

The negotiation process is a crucial phase of the programming activity. It is during this phase that strategies as initially designed may be subject to adjustments and reconsiderations. Here, the relationship with the Commission and the support provided during the negotiation are relevant aspects that can shape the future programmes.

In the survey, MAs were asked to provide information about the negotiation process. In this section of the survey, MAs had the possibility to express their feedbacks on the matter, especially as far as concerned the relations with the Commissions.

As Figure 33 shows, the majority of MAs encountered some sort of difficulties during the negotiations with the Commission concerning the programming modalities. Yet, almost 40% of the respondents did not report any relevant issues. More than half of respondent encountered difficulties either concerning only specific requirements or concerning both general and specific. The survey structure however did not allow to dig more into the details of the specific problems encountered during the implementation of the content-specific requirements. are those related to Health (especially transformation of the health system), Roma inclusion (especially the link to the National Roma Integration Strategy), and Education (especially the link to policy to reduce early school leaving and concentration on areas within the overall strategy). Shift to community-based services also records a low average score in terms of easiness of implementation, with a specific difficulty on the link to de-institutionalisation frameworks. On the other hand, very few MAs reported problems concerning general requirements.

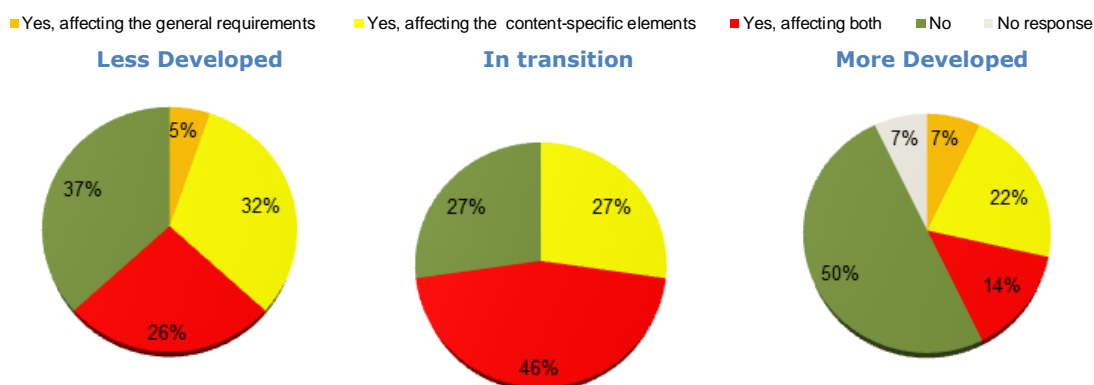
Figure 34 Were there any difficulties to reach an agreement with the Commission during negotiations on how inclusive growth has been programmed? (% of answer) (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Own survey results

The distribution of feedbacks by typology of region is particularly interesting as it shows that most of difficulties are encountered by MAs from less developed and in transition regions. Indeed, the majority of MAs located in more developed regions did not find any difficulties. Problems were particularly common for MAs of in transition regions as only one quarter of them did not report any difficulties in the negotiations process. Hence, institutional capacity, which can be assumed being higher in more developed than in less developed regions, is possibly providing the explanation for such result.

Figure 35 Were there any difficulties to reach an agreement with the Commission during negotiations on how inclusive growth has been programmed? Regional differences (% of answer) (N° of respondents: 44)

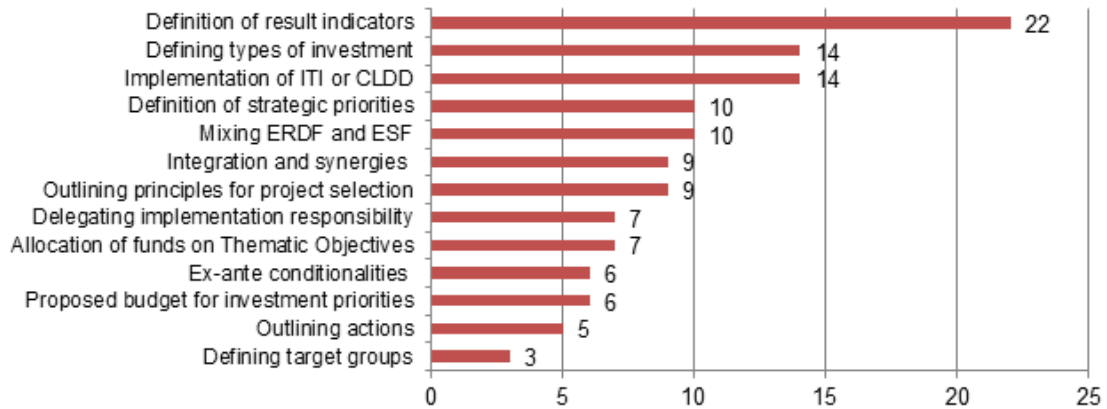


Beside an overall feedback on the negotiation process as a whole, respondents were also asked to highlight elements which proved to be especially problematic. They were allowed to select more than one option.

In line with previous findings, the definition of result indicators is the most critical element, especially for actions and provisions in new areas such as Health. This result is consistent with the very poor score recorded by the performance framework on usefulness and easiness to implement amongst general requirements. Also, the implementation of ITI and CLLD resulted particularly problematic during negotiations. This is consistent with the fact that general requirements concerning ITI and CLLD appeared to be less useful than the average and that these tools are used only in a very limited number of OPs (see Chapter 4).

Surprisingly, the ex-ante conditionalities – which scored below average in general requirements usefulness – were not critical in the negotiations phase, thus somehow the problems with ex-ante conditionalities were sorted out before the negotiation started.

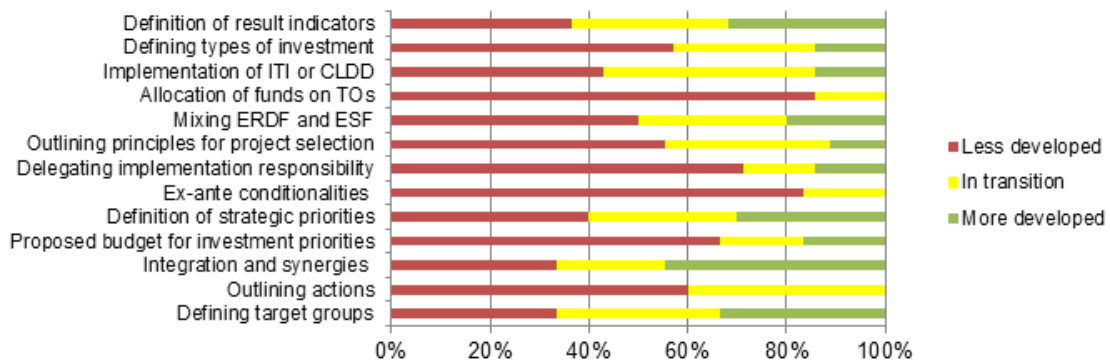
Figure 36 Which of the below elements were especially difficult to agree on with the Commission during the negotiations, with regard to inclusive growth? (N° of respondents: 44⁷¹)



Source: Own survey results

Figure 35 shows the regional distribution of the previous responses. It is worth noticing that the definition of result indicators is the most critical element, regardless the typology of region. In general, less developed and in transition regions encounters difficulties in more than one element. This is also confirmed in the analysis of quantification of needs. For instance, very few MAs from developed regions had problems concerning the negotiations of ITI and CLLD (perhaps because these elements are not relevant for all the OPs), against a much higher share of less developed and in transition regions.

Figure 37 Which of the below elements were especially difficult to agree on with the Commission during the negotiations, with regard to inclusive growth? – Regional distribution

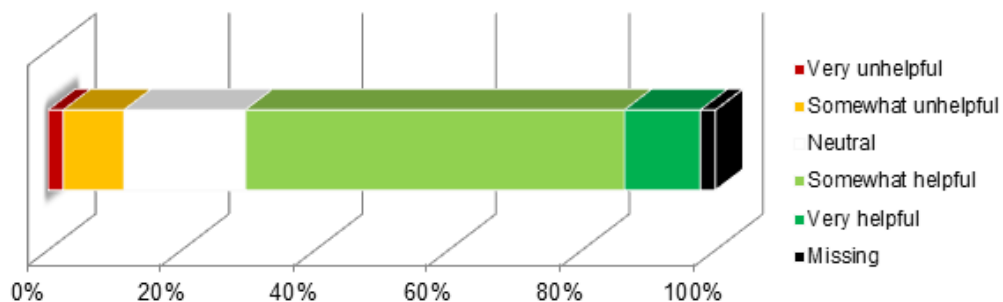


Source: Own survey results

Besides highlighting difficulties, respondents were also asked to evaluate the support of the Commission during the negotiations. In general, the survey suggests that most of the MAs found Commission support rather helpful and negative feedbacks have a residual share (see Figure 36). In transition regions appear to be more critical towards the Commission's help as Figure 37 shows.

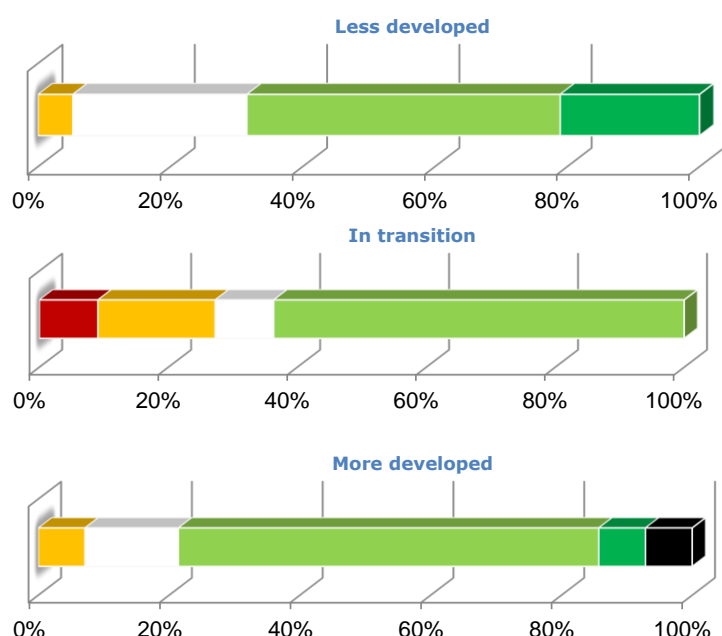
⁷¹ More than one option available

Figure 38 Usefulness of EC support during negotiation - % of answers (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Own survey results

Figure 39 Usefulness of EC support during negotiation – Regional breakdown



Source: Own survey results

Open-ended questions offer some additional hints regarding the support received by the Commission during the negotiation phase:

- While appreciating the guidance offered by the Commission and its guidance documents throughout the entire process of OPs design, some MAs complained about the lack of flexibility and rooms of maneuver during the negotiation, for example in the allocation to different TOs and on the definition of marginalized population (with an excessive focus on Roma where this was not really an issue, at the expense of other marginalised communities). In many cases a too formalistic approach by the Commission officers during the negotiation phase was the cause of low agreement and complaint.
- A common indication by several respondents was a lack of understanding of the local specificities and needs by the Commission officers.

