

Factual summary of the public consultation on the EU long-term budget in the area of cohesion

Introduction

The EU's long-term budget currently runs until the end of 2020. In May and June 2018, the Commission adopted its proposals for the post-2020 long-term budget and the next generation of programmes and funds. These programmes/funds will provide support to hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries such as regions, towns, NGOs, businesses, farmers, students, scientists, and many others, as well as ensure the functioning of concrete operations in plenty of areas like border management, humanitarian aid, the single market, to name a few.

The Commission's proposals were designed to make it possible for the EU to deliver on the things that matter most, in areas where it can achieve more than Member States acting alone. This requires a careful assessment both of what has worked well in the past and what could be improved in the future. What should the priorities be for future policies and programmes/funds? And how can they be designed to best deliver results on the ground?

As an integral part of this process and following on from the [Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances](#), the Commission has conducted a series of public consultations covering major spending areas to gather views from all interested parties on how to make the very most of every euro of the EU budget. These areas are:

- Investments, research and innovation, SMEs and Single Market
- Strategic infrastructure (transport, energy, digital, space)
- Cohesion
- Migration
- Security, defence and crisis/emergency response
- European values and mobility
- Natural resources
- External policy

See more on the main programmes under each policy area on the Commission [website](#) for the EU's long-term budget.

Replies to the public consultations fed into designing comprehensive proposals for the post-2020 EU long-term budget and for the next generation of financial programmes.

This document summarises the replies to the public consultation in the area of **cohesion** that was carried out from 10 January 2018 to 9 March 2018. More in-depth analysis of replies (including textual inputs) supported the impact assessments prepared for individual programmes.

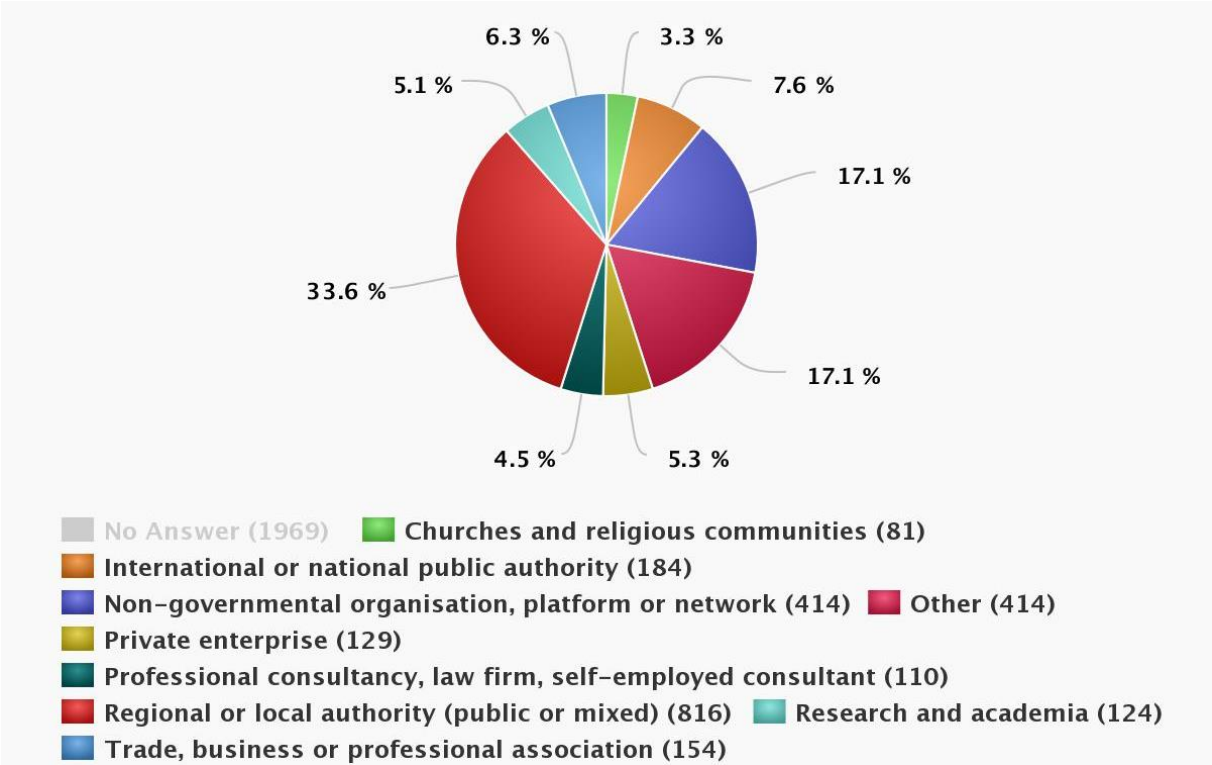
Who replied to this public consultation?

