



# **THE USE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE 2014-2020 PERIOD**

Final Report



May 2020





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## List of Abbreviations

AA	Audit Authority
CEP	Central Education Plan
CF	Cohesion Fund
CFCA	Central Finance and Contracting Agency
CLLD	Community-led local development
CP	Cohesion Policy
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
DG REFORM	Directorate-General for Structural Support Reform
DG REGIO	Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission
EGESIF	Expert Group on European Structural and Investment Funds
EMPIS	Portuguese Social Innovation Mission Structure
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
FE	Further Education
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
HE	Higher Education
HRD	Human Resources Development
HRM	Human Resources Management
IB	Intermediate Body
IC	Intervention Code
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
JS	Joint Secretariat
LDR	Less Developed Region
MA	Managing Authority
MDR	More Developed Region
MIS	Management Information Systems
MS	Member State
NCA	National Coordinating Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOP	National Operational Programme
OP	Operational Programme
OPTA	Operational Programme Technical Assistance
OSR	Organisational structures & resources
PA	Partnership Agreement
PRA	Administrative Strengthening Plan (Piano di Rafforzamento Amministrativo)
RET	Regional Engagement Teams
RIC	Regional Information Centres
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
SCO	Simplified Cost Options
SME	Small and medium sized enterprise
SRSS	Structural Reforms Support Service
TA	Technical Assistance
TR/TRANS	Transition Regions
WCVA	Welsh Council for Voluntary Action





## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to enhance the understanding of the planned and implemented use of Technical Assistance (TA) at the initiative of Member States during the 2014-2020 period. It provides a quantitative overview of TA budget for the EU28 as a whole, for groups of Member States and for categories of TA expenditure. It presents a detailed assessment of TA budget for selected OPs, analysing the thematic allocation of budget according to an original reclassification of expenditure. It provides examples of transferrable practices of use of TA resources for administrative capacity building, and the identification of internal and external factors influencing the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives.

The study finds that effective use of TA for administrative capacity building depends on the existence of well-founded, coherent and forward-looking strategies, and on good governance (based on leadership, coordination and stakeholder involvement) underpinned by a learning culture. Recommendations for 2021-2027 relate to: (a) the development of administrative capacity building roadmaps, with TA used for a wider set of capacity building activities; (b) support for the entire 'ecosystem' of ESIF management and implementation; (c) the development of learning strategies for administrative capacity building; and (d) coherent management of administrative capacity building at EU level, whereby the support provided for administrative capacity building through TA should be coordinated with wider public service administrative reforms.



## PREFACE

This is the Final Report for the 'Study on The Use of Technical Assistance for Administrative Capacity Building During the 2014-2020 Period' (Contract No. 2017CE16BAT088). The study has been undertaken by the European Policies Research Centre (EPRC), based at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, United Kingdom) and the Technical University of Delft (Netherlands), in cooperation with Red2Red (Madrid) and a team of experts with the following responsibilities.

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*The information and views set out in this Study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Final Report for the study on the 'Use of Technical Assistance for Administrative Capacity Building During the 2014-2020 Period'. **The objective of the study is to enhance the understanding of the European Commission and other stakeholders of the planned and implemented use of Technical Assistance (TA) at the initiative of Member States during the 2014-2020 period.** The study aims to provide insights on how TA is being applied in practice and to identify interesting cases of TA-funded sustainable capacity building, particularly in the area of Human Resource Development.

The study has involved: a general quantitative overview of TA budgets across the EU in 2014-2020, in aggregate for the EU28, groups of MS and for categories of TA expenditure; a detailed quantitative and qualitative assessment of TA budgets for a sample of selected OPs; and a qualitative review of interesting examples of TA use for administrative capacity building (the latter described in detail in a 'Compendium of practices' annexed to this report).

### ***What is Technical Assistance used for?***

**TA funding accounts for a relatively small share of ESIF (ERDF, ESF and CF) across the EU28** (3.1 percent). Among Member States, allocations range from 0.9 percent in Hungary to six percent in Luxembourg. This is below the capping for Technical assistance established in CPR Art. 119 (4 percent).

**ERDF accounts for almost half of the allocation to TA**, with ESF representing a third and the Cohesion Fund a fifth of TA funding. **Most TA funding is concentrated in Less Developed Regions (LDR)**, reflecting their larger ESIF allocations.

**TA funding is predominantly allocated to management interventions** (IC 121), representing over 80 percent of TA funding across the EU28. Evaluation and studies (IC 122) and information and communication interventions (IC 123) account for much less (8.5 percent and 10.1 percent respectively).

**TA project selection and spending rates vary greatly across Member States. Both rates are nevertheless positively correlated with those for ESIF as a whole.** At the end of 2017, the average TA project selection rate for the EU28 was 50 percent, with considerable variation across Member States, broadly in line with the total EU eligible costs selected for all thematic objectives. TA expenditure rates were substantially lower than selection rates (with an average EU28 rate of 15 percent), again with varied performance across Member States. Management interventions (IC 121) have the highest project selection and spending rates, which applies across all the funds and most countries.

**TA expenditure rates were substantially lower than selection rates** at the end of 2017, with an average EU28 rate of 15.2 percent. This is **nevertheless greater than the total ESIF expenditure rate of 11.9 percent at the same date.**

Analysis of a sample of programmes indicates that **most TA funding is allocated to Human Resources (65 percent)**. Much of this is allocated to operational staff salaries, particularly for Intermediate Bodies (44.7 percent), Managing Authorities (21.9 percent) and Audit Authorities (10.8 percent). Far less funding is allocated to salaries for the remaining institutional beneficiaries: National Coordination Bodies (4.4 percent); and Certifying Authorities (1.5 percent).

**Organisational Structures and Resources (OSR) account for almost a fifth of TA funding** (19 percent). TA support under this heading is mainly used for the 'Operational Costs of Institutions' (circa 50 percent of all funding to this thematic category) and the 'Subcontracting / Outsourcing of Programme Management Tasks' (other than Systems and Tools, 39.9 percent of the OSR heading).

**System and Tools account for the lowest share of TA funding** (16 percent), used primarily for **Management Information Systems (MIS) & E-Cohesion**, accounting for 22 percent of Systems and Tools TA funding. This is followed by **Audit Systems & Tools** (seven percent), which is supported by a third of the programmes in the sample. The final activity 'Anti-fraud Systems & Tools represents less than one percent of funding, and only applies to the EE-Cohesion Policy Funding OP (which is likely to be due to the fact that other OPs and Member States do not separate these types of expenditure in their accounts and that they are likely to be included under other types of expenditure).

### ***Case studies of TA use for administrative capacity building***

Further insights into the use of TA for administrative capacity-building are provided by the case studies undertaken for the study. They illustrate how TA is being used to strengthen human resource management systems to address shortages of qualified and experienced staff to implement Cohesion Policy, and to deal with task-specific needs, related to particular stages in ESIF implementation, regulatory requirements or types of operation.

The case studies show that **decisions on TA investment are driven by regulatory compliance, lesson-drawing from past experience, and adaptation to political or institutional change.**

The **main foci for TA use are strategic capacity-building, scaling-up of existing practices, the introduction of innovations, and better management of human resources**, but there are also many operational task-specific uses.

Support for human resources in the case studies examined has included the **provision of staff training and other professional development actions at all levels** – from central government coordinating bodies, through Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies to beneficiaries, as well as other relevant stakeholder groups involved in the implementation process.

The case studies also show how TA investment in organisational structures has been used to fund the **establishment and running costs of bodies, groups or networks**, especially at regional and local levels, or for particular themes, or to improve coordination between different levels and ensure harmonisation of procedures.

TA spending on systems and tools is used to develop capacity for **implementing e-cohesion, as well for evaluation models, databases and analytical tools** to improve the evidence base for policy. Other foci are project pipelines and advisory support systems for applicants, and communication systems such as websites, contact points and marketing or publicity materials.

Irrespective of the scope, scale or focus of TA support, the experiences reviewed highlight that TA is significant in terms of: (i) filling a gap, i.e. responding to a need that might otherwise have remained unfulfilled; (ii) ensuring that organisational staffing levels are supplemented with additional necessary personnel or specialist expertise; and, (iii) incentivising innovation, by providing room for experimental or pilot projects.

The usefulness of the capacity-building initiatives in the cases examined is context-specific. The success of transfer to other programmes/authorities would have to be linked to a **clear understanding of needs and possibilities, to a shared vision for the changes anticipated, and to continuous adaptation and improvement.**

### ***Factors influencing administrative capacity building***

The study identifies internal and external factors influencing the effectiveness of the capacity building.

**Key institutional factors** are political and organisational commitment, 'buy in' from stakeholders, an adequate baseline level of capabilities and a conducive institutional and governance framework.

**Procedural success factors** include a reflexive system for the consolidation of learning, and the development of the appropriate mix of tools and support.

**Cultural factors** are also important, notably a culture of cooperation in public administration and a long-term perspective.

**Contextual factors, and the different amounts of TA available, influence the transferability of case-study practices between countries and programmes.** Some technical practices are relatively straightforward to replicate, for example the acquisition of tools or equipment. Others are more demanding, requiring systemic, organisational or cultural adaptation, such as the introduction of new models of human resource management. Successful transfer is determined by levels of demand and commitment from key actors to see changes through and requires careful planning and adaptation.

### ***Lessons and recommendations***

The research carried out for the study contains detailed insights into the strengths and weaknesses of TA use for capacity-building. Three main groups of lessons relate to the strategy, governance and culture of capacity-building.

- (a) **Effective administrative capacity building depends on a well-founded, coherent and forward looking strategy**, including a clear rationale based on a sound strategic analysis, shared vision, long-term perspective, and a mix of different types of capacity building measures. Flexibility of support and targeting are also important as can be the frontloading of investments.
- (b) As with other aspects of ESIF, **good governance of investment for administrative capacity building requires leadership, coordination but also stakeholder involvement.**
- (c) **Effective TA strategic planning and good governance for administrative capacity building are underpinned by a learning culture.** Successful use of TA involves iterative review to facilitate reflexive learning and, where existing capacities are low, TA can be used effectively to provide a stimulus for innovative capacity building. Robust monitoring systems are required for learning as well as transparency and accountability.

Four groups of recommendation are particularly important for enhancing the future application of TA in the 2021-27 period.

**R1: Develop administrative capacity building roadmaps for the 2021-2027 period including a reorientation to encompass a broader range of capacity building activities.** The research underlines the importance of capacity-building embracing a mix of HR support, organisational reforms, and provision of systems and tools. While salary support continues to be important and necessary, the longer-term impact of TA support for administrative capacity building requires other aspects of capacity building to be supported also.

**R2: Support the entire ecosystem of ESIF management and implementation.** TA support is mainly used for Intermediate Bodies, national coordinating bodies or Managing Authorities, and has not always filtered down to implementing bodies, delivery agents and beneficiaries on the ground. This is an important gap for a place-based policy and should be addressed in 2021-2027 programmes, for example through stakeholder consultations to enable a 'discovery' of the needs of different actors, the implementation of action plans, and the earmarking of set proportions of TA funds for different actors charged with management and delivery functions.

**R3: Develop learning strategies for capacity building.** The use of TA needs to be flexible and adaptable to change, responding to changing internal and external environment. Administrative capacity building strategies, roadmaps and action plans should be regarded as 'live' documents, which are kept flexible to respond to evolving needs. There should also be ongoing learning from their implementation which can also provide scope for innovation.

**R4: Ensure coherent management of administrative capacity building at EU level.** In the 2021-2027 programming cycle, the support provided for administrative capacity building through TA should be coordinated with wider public service administrative reforms. DG REGIO, working with DG REFORM and other relevant DGs, should collaborate, where required, with Member States, to provide support to domestic authorities.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Objectives and tasks

The overall objective of this study is to enhance the understanding of the European Commission and other stakeholders of the planned and implemented use of Technical Assistance (TA) at the initiative of Member States during the 2014-2020 period. The study aims to provide insights on how TA is being applied in practice and to identify interesting cases of TA-funded sustainable capacity building, particularly in the area of Human Resource development.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- a) to provide a general quantitative overview of TA budgets across the EU, for the EU28 as a whole, for groups of Member States and for categories of TA expenditure;
- b) to undertake a detailed assessment – both quantitative and qualitative – of TA budgets for selected OPs, analysing the thematic allocation of budgets, and describing and explaining the differences; and
- c) to describe examples of interesting cases of the use of TA for administrative capacity building (ACB).

### 1.2 Methodology

The methodology for the study comprised five main tasks (see Table 1).

**Task 1: Data collection.** This has involved constructing a database of planned ESIF 2014-2020 TA allocations by TA category of expenditure, based on data extracted from the ESI Funds Open Data site.<sup>1</sup> The reliability of this data was checked through secondary sources in a sample of representative OPs, including 32 OPs selected for detailed analysis in Task 2.

Following the methodology provided in the study by NEI (2002),<sup>2</sup> the TA budget of selected OPs was split into three main thematic categories of expenditure for administrative capacity building: Human Resources (HR), Organisational Structure & Resources, and Systems & Tools. These were then linked to the intervention codes (Ics) specified in the Implementing Regulation – IC 121 (management), IC 122 (evaluation and studies) and IC 123 (information and communication) – and disaggregated into specific interventions. A more in-depth desk-based analysis of 25 selected OPs covered quantitative and qualitative data from a range of national and programme sources. Where information from documentation or MS authorities was unavailable, estimates were based on methodologies agreed with the Commission. A profile of TA use was built for each selected OP.

**Task 2: Data analysis and presentation.** Database 1 (TADB1), covering all EU programmes, and database 2 (TADB2) covering 25 sample OPs - were used to undertake: (i) a general quantitative overview of TA budgets for all ERDF, ESF and CF OPs across the EU, at the aggregate level of the EU28, groups of Member States and intervention codes; and, (ii) a more detailed quantitative overview of TA budgets for the 25 OPs. Data for TA budgets, project selection and declared expenditure were analysed

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu>.

<sup>2</sup> NEI (2002) *Key Indicators for Candidate Countries to Effectively Manage the Structural Funds*. Final Report. NEI Regional and Urban Development, Rotterdam.

with statistical methods in order to reveal patterns in TA allocations and spending, including an exploratory analysis of factors that contribute to these patterns. For the sample of OPs, expenditure was reclassified in 'thematic categories' ('Human Resources', 'Organisational Structures and Resources', and Systems and Tools) and sub-categories (types of expenditure).

**Table 1: Summary of activities undertaken for each Task**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
<b>1. Data collection</b>	Database construction	First Interim Report with overview of TA use (planned and implemented) for all OPs, complemented with more in-depth analysis of specific data for the selected number of OPs. Proposals for case studies in Task 3.
	Data check	
	Selection of programmes for detailed analysis	
	Data categorisation	
	Detailed data collection	
	Data gaps and estimations	
	Programme profiles	
<b>2. Data analysis and presentation</b>	Data analysis and presentation	Second Interim Report, including case studies and synthesis.
	Correlation and regression	
	Qualitative review	
<b>3. Case studies</b>	Proposal of topics for case studies	Draft Final Report drawing together results of Tasks and providing conclusions and concrete recommendations for different stakeholders.
	Selection of case studies	
	Case study research (including interviews)	
	Drafting of case studies and of fiches of interesting practices	
<b>4. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	Synthesis of findings of Tasks 1, 2 and 3.	Final report, including conclusions of the workshop
	Conclusions & recommendations	
<b>5. Workshop and finalisation of Final report</b>	Presentation of research findings	Finalisation of conclusions and recommendations
	Finalisation of conclusions and recommendations	

**Task 3: Case studies.** The case study research sought to identify interesting examples how TA use for administrative capacity building. Topics and examples to be covered were derived from the results of Tasks 1 and 2, from structured consultations with the study's team of National Experts, and in consultation with DG REGIO. Thirteen cases were selected, giving balanced coverage of TA needs/priorities in different types of MS and programmes, and relating to different CPR regulatory requirements. The research covered the organisational context of TA use, the key factors for its effectiveness, the lessons learned and the potential for application in other contexts.

Documentary research and interviews with programme authorities and beneficiaries were undertaken, based on structured guidance, templates and interview checklists, common to all case studies. This research was brought together for comparative analysis and drafting of case reports and fiches. The latter are presented in a 'Compendium of Practices' that is annexed to this report. To inform the comparative conclusions of the

study, case study research was supplemented with wide-ranging interviews with Commission services.

**Task 4: Conclusions and recommendations.** The findings were used to develop conclusions and recommendations, initially in a Draft Final Report on how to use TA in the most efficient and effective way, with a focus on administrative capacity building and, particularly, human resources development.