- Similarly, mutual agreement on the allocation by Thematic Objectives was also difficult to reach in some cases and some MAs complaint that in some cases it was not possible to keep supporting the activities which were prioritised in the previous programming period.
- In some limited cases sudden stops-and-go in the negotiation process were reported, together with changing views from the side of the Commission during the process. These aspects negatively affected the effectiveness and efficiency of the process.

Additional findings are also coming from interviews:

- National strategies⁷² are used as a support to negotiations (), with a useful role in indicating clear strategic priorities.
- Target groups were prioritised during the negotiation process based on indications of existing national strategies. The most common target groups are children, the elderly and people at risk of poverty.
- While the discussion and contribution of third party organisations were considered useful, it was also stressed that due to regulatory constraints, not all the requests from their side could be accommodated.
- Confrontation with the Commission during the negotiation were reported as being generally smooth and positive, with only a few indications of harsh discussion on the possibility to implement specific interventions, with mixed results in terms of final outcome (in some cases the intervention was accepted in some others it was not).

8.4. First experience with implementation

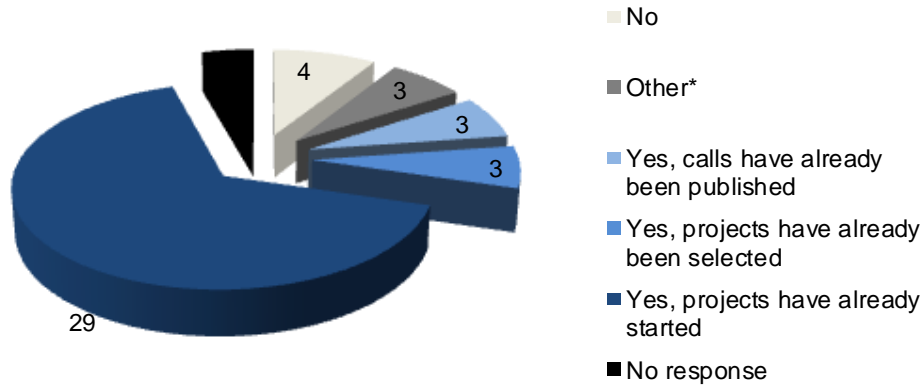
Although a bit delayed, the implementation of 2014-2020 programmes is currently ongoing. As part of the study an important aspect was to understand to what extent projects of inclusive growth measure were already launched and selected and if any difficulties with the beneficiaries were encountered.

Results from the survey help shedding some light on this issue. While we report here below the findings from the survey, an additional source of evidence will be the analysis of a selected number of calls that will be carried out in the next step of the study.

Figure 39 shows that – in most of the sampled OPs- activities related to inclusive growth had already begun, not only with publication of the calls and selection of the projects but, in the vast majority of cases, even with the implementation of selected projects.

⁷² Such as the national strategies for deinstitutionalization of children, the elderly, for Poverty Reduction and Promotion of Social Inclusion, higher education, health and Roma in Bulgaria; the Strategy on the Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion in Croatia or the "National Health Strategy" in Poland

Figure 40 Has the implementation of activities in the Operational Programme relating to inclusive growth already begun? (N° of respondents: 44)

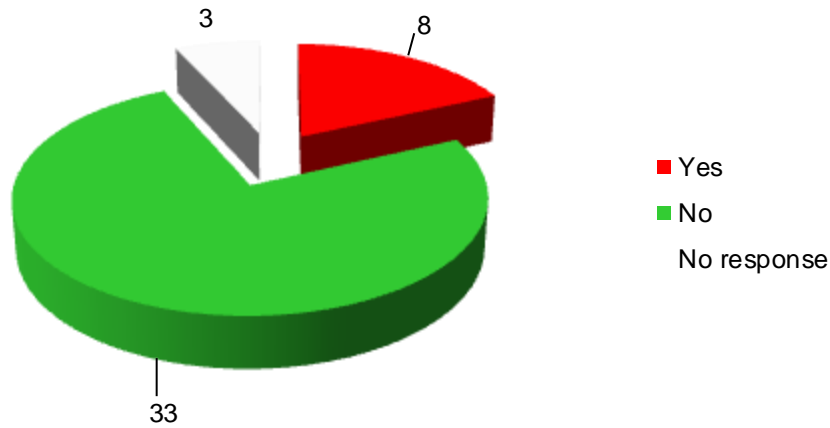


*Not relevant, no opinion, part of the projects has already started.

Source: Own survey results

Respondents were also asked to declare whether the interpretation and implementation of specific content related elements (without specifying which ones) proved to be difficult. In general, the survey suggests that most of respondents had no difficulties in this process. On the other hand, responses to open-ended questions on specific areas of difficulties, point clearly to Result indicators as the most difficult element to apply and interpret. This is in line with previous findings concerning the usefulness of the performance framework and the criticalities during the negotiations with the Commission.

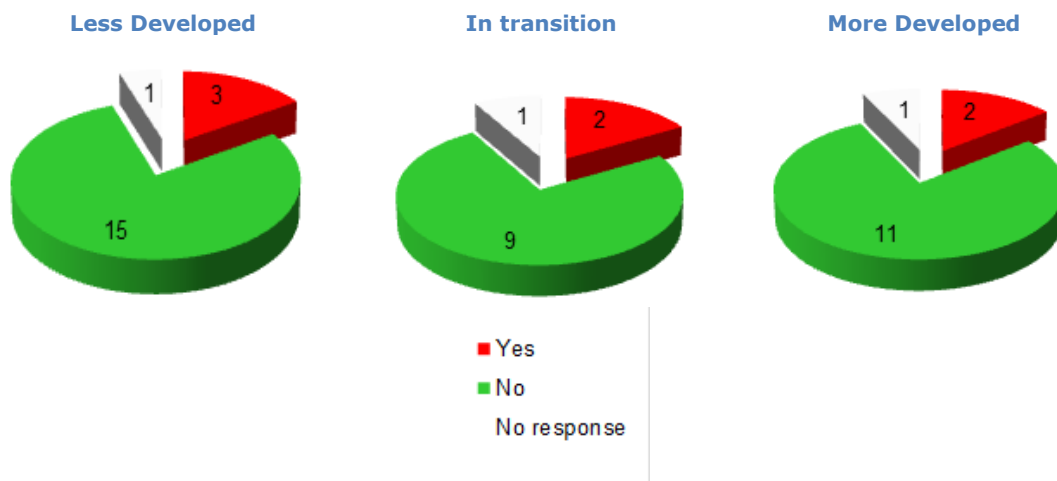
Figure 41 Have you encountered specific content-related new elements that are difficult to interpret and/or correctly apply in implementation (the calls or project implementation)? (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Own survey results

Figure 42 below shows that there are not significant regional disparities concerning the easiness of the implementation and application of the specific-content related new elements.

Figure 42 Have you encountered specific content-related new elements that are difficult to interpret and/or correctly apply in implementation (the calls or project implementation)? (Regional breakdown)



Source: Own survey results

Another important step in the implementation phase is the discussion with the Commission. Respondents were asked to declare whether there were differences with the Commission in the in the interpretation and application of the specific content related to new provisions. In most of the cases there were not, as Figure 43 early shows.

Figure 43 Have you had any discussion with the Commission on how specific content related new elements should be applied?



Source: Own survey results

Region-wise, we noticed that in transition regions score better than the others. The results for less developed and more developed are balanced.

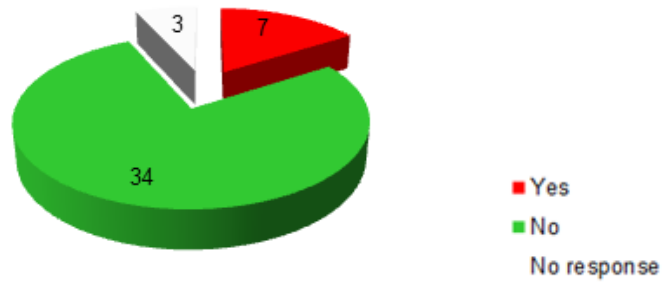
Figure 44 Have you had any discussion with the Commission on how specific content-related new elements should be applied?



Source: Own survey results

An additional aspect of the implementation is the perspective of **project beneficiary**. In general, the survey results suggest that, according to the MAs, most of project promoters had no difficulties in complying with the new content specific elements. According to the MAs, project promoters who had compliance related issues are mostly located in less developed regions. The most cited constraints among open-ended questions are linked to the lack of technical expertise or resource to comply with the new provisions. Indeed, these appear rather burdensome for small project promoters.

Figure 45 In your view, are there significant numbers of project promoters (beneficiaries) who have difficulties in complying with the specific content-related new elements? (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Own survey results

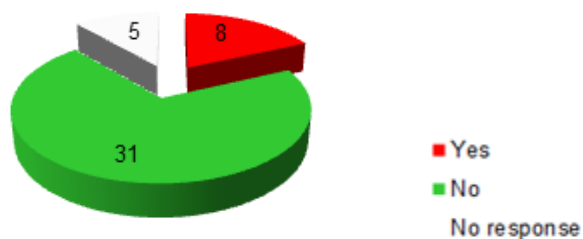
Figure 46 In your view, are there significant numbers of project promoters (beneficiaries) who have difficulties in complying with the specific content-related new elements? (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Own survey results

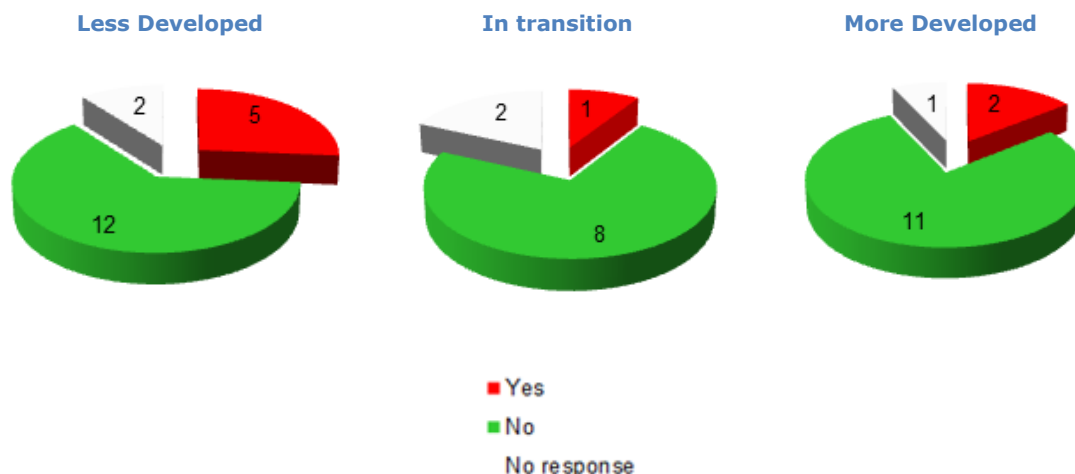
The overall easiness in compliance is confirmed also by the fact that most of the responding MAs did not need further guidance from the Commission. Those who needed further guidance were especially located in less developed regions – which is consistent with the previous findings highlighting that compliance related issues are more common in this typology of region.