In total, the public consultation on cohesion received **4395 replies; 2426 from organisations** and **1969 from individuals**. Contributions were mainly provided by organisations based in Italy (518),

Germany (280), France (252) and Poland (236), while the individuals that took part in the consultation are mainly Italian (436) and Polish (338) citizens.

In terms of **type of organisations**, those that replied to this question are regional or local authority (18.6%) followed by non-governmental organisations, platforms or networks (9.4%) (see figure 1 below for details on the types of organisations).

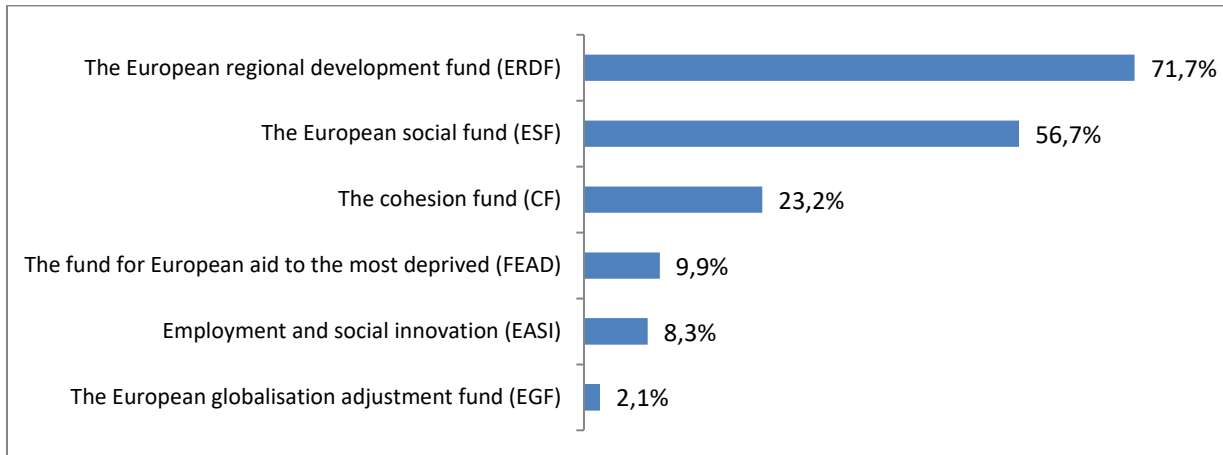
Figure 1: distribution of the type of organisations participating in the public consultation



In the figure above, the "No Answer" category is left out as it represents the respondents that are citizens and for which this question is thus not relevant.

Respondents were asked to indicate their experience with one or more funds or programmes (see figure 2). Respondents seem to be most familiar with the European Regional Development Fund (71.7%) followed by the European Social Fund (56.7%).

Figure 2: Experience of respondents with programmes/funds



What are the views of respondents who replied to the public consultation?

Importance of policy challenges

The questionnaire preliminarily identified a number of policy challenges which programmes/funds under this policy area could address. Respondents were asked how important they considered these policy challenges to be.