**Task 5: Organisation of workshop.** With the support of the European Commission (DG REGIO), the Core Team presented the results of the study at a half-day workshop in Brussels in February 2020 and to the Expert Group on European Structural and Investment Funds, as an opportunity to open up discussion and facilitate learning on how to use TA to best effect in sustainably strengthening administrative capacity. The content of the Final Report, and the conclusions and recommendations therein, were finalised through this iterative process.

### **1.3 Structure of the report**

Following this introduction, Section 2 of the report provides a general quantitative overview of TA budgets across the EU, in aggregate for the EU28, by groups of Member States and intervention codes. This includes a detailed review of TA budgets for a sample of OPs, selected for more in depth examination, analysing the thematic allocation of TA budgets.

Section 3 presents the results of 13 case studies of interesting practices on the use of TA for administrative capacity building, including comparative analysis of the factors contributing to their success and the scope for transferability to other contexts. Synthetic case study narratives are presented in an accompanying 'Compendium of practices' of TA use for administrative capacity building, annexed to this report.

Section 4 draws together the findings from the different research tasks to derive lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations for the use of TA for administrative capacity building in 2021-2027.

## 2. THE USE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL DATA

### KEY FINDINGS

- TA funding accounts for a relatively small share of ESIF (ERDF, ESF and CF) across the EU28 (3.1 percent), ranging from 0.9 percent in Hungary to 6 percent in Luxembourg. This is below the capping for Technical assistance established in CPR Art. 119 (4 percent).
- ERDF accounts for almost half of this allocation. Most TA funding is concentrated in Less Developed Regions.
- TA funding is mainly allocated to management interventions (IC 121) which account for 81.5 percent of TA funding.
- TA expenditure rates were substantially lower than selection rates at the end of 2017, with an average EU28 rate of 15.2 percent. This is nevertheless greater than the total ESIF expenditure rate of 11.9 percent at the same date.
- The correlation between the TA project selection rate and the overall ESIF project selection rate is positive, meaning that the higher the project selection rate of EU expenditure in general, the higher the project selection rate for TA funding. A positive correlation is also observed in relation to declared expenditure.
- Management interventions (IC 121) have the highest project selection and spending rates.
- Analysis of a sample of programmes indicates that spending on Human Resources accounts for almost two-thirds of TA expenditure (65 percent), mostly allocated to operational staff salaries. The largest share of TA funding to staff salaries is allocated to Intermediate Bodies (44.7 percent), followed by Managing Authorities (21.9 percent) and Audit Authorities (10.8 percent). Far less funding is allocated to salaries for the remaining institutional beneficiaries: National Coordination Bodies (4.4 percent) and Certifying Authorities (1.5 percent). TA funding to Staff Professional Development is marginal (7 percent). However, if benchmarked with existing studies on the private sector, this proportion appears significant.
- Organisational Structures and Resources account for almost a fifth of TA funding, mainly used for operational costs of institutions (which accounts for around half of all funding under this thematic category) and subcontracting/outsourcing of programme management tasks (39.9 percent).
- System and Tools account for the lowest share of TA funding (16 percent), used primarily for management and information systems and e-cohesion.

### 2.1 Technical Assistance in the EU28

This section provides a quantitative overview of TA budgets across all 2014-2020 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesion Fund (CF) programmes being implemented in the EU28. It begins with a review of TA allocations before turning to implementation, both in terms of project selection and

declared expenditure by the end of 2017. The distribution of TA across intervention codes is also reviewed.

### **2.1.1      *Technical Assistance allocations***

**Overall, TA funding accounts for 3.1 percent of the ESIF (ERDF, CF and ESF)** across the EU28 (Table 2). The highest TA shares are in the range 4-6 percent (Luxembourg, Austria, Denmark, Croatia, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Sweden and Slovakia). The lowest shares are in Hungary (0.9 percent) followed by Ireland (1.4 percent).

**The average allocation to TA for the 2014-2020 period among Member States is around €500 million** with significantly higher levels in Italy and Poland (€1 billion and over €2.6 billion allocated respectively). There are much smaller TA allocations in more developed and/or smaller countries in line with their lower ESIF funding (e.g. Luxembourg, Ireland, Malta, Denmark and Cyprus).

**Table 2: Planned TA Allocations by Fund and Member State**

Member State	ERDF		ESF		CF		All Funds	
	TA (€m)	Fund % of TA	TA (€m)	Fund % of TA	TA (€m)	Fund % of TA	TA (€m)	TA % of all TOs
AT	21	43.9	26	56.1	0	0.0	47	4.8
BE	24	41.2	35	58.8	0	0.0	59	2.9
BG	161	54.6	134	45.4	0	0.0	295	4.0
CY	6	27.2	1	6.1	16	66.6	23	3.1
CZ	361	44.7	93	11.5	354	43.8	808	3.8
DE	404	57.4	300	42.6	0	0.0	703	3.9
DK	10	50.0	10	50.0	0	0.0	19	4.6
EE	69	63.6	0	0.0	39	36.4	108	3.1
ES	240	51.5	226	48.5	0	0.0	467	1.5
FI	24	60.2	16	39.8	0	0.0	39	3.0
FR	309	56.7	236	43.3	0	0.0	544	3.6
GR	323	54.9	145	24.6	120	20.5	588	3.7
HR	266	76.9	80	23.1	0	0.0	346	4.1
HU	0	0.0	0	0.0	193	100.0	193	0.9
IE	4	29.1	10	70.9	0	0.0	14	1.4
IT	697	65.7	364	34.3	0	0.0	1061	3.3
LT	0	0.0	26	12.1	188	87.9	213	3.2
LU	1	49.3	1	50.7	0	0.0	2	6.0
LV	39	38.7	21	21.1	41	40.2	101	2.3
MT	13	66.8	6	33.2	0	0.0	19	2.7
NL	20	50.1	20	49.9	0	0.0	41	4.0
PL	389	14.7	1216	46.2	1030	39.1	2635	3.4
PT	385	73.3	99	18.8	42	7.9	525	2.5
RO	323	52.1	297	47.9	0	0.0	621	2.7
SE	37	53.6	32	46.4	0	0.0	70	4.0
SI	17	14.4	13	10.8	90	74.9	120	3.9
SK	455	83.5	90	16.5	0	0.0	545	4.0
UK	195	53.6	169	46.4	0	0.0	365	3.3
TC	542	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	542	5.8
EU28	5335	48.0	3667	33.0	2112	19.0	11114	3.1

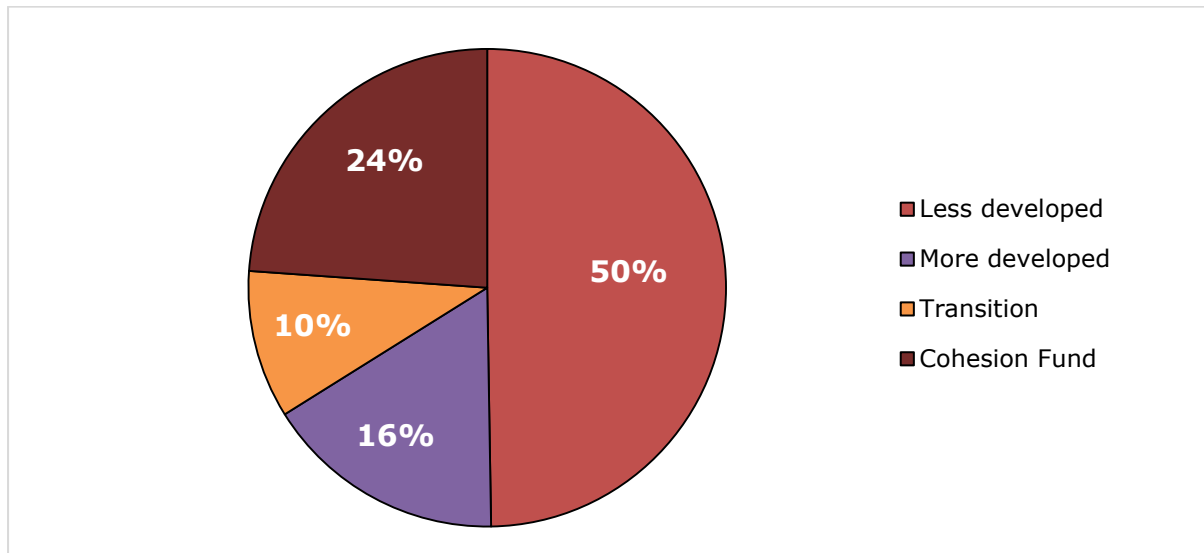
Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

**The ERDF accounts for almost half of TA (48 percent)**, followed by the ESF at one third (33 percent) and the Cohesion Fund at around a fifth (19 percent) of TA funding. The ERDF proportion of TA funding is highest in the Slovak Republic (84 percent) and Croatia (77 percent). Only three Member States have allocated over 50 percent of TA funding to the ESF (Austria, Belgium and Ireland).

**Most TA funding is concentrated in LDRs** for both ERDF and ESF reflecting their larger ESIF allocations (Figure 1), notably CZ, PL, PT and RO (see Annex, Table 12). LDRs also have a marginally higher level of funding dedicated to TA as a share of total funding for all Thematic Objectives (TOs).

There are only three Member States where TA funding in LDRs accounts for over three percent of total funding (BG, HR, SK). Six Member States have TA allocations in MDR exceeding three percent (AT, DK, FI, LU, NL, SE). For the remaining countries the level is around two percent or less, as is the case with TR allocations to TA (except for Malta at 2.7 percent.).

**Figure 1: TA distribution across regional categories as share of all TOs**



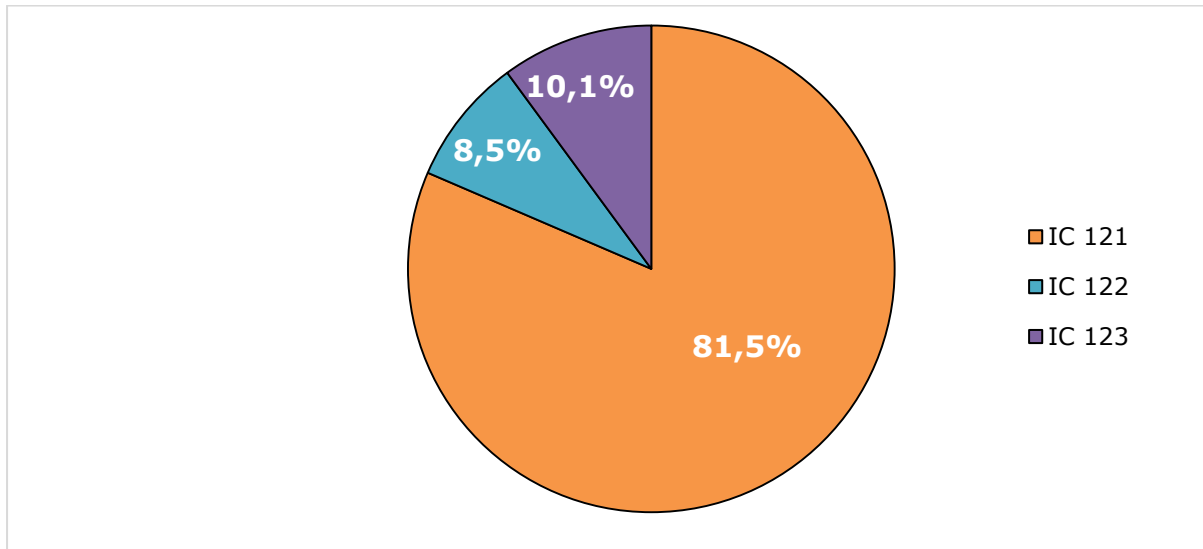
Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (Technical Assistance Database 1, TADB1).

Note: Excludes Territorial Cooperation and Hungary, as funds cannot be allocated to regional categories. Cohesion Fund is included in the chart, but it is allocated nationally, thus the figures are not disaggregated by categories of region).

Based on the categorisation of expenditure by intervention code, **most TA funding is allocated to 'Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection' ('management') interventions (IC 121)**, representing 82 percent of TA funding (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup> The only country with a relatively low share of TA allocated to intervention category 121 is Ireland (48 percent), in part reflecting the low overall ESIF allocation. The 'evaluation and studies' category (IC 122) and 'information and communication' category (IC 123) account for 8.5 and 10.1 percent respectively of the EU28 average.

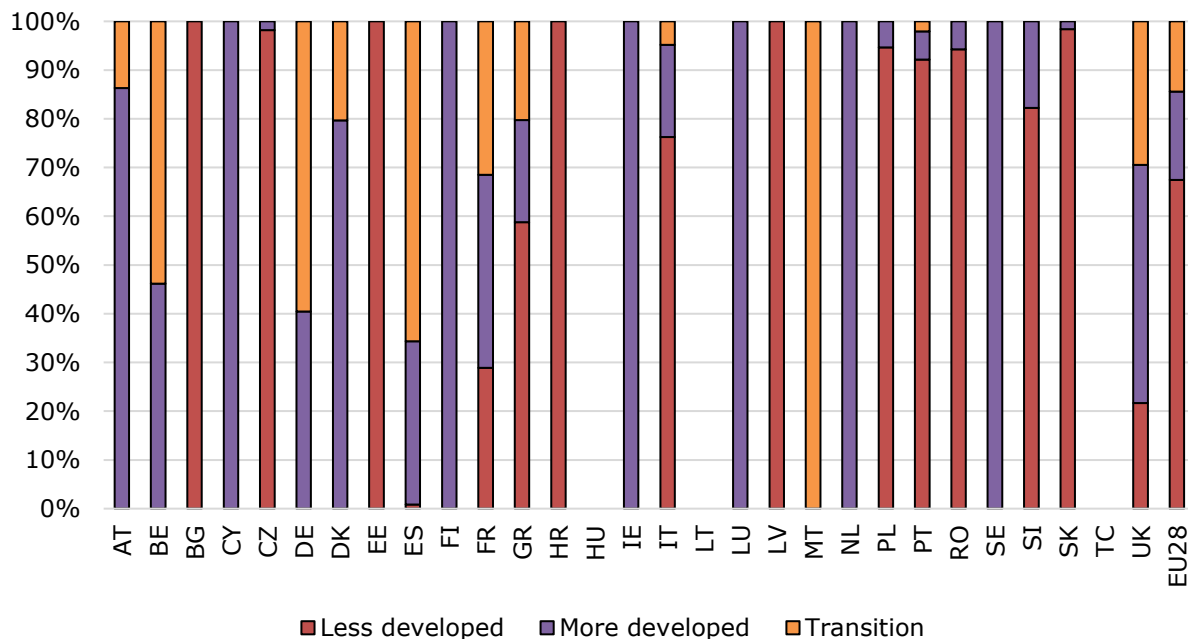
<sup>3</sup> Based on the three categories of TA intervention (intervention field codes (IC)) set out in Commission Implementing Regulation 215/2014.

**Figure 2: Share of planned TA allocations by Intervention Code**



The distribution of TA across the ERDF and ESF within Member States by categories of regions is broadly similar (Figures 3 and 4). The notable exceptions are Estonia, which does not allocate any ESF funding to TA, and Lithuania, which does not use the ERDF for TA.

**Figure 3: TA ERDF planned funding by category of region**

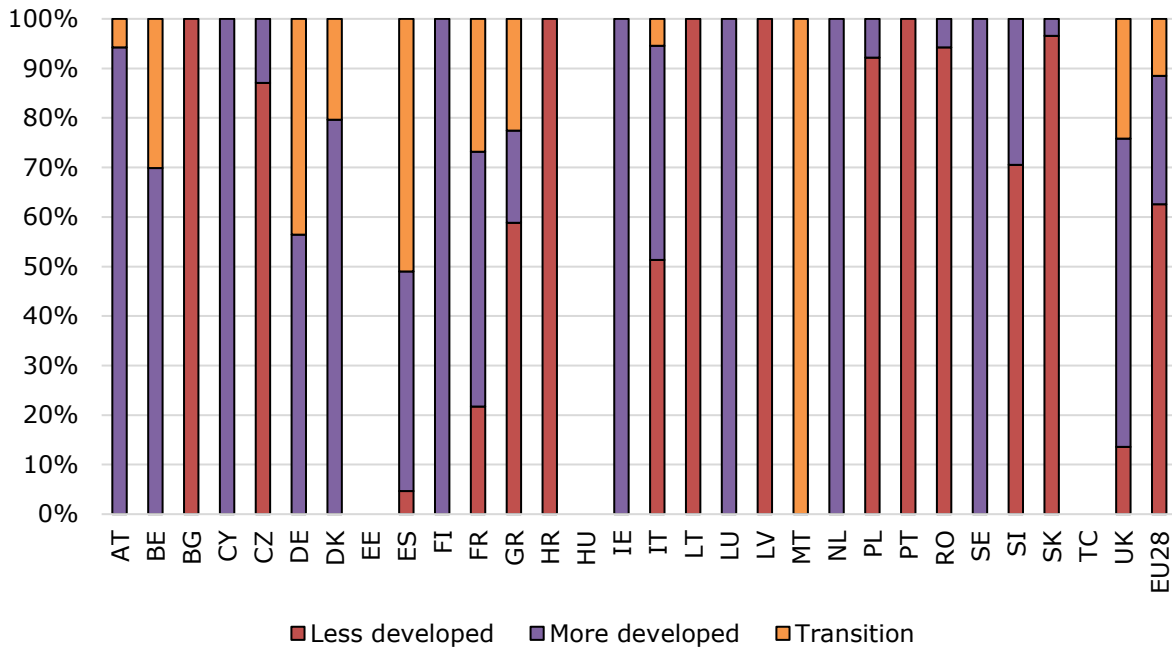


Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

Note: Hungary ERDF/ESF data have been transferred to CF (due to corrections made to the initial data), which is not broken down across categories of regions.