Figure 47 Do you need help or further guidance from the Commission in establishing how to best comply with the specific content-related new elements? (N° of respondents: 44)



Source: Own survey results

Figure 48 Do you need help or further guidance from the Commission in establishing how to best comply with the specific content-related new elements? (N° of respondents: 44) – Regional breakdown



Source: Own survey results

Additional anecdotal evidence coming from interviews point to the following aspects:

- Implementation seems to be on track in most of the cases and calls have already been issued and beneficiaries selected.
- Problems and delays in the implementation of specific interventions are reported as being the reflection of delays in implementing national regulatory and sectoral reforms, especially in the health, education and social service sectors. Specific problems are also encountered for measures jointly financed by ESF and ERDF, for different degree of preparedness, for example when ESF is used to finance the more analytical and strategic aspect of the design of reforms and the ERDF should then follow with financing the measure to implement the strategy.
- No major difficulties were reported by project beneficiaries, however there is the awareness that typical beneficiaries (and calls' applicants)

are municipalities and civil society organisations with rather limited capacity and experience (especially in Eastern and Central European Countries). Representatives of vulnerable groups at the national level have more expertise and are more active in responding to calls.

- In some MSs, especially in central and Eastern Europe, national authorities, such as Ministry of labour or of Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, play a coordinating and advisory role in the preparation of the calls for projects, for example in some cases the necessary documentation and background information for the calls is being developed with support and coordination with the ministry. In more than one case it was mentioned that social partners and third-sector representatives are involved in the implementation and monitoring of inclusive growth measures through their representatives.
- It has been pointed by some interviewees that actions such as social housing for disadvantaged groups, incl. Roma, may face some difficulties of implementation on the ground due to the social and cultural attitudes of the beneficiaries and the population. This is confirmed in the analysis of the call for proposal below.

While being too early to draw conclusions on the implementation of inclusive growth measures it seems that most of the problems faced during the programming and negotiation phases were then not reflected in the implementation.

8.4.1. Analysis of selected calls for proposals

Sixteen calls for proposals in seven countries and under six different thematic areas have been analysed in order to assess how inclusive growth actions are implemented in practice. The division of these calls by area and per country is shown in Table 46.

Table 46 Calls for proposals divided by area per country and call

Area	Country	Call name
Health	Romania	Call under the Investment Priority 8.1 and Specific Objective 8.2
	Poland	Health Care Infrastructure RPWP.09.01.01-IZ-00-30-001/17
Shift to community-based services	Bulgaria	Support for deinstitutionalisation of social services for children BG16RFOP001-5.001
	Hungary	Improving the transition from institutional care to community-based services - replacing institutional placement by 2023

Area	Country	Call name
		EFOP-2.2.5-17
Education and training	Romania	Supporting sustainable urban development POR/4/2017/4.4/4.4/1
	Bulgaria	Support for vocational schools in the Republic of Bulgaria BG16RFOP001-3.002
Access to childcare facilities and early childhood education and care	Czech Republic	Call number 15 on the infrastructure for early childhood education for socially segregated localities
	Slovakia	OPLZ-PO6-SC612-2016-1b
Social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas	Poland	Social Infrastructure RPWM.09.02.00-IZ.00-28-002/17
	Romania	Improvement of the urban environment and preservation, protection and sustainable valorisation of cultural heritage POR/2016/5/5.2/1
Social housing	Czech Republic	Call number 35 Social housing for marginalised areas
	Poland	Development of social housing, assisted and protected, and social services infrastructure RPSL.10.02.01-IZ.01-24-096/16
Support to social enterprises	Czech Republic	Call number 25 on support for creation and development of social enterprises and protected working environments
	Czech Republic	Call number 6 on support for creation of social enterprises and protected working environments
Educational and spatial segregation of marginalized communities	Hungary	Eliminating segregated life situations (ERDF) EFOP-2.4.1

Area	Country	Call name
	Slovakia	OPLZ-PO6-SC611-2016-3

The analysis concentrated on numerous aspects, such as the objectives of the calls, target groups, policy backgrounds, activities, outcomes, indicators, horizontal principles and eligibility and selections criteria. No disparities or inconsistencies were found in these aspects, with the objectives and outcomes being in line with the areas, Thematic Objectives and social inclusion principles. The vast majority of the calls have been successfully closed, containing up to three rounds.

Nonetheless, further desk research has revealed some mistakes or bad practices in the implementation processes. For instance, newspaper in Hungary have found mistakes in the call EFOP-2.2.5-17: shift to community based services. The article highlights that at times, the call contradicts the original objectives and principles of social integration, placing resettlement facilities in smaller towns or villages where access to full range of services might not be provided. In most cases, the authorities opted to build just small, 10-12 people, housing for people with disabilities. Being built in either villages or small towns, such facilities would provide less favoured conditions with smaller chances for integration. The article also critiques the fact that there was hardly any professional dialogue or consultation on the composition of the call. According to the article the human rights aspect is scarcely present in the Hungarian practice of caring for people with disabilities, which reflects in the calls for proposals.⁷³

Poland, on the other hand, reports obstacles in lack of available funds in the health area. The call RPWP.09.01.01-IZ-00-30-001/17 registered many more applications than available funds. In the end, only 16 projects out of 26 were selected despite the high quality and ratings for all of the projects.⁷⁴ Additionally, it was reported that larger and more prestigious regional hospitals had more facilities to obtain the needed rating. Regional commission changed qualification rules on numerous occasions during the procedure, which resulted in some hospitals not being granted with the funding they hoped for,⁷⁵ Contrary to the high demand in the health area, the call for social regeneration in Poland received less proposals than expected.

73 Nepszava (2017), Pusztába száműzik a fogyatékosokat, Available at: <http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1144981-pusztaba-szamuzik-a-fogyatekosokat>

74 Wyborcza (2017), Unia Europejska pomaga walczyć z chorobami. W Wielkopolsce potrzebne są nowe szpitale, available at: <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22758280,unia-europejska-pomaga-walczy-z-chorobami.html?disableRedirects=true>

75 Wyborcza (2017), Unia Europejska pomaga walczyć z chorobami. W Wielkopolsce potrzebne są nowe szpitale, available at: <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22758280,unia-europejska-pomaga-walczy-z-chorobami.html?disableRedirects=true>

Only 16 applications were submitted and only 71% of the available funding has been allocated.⁷⁶

In case of Slovakia, the managing authority for the OP Human Resources has created a list of 150 villages with marginalised communities eligible to apply for calls targeting Roma integration. However, the selection of these villages seems quite peculiar, as towns such as Zilina have been selected. Located in the northwest, Zilina region has one of the lowest numbers of Roma population and above that, it is one of the biggest cities in Slovakia. Roma population is present mostly in rural areas in the east of the country. Many villages and smaller towns with Roma population were omitted from this list. No methodology on this selection was provided by the managing authority. As for the two analysed calls for proposal in Slovakia, Zilina has not been awarded any financial allocation.

The interviews with the managing authorities, third sector organisation and geodesk officers have revealed challenges in particular related to Roma integration in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The political situation in both countries, where poverty is stigmatised and both countries face anti-Roma movements, prevents local authorities from applying for the funding. In most cases mayors of municipalities are very reluctant to such calls, as they fear losing votes in the next elections. Very often the political situation in the countries has a big impact on calls of this type, sometimes leading to low number of applicants. Moreover, in Slovakia the municipalities lack needed human and financial resources for co-financing the projects and drafting proposals. The proposals require a lot of investments without any guarantee of gaining the allocations. There is a poor dissemination of information on the calls' technicalities with lack of technical support provided from the managing authorities. This problem was partially solved by establishing information centres, however, these are still located in the capital and not in the municipalities. The application process is too complicated and requires human resources small municipalities do not possess. As a result, many consultancies are benefiting from this situation in Slovakia, even though it should be the municipalities drafting the calls. In general, this is also a result of low quality of public procurement in Slovakia. It was suggested that to improve this situation, the Office of the Government for Roma Communities should be given more competences in managing the Priority axis 5 and 6 in Slovakia (devoted to Roma community). Comparing to the ministry, the Office some interviewees state that the Roma Communities has more knowledge and more human resources and experts to disseminate information and offer help to municipalities.

Contrary to the bad practices, many benefits of these calls were highlighted. For example, the Czech Republic welcomed the possibility to create new social enterprises and protected working environments, acknowledging their added value for the society.⁷⁷ Similarly, the call for housing in Poland was positively assessed as it allows renovation of housing that the municipalities would never be able to perform from their own finances.⁷⁸ Romania benefitted from the collaboration

76 Sprawozdanie roczne za rok 2016 z wdrażania Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego Województwa Warmińsko-Mazurskiego na lata 2014–2020, Available at: <http://rpo.warmia.mazury.pl/plik/6189/sprawozdanie-roczne-za-rok-2016-z-wdrazania-regionalnego-programu-operacyjnego-wojewodztwa-warmińsko-mazurskiego-na-lata-2014%E2%80%932020>

77 HN (2016), Kapacity už nestačí. Sociální podnikatelé shánějí pracovníky, available at: <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-65523340-kapacity-uz-nestaci-socialni-podnikatele-shanejji-pracovniky>

78 Onet (2017), Ruda Śląska: nowe mieszkania socjalne, Available at: <https://slask.onet.pl/ruda-slaska-nowe-mieszkania-socjalne/83fmp5p>

between local authorities which resulted in a construction of a new park and a shopping area.⁷⁹ Likewise, the impact of the call for proposal for health area in Romania was assessed positively.⁸⁰

79 Adevarul (2018), Municipiul Târgoviște va beneficia de un un parc nou, cu bibliotecă în aer liber. Cristian Stan: "zona degradată a orașului va fi transformată radical" Available at: http://adevarul.ro/locale/targoviste/municipiul-targoviste-beneficia-parc-nou-biblioteca-aer-liber-cristian-stanzona-degradata-orasului-transformata-radical-1_5a584a37df52022f756d2d8a/index.html

80 Obiektiv (2018), Dezbateri publică despre extinderea și dotarea cu echipamente medicale a ambulatoriului din structura Spitalului municipal Fetesti, Available at: <https://obiectiv.net/dezbateri-publica-despre-extinderea-si-dotarea-cu-echipamente-medicale-a-ambulatoriului-din-structura-spitalului-municipal-fetesti-44294.html/>

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Member States have addressed in the 2014-2020 programming period the subject of inclusive growth in their ERDF-co-financed (both mono and multi fund) OPs and the Partnership Agreements; to identify the main strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks in programming and implementation; and to formulate conclusions on how European cohesion policy should be adjusted in the future to better contribute to inclusive growth, to the promotion of social inclusion, equal opportunities and non-discrimination of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

ERDF actions under Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10, or the third investment priority under TO2 (2c "Strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health") were considered relevant for the topic.⁸¹

9.1. Conclusions

9.1.1. Programmes supporting inclusive growth, funding and institutional framework

Support for inclusive growth is the key area for ESF interventions, but it is, on average, only a smaller share of ERDF spending. The total funding allocation from ERDF for Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10, excluding cross-border and transnational programmes, is 20.4 billion EUR, 11% of all ERDF allocations (TO8: 2.9 billion EUR corresponding to 1.5% of ERDF contributions; TO9: 11.4 billion EUR to 6.1%; TO10: 6.6 billion EUR to 3.2%).