The three **most important policy challenges** which the programmes/funds under this policy area could address are:

1. “Reducing regional disparities and underdevelopment of certain EU regions” (87.5% of respondents consider it at least rather important)
2. “Reducing unemployment, promoting quality jobs and supporting labour mobility” (87.0% of respondents consider it at least rather important)
3. “Promoting social inclusion and combatting poverty” (87.0% of respondents consider it at least rather important)

“Promoting sound economic governance and the implementation of reforms” is the challenge considered least important of the challenges identified by the Commission (62.8% of respondents consider it very and rather important) (see table 1 for more details).

Success of the current programmes/funds

The questionnaire asked respondents to what extent they consider the previously mentioned policy challenges to be successfully addressed by the current programmes/funds.

“Fostering research and innovation across the EU” and “promoting territorial cooperation” are the two challenges considered **most successfully met by the current programmes/funds**; 57.8% and 57.1% of respondents respectively consider them at least fairly well addressed. The two challenges considered the least well addressed by the current programmes/funds (of those identified by the Commission) are “addressing the adverse side-effects of globalisation” and “promoting sound economic governance” and the implementation of reforms.

Table 1 below combines the two previous questions: which challenge(s) respondents consider important and how successful the current programmes/funds are at addressing these challenges.

Table 1: Importance of policy challenges and how well current programmes/funds address them

Challenge	Respondents considering the challenge important or rather important (%)	Respondents considering the challenge fully or fairly well addressed (%)
Reduce regional disparities and underdevelopment of certain EU regions	87.5	50.4
Reduce unemployment, promote quality jobs and support labour mobility	87.0	44.4
Promote social inclusion and combat poverty	87.0	40.9
Promote economic growth in the EU as a whole	85.2	51.0
Facilitate transition to low carbon and circular economy, ensure environmental protection and resilience to disasters and climate change	84.5	41.9
Foster research and innovation across the EU	84.2	57.8
Support education and training for skills and life-long learning	82.7	53.8
Promote territorial cooperation (interregional, cross-border, transnational)	80.3	57.1
Promote sustainable transport and mobility	77.5	41.1
Promote common values (e.g. rule of law, fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination)	75.2	34.2
Facilitate transition to digital economy and society	72.1	46.3
Improve quality of institutions and administrative capacity	70.8	30.6
Address the adverse side-effects of globalisation	67.9	20.3
Promote sound economic governance and the implementation of reforms	62.8	24.7

EU added value of the current programmes/funds

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they consider the **current programmes/funds to add value** compared to what Member States could achieve at a national, regional and/or local level.