**Figure 4: TA ESF planned funding by category of region**

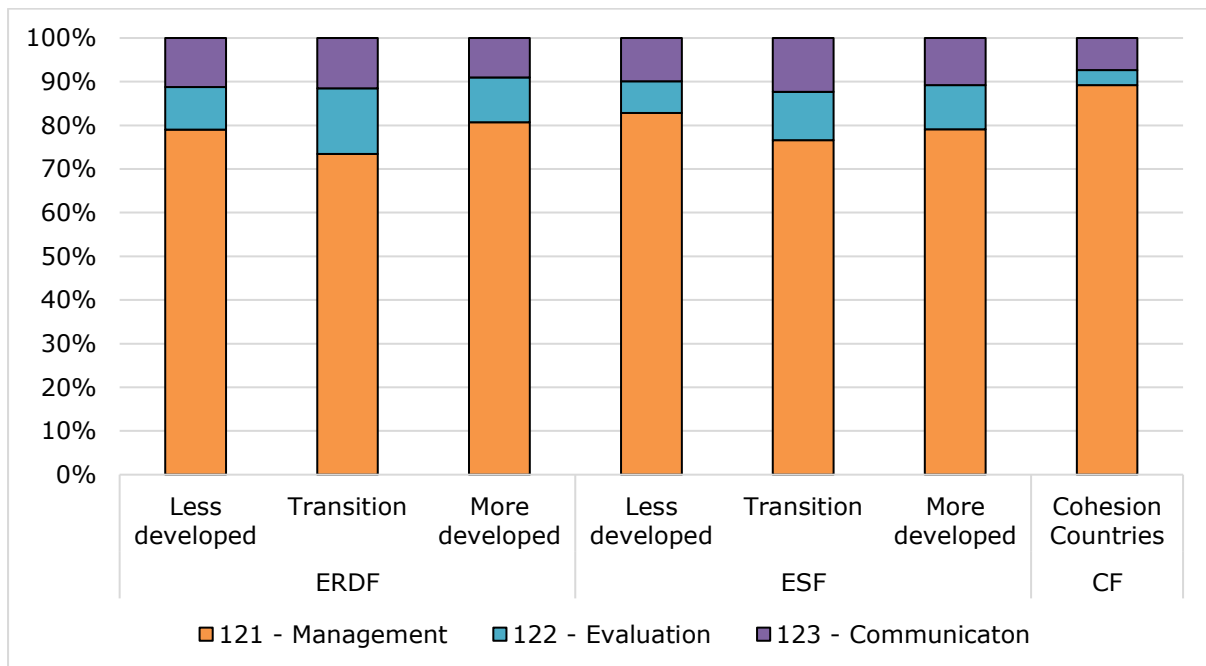


Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

Note: Hungary ERDF/ESF data have been transferred to CF (due to corrections made to the initial data), which is not broken down across categories of regions.

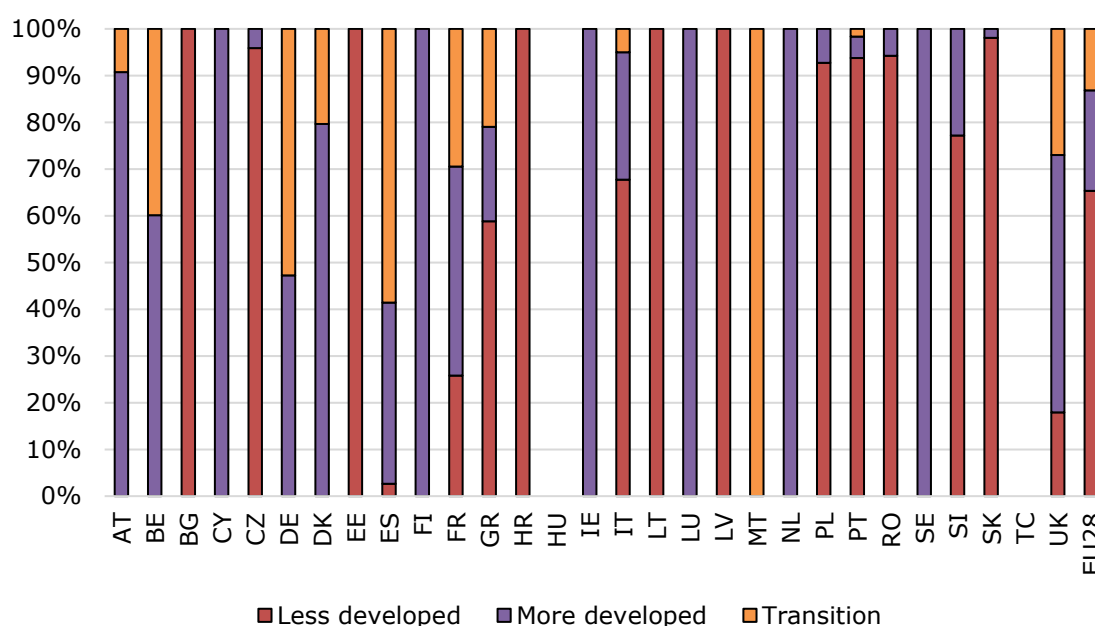
The ERDF and ESF also have a similar distribution of TA by intervention codes and categories of region (Figure 5 and 6). **Management interventions (IC 121) account for the largest share of TA funding across all categories of regions and funds**, with marginally lower relative funding in TR compared to MDR and LDR under both the ERDF and ESF.

**Figure 5: Planned EU funding on TA by category of region and TA category**



Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

**Figure 6: Planned ESIF funding on TA by category of region and Member State**



Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

Note: Hungary ERDF/ESF data have been transferred to CF due to corrections made to the initial data and CF data are not broken down across categories of regions as it is a national fund.

### 2.1.2 Technical Assistance project selection and declared expenditure

**The average TA project selection rate<sup>4</sup> for the EU28 was 49.7 percent at the end of 2017. This compares with a 54.3 percent project selection rate for ESIF as a whole.<sup>5</sup>** Most Member States had selection rates within the 40-80 percent range, but with figures as low as 26 percent for Estonia and Spain. Cyprus and Hungary are the only countries to have overbooked expenditure under TA with project selection rates greater than 100 percent.

**The TA selection rates for the ERDF and ESF are broadly similar** (49 and 47 percent respectively), while **the CF had a slightly higher selection rate** at 56 percent.

- At the end of 2017, the highest rates of project selection= under the ERDF were in Cyprus, the Netherlands, Sweden and Malta, with fully contracted or overbooked rates of between 100 and 144 percent. The lowest selection rate under the ERDF was in Spain at 13 percent.

<sup>4</sup> Where 'selected' refers to the financial resources allocated to projects (operations) selected by programme managers, i.e. (project pipeline), also referred to as eligible cost reported by the programmes to the Commission; 'spending' or 'declared' relates to the expenditure reported by the selected projects which is eligible for reimbursement, as reported by the programmes to the Commission. See Reg. (EU) No 103/ 2013 Art 112.

<sup>5</sup> The present report only covers ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund. For simplicity, throughout the text, these Funds are referred to as ESI Funds or ESIF; however, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) are not included in the analysis.

- The selection rates were greater under the ESF than the ERDF in half the Member States. ESF selection rates above 100 percent were recorded in Czech Republic, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Ireland and Malta. The lowest selection rates for the ESF were in Austria and the Netherlands at 17 and 18 percent respectively.
- For the CF, the highest rate was in Cyprus (157 percent) and the lowest in Estonia (27 percent).

**Table 3: TA expenditure selected and declared as share of planned allocation at end-2017 (%)**

Member State	CF		ERDF		ESF		Total	
	Selected	Declared	Selected	Declared	Selected	Declared	Selected	Declared
AT			51.1	6.7	17.3	3.6	32.2	5.0
BE			36.6	13.9	95.8	14.7	71.4	14.4
BG			68.5	16.3	57.8	11.7	63.6	14.2
CY	156.5	20.9	143.7	27.4	0.0	0.0	143.4	21.4
CZ	58.9	19.3	38.3	14.3	106.7	17.3	55.2	16.8
DE			58.6	17.1	60.4	18.4	59.4	17.7
DK			46.8	35.8	46.1	36.2	46.5	36.0
EE	26.5	21.5	27.0	21.8			26.8	21.7
ES			13.4	2.9	40.7	3.3	26.7	3.1
FI			60.1	21.4	84.6	45.7	69.8	31.1
FR			32.2	10.1	33.7	7.8	32.8	9.1
GR	64.5	18.1	78.4	24.5	67.4	19.2	72.9	21.9
HR			42.1	10.0	44.7	13.0	42.7	10.7
HU	104.9	25.6					105.4	25.6
IE			23.4	6.5	100.0	0.0	77.7	1.9
IT			51.4	5.6	41.1	13.1	47.9	8.2
LT	34.6	26.1			31.9	21.2	34.2	25.5
LU			92.2	17.7	100.0	11.3	96.1	14.5
LV	48.5	23.6	48.3	26.4	26.9	3.7	43.9	20.5
MT			100.0	13.1	100.0	12.2	100.0	12.8
NL			115.4	27.7	18.0	0.0	66.8	13.9
PL	44.8	21.0	20.6	8.7	45.9	19.2	41.7	18.3
PT	52.9	20.3	45.3	18.4	26.1	10.1	42.3	17.0
RO			47.0	24.4	20.5	2.5	34.3	13.9
SE			100.3	12.8	89.0	1.2	95.1	7.4
SI	97.3	19.8	92.6	14.1	105.6	17.7	97.5	18.8
SK			45.8	21.5	57.5	19.3	47.7	21.1
UK			31.9	5.6	35.7	5.1	33.7	5.3
TC			81.9	10.4			81.9	10.4
EU28	55.8	21.4	49.4	13.7	46.5	13.7	49.7	15.2

Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

**TA expenditure rates were substantially lower than selection rates at the end of 2017, with an average EU28 rate of 15.2 percent. This is nevertheless greater than the total ESIF expenditure rate of 11.9 percent at the same date.** The highest spending rates were in Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania and Greece with declared expenditure rates between 25 and 35 percent. The lowest rates were in Ireland, Austria and Spain at less than five percent. There are substantial differences between the rates of project selection and expenditure declared in most Member States.

**Declared expenditure rates across the ERDF and the ESF were the same, at 14 percent, with the CF again outperforming the other Funds** (21 percent of expenditure declared). In most Member States, spending rates were higher under the ERDF than the ESF. The highest spending rates under the ERDF were in Denmark, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Latvia, with a range of 26 to 36 percent. For the ESF, the highest spending rates were in Finland (46 percent) and Denmark (36 percent), while the highest under the CF was in Lithuania and Hungary (at 26 percent).

(i) Project selection rates by intervention codes

The variation in project selection rates by intervention codes across the Funds and Member States is shown in Table 4, which distinguishes IC 121 (management), IC 122 (evaluations and studies) and IC 123 (information and communication). The key findings are :

- TA project selection rates for the EU28 were 50 percent at the end of 2017, with variations ranging from 26 percent (Estonia and Spain) to more than 100 percent in Member States which have overbooked commitments (Hungary and Cyprus).
- Project selection rates are broadly similar under the ERDF (49 percent) and ESF (47 percent) but higher under the CF (56 percent).
- Management interventions (IC 121) have a significantly greater project selection rate (54 percent) than IC 122 (24 percent) and IC 123 (33 percent) interventions across all Funds.

**ESIF:** The highest level of project selection across all the funds and most Member States is under IC 121. Average selection rates are 54 percent under IC 121, 24 percent under IC 122 and 33 percent under IC 123 across all Funds. Only Finland, Ireland and Romania have higher selection rates under IC 122 compared to IC 121. Austria, Finland, Ireland and the UK are the only countries with higher selection rates under IC 123 versus IC 121.

**ERDF:** Mirroring the average rates across all Funds, the ERDF project selection rate is significantly higher for IC 121 (55 percent), compared to IC 122 (23 percent) and IC 123 (34 percent). The highest (and overbooked) selection rates for IC 121 are in Cyprus (205 percent), the Netherlands (131 percent) and Sweden (112 percent), with the lowest rates in Spain (18 percent), Poland (24 percent) and the UK (29 percent). For IC 122, the highest selection rates are in Slovenia and Malta (144 and 100 percent respectively). For IC 123, the highest project selection rates are in the UK (119 percent) and Malta (100 percent).

**ESF:** ESF selection rates under each intervention code do not differ greatly from the general pattern across the funds and the ERDF: 51 percent (IC 121); 22 percent (IC 122); and 28 percent (IC 123). The highest selection rates under IC 121 are in Slovenia, Czech Republic, Malta, Luxembourg and Belgium – at 100 percent or more in all cases. There are large variations in IC 122 selection rates across Member States, with Czech Republic and Romania having the highest rates at 231 and 159 percent respectively, and

the lowest in the UK (0.2), France (4 percent) and Poland (5 percent). Within IC 123, high selection rates, of 100 percent or more, are found in five countries: Czech Republic, Malta, Luxembourg, Ireland and Slovenia. The lowest selection rates are in Portugal (6 percent), France (7 percent) and Denmark (8 percent).

**Cohesion Fund:** The average selection rate under the CF for IC 121 is 57 percent, similar to ERDF (55 percent). However, spending rates in IC 122 and IC 123 (36 and 45 percent respectively) significantly outperform the average across all funds by 12 percentage points in both cases. The Member State with the highest selection rate under IC 121 is Cyprus (202 percent), with the lowest rate found in Estonia (31 percent). Hungary has the highest selection rate under both IC 122 (76 percent) IC 123 (88 percent). The lowest rate for IC 122 is in Poland (18 percent), and in Greece (14 percent) for IC 123.

(ii) Project expenditure rates by intervention code

Turning to actual project spending on the ground, Table 5 shows the declared rates of expenditure as a percentage of planned allocation across the Funds for each intervention code: IC 121 (management), IC 122 (evaluations and studies) and IC 123 (information and communication). The key findings are three-fold.

- TA expenditure rates are much lower than selection rates across all Member States, with an average rate of 15 percent by the end of 2017.
- Spending progress is similar under ERDF and ESF (14 percent) and substantially higher under the CF (21 percent).
- TA project spending rates are significantly higher under management interventions (17 percent) than information and communication (eight percent) and evaluations and studies (four percent) interventions.

**ESIF:** The spending rate is significantly greater under management interventions (IC 121), with an average of 17 percent of allocations across all funds at EU28 level. This is followed by IC 123 at 8 percent and IC 122 at 4 percent. The highest spending rate under IC 121 is in Denmark (45 percent) and the lowest is in Ireland (4 percent). Within IC 122, Lithuania and Denmark top the list at 15 percent of declared expenditure, with Malta at the bottom on 0.2 percent. Lastly, under IC 123, Hungary has the highest spending rate at 29 percent, while the lowest is in Romania at 0.3 percent.

**ERDF:** Declared spending rates for each IC under the ERDF do not differ greatly from the average across the funds: IC 121 (16 percent), IC 122 (4 percent) and IC 123 (6 percent). The highest spending rate under IC 121 is in Denmark (45 percent), Estonia under IC 122 (14 percent) and the UK under 123 (30 percent). Conversely, the lowest spending rate under IC 121 and IC 122 is in the UK (4 percent), while Romania is ranked the lowest in IC 123 at 0.2 percent.