Denmark, Ireland, Finland and Luxembourg have not set aside any ERDF funding for promoting inclusive growth-related Thematic Objectives.

TO8 tends not to be supported from ESF. Only Hungary, Estonia and Lithuania have allocated significant amounts from their ERDF envelope to supporting employment-focussed actions, and 19 Member States have not allocated any ERDF budget to support TO8. There are, however, often actions even in these countries under TO9 (upgrading of derelict sites, local infrastructure and services) that will focus on increasing employment, but being more specifically targeted at deprived areas and groups most disadvantaged on the labour market.

TO9 has a much largest significance in ERDF allocations. The weight of this objective within their national envelope is the highest in Estonia (5.7% of total ERDF funding), Malta (6.7% of total ERDF funding), Slovakia (5.5% of total ERDF funding) and the Czech Republic (4.3% of total ERDF funding). All countries apart from Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Luxembourg have allocated ERDF financing to this objective.

TO10 is in between the other two objectives in terms of its significance in budgetary allocations, It is, on average, less generously funded from ERDF than TO9, but its level exceeds TO8 considerably. Austria, Cyprus, Germany,

⁸¹ OPs with research and innovation actions under Thematic Objective 1 connected to e-health were mapped, but these actions were ultimately not found to be sufficiently relevant, bringing the number of OPs with relevant actions down to 128 from the initial 138 OPs selected for mapping.

Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom have not allocated ERDF resources to TO10. On the other side of the spectrum, this objective plays an important role in the allocations of ERDF budgets in Estonia, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Malta.

In summary, Member States with a lower per capita GDP (and in less developed regions) tend to allocate a higher share of their available ERDF financing to TO9 and TO10, and richer countries tend to give it less weight, while there is no such association for the funding of TO8.⁸² An important question remaining is why certain Member States have not allocated ERDF funding to Thematic Objectives they otherwise pursue in their cohesion policy programmes (all three TOs are covered in each of the Member States, mostly by ESF, but also EAFRD or EMFF), although ERDF should be useful in complementing ESF funding (see the issue of complementarity below).

Inclusive growth is almost exclusively addressed by the regional OPs or the single national ERDF OP, covering all corresponding Thematic Objectives. Only 17 of the 138 OPs mapped were of a sectoral nature (this is mostly research and innovation; and/or education). In contrast, the other two main goals of Europe 2020 – smart and sustainable growth – are more often covered by sectoral OPs: apart from research and innovation, these include programmes specifically addressing transport infrastructure, or the environment.

More than half of the relevant Operational Programmes were multi-fund, supported from both the ERDF and ESF, often also involving the Youth Employment Initiative, and occasionally the Cohesion Fund. While in the preceding programming period interventions were delivered through mono-fund programmes, many Member States have made use of the new possibility to depart from this approach and combine the two funds within one OP. Out of the 138 ERDF-co-financed programmes in the scope of the study, 76 OPs were also funded from ESF (and YEI). Many inclusive growth-related actions require the involvement of both ERDF and ESF to support and complement each other. For instance, ERDF investments into local services accompany ESF measures for the activation of persons not in employment living in deprived neighbourhoods. In social housing or the fight against housing segregation, the lead role is typically assumed by ERDF, but the interventions are complemented by measures preparing and following-up the affected families, financed from ESF. According to the views of some Managing Authorities and policy ministries, the move towards multi-fund programmes raises the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of programme implementation and monitoring. Benefits include: the better harmonisation of call contents and deadlines; clearer communication to applicants and more meaningful dialogue with partners; tackling of technical problems with projects receiving funding from 'parallel' ERDF/ESF calls and monitoring these projects easier.

There are 12 countries which opted for a mono-fund approach and have not planned in ESF funding in any of their ERDF OPs addressing inclusive growth: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Croatia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania and the United Kingdom. However, there is usually a link in the ERDF OPs of these countries to one or more corresponding national or regional ESF OPs, for instance in the form of coordinated calls. This is the case in at least 6 of the above-mentioned countries: Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Romania,

⁸² This analysis could not be done for the inclusive-growth relevant part of TO2, as budgetary allocation data at an investment priority level was not available for most of the OPs.

Germany and Spain. The mapping did not identify concrete cooperation mechanisms with ESF OPs in Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta and the United Kingdom.

The institutional framework for the implementation of cohesion policy in the Member States can be either centralised, where the OPs are managed at a central ministry level (although subnational bodies may be involved as Intermediary Bodies with important implementation tasks); or decentralised, where regional authorities run all, or most of the programmes as Managing Authorities. From the 16 countries assessed in more detail in this study, the centralised group includes Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia (all Member States that joined the EU in 2004 or later); the decentralised group includes France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain (mostly old Member States with autonomous regions, or federal states). The framework in the Czech Republic is mostly centralised, although the Prague Growth Pole OP is managed by the city itself, in collaboration with the ministry responsible for regional development.

9.1.2. *Logic of intervention for inclusive growth*

The linkage between needs expressed in the strategy section and the actions programmed is not very strong. Due to the limited resources allocated from ERDF to inclusive growth, there are significant discrepancies between the number of OPs that address certain topics as 'needs' and as 'actions'. While there are obviously policies and strategies behind the actions, this finding suggests that those strategies are often not underpinned in sufficient depth in the OPs' strategy section itself.

When turning to the analysis of the potential of ERDF in supporting inclusive growth, it emerges that inclusive growth considerations only play a relatively minor role under TO2. In addition, needs under TO2 are mostly related to the general population. On the contrary the thematic Objective 9 is the most often addressed objective within the needs. The most prevalent need associated with TO8 is improving employability of disadvantaged groups and the long-term unemployed (LTU): Although, when looking at investments, actions are only programmed under ESF and YEI, or mentioned only as a strategic background to TO9 and TO10. More details about the complementarity between ESF and ERDF should be indicated in the OPs' strategies.

Transition and less developed regions that face significant problems of social exclusion, focus on the need of providing accommodation, local infrastructure and services in deprived communities and fighting housing segregation; promoting social integration of vulnerable and marginalised group is the most mentioned need under TO9. Similarly, transition and lagging- regions, more often identify the need to replace institutional care with community-based services. However, the degree of correspondence between needs and action in replacing institutional care with community-based services is low: 25 OPs have included actions concerning this need, but the mapping of their intervention strategy has found only 7 OPs where the need was specified. Similarly, there is a significant level of discrepancy in relation to interventions in the social economy.

Under the last Thematic Objective relevant to inclusive growth, TO10, the type of action concerning investments to increase the availability of early childhood education and care facilities and education institutions. Whilst 49 OPs contain this type of action, only 28 OPs have identified the need to upgrade infrastructure for

education and training. This may be partly explained by the fact that several of these actions are classified in the OPs under TO8.

Overall, it emerges that countries and regions have sometimes limited abilities in identifying and monitoring new and emerging societal challenges, translated in needs. At the same time the priorities and the actions suggested from the EU level are perhaps too advanced.

The analysis of the link between the OPs strategies and other strategies reveals that several, but not all of the OPs refer to relevant Europe 2020 headline targets when describing their challenges, needs and strategies. These references are sometimes very concrete, explaining that the OP will contribute to the achievement of a certain target, but sometimes, on the contrary, they remain vague in a number of OPs.

Links with employment and social inclusion relevant Country Specific Recommendations have been explicitly mentioned in a minority of OPs. This is partly explained by the fact that a total of five countries had not received CSRs in 2013. A number of Member States refer to the recommendations in all of their relevant OPs: Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands – typically national OPs. The coverage of CSRs in the OPs is weaker in France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain – with several of the OPs not covering CSRs because these are OPs implemented at regional level.

Another possible explanation for the low percentages of CSR coverage is the thematic concentration. The results of a previous study⁸³ show a substantial degree of concentration of ERDF on Thematic Objectives 1, 3 and 4. Altogether, 56% of ERDF budget was allocated to these TOs which received the highest funding. This situation leads to smaller presence of recommendations linked to inclusive growth.

9.1.3. *Territorial strategies for inclusive growth*

Member States use the available three main types of integrated territorial strategies for implementation – Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) – to varying degrees.

As for CLLD, within the 138 OPs under this study's scope, CLLD is used in 29, or in 21% of cases. Four large countries with regional OPs - Spain, Germany, Italy and Poland - make only limited use of it in their inclusive growth relevant ERDF co-financed OPs, while in Portugal and Greece, CLLD has an important presence in the regional OPs. Many smaller countries have implemented CLLD through national OPs, while France, Croatia and Latvia have not adopted CLLD strategies in any of their OPs mapped for this study.

Community-Led Local Development priority axes tend to focus on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty (TO9) and to be financed by a combination of

83 European Commission, 2017. "The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds", p. 12

ERDF and ESF (45% of cases where CLLD exists), although a considerable number of them (38% of cases) are solely funded by the ERDF.

The low take up level of CLLD seems to be due to some practical problems concerning the long and complex nature of its setup and operations. In addition, most respondents did not consider the legal and guidance documents concerning CLLD useful. These practical implementation issues were mentioned as the main reason why the instrument is not often used. This is in line with another European Commission's report⁸⁴, which states that the most frequent challenges linked to CLLD are related to programming – the identification of areas and/or challenges to be tackled with the help of CLLD.

Integrated Sustainable Urban Development strategies are more frequently used in the OPs reviewed than the two other territorial instruments, with 40% of the OPs within scope making use of it. In the majority (56%) of cases, the ERDF is coupled with the ESF to deliver this strategy, even though a considerable number of OPs (38% of those using SUD) rely solely on the ERDF. Very few OPs (3, or 5% of those using SUD) rely only on the ESF to deliver SUD in the context of inclusive growth.