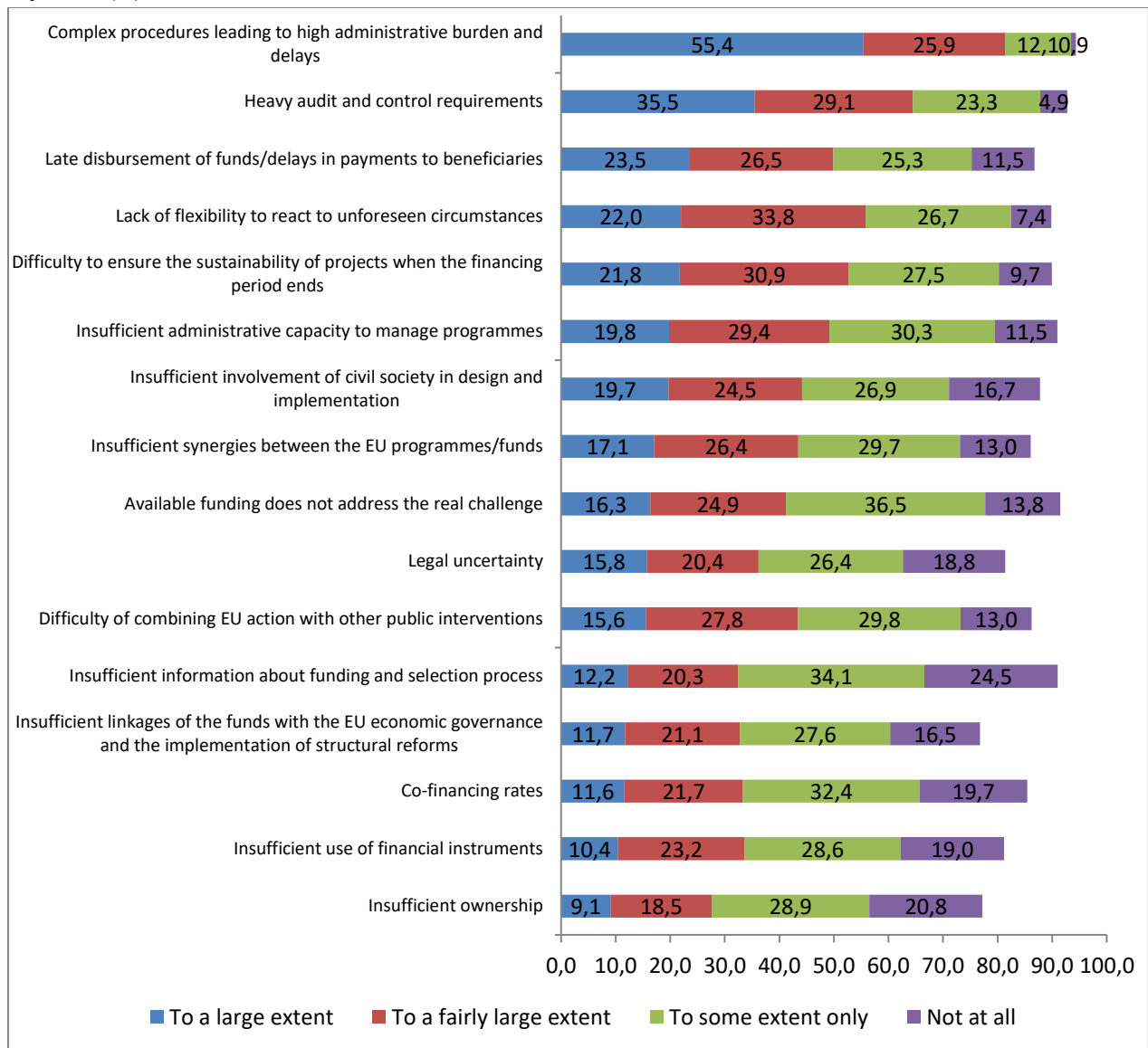
75.2% of respondents believe that the programmes/funds do add value to a large or fairly large extent compared to what Member States could achieve on their own. Indeed, 1978 respondents (45.0%) consider that current programmes/funds add value to a large extent and 1327 respondents (30.2%) consider that they do so to a fairly large extent. 804 respondents (18.3%) consider that current programmes/funds add value to some extent only and 61 respondents (1.4%) consider them not to do so at all.

Obstacles preventing the current programmes/funds from being successful

The Commission preliminarily identified certain obstacles to the current programmes/funds. Respondents were asked to identify those that represent the biggest obstacles.

“Complex procedures leading to high administrative burden and delays” and “heavy audit and control requirements” are the most important **obstacles preventing current programmes/funds from successfully achieving their objectives** with 81.3% and 64.6% of respondents respectively considering this to be challenges to a large or fairly large extent (see details in figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Extent to which the following obstacles prevent the current programmes/funds from meeting their objectives (%)



Simplifying and reducing administrative burdens

In the questionnaire, the Commission preliminarily identified certain steps that could help further simplify and reduce administrative burdens for beneficiaries under the current programmes/funds.

According to stakeholders, the **steps most likely to help further simplify and reduce administrative burdens** under current programmes/funds are “fewer, clearer, shorter rules” (87.0% of respondents considering this at least to a fairly large extent) followed by the "alignment of rules between EU funds" and more flexibility in implementation with 74.3% and 74.1% respectively (see figure 4 below for details).

Figure 4: Extent to which the following steps would help further simplify or reduce administrative burdens for beneficiaries under the current programmes/funds (%)