**ESF:** ESF expenditures rates across the EU28 do not vary significantly from the average rates across all funds: IC 121 (16 percent), IC 122 (3 percent) and IC 123 (7 percent). The highest expenditure rate for IC 121 is in Finland (48 percent) and the lowest in Sweden (1 percent). The Czech Republic has the strongest spending under IC 122 (37 percent), while Spain is the lowest on 0.3 percent. Spending rates under IC 123 range from 23 percent (Lithuania) to 0.3 percent (Portugal).

**Cohesion Fund:** CF spending rates across the intervention codes are: 22 percent (IC 121) 5 percent (IC 122) and 20 percent (IC 123). The spending rate in IC 123 deviates significantly from the average across all funds at 12 percentages points higher than the ESIF average of eight percent. Under IC 121, Cyprus is ranked first in terms of spending

(27 percent), and Czech Republic has the slowest expenditure rate at 18 percent (also under IC 122 at 1.7 percent). The highest spending rate under IC 122 is in Slovenia (11 percent). For IC 123, the spending rate ranges from one percent (Greece) to 50 percent (Czech Republic).

Member State	ERDF			ESF			CF			All Funds		
	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123
AT	48.3	38.0	73.4	18.2	9.1	13.0				30.3	27.7	47.9
BE	57.1	0.0	17.7	99.5	98.9	0.0				86.7	20.1	14.4
BG	81.5	19.6	61.0	73.2	28.8	22.8				77.9	22.0	34.5
CY	205.0	3.6	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	201.7	29.2	72.9	193.8	19.4	49.1
CZ	42.7	26.3	17.6	101.0	230.7	104.9	61.3	18.9	54.8	58.4	40.1	32.2
DE	62.8	24.7	43.7	67.6	20.2	49.6				64.8	22.4	46.9
DK	57.1	26.5	9.1	56.0	28.6	8.3				56.5	27.5	8.7
EE	31.3	20.8	0.0				31.4	0.0	0.0	31.4	14.5	0.0
ES	18.0	5.3	9.2	51.0	6.6	12.7				36.1	5.7	10.6
FI	60.1			84.7	70.8	96.2				69.4	70.8	96.2
FR	36.1	4.0	30.9	40.6	4.2	7.3				38.1	4.0	21.9
GR	89.2	39.0	45.3	85.7	30.0	22.4	72.7	48.0	13.9	84.9	37.5	32.9
HR	42.6	12.0	65.0	71.5	0.0	0.0				47.9	6.0	44.4
HU							110.3	76.2	87.8	110.3	76.2	91.2
IE	34.4	0.0	4.0	100.0	100.0	100.0				73.6	85.1	75.1
IT	57.7	22.4	43.1	47.2	10.1	35.0				54.1	18.2	40.3
LT					26.1	33.5	34.6			34.6	26.1	33.5
LU	102.8	0.0	27.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	48.5			101.5	54.0	87.4
LV	48.3				21.8	39.7				48.4	21.8	39.7
MT	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0				100.0	100.0	100.0
NL	131.2	23.5	36.8	21.1	0.0	0.0				75.9	10.0	21.6
PL	23.7	0.6	3.2	49.7	4.5	22.4	46.4	17.8	33.7	44.7	6.7	23.3
PT	49.2	8.4	16.8	28.1	11.4	6.4	52.9			45.6	8.8	12.2
RO	51.8	66.7	15.3	17.8	159.4	62.1				34.0	86.9	20.3
SE	111.5	0.0	0.0	88.8	89.8	89.8				102.0	41.3	69.4
SI	89.3	143.5		116.8	8.2	100.0	100.4	49.5		100.0	58.6	100.0
SK	54.1	28.9	23.1	53.7	107.4	35.4				54.0	38.5	24.5
UK	28.9	0.1	118.5	48.1	0.2	9.5				37.7	0.1	51.1
TC	88.8	52.6	57.0							88.8	52.6	57.0
EU28	55.1	23.0	33.8	51.4	21.9	27.5	57.5	36.3	44.5	54.4	23.7	33.1

**Table 4: TA Expenditure selected as a percentage of planned allocation by TA Intervention Code and Fund at end-2017 (percent)**

Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

**Table 5: TA expenditure declared as a percentage of planned allocation by TA Intervention Code and Fund by end-2017 (percent)**

Member State	ERDF			ESF			CF			All Funds		
	IC 121	IC 22	IC 123	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123	IC 121	IC 122	IC 123
AT	6.3	4.5	10.0	4.0	0.7	1.0				4.9	3.1	6.2
BE	17.4	0.0	17.7	15.9	0.0	0.0				16.4	0.0	14.4
BG	19.2	8.0	8.9	14.8	0.4	6.2				17.3	6.1	7.1
CY	39.4	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3	3.3	8.3	29.4	2.1	5.7
CZ	17.1	4.2	2.4	17.0	37.4	4.9	18.9	1.7	49.8	17.9	6.0	13.1
DE	18.4	7.6	11.1	21.0	6.2	10.5				19.5	6.9	10.8
DK	44.6	13.6	6.5	45.0	15.4	5.7				44.8	14.5	6.1
EE	25.7	13.9	0.0				25.4	0.0	0.0	25.6	9.8	0.0
ES	4.6	0.8	0.5	4.0	0.3	2.3				4.2	0.7	1.2
FI	21.4			48.1	11.6	12.0				31.6	11.6	12.0
FR	12.6	1.0	2.3	9.6	0.0	1.0				11.3	0.6	1.8
GR	29.8	6.4	6.0	26.1	4.7	3.2	22.3	3.9	1.3	27.4	5.4	4.3
HR	9.8	3.4	18.6	20.7	0.0	0.0				11.8	1.7	12.7
HU							26.4	7.7	29.0	26.4	7.7	29.0
IE	9.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0				4.0	0.0	0.0
IT	6.6	2.4	3.0	15.3	1.2	11.4				9.6	2.0	5.9
LT					14.8	23.0	26.1			26.1	14.8	23.0
LU	19.3	0.0	24.7	11.5	0.0	20.7				15.6	0.0	21.4
LV	26.4				0.6	11.3	23.6			25.0	0.6	11.3
MT	16.9	0.2	2.8	14.4	0.4	3.1				16.0	0.2	2.9
NL	32.5	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0				16.2	0.0	1.7
PL	9.9	0.6	1.9	21.0	0.6	6.8	21.9	6.1	15.4	19.8	1.8	9.4
PT	20.1	1.4	6.6	11.2	0.3	0.3	20.3			18.5	1.3	3.8
RO	30.2	0.0	0.2	2.5	0.0	0.8				15.7	0.0	0.3
SE	14.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	1.0	1.0				8.7	0.5	0.8
SI	14.2	12.2		19.9	1.2	16.0	20.4	10.8		19.4	9.9	16.0
SK	25.5	9.5	14.1	19.1	30.1	9.5				24.3	12.0	13.6
UK	3.9	0.1	30.3	7.0	0.0	0.9				5.3	0.0	12.1
TC	11.9	4.7	4.1							11.9	4.7	4.1
EU28	16.1	4.1	5.9	15.6	3.3	6.7	22.2	4.7	19.9	17.2	3.9	8.1

Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

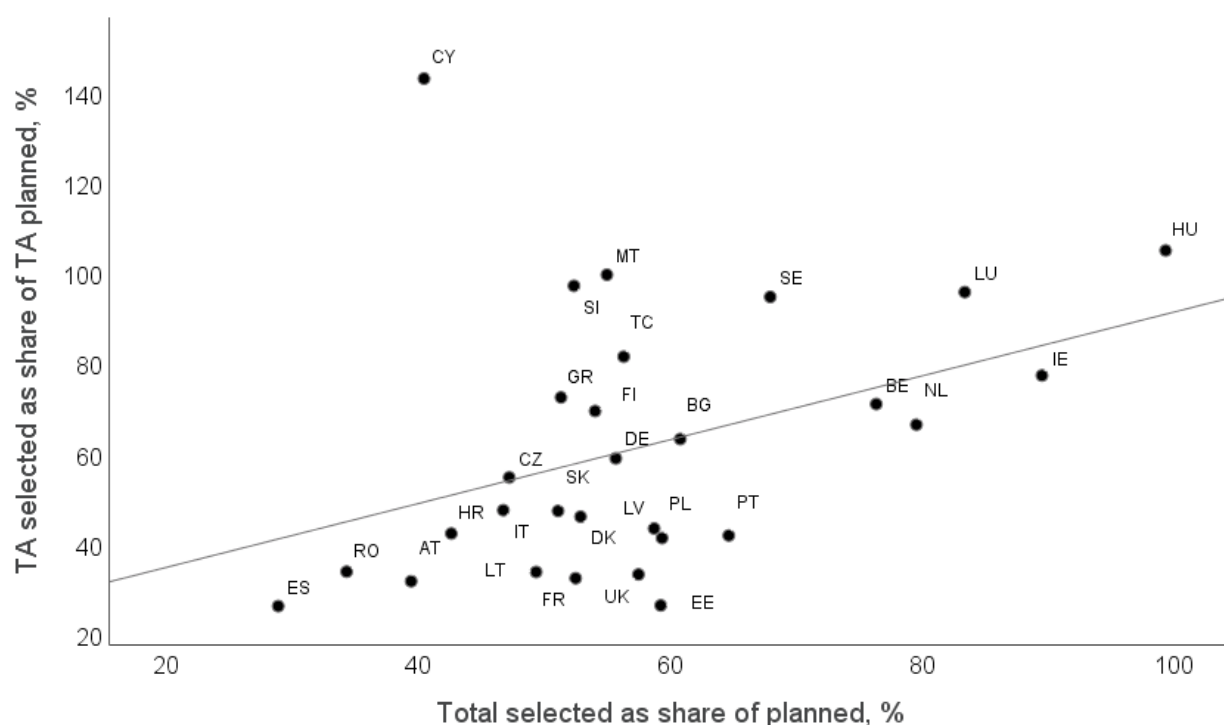


### 2.1.3 Relationship between TA implementation and ESIF implementation

There is a positive relationship between the TA project selection rate and the overall ESIF project selection rate (see Figure 7). Overall, the higher the project selection rate of ESIF expenditure in general, the higher the project selection rate for TA funding.

Cyprus is a notable outlier with the highest TA project selection rate – overbooked at 140 percent of planned TA expenditure – but a relatively low selection rate for total EU expenditure. By contrast, Estonia has the lowest TA expenditure selection rate along with a relatively strong selection rate for total ESIF expenditure.

Figure 7: TA selection rate relative to total ESIF selection rate, end-2017

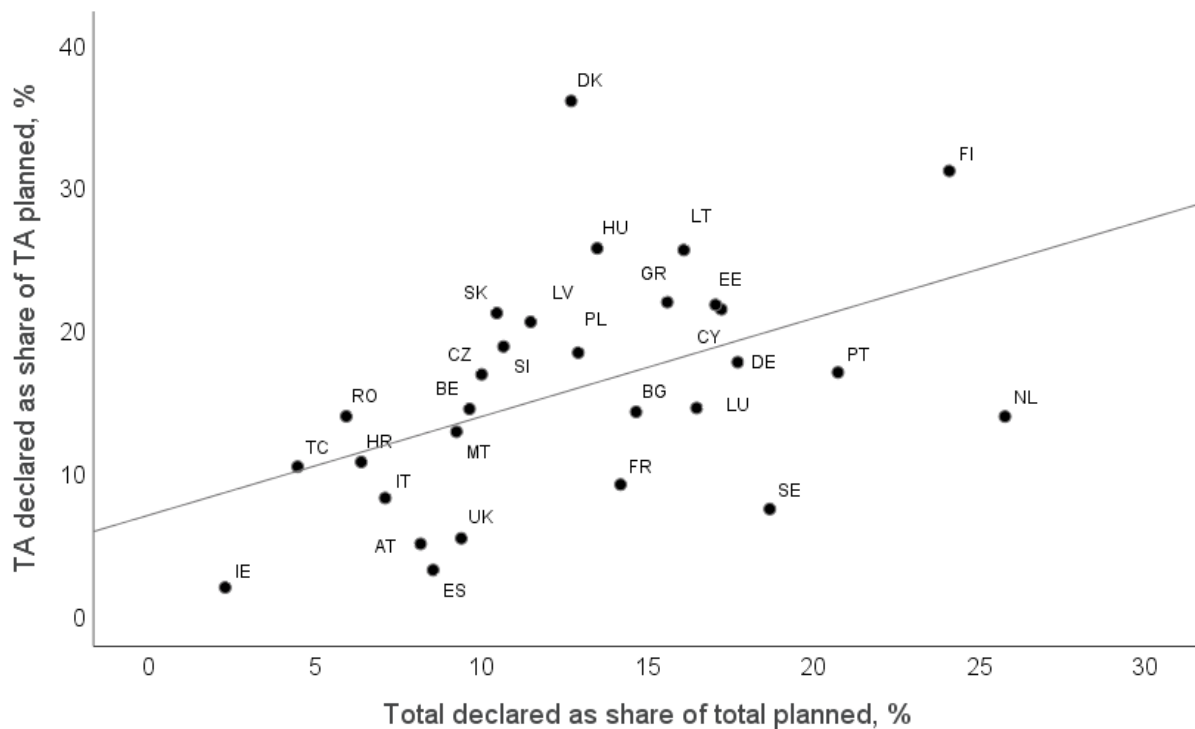


Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

The TA expenditure rate is also positively correlated with the total ESIF expenditure rate for all thematic objectives (Figure 8). The higher the overall absorption rate of ESIF funds overall, the higher the absorption of TA funding.

Not all Member State conform to this pattern. Denmark has a very high TA expenditure rate but has an average rate of spending performance in terms of overall ESIF funding. The reverse is true for the Netherlands, which has the highest rate of declared expenditure for ESIF overall, but an average performance in terms of TA expenditure declared.

**Figure 8: TA declared spend rate relative to total ESIF declared spend rate, end-2017**



Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

## 2.2 Technical Assistance Use in Selected Programmes

The previous section analysed TA allocations based on categories of intervention that Member States are required to use for programming and reporting purposes. To go beyond these generic and administrative categories of TA expenditure and provide a better understanding of allocations to capacity-building related themes and types of expenditure, a more in-depth analysis was undertaken of a sample of 25 OPs using an original model of re-categorisation of TA expenditure. The model comprises three 'thematic categories' of intervention that correspond to administrative capacity building themes identified in previous studies<sup>6</sup> (see Table 6):

- Human Resources;
- Organisational Structures & Resources;
- Systems & Tools.

The thematic category 'Human Resources' relates to the allocation of tasks and responsibilities, to the number and qualifications of staff, and to the fulfilment of recruitment need in terms of experienced, skilled and motivated staff. 'Organisational Structures and Resources' relate to the organisation of institutional and departmental

<sup>6</sup> This classification is drawn from NEI (2002) *Key Indicators for Candidate Countries to Effectively Manage the Structural Funds. Final Report*. NEI Regional and Urban Development, Rotterdam; Metis GmbH (2014) *Co-financing Salaries, Bonuses, Top-ups from Structural Funds during the 2007-2013 period*, Final Report prepared for DG Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission.

responsibilities for management, programming and implementation tasks. 'Systems and Tools' relate to the availability of instruments, methods, guidelines, manuals and procedures to enable tacit knowledge to be converted into shared and institutionalised knowledge and working practices.

A more disaggregated level of data collection and analysis was undertaken for TA 'management' projects (IC 121) which were further re-classified in ten 'types of expenditure' (Table 6). This re-classification was challenging to implement, and a number of methodological caveats need to be borne in mind in reading the data (see Section 2.2.1 below). Nevertheless, this finer-grained disaggregation of expenditure provides useful insights on the actual 'capacity building'- orientation of TA expenditure.

**Table 6: Breakdown of Thematic Categories and types of expenditure**

Thematic Category (applied to all TA expenditure, i.e. IC 121, 122, 123)	Types of expenditure (applied to IC 121 only)
<b>Human Resources</b>	1.1 Staff Professional Development, including networking
	1.2 Operational Staff Salaries
	1.3 Other
<b>Organisational Structures &amp; Resources</b>	2.1 Operational costs of institutions ( <i>other than HR and Systems &amp; Tools</i> )
	2.2 Subcontracting or Outsourcing of Programme Management Tasks ( <i>other than Systems &amp; Tools</i> )
	2.3 Other
<b>Systems &amp; Tools</b>	3.1 Management information system (MIS) & E-cohesion
	3.2 Audit systems & tools
	3.3 Anti-fraud systems & tools
	3.4. Other

### **2.2.1 Reclassification methodology and limitations**

(i) Description of the sample

The sample of OPs covered in the detailed TA data collection and analysis comprises 25 programmes covering a range of Member States, categories of regions and Funds (Table 7). The sample represents 22.7 percent of total TA funding across all EU28 OPs and a balanced mix between different types of Operational Programmes (National/Regional, LDR/TR/MDR).