SUD is included in inclusive growth relevant OPs co-financed from ERDF in almost all the Member States, with the exception of Croatia. In France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal and the Czech Republic, all or the majority of the relevant OPs include SUD. In a second group of countries – Spain, Bulgaria, Latvia and Hungary – SUD plays a minor role, being included in only one (national) OP each. In these countries a common pattern in the use of SUD is difficult to identify, although it seems that the main focus of SUD is the renovation of social infrastructures

Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) other than SUD are present in many countries' OPs (with the exception of Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Croatia and Estonia which do not include ITI in any of their OPs). Most actions target urban areas and focus on education, demography, access to public and health services, and infrastructure to address, for instance, inadequate infrastructural connectivity, unemployment and low inactivity due to inadequate qualifications, or demographic challenges such as ageing and depopulation. In many cases the ITI actions are designed to complement the Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies laid out in the previous chapter. A strong focus of many countries' actions lies either on improving education infrastructure and outcome or on tackling demographic challenges.

Most Member States have included **specific approaches for geographical areas most affected by poverty or social exclusion**. Lithuania and Latvia are the only countries that do not apply any specific approaches in their OPs in scope. From the countries with a large number of OPs, Greece, Poland, France, Spain and Italy include specific approaches in a majority of their OPs, while in Italy and Germany has far less OPs in relative terms that contain such specific approaches. The smaller countries assessed are similar to the first group, with a significant presence of specific approaches.

⁸⁴ European Commission (2016), The use of new provisions during the programming phase of the European Structural and Investment Funds, p. 115

9.1.4. *Application of the relevant horizontal principles*

The relevant horizontal principles investigated in the study were promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination and accessibility.

ERDF can have an important role in promoting both of these in a wide number of intervention areas in the Operational Programmes concerned. Firstly, it can support measures directly targeting disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups: for example, via measures supporting business start-ups and entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups. Secondly, it can also indirectly tackle these challenges, for example by upgrading public healthcare and social services, benefitting especially vulnerable groups who are most in need of such services and who are less likely to be able to afford private care.

All the OPs declare to observe the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, this being also enshrined in generic national legislation, and usually provide indications on rules and guidelines in the application of these principles and underline potential synergies with the ESF and national strategies. The specific content, the explicitly mentioned disadvantaged groups, and the level of detail on how the principle will be implemented differ.

A number of critical points emerged from the interviews and analysis that have impacts on the effectiveness of ERDF's contributions to these horizontal principles:

- The gap between formal statements and actual implementation. A lack of clear indications in many of the OPs on how to apply the principles is likely to reduce the potential effects of the provisions adopted in the programming phases.
- The difficulty in mainstreaming equal opportunities and gender equality principles into all ERDF intervention areas. The areas mainly addressed concern social services and their accessibility. Little attention is given to supporting research and businesses in the development and provision of products and services improving the quality of life of disadvantaged groups; or to address the needs of such groups in facilities serving cultural and tourism purposes and related services.
- The difficulty to address forms of discrimination where prejudices are still strong, for instance discrimination on grounds of religion or on sexual orientation. Little experience and knowledge exists to date as to how to implement them in the framework of ERDF;
- **The difficulty to move from formal statements to actual implementation** is likely to reduce the potential effects of the provisions adopted in the programming phases. While usually a large number of forms of discrimination and disadvantaged groups are mentioned in the sections on horizontal principles in the PAs and OPs, these same groups are hardly mentioned in the presentation of actual actions and/or no systematic arrangement is identified on how to apply these principles.
- **The difficulty to actively involve representatives of the relevant discriminated groups in the programmes' design and implementation**, which may reduce the effectiveness of the implemented actions in addressing the needs of the marginalised groups.

There are initiatives in certain Member States to improve the application and mainstreaming of these horizontal principles via knowledge sharing, training and general awareness raising. Sometimes support to capacity building is provided by non-governmental stakeholders (as for example the association of disabled people). An example can be found in Greece where the Greek National Confederation of Disabled Persons (NCDP) supported the MAs on understanding how the accessibility for persons with disabilities can be addressed via the ESI Funds. In particular the development of a toolkit on the implementation and mainstreaming of horizontal principles and ex-ante conditionalities provides guidance on possible targeted actions for persons with disabilities to be included in the OPs.⁸⁵ The NCDP also organised training of all their members to improve their contribution in Monitoring Committees, and it is planning to prepare a Manual (in GR & EN) on how to engage in monitoring and implementation of ESIFs.⁸⁶

9.1.5. *Programming and negotiation of inclusive growth*

Programming process

The programming process has changed as compared to the previous period significantly. A number of new provisions were formulated by the Commission, such as a new framework for thematic concentration, the Partnership Agreements, and ex-ante conditionalities.

The provisions – general and inclusive growth specific – are perceived by Managing Authorities as useful. However, their consideration in programming and their implementation was sometimes coupled with difficulties. The programming of interventions in certain healthcare sectors, and the shift to community-based social services particularly appear as problematic. Some MAs criticised the limited flexibility of the EC's provisions and positions on programme content. The relevant Commission guidelines present model solutions for the delivery of social services but they are not always suitable or feasible in the national, regional and local context.

The fact that there are requirements for strong links to policies or strategic frameworks – also ex-ante conditionalities – has been generally appreciated by MAs for all specific areas within inclusive growth. However, the ex-ante conditionalities have created some delays at national and regional level in several Member States, and are considered to be a major cause of delays of implementation.

It is important to mention that inclusive growth is not always a top priority for MAs, and interviews reported some difficulties in having a clear overall vision. MAs point that the concentration of ERDF funding on the key drivers for competitiveness under Thematic Objectives 1-4, as well as necessary investments to promote sustainability limited the scope of activities that could be included under TO 8, 9 and 10.

While inclusive growth oriented measures have a low weight in many of the ERDF-co-financed OPs, and are outside the main focus of the Managing Authority, it is acknowledged by them that ERDF brings important added value in complementing

85 Good practice reported in the EDF Position on 6th Cohesion Policy Report of November 2014, available at: <http://www.edf-feph.org/structural-funds>)

86 Ibidem.

ESF. It is also clear, however, that to achieve this, the synergies with ESF have to be maximised, which requires broad coordination activities and the presence of experienced ERDF and ESF officers present during the whole programming period as members of the planning units or employees of the Managing Authorities. The integration between ESF and ERDF measures is especially problematic for the MAs, requiring special know-how and producing additional workload.

The separation of interventions into thematic objectives, investment priorities, as well as the strict mandatory structure of the OPs made a comprehensive and holistic strategic planning approach to some extent more challenging. The separation makes it in the general case very difficult to undertake complex projects responding to multiple needs of target groups.

MAs were generally satisfied by the support provided by the Commission during the design of the programme, especially when overcoming problems on more complex issues, such as for example the definition of results indicators.

The guidance documents produced by the Commission were overall helpful, although they were considered sometimes too technical and in need of some simplifications. On the other hand, there were stakeholders who thought that there is too much information and specific guidance documents around, leading to an information overflow. MAs and partners may not be able to read and digest all of them. Furthermore, MAs mentioned the delays in having those guidelines available as a factor preventing their full exploitation.

Partnership arrangements

The involvement of partners in the elaboration and implementation of programmes has a long history, and the general provisions have not changed. Partners have been typically involved via a combination of several methods: generic online public consultations on draft versions of the programme; in-depth consultations with key organisations; consultations on underlying national or regional strategies; and on sub-areas and past interventions. Consultations tended to be deeper in countries with more established partnership and co-decision mechanisms and more prepared partners.

There was a large emphasis on open online consultations. This had the advantage that the consultation reached a broad group of stakeholders, but steering and facilitation was missing. Deeper consultations on the content of the OPs usually involved the traditional partners of the ministries (regions, counties, municipalities; social partners; NGOs). As the weight of inclusive growth was usually low in the OPs, there was no specific focus on the subject, unless a specific thematic working group was created for this purpose (for instance in Latvia).

The Monitoring Committees usually include associations of large and small municipalities and organisations representing the interests of various inclusive growth-related target groups (women, disabled persons, the elderly). This list may be complemented with organisations representing Roma and migrant groups, or other specific vulnerable groups (people with mental health problems, children).

Certain social partners are very active and well prepared, with a lot of experience with ESIF, but there are a number of important target groups which do not have sufficiently prepared representations and hence cannot add the same value to the consultations.

Organisations consulted on the draft programme and calls are often applicants and beneficiaries themselves. There is a lack of independent umbrella organisations for all the relevant target groups, who could provide a good representation of the vulnerable groups, free from vested interests.

The implementation of the partnership principle in programming and implementation was assessed as more or less satisfactory by interviewees. Partner inputs were given with regard to specific needs, coherence issues, and possible implementation bottlenecks; although according to Polish views the inputs may have been marginal only, considering the steer from the Commission (and the Partnership Agreement). The work of the social inclusion subcommittees of the Monitoring Committees has been assessed as particularly useful.

Negotiations

In Managing Authorities' feedback on the negotiation process, problematic issues highlighted concerned primarily the definition of result indicators; defining types of investments to support; and the implementation of ITI and CLLD. MAs from less developed and in transition regions encountering problems in significantly larger proportions than authorities in more developed regions.

In many cases the approach followed by Commission officers during the negotiation phase was perceived as being too formalistic, leading to difficulties in finding agreement. A few MAs reported sudden halts in the negotiation and a change of views from the side of the Commission, causing delays in the process.

The support of the Commission during the negotiations was found to be rather helpful. However, some MAs complained about the lack of flexibility and room for maneuvering during the negotiations, for example in the allocation to different TOs and on the definition of marginalised population. Considerable focus was put on the Roma at the expense of other marginalised communities, even in regions where their weight or situation did not necessarily warrant this level of attention. A common indication by several respondents was a lack of understanding of the local specificities and needs by the Commission officers.

First experience with implementation

Implementation is ongoing in all countries, but with some initial delays caused by protracted programming and negotiations phases, and the time need to fulfil ex-ante conditionalities. In most of the OPs who filled in the online questionnaire the activities related to inclusive growth had already begun, not only with publication of the calls and selection of the projects but, in the vast majority of cases, already with the implementation of selected projects.

The survey suggests that most MAs did not have difficulties with the interpretation and implementation of specific content related new provisions. Where this was the case, however, the result indicators were mentioned as the most difficult element to apply and interpret.

According to the MAs, project promoters generally had no difficulties in complying with the new content specific elements. The most cited problems are linked to the lack of technical expertise or resources to comply with the new provisions. These are especially burdensome for small project promoters. Typical beneficiaries under inclusive growth are municipalities and local civil society organisations with rather limited capacity and experience (especially in Eastern and Central European

countries). Representatives of vulnerable groups at the national level have more expertise and are more active in responding to calls.