(ii) Methodology and caveats

To reclassify the TA expenditure three steps were implemented:

- **Step 1 – Re-categorisation or TA data by Mas or National Experts.** This involved reclassifying TA expenditure within TA operations to the study's TA categorisation model. If this was not possible due to data missing or insufficiently disaggregated data, estimations were undertaken in step 2.

**Table 7 : Data sample summary (data at end 2017)**

Programme	TA budget	TA share of OP (%)	N of TA operations	1. Human Resources		2. Organisational Structures & Resources		3. Systems & Tools		Category of Regions	% of TA estimated
				N	€m	N	€m	N	€m		
BG -Good Governance	27	9.5	45	41	18.7	38	7.4	4	1.2	LDR	0
CZ - Technical Assistance	84	39.9	69	48	60.4	38	11.9	10	11.3	N/A	29.2
CZ-Integrated Territorial	46	1.0	14	4	38.5	12	7.4	0	0	LDR	8.6
DE -Federal Germany	150	5.6	6	2	131.7	0	0	4	17.9	MDR, TRANS	0
EE-Cohesion Policy Funding	108	3.1	6	6	87.7	6	12.7	6	7.6	LDR, N/A	0
EL-Technical Assistance	292	100	649	208	196.6	284	76.6	155	18.6	LDR, MDR, N/A, TRANS	0
ETC-Baltic Sea	2	0.8	2	2	1.5	1	0.4	1	0.3	N/A	100
ETC-CZ-PO	3	1.4	16	15	2.5	11	0.6	0	0	N/A	6.1
ETC-POCTEP	2	0.4	35	17	1.2	25	0.3	0	0	N/A	0
ETC-RO-BG	3	1.3	12	7	1.8	12	1.1	0	0	LDR, MDR	34.7
HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion	107	1.6	77	63	53.1	77	48.4	6	5.4	LDR	0
HU-Public Admin. & Civil Service	203	25.5	16	14	49.9	14	93.1	13	59.8	N/A	0
IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness	53	2.3	11	11	45.8	4	6	1	1.4	LDR, Multi	0
LT-Structural Funds	83	1.3	83	29	54.8	29	13.1	59	15.4	LDR, N/A	0
LV-Growth Employment	90	2.1	10	10	68.6	10	18.9	2	2.2	LDR, N/A	0
PL-Knowledge Education Growth	61	1.5	79	77	32.1	76	10.4	78	18.4	N/A	0
PL-Smart Growth	75	0.9	20	19	4.4	20	19.8	19	51	N/A	0
PL-Technical Assistance	491	70.1	224	158	299.4	69	33	60	158.6	N/A	0
PT-Technical Assistance	73	53.2	15	8	40	12	12.2	7	21.3	Multi	0
RO -Technical Assistance	277	100	61	45	230.6	30	42	8	4.2	LDR, MDR, Multi	95.4
RO-Human Capital	52	1.3	66	21	35.6	42	15.9	5	0.4	LDR, MDR, Multi	0
RO-Integrated Regional	70	1.0	9	9	44.6	9	25.4	0	0	LDR, MDR	41.7
SI-EU-Cohesion Policy	27	0.9	18	18	22.7	18	4	3	0.1	Multi, N/A	0.1
SK-Technical Assistance	86	54.3	65	41	47.5	26	23.6	9	15.3	LDR	0
UK-England -ERDF	60	1.6	42	42	59.6	0	0	0	0	LDR, MDR, Multi, TRANS	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2524</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>1650</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>1629.3</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>484.2</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>410.4</b>		<b>15.2</b>

- **Step 2 – Estimation by the MA or National Expert** based on qualitative rating criteria using TA financial data obtained from Mas, lists of operations and project fiches/descriptions, or other publicly available documentation. This involved allocating funding to dominant thematic categories and, for the Human Resources category, to types of expenditure based on the relative emphasis using a rating scale ranging from very low emphasis (0 percent), to low (25 percent), medium (equal), high (75 percent) and very high emphasis (100 percent).
- **Step 3 – Missing data.** If a judgement could not be made to classify the operation allocations reliably due to the unavailability of data or information for a relatively small share of the operation (less than 25 percent), the missing expenditure was eliminated from that operation and the operation was included in the dataset for analysis. If the missing data accounted for a higher share (25 percent or more of the project), the operation was omitted from the dataset altogether. This final step was only necessary for a small number of operations (2 percent of the total).

The data source used for classifying TA funding was planned allocations at the start of period. However, for four OPs the analysis had to be carried out based on declared expenditure as it was the only source of data that permitted a robust disaggregation and mapping to the re-categorised expenditure model (Table 8). For two OPs (ETC-POCTEP and ETC-RO-BG), a combination of planned and declared expenditure was used.

**Estimations were necessary for eight of the 25 OPs** in order to disaggregate financial allocations in accordance with the new categorisation model of TA expenditure (Table 7). The OPs with the highest estimation values were the ETC-Baltic Sea programme (100 percent) and RO-Technical Assistance (95.4 percent). Estimation was also required for the RO-Integrated Regional OP (41.7 percent), ETC-RO-BG OP (34.7 percent) and CZ-Technical Assistance OP (29.2 percent) and at a lower level for CZ-Integrated Territorial OP, SI-EU Cohesion Policy OP and ETC-CZ-PO OP.

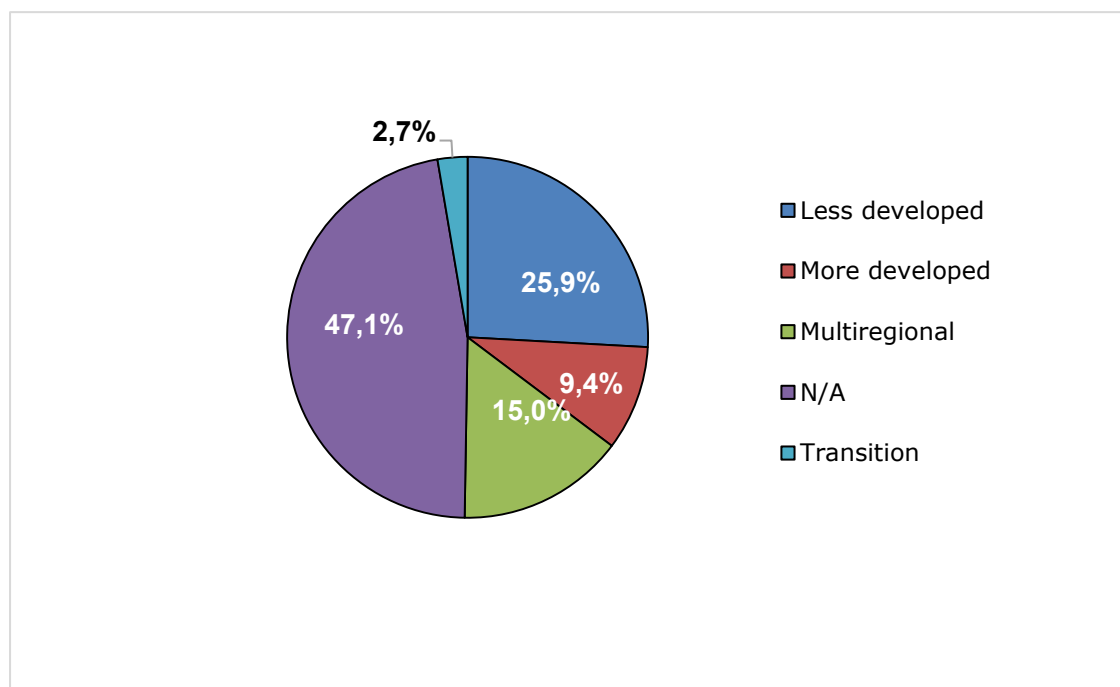
**There were significant methodological challenges relating to the Czech Republic OPs** (CZ-Integrated Territorial; CZ-Technical Assistance & ETC CZ-PO) as the study categorisation model was incompatible with the Czech monitoring system. Due to this, the research team dropped some operations with high levels of missing data, namely where over 25 percent of the budget could not be mapped onto the types of expenditure used in the study. Operations with up to 25 percent of missing data were included in the analysis but the missing data was excluded from the total operation budget.<sup>7</sup> However, this only applied to a small number of operations. The final dataset comprised 98 percent of the TA operations across the sample of OPs.

**LDR are the dominant category of region in the sample**, accounting for over 25 percent of the total TA funding to the 25 OPs (see Figure 9), followed by MDR (over nine percent) and TR (c. three percent). Multiregional OPs covering different categories of regions account for 15 percent of the TA funding in the sample. However, the majority of TA allocations fall under the N/A group because they cannot be grouped into categories of regions, as they refer to the CF and Territorial Cooperation OPs whose expenditure is not regionally disaggregated.

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<sup>7</sup> CZ-Integrated Territorial: eight projects omitted, four projects estimated. CZ Technical Assistance: 12 projects omitted, 40 projects estimated. ETC-CZ-PO: Nine projects omitted, 13 projects estimated. One project in ETC-RO-BG also involved estimation to address missing data.

**Figure 9: Distribution of TA allocation by category of region**



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ion analyses the distribution of TA funding across thematic categories. Figures 10 and 11 show the distribution of TA allocations<sup>8</sup> across each thematic category (also called 'themes', for short):

- (i) **Human Resources**, comprising salaries, professional development, and other HR related spending;
- (ii) **Organisational Structures and Resources**, comprising operational costs, subcontracting/outsourcing, and other expenditure related to this heading; and
- (iii) **Systems and Tools**, inclusive of management/IT system and e-cohesion, audit, anti-fraud, and instruments, methods, guidelines, etc. relating to other programme management tasks.

**Most TA funding is allocated to Human Resources (65 percent)**, followed by Organisational Structures and Resources (19 percent) and Systems and Tools (16 percent) (see Figure 10). With the exception of two programmes, all OPs allocate more than half of TA funding to the Human Resources (HR) category, with nine programmes allocating more than three quarters of HR budgets to this category. The lowest share of TA funding allocated to Human Resources is found in the PL-Smart Growth OP (5.8 percent) followed by HU-Public Administration (24.6 percent).

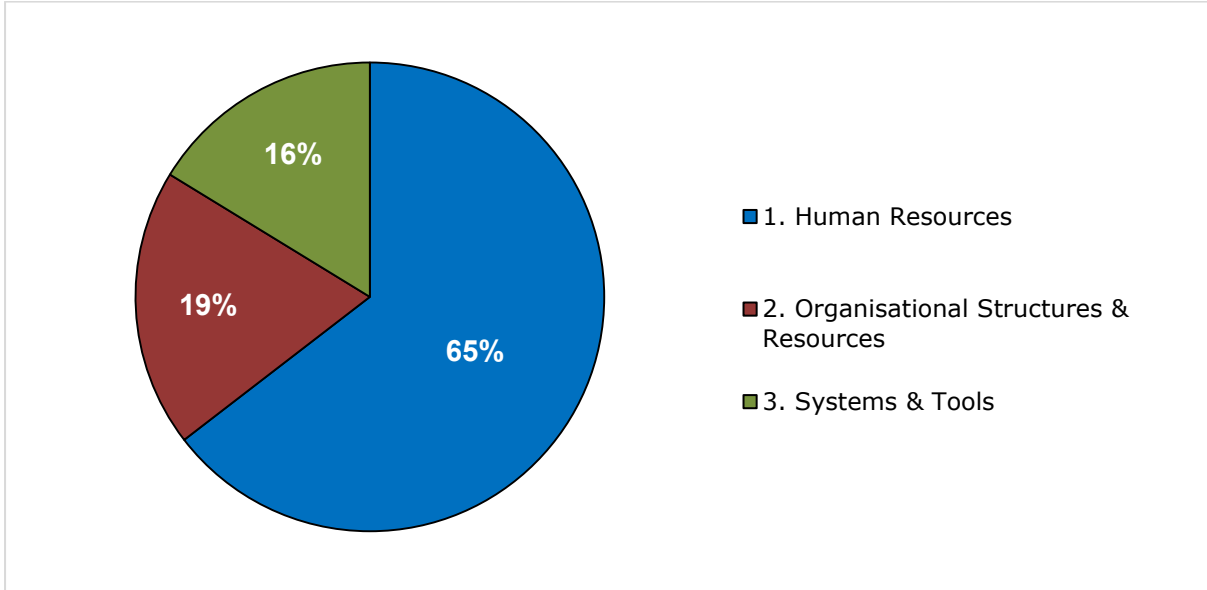
**Organisational Structures and Resources are allocated up to 20 percent of TA budgets** in two thirds of the OPs and no funding in one case (DE-Federal). The largest shares of funding under this category can be found in the programmes HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion and HU-Public Administration & Civil Service, at 45 percent of TA funding in both cases.

**Systems and Tools generally receive the lowest TA allocations**, with the exception of the PL-Smart Growth OP (68 percent). The next highest shares (of around 30 percent) are in a further two Polish OPs (PL-TA, PL-Knowledge, Education and Growth), the HU-

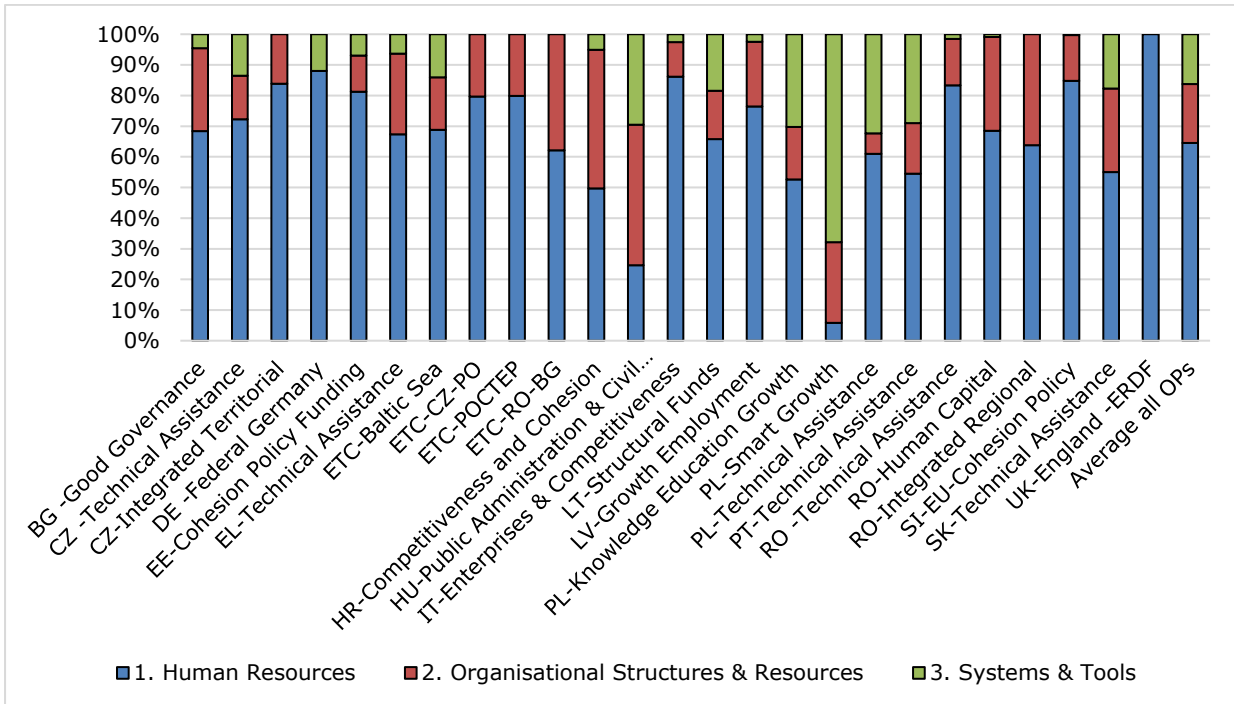
<sup>8</sup> See Annex IV for absolute values of funding.

Public Administration & Civil Service OP, and PT-Technical Assistance OP. By contrast, five OPs have not allocated funding to this category, including three out of the four ETC OPs as well as the Czech and Romanian regional programmes.

**Figure 10: Distribution of TA funding across thematic categories**



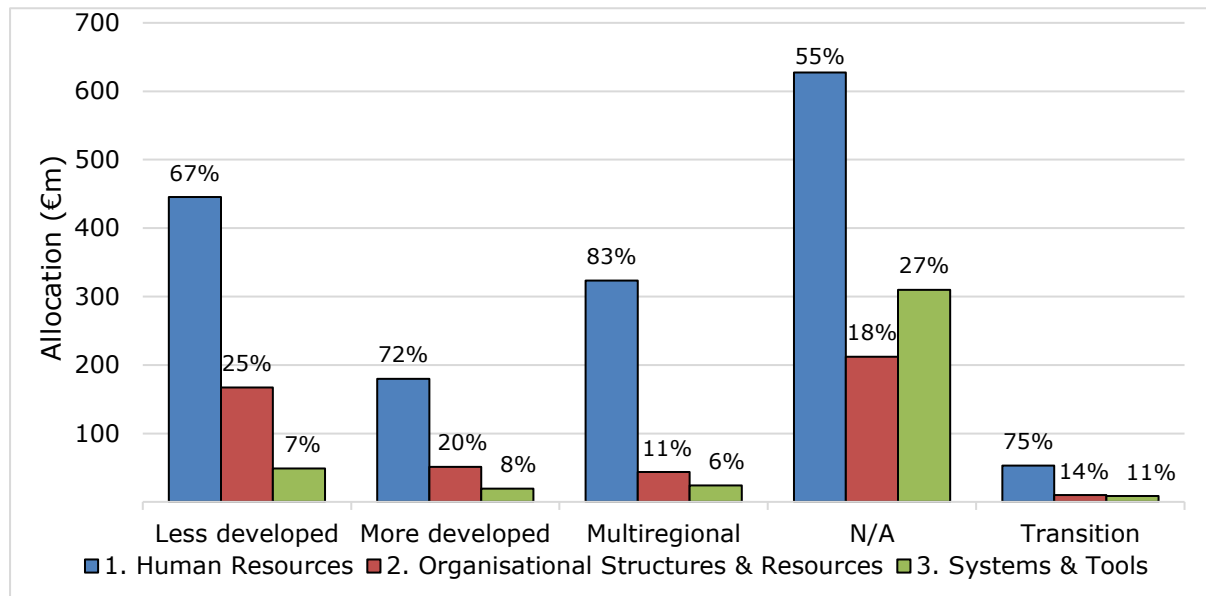
**Figure 11: Distribution of TA allocations to thematic categories by OP**



Analysis of the distribution of **funding to TA themes by type of regions** shows that multi-regional TA programmes allocate the largest share of funding to Human Resources (83 percent, see Figure 12). TR and MDR programmes also allocate above average funding to Human Resources at 75 percent and 72 percent respectively, compared to 67 percent in LDR programmes. MDR programmes allocate significantly more TA funding to

Organisational Structures and Resources (20 percent) than TR (14 percent) and LDR programmes (11 percent). The highest share of funding to the Systems and Tools thematic category can be seen in TR programmes at 11 percent, with all other regional categories allocating shares of 6-8 percent of TA funding.

**Figure 12: Distribution of TA funding to themes by category of region (€m and %)**

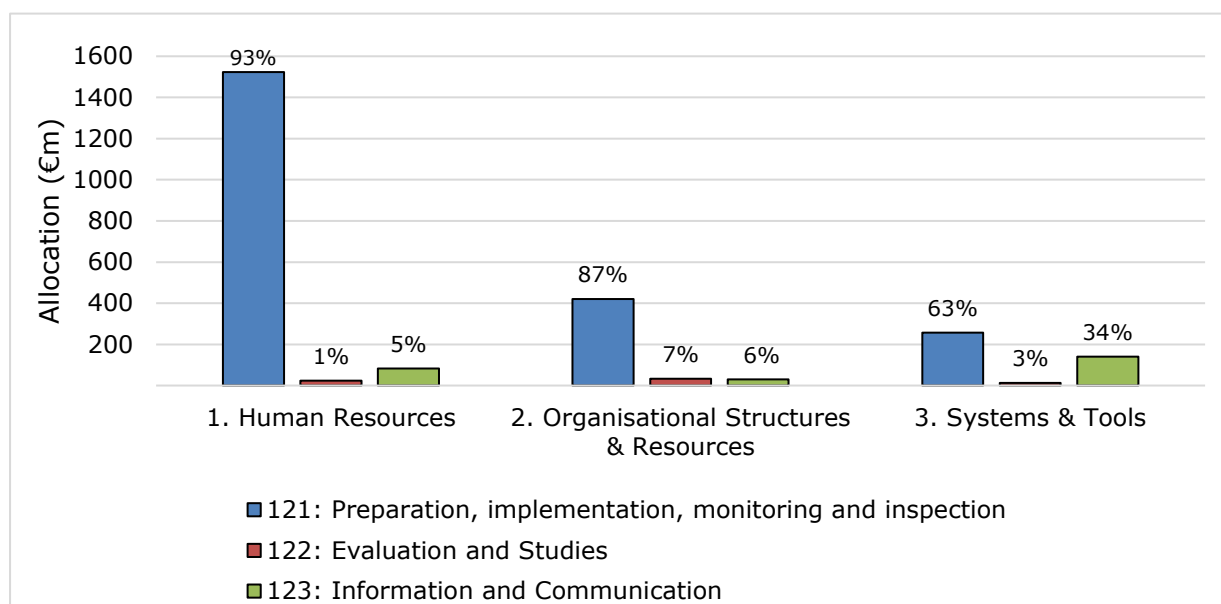


**The majority of TA operations fund management tasks (IC 121) under all three categories of expenditure, albeit with variations (Figure 13):**

- **The vast majority of TA funding under the dominant Human Resources category corresponds with 'management interventions' (IC 121)**, which account for €1,523 million or 94 percent of TA funding under this category (Figure 13). This is followed by evaluations and studies (five percent of TA funding) and information and communication interventions (one percent).
- **Management interventions (IC 121) also account for the majority of TA funding under the Organisational Structures and Resources thematic category (87 percent)**. The remaining funding under this thematic category is split evenly between 'evaluations and studies' (IC 122) and 'information and communication' (IC123) expenditure.
- While management interventions are the main type of intervention under the Systems and Tools thematic category (62 percent of funding), **'information and communication interventions' (IC 123) represent a much larger share under this thematic category (34 percent)** than under the Human Resources or Organisational categories. The corresponding share allocated to evaluations and studies (one percent) is consequently much lower.



**Figure 13: Distribution of TA funding to themes by category of expenditure (€m and %)**



### 2.2.3 Technical Assistance Use by Types of Expenditure

A more disaggregated analysis of TA funding to types of expenditure has been undertaken for management interventions (IC 121 projects). The key findings from this analysis are as follows :

- TA funding to Human Resources is almost fully allocated to staff salaries;
- There is a significant concentration of TA on operational staff salaries, subcontracting or outsourcing of programme management tasks and operational costs of institutions;
- TA funding to Staff Professional Development, including networking, is marginal (7 percent). However, if benchmarked with existing studies on the private sector, this proportion appears significant;
- TA support for staff salaries is allocated predominantly to IBs (45 percent) and MAs (11 percent).

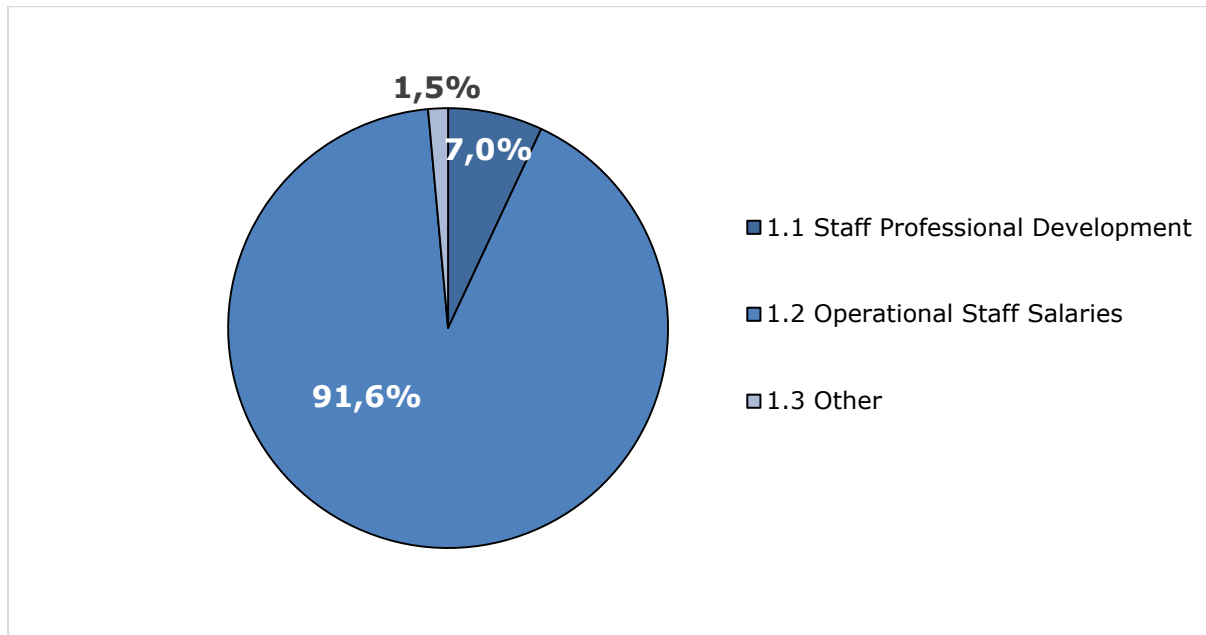
These findings indicate that TA is mostly allocated to deal with the contingent need linked to the management and delivery of the funds, possibly filling existing staffing shortages in the MAs of the administrations concerned. Thus, the longer-term impact in terms of ACB can be expected to be limited. The main outlier is Estonia which focuses most of its Human Resources budget on the 'Staff professional development' expenditure type (71.2 percent). Other programmes with substantial relative funding allocated to staff professional development are PL-Smart Growth (31 percent) and HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion (20.4 percent). The reasons for the variations across programmes cannot be explained by allocation data and merit further investigation.

- (i) Human resources

**The vast majority of TA funding for management interventions (IC121) in the sample of 25 OPs examined under the HR thematic category is concentrated on staff salaries.** This indicates a propensity and possibly need of OP Managing Authorities to use TA for management and delivery functions, which leaves little room for spending on ACB activities.

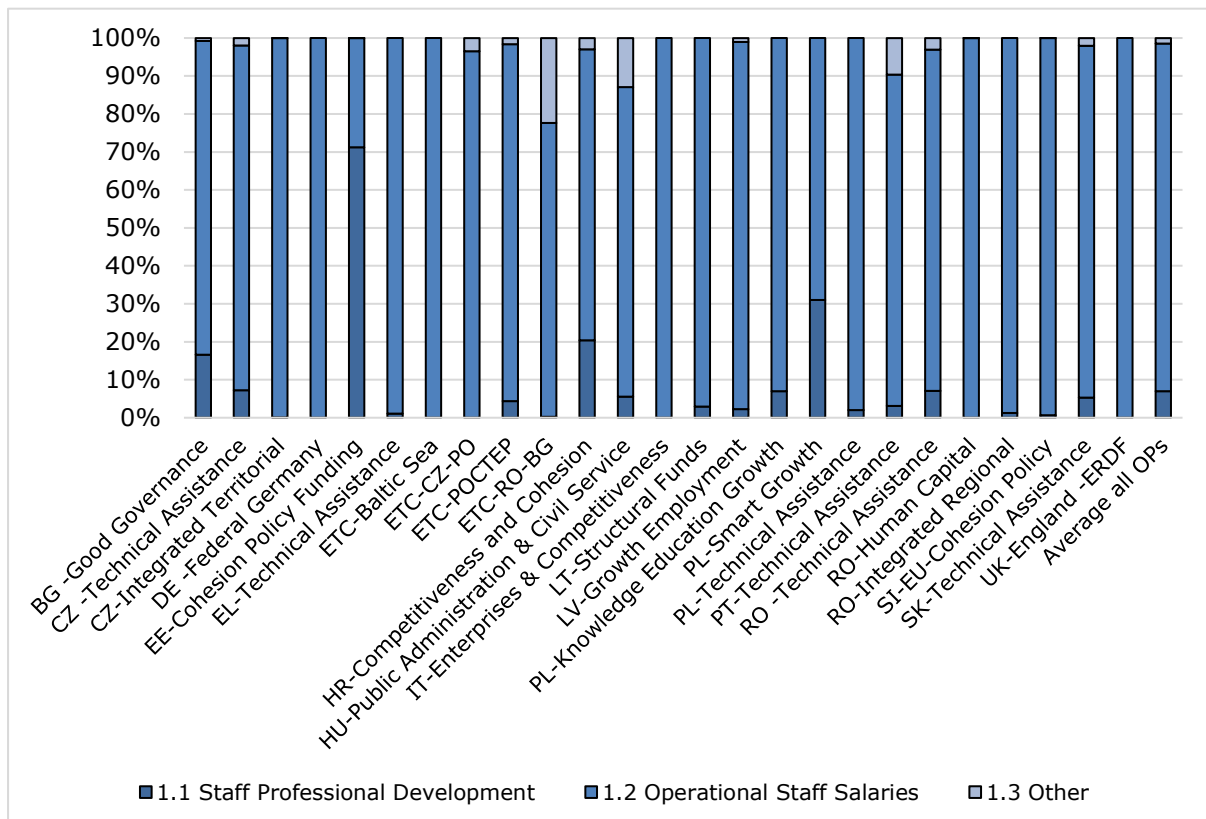
Staff salaries account for 93 percent of Human Resources funding across all programmes (Figure 14), or 63 percent of funding for IC 121 operations.

**Figure 14: Distribution of types of expenditure within Human Resources**



As shown in Figure 15, below, with the exception of Estonia, all OPs allocate more than 70 percent of their Human Resources allocations to salaries, rising to 95-100 percent in a majority (13/25) of programmes.

**Figure 15: Distribution of types of expenditure within Human Resources within OPs**



As noted, the lowest share allocated to salaries can be found in Estonia (28 percent), which focuses most of its Human Resources budget on the 'Staff professional development' expenditure type (71.2 percent). The only other programmes with substantial relative funding allocated to staff professional development are PL-Smart Growth (31 percent), HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion (20.4 percent) and BG-Good Governance (16.6 percent). Overall, however, **staff professional development accounts for only seven percent of HR expenditure (or five percent of funding to IC 121 projects).**

There is no directly comparable data available to benchmark the appropriateness of this level of funding to staff development in the public sector. However, a survey of 310 small and large private, public, and not-for-profit organizations from around the world found that learning expenditure accounted for 4.3 percent of staff salaries in 2016 (an increase from four percent in 2015) which is around half the level found in our sample of TA programmes.<sup>9</sup> This suggests that the sums allocated to staff professional development in the OPs analysed is significant even if low in relative terms to other TA expenditure.

A small number of programmes have sizeable shares of funding under the 'other' HR expenditure type – namely, ETC-RO-BG (22 percent), HU–Public Administration (12.9 percent) and PT-Technical Assistance (9.6 percent), although the vast majority of programmes have very little or no funding under 'other' expenditure. For example, in the case of HU–Public Administration, other costs relate to attending conferences, study missions, the organisation of information days for beneficiaries and corresponding travel, accommodation and per diem expenditure, as well as the continuation of monitoring committee activities of the previous programmes.

**Staff salaries are the main type of expenditure under Human Resources as a proportion of total TA funding too** (Figure 15), **accounting for 55.3 percent of total TA** and rising to over 80 percent in the CZ-Integrated Territorial OP (83 percent) and DE-Federal OP (88 percent). A further nine OPs have allocated two-thirds to three quarters of all TA to staff salaries. At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest shares of total TA funding to salaries can be seen in the UK-England ERDF OP and PL-Smart Growth.