9.2. Recommendations

The list of recommendations is as follows:

9.2.1. Programmes and logic of intervention for inclusive growth

1. Given that inclusive growth issues are relevant but not a priority in ERDF OPs, it is recommended to concentrate resources on a small number of investment priorities related to inclusive growth, with a well-defined and robust logic of intervention.
2. A good intervention logic should ensure that the funds deployed and the actions put in place address the identified needs in the most relevant way. Based on the analysis it emerges that countries, regions and local authorities need to improve the identification of needs and challenges in their territories as regard to Inclusive growth. Likewise, actions need to follow the needs consistently.
3. Following the logic of a better alignment between needs and actions the identified investments should be tailored made to the particular territory characteristics.
4. The principle of concentration turns to be a factor that limits the alignment between needs and actions related to Inclusive growth. The thematic concentration on TOs 1,2, 3 and 4 limits the possibility to invest in TOs 8,9 and 10. In order to address inclusive growth issues, in compliance with the concentration principle, it is recommended to address inclusive growth also through actions under TOs 1, 2 and 3. These thematic objectives can offer for example possible rooms for exploiting the potential of ICT to enhance accessibility to public services for vulnerable groups.
5. Countries, regions and local authorities should also improve their ability to monitor and to qualitatively and quantitatively measure the achievement of their targets in the Inclusive growth area. In the next programming period an obligation to indicate in the OPs the results indicators should be included in the regulation.

9.2.2. Territorial strategy for inclusive growth

6. The territorial instruments ITI, which allows the combination of funding, and CLLD, which includes local actors, have been applied only to a limited extent because these instruments require a complex procedure to be set. It is therefore suggested to reduce the red tape associated with the application of these instruments and to provide training and technical assistance instruments for local actors for the implementation of these instruments.
7. The analysis has revealed that the implementation of the SUD strategies seems more relevant than other territorial instruments for programming inclusive growth actions. It is therefore recommended - especially for the EU 15 - to strengthen the development of urban development strategies linked to inclusive growth.

9.2.3. *Application of the relevant horizontal principles*

8. The analysis highlights that ERDF stakeholders are facing some challenges in the full application of the horizontal principles. It is suggested to provide support to Managing Authorities on how to implement relevant horizontal principles in the preparation of the calls, project selection, and control and monitoring in all the Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities covered by ERDF and ESF.
9. There is need to build institutional capacities to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination under ERDF by supporting Managing Authorities and intermediate bodies in the preparation of programmes and calls especially at regional level through: the use of Technical Assistance, the development of guidance tools, the exchange of knowledge and practices and the promotion of awareness raising measures on the importance of mainstreaming the horizontal principles in all the ERDF intervention fields for inclusive growth.
10. Technical assistance should also be provided to ERDF beneficiaries on how to enhance and improve the application of the horizontal principles in projects' implementation throughout the project life cycle.
11. At the same time, Managing Authorities and other involved bodies should implement specific mechanism for ensuring compliance of *all* programmes and projects with the horizontal principles.
12. Organisations representing the relevant discriminated groups should be more involved in the programmes' design and implementation, in order to guarantee a better alignment between the implemented actions and the needs of the discriminated groups.
13. Ex ante conditionalities on the horizontal principles and the coordination with national strategies is important and should be kept also in the coming programming period. Nonetheless, some safeguards should be put in place when there is lack of commitment towards the implementation of measures addressing forms of discrimination where prejudices are still strong, as in the case of ethnic minorities such as Roma.

9.2.4. *Programming and negotiation of inclusive growth*

14. The implementation of provisions related to certain elements of health, education and Roma inclusion was perceived as being the most difficult. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen the support of the Commission to MA regarding the alignment between the programme interventions and the national specific prioritization and strategies in these areas. Moreover, a detailed needs assessment on the ground is necessary including demographic data, possible stratification of population and epidemiological analysis. To do such a need assessment the national capacities should be increased.
15. ERDF investments should be combined with ESF interventions in order to exploit synergies and maximise the ERDF added value for example in the fields of education, training and urban development strategies. Synergies however shall be promoted and sustained, for example by ensuring a stricter dialogue and alignment between EMPL and REGIO on the support of multi-fund OPs as well as facilitating the combined use of funds. It is recommended to develop guidance, knowledge sharing and peer learning actions on how to best address the complementarity of ERDF and ESF in programming but also programme implementation (e.g. harmonising calls and deadlines, selection and implementation of projects that rely on funding from parallel ERDF/ESF calls, monitoring of projects, etc.).
16. In the programming and negotiation process, a more constructive interaction between the Commission and the MAs is recommended. In particular the former shall adopt a less formalistic approach to programmes requirements. MAs, on the other side, shall develop a strategic framework and aligning it with the programmes.
17. In some cases, guidance fiches are too dense or too extended or not aligned with the programming time. Therefore, the Commission should simplify the guidance language and improve the time alignment between the issuance of the guidance and the start of the programming period.
18. Partnership consultations should be thoroughly prepared and accompanied, where needed, by a briefing of social partners.

10. ANNEX

10.1. Questionnaires

10.1.1. *Questionnaires for Policy Ministries*

INTERVIEW GUIDE – POLICY MINISTRY

1. **Name** of respondent, organisation/department, position
2. **Role** of respondent in programming, negotiations, implementation

PROGRAMMING

3. In what role is your ministry involved in the programming process of the OP?
4. What added value does the ERDF bring in reaching inclusive growth objectives above the activities co-funded from the ESF?
5. Which advantages of the CPR were experienced in designing inclusive growth measures? Were these due to synergies with other measures?
6. What were the main hurdles your ministry experienced in putting forward your suggestions for inclusive growth priorities?
7. Did you use European Commission or external assistance during the programming process? If yes, through which channels, and how useful did you find it?
8. Are any development needs in connection with inclusive growth which should be covered, but are currently not covered by the programme(s) (i.e. a case for programme modification)?

NEGOTIATION

10. How were you involved in the negotiation process of the OP?
11. Are there any national/regional strategies pertaining to inclusive growth that were used as support for the negotiations?
12. Were specific target groups (marginalised groups, migrants or refugees, etc) prioritised in the negotiation process of inclusive growth provisions? If yes, how were these chosen?
14. Were there discussions on how to achieve synergies or complementarities between national and ESIF support for inclusive growth? If yes, what type of integrated approaches were agreed upon?
15. What were the main advantages of the new regulation in allowing you to streamline the negotiations on inclusive growth priorities between ESI Funds or other national programmes?
16. In your view, how important was the input of private and third party partners in developing the OP's strategy for inclusive growth?

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

17. In what role is your ministry involved in the implementation process of the OP?

18. Was your ministry consulted in launching calls for proposals or guidance documents to final beneficiaries concerning inclusive growth actions? If yes, how did you contribute?

10.1.2. Questionnaires for Managing authorities

INTERVIEW GUIDE - MANAGING AUTHORITIES

1. **Name** of respondent, organisation/department, position
2. **Role** of respondent in programming, negotiations, implementation

PROGRAMMING

3. Which national authorities were in leading roles in relation to programming inclusive growth in your OP (inputs and coordination)? Were there any strong or weak points in their collaboration?
4. Which of the **new regulatory provisions** concerning inclusive growth made a difference – as improvement or limitation – in how inclusive growth is programmed into the OP and why?
5. Which of the new regulatory provisions concerning inclusive growth were difficult or burdensome to implement and why?
6. What are the effects of the current regulatory framework **for mixing ESF and ERDF co-financing** for inclusive growth measures on the programming process? What are its strengths and weaknesses?
7. What type of system does the OP have in place to safeguard **horizontal principles**?

GUIDANCE

8. What were the strong and weak points of DG REGIO's guidance documents?
9. What were the strong and weak points of the **help given by the Commission**?

PARTNERSHIPS

10. To what extent did **consultations with social partners** influence how inclusive growth has been programmed into the OP? What were the strong and weak points of the partnership process in this regard?
11. Was there cooperation during programming with stakeholders (public or private) in neighbouring regions/countries facing the same problems related to inclusive growth? If yes, how was it conducted, and how useful was it?

NEGOTIATION PROCESS

12. What elements were difficult to agree on with regard to inclusive growth in the **negotiations**? How did the positions of national authorities and the Commission diverge and how were the disagreements resolved (if at all)?

IMPLEMENTATION

14. Which calls for proposals have already been launched, for which activities have

projects already been selected and launched?

15. Where **have difficulties been experienced with applying the new elements in the calls and why**? How did you discuss and resolve problems with national stakeholders and the Commission (if at all)?

16. Where did project promoters have problems with complying with the new elements and why? How could these problems be mitigated?

17. How are social partners involved in the implementation and **monitoring activities** for the measures concerning inclusive growth (the OP Monitoring Committee and other solutions)? How do they contribute?

18. Was there final beneficiary guidance created specifically for inclusive growth measures? If so, which and why?

19. Were there any **first or second-level intermediate bodies** appointed due to their knowledge of one/several inclusive growth measures?

20. What are the main challenges in monitoring and reporting multi-fund measures? Did the new regulatory framework have an effect on this?

CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

General progress

21. Which calls have been published? Would be helpful to get a list, but I assume they are all on a website. If this website is not known yet, MA should identify it.

22. Is progress in publishing the calls good and as planned? Are there any delays?

Content of calls

23. What external stakeholders (especially groups representing vulnerable groups and women) were involved in co-designing the calls? What was their role?

24. Were there any deviations from the original OP content, its approach or emphases, when designing the calls? If yes, what were these and why?

25. Were there any discussions around the content of calls with the Commission (policy content, concrete requirements etc.)? Or disagreements within the country or region?

Reception and views

26. How were the calls received by applicants? Did they have any problems with them?

27. How satisfied are you with the calls as they are? Do you plan to make amendments in the future?

10.1.3. Questionnaires for Third Sector Organisations

INTERVIEW GUIDE – THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

1. **Name** of respondent, organisation/department, position
2. **Organisation**
 1. To what extent were you involved in the programming of ERDF co-funded Operational Programmes and/or the Partnership Agreement in your country, representing the needs of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other?
 2. Were you involved in designing specific actions under the Operational Programmes that target the needs of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other? Were you involved in designing more general issues such as preventing discrimination during implementation?
 3. What type of ERDF co-financed measures target persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other in your country? If they target certain sub-groups, please mention them.
 4. Do you have any involvement in designing calls for proposals, and/or selecting individual projects to be financed?
 5. To what extent are you involved in implementing, monitoring or evaluating specific targeted measures (if any) and what is your role in this process?
 6. What is the current implementation status of these specific targeted measures? How satisfied are you with progress?
 7. Do the targeted beneficiaries consider the application process and implementation requirements (including administrative) feasible? Are they provided any assistance to fulfil them (e.g. free advice from national/regional authorities, workshops, easy-to-read forms, financial assistance, etc)?
 8. Do you think the approach adopted in your country for using ERDF for supporting the inclusion of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other is adequate? Or do you think it should have been programmed differently? Should calls for proposals be designed differently?
 9. Do you have any more comments on how ERDF could contribute more in the future to the objective of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other inclusion in your country?
 10. To what extent were you involved in the programming of ERDF co-funded Operational Programmes and/or the Partnership Agreement in your country, representing the needs of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other?
 11. Were you involved in designing specific actions under the Operational Programmes that target the needs of persons with

disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other? Were you involved in designing more general issues such as preventing discrimination during implementation?