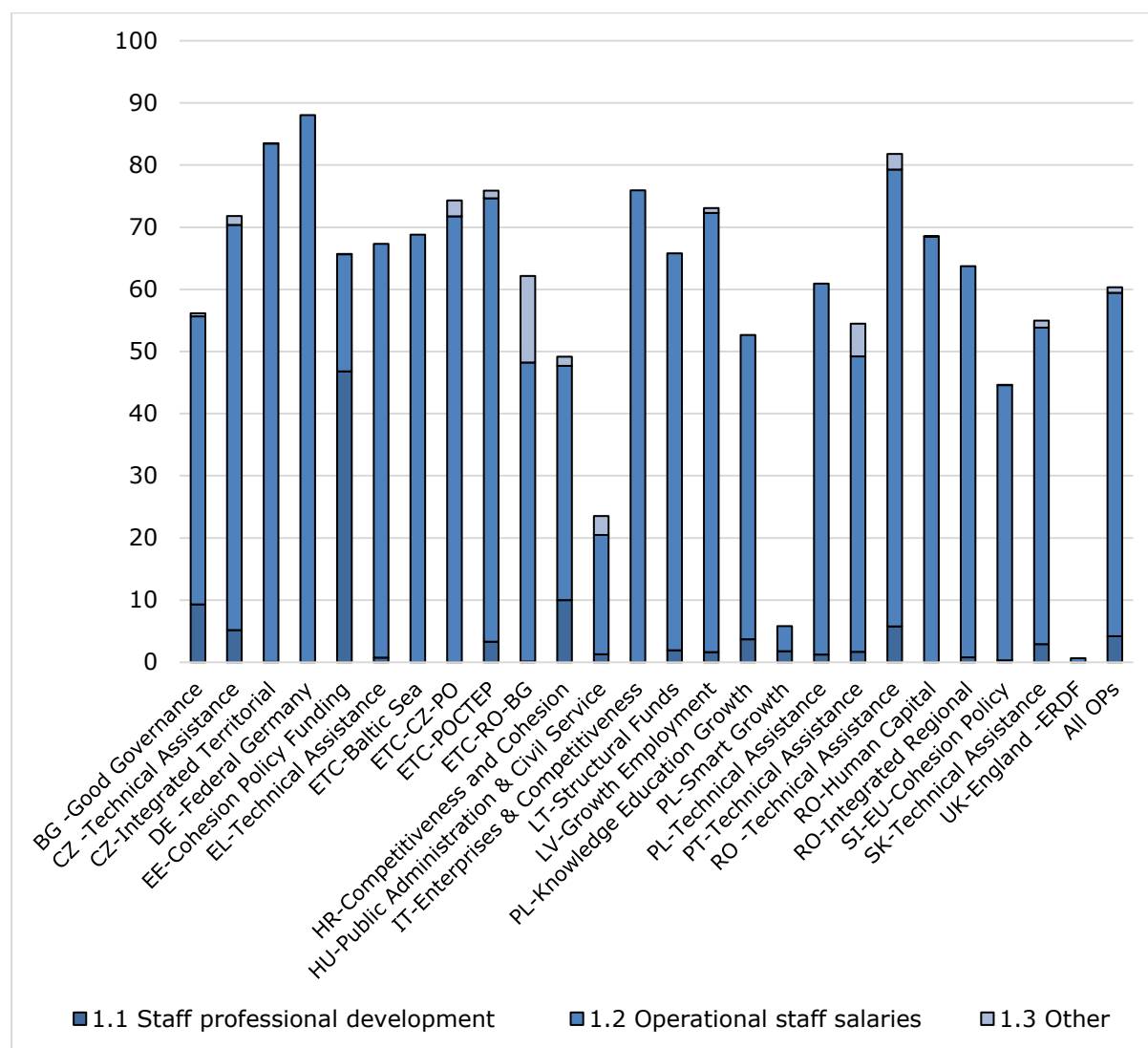
**The Staff Professional Development expenditure type is less prominent, representing less than five percent of total TA on average.** EE-Cohesion Policy Funding is the only programme with a large share of TA funding allocated to staff professional development (47 percent of TA), followed by HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion and BG-Good Governance with significantly lower shares (ten percent and nine percent respectively).

The 'other' type of expenditure represents just one percent of TA funding across all OP and is only substantial in ETC-RO-BG (14 percent).

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<sup>9</sup> ATD (2015) *State of the Industry Report 2015*, Association for Talent Development, Alexandria, Virginia: [https://www.astdalaska.org/resources/ATD\\_Research\\_\\_State\\_of\\_the\\_Industry.pdf](https://www.astdalaska.org/resources/ATD_Research__State_of_the_Industry.pdf)

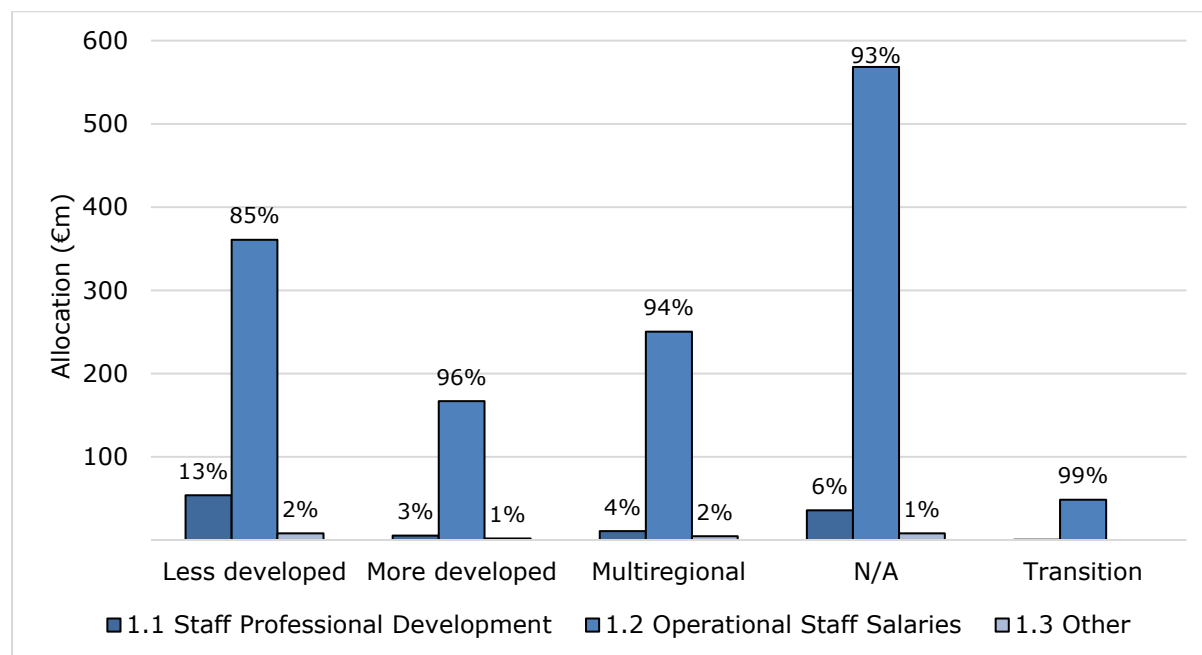
**Figure 16: Human Resources expenditure types as share of total TA (%)**



**Analysis of HR-related TA funding to types of expenditure across categories of regions (Figure 17) shows that there are no significant differences between types of regions in their allocative choices:** with the exception of LDR regions, that allocate to staff salaries 87% of their TA funding under the Human Resources category, all other types of regions allocate to staff operational staff salaries more of 90 percent of total HR-related TA funding (99 percent for TR regions, followed by 96 percent by MDR (96 percent) an 94 percent in multi-regional programmes (94 percent).

Consequently, relatively small shares of HR funding are allocated to staff professional development, although **LDR programmes allocate significantly more funding to this (13 percent of HR-related TA expenditure)** relative to the other categories of regions.

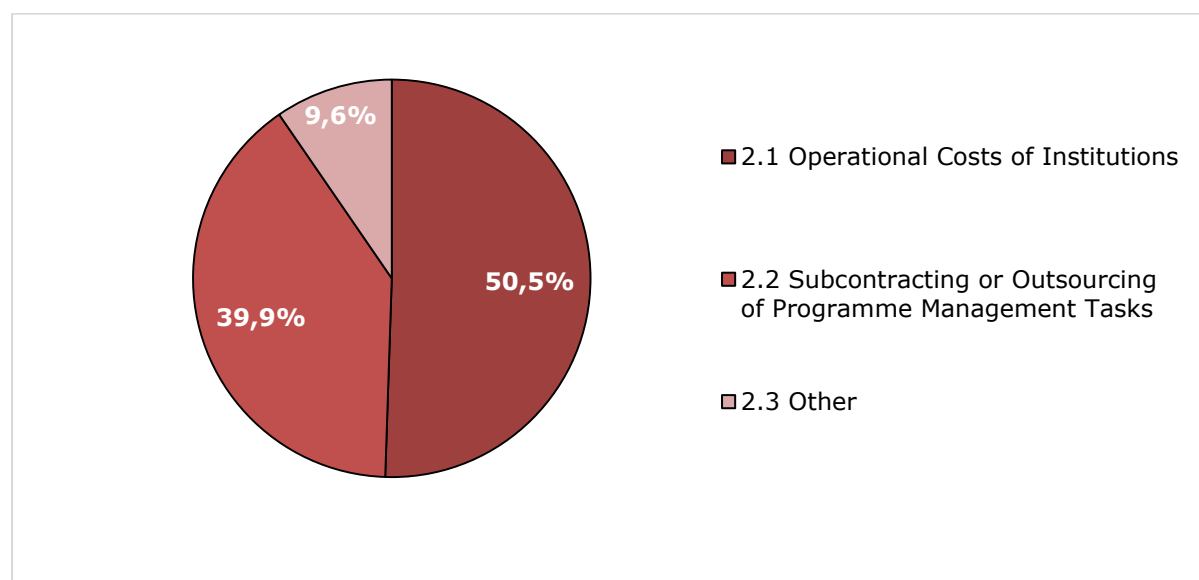
**Figure 17: TA allocation to Human Resources by category of region (€m and %)**



(ii) Organisational structures and resources

The distribution of TA funding across types of expenditure within 'Organisational Structures and Resources' (OSR) for each OP is illustrated in Figure 18, distinguishing operational costs, subcontracting/outsourcing and other expenditure.

**Figure: 18: Distribution of expenditure types within Organisational Structures and Resources**

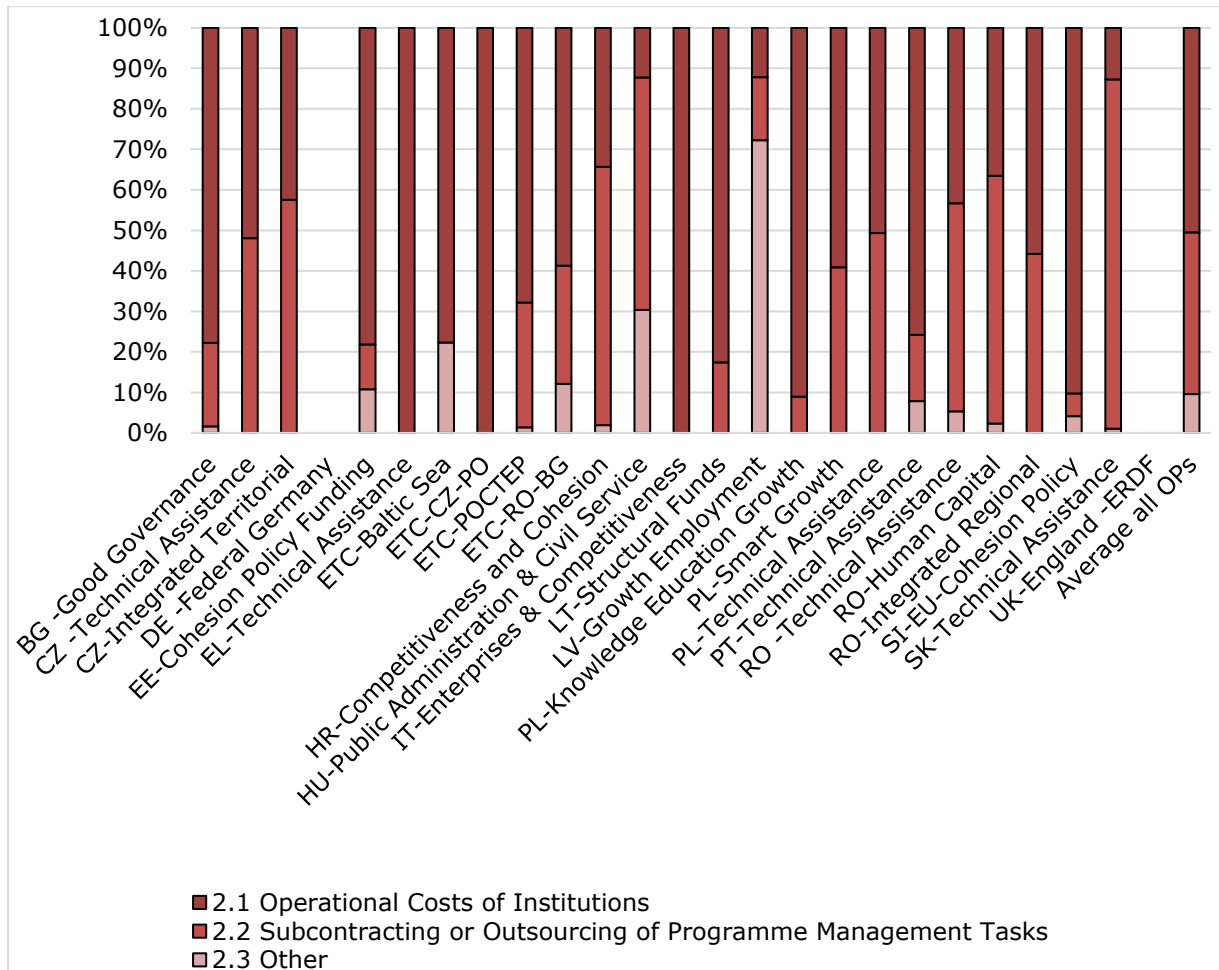


As illustrated in Figure 18, **the largest expenditure type within OSR is 'Operational Costs of Institutions'**, which accounts for around 50 percent of all funding to this thematic category (or 10 percent of funding to IC 121 projects). This type of expenditure accounts for more than half of OSR funding in 11 (out of 25) programmes and all of the OSR funding in two cases (EL-Technical Assistance and IT-Enterprises).

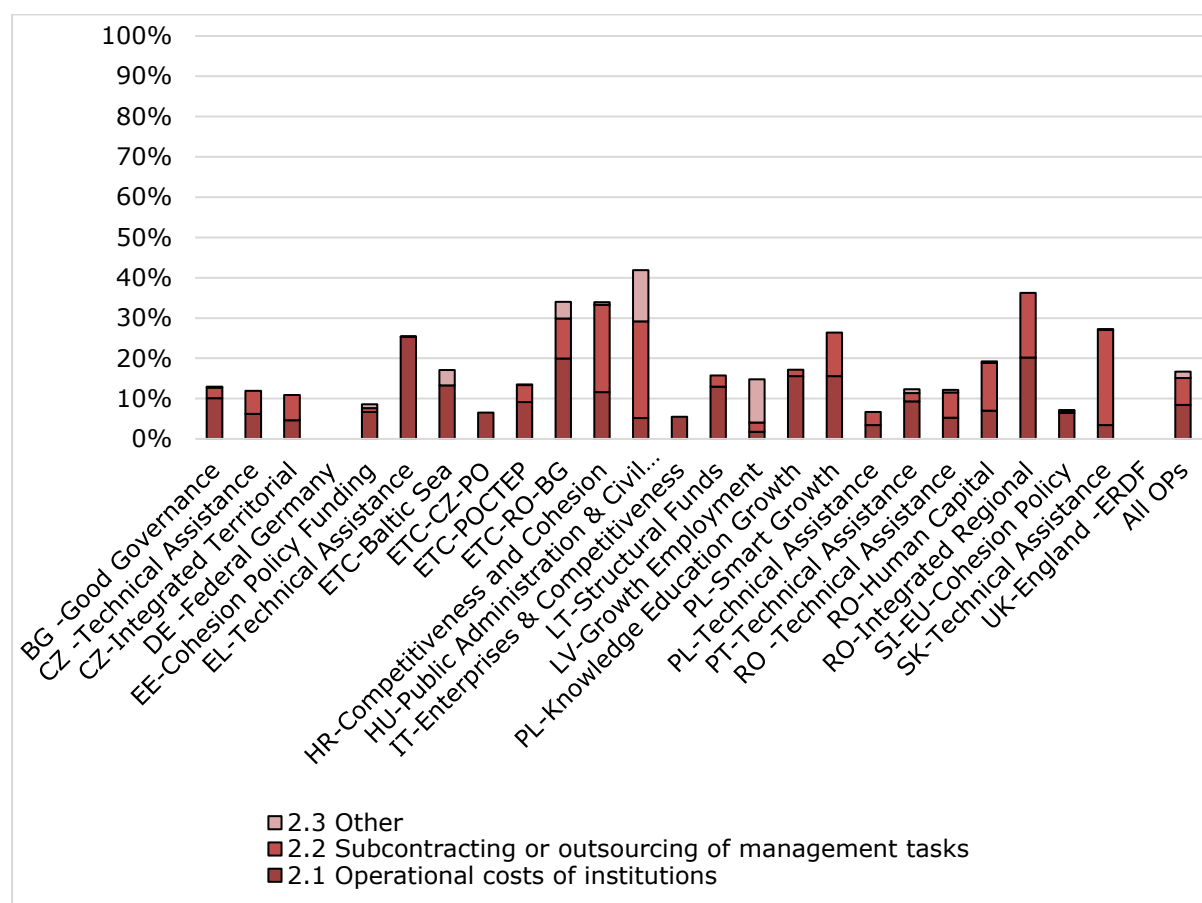
**'Subcontracting or Outsourcing of Programme Management Tasks' is the other main type of expenditure within OSR**, accounting for 39.9 percent of the thematic category (or 8 percent of funding to IC 121 projects). Figure 19 shows that the highest funding to 'Subcontracting or Outsourcing of Programme Management Tasks' can be found in HU-Public Administration & Civil Service (57.4 percent) and SK-Technical (86.3percent) Assistance. The 'Other' expenditure type accounts for 9 percent of the OSR thematic category budget. LV Growth Employment is the only programme to allocate a high share to the 'other' category (50.7 percent) which are 'indirect (mainly administrative) costs'.