12. What type of ERDF co-financed measures target persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other in your country? If they target certain sub-groups, please mention them.
13. Do you have any involvement in designing calls for proposals, and/or selecting individual projects to be financed?
14. To what extent are you involved in implementing, monitoring or evaluating specific targeted measures (if any) and what is your role in this process?
15. What is the current implementation status of these specific targeted measures? How satisfied are you with progress?
16. Do the targeted beneficiaries consider the application process and implementation requirements (including administrative) feasible? Are they provided any assistance to fulfil them (e.g. free advice from national/regional authorities, workshops, easy-to-read forms, financial assistance, etc)?
17. Do you think the approach adopted in your country for using ERDF for supporting the inclusion of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other is adequate? Or do you think it should have been programmed differently? Should calls for proposals be designed differently?
18. Do you have any more comments on how ERDF could contribute more in the future to the objective of persons with disabilities/Roma/Women/Migrants/Other inclusion in your country?

10.1.4. Questionnaires for European Commission desk officers

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DG REGIO DESK OFFICERS

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The overall purpose of this study is to develop an evidence-base on how the regulatory provisions relating to inclusive growth have been incorporated in the programmes for the 2014-2020 period (for ERDF) and how the intervention logic was taken up.

With the Europe 2020 strategy, inclusive growth got a more prominent place as it became one of its three main pillars. Its objective is to foster a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. Actions under this priority aim at modernising and strengthening employment, education and training policies and social protection systems by increasing labour participation and reducing structural unemployment, as well as raising corporate social responsibility among the business community. Access to affordable and quality childcare facilities and care for other dependents is essential in this respect as it is a prerequisite for increasing labour market participation and participation in training to adapt to new conditions and enable potential career shifts.

Member States are asked to do major efforts in order to combat poverty and social exclusion and reduce health inequalities. Equally important is promoting a healthy and active ageing population to allow for social cohesion and higher productivity. European regional policy is an important player in the field of inclusive growth. The European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) has traditionally invested in fields of social inclusion such as for example education and health infrastructure in particular in convergence regions. Approximately EUR 21,5 billion from the ERDF are allocated to inclusive growth comprising education, healthcare, childcare, housing and other social infrastructure for the programming period 2014-2020.

Experience shows that Member States and regions implement inclusive growth in very different ways and that they allocated different shares of ERDF support to this policy field in addition to setting specific result indicators adapted to their needs and policy choices. The findings will feed into further reflections on the future of European regional policy. It may also contribute to improving the implementation of inclusive growth in the 2014-2020 programmes.

Entity/unit (DG REGIO country desk):		Date:	
Interviewee:		Role in helping MS in programming:	
Email Address		Telephone number	

PROGRAMMING INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND COMMISSION GUIDANCE

1. Which of the new regulatory provisions concerning inclusive growth were difficult or burdensome to meet during programming by the Member State you are responsible for, and why?
 - Thematic concentration of funds to 11 thematic objectives
 - Stronger alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy and Country Specific Recommendations
 - Result-orientation (focus on results to be achieved at the level of investment priorities)
 - Social inclusion included as a common horizontal principle
 - Implementing integrated approaches to territorial development (CLLD, ITI, SUD, other)
 - Ex-ante conditionalities (social inclusion-related ones)
2. How was formal and informal Commission guidance to the Member State you are responsible for concerning the programming of inclusive growth in ERDF formulated (esp. with regard to policy dossiers of DG EMPL and DG JUST)?
3. Were there any difficulties in finding a common position within the Commission, in speaking with one voice?
4. What were the strong and weak points of the help given by the Commission during programming? How could such (formal and informal) help be improved in the future?
5. How well did national authorities and social partners collaborate in relation to programming inclusive growth in the MS? Were there any strong or weak points in their collaboration?
6. What issues in relation to ERDF support to inclusive growth (or relevant implementation issues) were explicitly addressed by the Commission during programming? What were the problems perceived and were these satisfactorily addressed by the Member State you are responsible for?

NOTE: Important topics may include:

Health:

- Linking health infrastructure actions to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health
- Consistency with the transformation of the health system (health reform)
- Balance between institutional and community-based health services
- Link to frameworks like de-institutionalization or national poverty reduction
- Link to legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Needs assessment of target groups

Education:

- Concentration on areas within the overall strategy allowing for measurable impact and added value
- Link to strategic policy frameworks to reduce early school leaving; to increase tertiary education attainment, quality and efficiency; for lifelong

- learning; for increasing the quality and efficiency of vocational education and training (VET) systems
 - Segregation in education cannot be financed by ERDF
- Roma inclusion:
- Link to National Roma Integration Strategy and any other relevant strategy framework; relevance to structural reforms
 - Prevention of segregation, physical isolation of Roma in educational and housing facilities
 - Identification of disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods
 - Involvement of relevant stakeholders
- Gender equality:
- Gender equality as a mainstreamed horizontal principle
 - Gender disaggregated analysis where appropriate
- Accessibility:
- Actions to ensure accessibility
- Addressing demographic change:
- Inclusion of all age groups
 - Identification of measures to support demographic renewal

NEGOTIATION PROCESS

7. What elements were difficult to agree on with regard to ERDF support to inclusive growth during the negotiations? How did the positions of national authorities and the Commission diverge and how were the disagreements resolved (if at all)?
8. What were the strong and weak points of the negotiation process (e.g. scheduling and available time in general, the actors involved, programming bodies' actual leverage over national policies and strategies)? How could the negotiation process improved in the future?
9. Are there any **potential weaknesses/risks left** in the approved programmes in relation to:
 - ERDF support to inclusive growth (e.g.: choice and relative weight of investment priorities, content of actions planned, target groups addressed, synergies between OPs or priority axes...); or
 - relevant implementation mechanisms (e.g: partnership, project selection methods, mixing ERDF and ESF...)?
10. Are there any **strong points** in the programmes that could serve as good practice examples?

IMPLEMENTATION

11. Are there any **difficulties or problems** perceived by DG EMPL with how ERDF-cofunded inclusive growth actions are now implemented in the Member State?
E.g.:

- the objectives and eligibility/selection criteria in individual calls,
- ERDF and ESF coordination,
- monitoring multi-fund measures,
- involvement of social partners in designing calls and monitoring

12. Are there difficulties especially with applying the new regulatory provisions during the implementation phase in connection with inclusive growth topics?

13. Is there any discussion with the Member State you are responsible for about these problematic issues (if any)? If yes, how is this conducted and what outcomes may be expected?

14. How could the Commission's role in supporting optimal implementation of inclusive growth be improved in the future?

15. Do you have any other comment or suggestion?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DG EMPL DESK OFFICERS

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The overall purpose of this study is to develop an evidence-base on how the regulatory provisions relating to inclusive growth have been incorporated in the programmes for the 2014-2020 period (for ERDF) and how the intervention logic was taken up.

With the Europe 2020 strategy, inclusive growth got a more prominent place as it became one of its three main pillars. Its objective is to foster a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. Actions under this priority aim at modernising and strengthening employment, education and training policies and social protection systems by increasing labour participation and reducing structural unemployment, as well as raising corporate social responsibility among the business community. Access to affordable and quality childcare facilities and care for other dependents is essential in this respect as it is a prerequisite for increasing labour market participation and participation in training to adapt to new conditions and enable potential career shifts.

Member States are asked to do major efforts in order to combat poverty and social exclusion and reduce health inequalities. Equally important is promoting a healthy and active ageing population to allow for social cohesion and higher productivity. European regional policy is an important player in the field of inclusive growth. The European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF) has traditionally invested in fields of social inclusion such as for example education and health infrastructure in particular in convergence regions. Approximately EUR 21,5 billion from the ERDF are allocated to inclusive growth comprising education, healthcare, childcare, housing and other social infrastructure for the programming period 2014-2020.

Experience shows that Member States and regions implement inclusive growth in

very different ways and that they allocated different shares of ERDF support to this policy field in addition to setting specific result indicators adapted to their needs and policy choices. The findings will feed into further reflections on the future of European regional policy. It may also contribute to improving the implementation of inclusive growth in the 2014-2020 programmes.

Entity/unit (DG EMPL country desk):		Date:	
Interviewee:		Role in helping MS in programming:	
Email Address		Telephone number	

(NOTE: The study focuses on ERDF support to inclusive growth; but it is essential to explore coordination and synergies with ESF, and the connection with the policy dossiers led by DG EMPL)

PROGRAMMING INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND COMMISSION GUIDANCE

16. From the point of view of DG EMPL, how successful or unsuccessful were the following elements ensured in the programmes of the Member State you are responsible for?
17. Complementarity of ESF and ERDF funding (concerning inclusive growth)
18. Strong alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy and relevant Country Specific Recommendations (concerning inclusive growth)
19. The use of relevant ex-ante conditionalities (concerning inclusive growth)
20. How did DG EMPL contribute to giving **formal and informal Commission guidance** to the Member State you are responsible for concerning the programming of inclusive growth in ERDF formulated? What was the level of DG EMPL's leverage in conveying its policy messages?

Note: this refers to country-specific opinions and informal comments, not the general guidance documents.

21. Were there any difficulties in finding a common position with the Commission, in **speaking with one voice**?
22. What were the **strong and weak points of the help** given by the Commission during programming? How could such (formal and informal) help be improved in the future?
23. What **issues in relation to ERDF support to inclusive growth** (or relevant implementation issues) were explicitly addressed by the Commission during

programming? What were the problems perceived by DG EMPL and were these satisfactorily addressed by the Member State you are responsible for?

NOTE: Important topics may include:

Health:

- Linking health infrastructure actions to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health
- Consistency with the transformation of the health system (health reform)
- Balance between institutional and community-based health services
- Link to frameworks like de-institutionalization or national poverty reduction
- Link to legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Needs assessment of target groups

Education:

- Concentration on areas within the overall strategy allowing for measurable impact and added value
- Link to strategic policy frameworks to reduce early school leaving; to increase tertiary education attainment, quality and efficiency; for lifelong learning; for increasing the quality and efficiency of vocational education and training (VET) systems
- Segregation in education cannot be financed by ERDF

Roma inclusion:

- Link to National Roma Integration Strategy and any other relevant strategy framework; relevance to structural reforms
- Prevention of segregation, physical isolation of Roma in educational and housing facilities
- Identification of disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders

Gender equality:

- Gender equality as a mainstreamed horizontal principle
- Gender disaggregated analysis where appropriate

Accessibility:

- Actions to ensure accessibility

Addressing demographic change:

- Inclusion of all age groups
- Identification of measures to support demographic renewal

NEGOTIATION PROCESS

24. To what extent did DG EMPL contribute to the negotiations with regard to ERDF support to inclusive growth? Did DG EMPL have sufficient leverage? How did the positions of national authorities and the Commission diverge and how were the disagreements resolved (if at all)?

25. What were the **strong and weak points of the negotiation process** (e.g. scheduling and available time in general, the actors involved, programming bodies' actual leverage over national policies and strategies)? How could the negotiation process improved in the future?

26. Are there any **potential weaknesses/risks left** in the approved programmes in relation to:

- ERDF support to inclusive growth (e.g.: choice and relative weight of investment priorities, content of actions planned, target groups addressed, synergies between OPs or priority axes...); or
- relevant implementation mechanisms (e.g: partnership, project selection methods, mixing ERDF and ESF...)?

27. Are there any **strong points** in the programmes that could serve as good practice examples?

IMPLEMENTATION

(Answers will depend on the extent to which DG EMPL has an overview on how ERDF cofinanced OPs – inclusive growth-related actions - are implemented in the Member States)

28. Are there any **difficulties or problems** perceived by DG EMPL with how ERDF-cofunded inclusive growth actions are now implemented in the Member State?
E.g.:

- the objectives and eligibility/selection criteria in individual calls,
- ERDF and ESF coordination,
- monitoring multi-fund measures,
- involvement of social partners in designing calls and monitoring

29. Is DG EMPL involved in any **discussion with the Member State** you are responsible for about these problematic issues (if any)? If yes, how is this conducted and what outcomes may be expected?

30. How could the Commission's (esp. DG EMPL's) role in **supporting optimal implementation** of inclusive growth be improved in the future?

31. Do you have any other comment or suggestion?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

ANALYSIS OF ERDF SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD
Survey for Managing Authorities

A1

Operational Programme Title

Country

Geographical scope:

- National
- Regional
- Interregional

Type of OP:

- Monofund ERDF
- Multifund ERDF/ESF
- Other Multifund

A2 Name of respondent

A3 Organisation/department/unit

A4 Position

A5 Contact

The 2014-2020 regulatory framework for cohesion policy and DG REGIO's guidance documents have set out a number of new provisions for programming interventions that are relevant for programming inclusive growth:

- General requirements indirectly affecting the strategies for inclusive growth and available instruments of the programmes, and the programming process itself; and
- Specific content-related provisions addressing the question how the EU's goal of promoting inclusive growth should be taken into account in the programmes

In this section we would like to ask you about your perceptions on the effects of these new provisions on the content of the programmes and the process of programming.

B1 How helpful were the following general requirements on how you could programme inclusive growth in your Operational Programme?

(Please consider: did you have to outline the inclusive growth content of your programme differently than you would have done otherwise, without these new provisions)

	Very unhelpful	Rather unhelpful	Rather helpful	Very helpful	No opinion
Concentration, coherence and coordination					
Thematic concentration of funds to 11 thematic objectives					
Stronger alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy and Country Specific Recommendations					
Result-orientation (focus on results to be achieved at the level of investment priorities)					
Partnership Agreements setting out the combined strategy for the use of all funds					
Same types of investments across all types of regions					
Stronger coordination of ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund (where applicable) with the agricultural and fisheries funds					
Joint Action Plans (extended simplified costs system)					

Social inclusion included as a common horizontal principle						
The performance framework						
Ex-ante conditionalities (esp. social inclusion-related ones)						
Integrated approaches to territorial development						
Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)						
Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)						
Requirement of allocating 5% of ERDF resources to sustainable urban development (SUD) (more developed regions only)						
Integrated approach to address specific needs (geographical or group-specific)						
Integrated approach to address the demographic challenges of regions with handicaps						
Other (please specify)						

B2 Which ones of the above new provisions, if any, were difficult or burdensome to implement during programming actions to support social inclusion / inclusive growth?

B3 Have any of the above provisions had a large impact on the content of the programme (on actions to support social inclusion/inclusive growth)? Please explain.

B4 How helpful have you found the below legal and guidance documents in implementing the new provisions in the programming of social inclusion/inclusive growth?

	Very unhelpful	Rather unhelpful	Rather helpful	Very helpful	op
ESIF implementing Acts					
ESIF delegated Acts					
Draft guidelines for the content of the PA					

Draft guidelines for the content of the OP						
Thematic guidance (specific guidance for programming the thematic objectives)						
Cross-cutting thematic guidance						
Arrangements on territorial development guidance document						
ITI guidance document						
Guidance on Sustainable Urban Development						
CLLD guidance document(s)						
Guidance on Joint Action Plans						
Guidance on ex-ante conditionalities						
Guidance on financial instruments						
Guidance on management and control procedures						
Other (please specify)						

B5 Could you identify any strong points of the guidance documents, which were especially helpful?

B6 Were there any weak points of the documents, which were especially unhelpful?

B7 How helpful were the following specific content-related requirements on how you could programme inclusive growth in your Operational Programme?

	Very unhelpful	Rather unhelpful	Rather helpful	Very helpful	No opinion
Health					
Link to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health					
Consistency with the transformation of the health system (health					

reform)					
Balance between institutional and community-based health services					
Shift to community-based services (deinstitutionalisation)					
Link to frameworks like de-institutionalization or national poverty reduction					
Link to legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities					
Breaking down ERDF allocations to institutional and community-based care					
Needs assessment of target groups					
Education					
Concentration on areas within the overall strategy allowing for measurable impact and added value					
Link to strategic policy framework to reduce early school leaving					
Link to national or regional strategic policy framework to increase tertiary education attainment, quality and efficiency					
Link to national or regional strategic policy framework for lifelong learning					

Link to national or regional strategic policy framework for increasing the quality and efficiency of vocational education and training (VET) systems					
Segregation in education cannot be financed by ERDF					
Roma inclusion					
Link to National Roma Integration Strategy and any other relevant strategy framework					
Link to mainstream actions, relevance to structural reforms					
Prevention of segregation, physical isolation of Roma in educational and housing facilities					
Identification of disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods					
Involvement of relevant stakeholders					
Gender equality					
Gender equality as a mainstreamed horizontal principle					
Gender disaggregated analysis where appropriate					
Accessibility					
Actions to ensure accessibility					

Addressing demographic change					
Inclusion of all age groups					
Identification of measures to support demographic renewal					
Other (please specify)					

How easy or difficult to implement were each of these specific requirements?

B8

	Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy	No opinion
Health					
Link to national and/or regional strategic policy framework for health					
Consistency with the transformation of the health system (health reform)					
Balance between institutional and community-based health services					
Shift to community-based services (deinstitutionalisation)					
Link to frameworks like de-institutionalization or national poverty reduction					
Link to legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities					
Breaking down ERDF allocations to institutional and community-based care					
Needs assessment of target groups					

Education					
Concentration on areas within the overall strategy allowing for measurable impact and added value					
Link to strategic policy framework to reduce early school leaving					
Link to national or regional strategic policy framework to increase tertiary education attainment, quality and efficiency					
Link to national or regional strategic policy framework for lifelong learning					
Link to national or regional strategic policy framework for increasing the quality and efficiency of vocational education and training (VET) systems					
Segregation in education cannot be financed by ERDF					
Roma inclusion					
Link to National Roma Integration Strategy and any other relevant strategy framework					
Link to mainstream actions, relevance to structural reforms					
Prevention of segregation, physical isolation of Roma in educational and housing facilities					
Identification of disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated					

neighbourhoods					
Involvement of relevant stakeholders					
Gender equality					
Gender equality as a mainstreamed horizontal principle					
Gender disaggregated analysis where appropriate					
Accessibility					
Actions to ensure accessibility					
Addressing demographic change					
Inclusion of all age groups					
Identification of measures to support demographic renewal					
Other (please specify)					

B9 Were there actions that would have been preferred but you could not programme due to the new provisions? Please explain:

B10 Had any of the above new requirements have an especially large impact on the content of the programme? Please explain:

B11 As compared to ESF, where lies the added value of ERDF support for inclusive growth?

- Support to infrastructures
- Support to urban development strategies
- Support to innovation in SMEs

Support to innovation in public service delivery

Other (specify)

SECTION C. ASSESSMENT OF NEGOTIATION PROCESS

C1 Were there any difficulties to reach an agreement with the Commission during negotiations on how inclusive growth has been programmed?

Yes, affecting the general requirements in conjunction with inclusive growth

Yes, affecting the specific content-specific elements for inclusive growth

Yes, affecting both

No

C2 Which of the below elements were especially difficult to agree on with the Commission during the negotiations, with regard to inclusive growth?

Definition of strategic priorities

Definition of result indicators

Allocation of funds on Thematic Objectives/Investment Priorities

Defining types of investment

Defining target groups

Outlining actions

Outlining principles for project selection

Proposed budget for investment priorities

Implementation of ITI or CLDD

Ex-ante conditionalities related to Thematic Objectives 8, 9 or 10

Mixing ERDF and ESF

Integration and synergies with other instruments

Delegating implementation responsibility

Other (specify)

C3 How helpful did you find the Commission 's help relating to programming inclusive growth during the negotiations?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Somewhat unhelpful
- Very unhelpful

C4 Could you identify strengths and/or weaknesses in how the Commission helped?

SECTION D. FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH IMPLEMENTATION

D1 Has the implementation of activities in the Operational Programme relating to inclusive growth already begun?

- Yes, projects have already started
- Yes, projects have already been selected
- Yes, calls have already been published
- No
- Other (Specify)

D2 Have you encountered specific content-related new elements that are difficult to interpret and/or correctly apply in implementation (the calls or project implementation)?

- Yes
- No

D3 If yes, please explain which specific content-related elements are concerned.

D4 Have you had any discussion with the Commission on how specific content-related new elements should be applied?

Yes

No

D5 If yes, please indicate which elements were concerned.

D6 In your view, are there significant numbers of project promoters (beneficiaries) who have difficulties in complying with the specific content-related new elements?

Yes

No

D7 If yes, please indicate which specific content-related elements are concerned.

D8 How are the above problems resolved?

D9 Do you need help or further guidance from the Commission in establishing how to best comply with the specific content-related new elements?

Yes

No

D10 If yes, please explain. What kind of help would be needed?

0

SECTION E. CLOSING

E1 Do you have any further comments to this questionnaire or to programming inclusive growth under ERDF?

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