The largest greatest share of expenditure on operational costs of institutions (see Figure 19) is in the EL-Technical Assistance OP (25 percent) and the ETC-RO-BG and RO-Integrated Regional OPs (20 percent in both), but has a much lower range of 2-7 percent of total TA in most other cases.

**Figure 19: Distribution of expenditure types within Organisational Structures and Resources**



**Figure 20: Organisational Structures and Resources expenditure types as share of total TA**



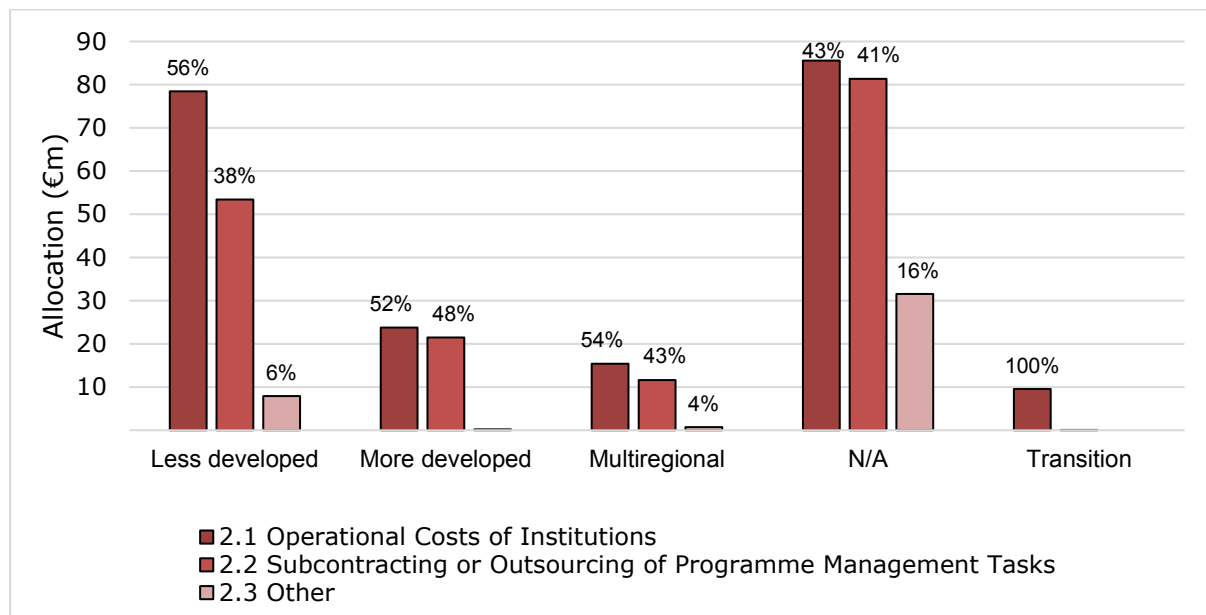
As shown in Figure 20, **outsourcing or subcontracting of management tasks has a similar distribution of funding as operational costs**, with three programmes allocating almost a quarter of TA funding to this types of expenditure - HU-Public Administration & Civil Service (24 percent); SK-Technical Assistance (24 percent); and HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion (22 percent) – and the vast majority of programmes allocating just 1-6 percent of TA to outsourcing or subcontracting of management tasks.

Lastly, 'other' expenditure represents just 2 percent of TA across the OPs with only two programmes allocating more than five percent of TA: HU-Public Administration & Civil Service (13 percent); and LV-Growth Employment (11 percent)

In terms of distribution across categories of regions (Figure 21), with the exception of TR regions, that devote the entirety of their TA allocations related to Organisational Structures and Resources to operational costs, the other groups of regions and multi-regional programmes all devote about 50 percent to this type of expenditure (LDR 56 percent, MDR 52 percent and multi-regional programmes 53 percent).

**Subcontracting or outsourcing receives relatively lower funding in LDR** than MDR and TR.

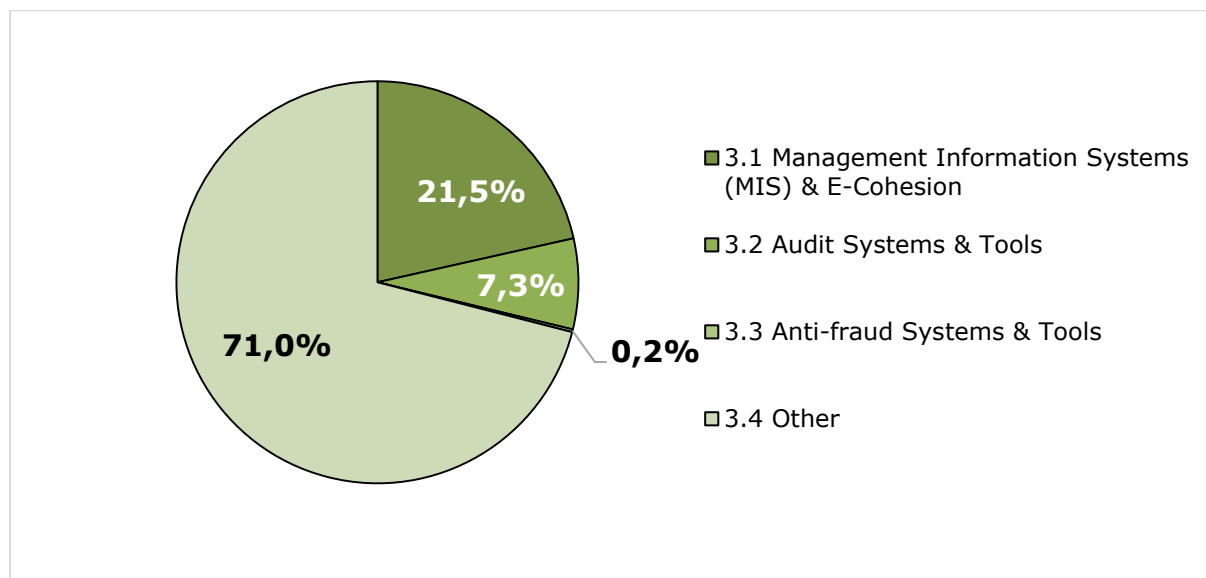
**Figure 21: Distribution of Organisational Structures and Resources' expenditure types by category of region (€m and %).**



(iii) Systems and Tools

The distribution of TA funding to types of expenditure within the Systems and Tools category is illustrated in Figure 22, distinguishing management/IT system and e-cohesion, audit, anti-fraud, and other expenditure.

**Figure 22: Distribution of expenditure types within Systems and Tools**



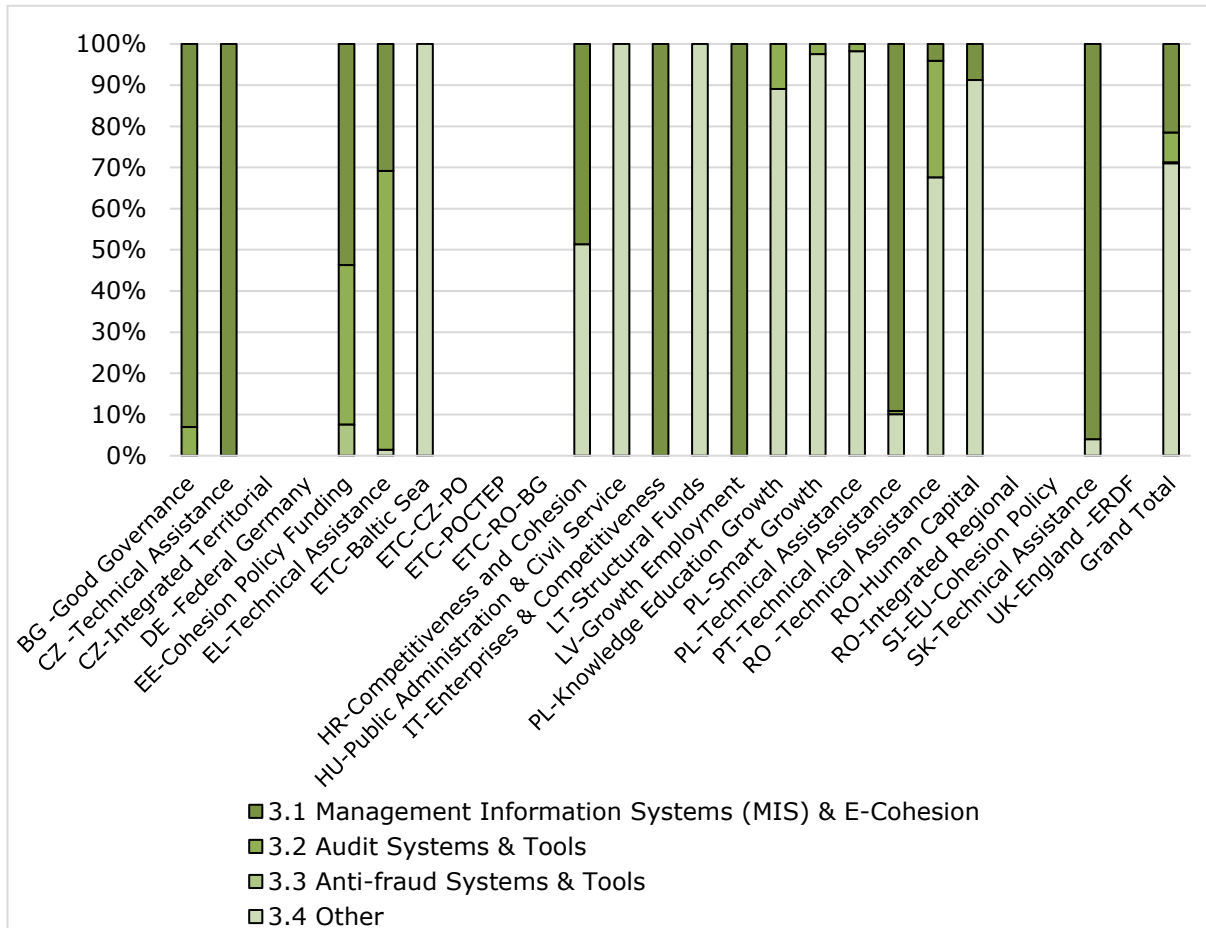
The major expenditure type is the 'Other' category (that excludes audit, anti-fraud and management information system systems and tools), accounting for approximately 71 percent of systems and tools funding (or 8 percent of funding to IC 121 projects). An aggregate overview for all 25 OPs is provided in Figure 23. Around one third of programmes (7 out of 25) allocate more than 85 percent of TA funding to the 'Other' activity, notably the three Polish programmes and the HU-Public Administration OP. In the Polish cases, this category mainly includes support for management and implementation (not classified elsewhere), e.g. functioning of steering committees,



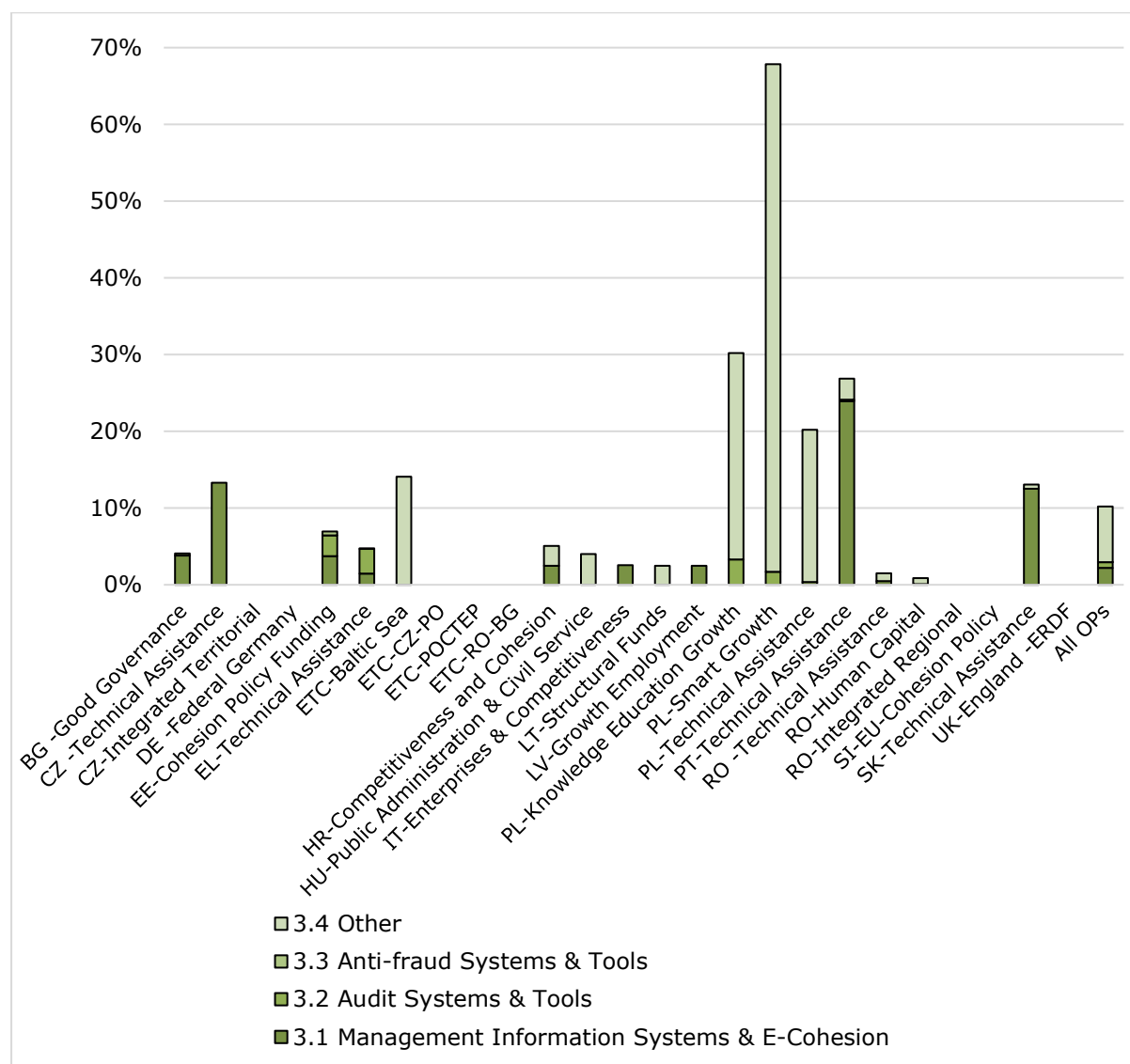
working groups, conferences and meetings; information and promotion activities; and evaluation. The latter is partly a result of the decision in Poland to simplify procedures and not to implement very small projects related to IC 122 (evaluation) and IC 123 (information and communication) categories, but to cluster expenditure into bigger TA umbrella projects, that were classified as IC 121. In the HU-Public Administration OP, the 'other' category includes expenditure related to communication systems/tools, but are not classified as 'communication' (IC 123) projects because most of the funding is for management (IC 121) tasks.

**The second most prevalent type of expenditure is Management Information Systems (MIS) & E-Cohesion**, accounting for 22 percent of systems and tools TA funding (or 2.5 percent of funding to IC 121 projects). This is followed by **Audit Systems & Tools** (seven percent), which is supported by a third (8) of the programmes in the sample. The final activity 'Anti-fraud Systems & Tools' represents less than one percent of funding, and only applies to the EE-Cohesion Policy Funding OP. This is likely to be due to the fact that other OPs and Member States do not separate these types of expenditure in their accounts and that they are likely to be included under other types of expenditure.

**Figure 23: Distribution of expenditure types within Systems and Tools by OP**



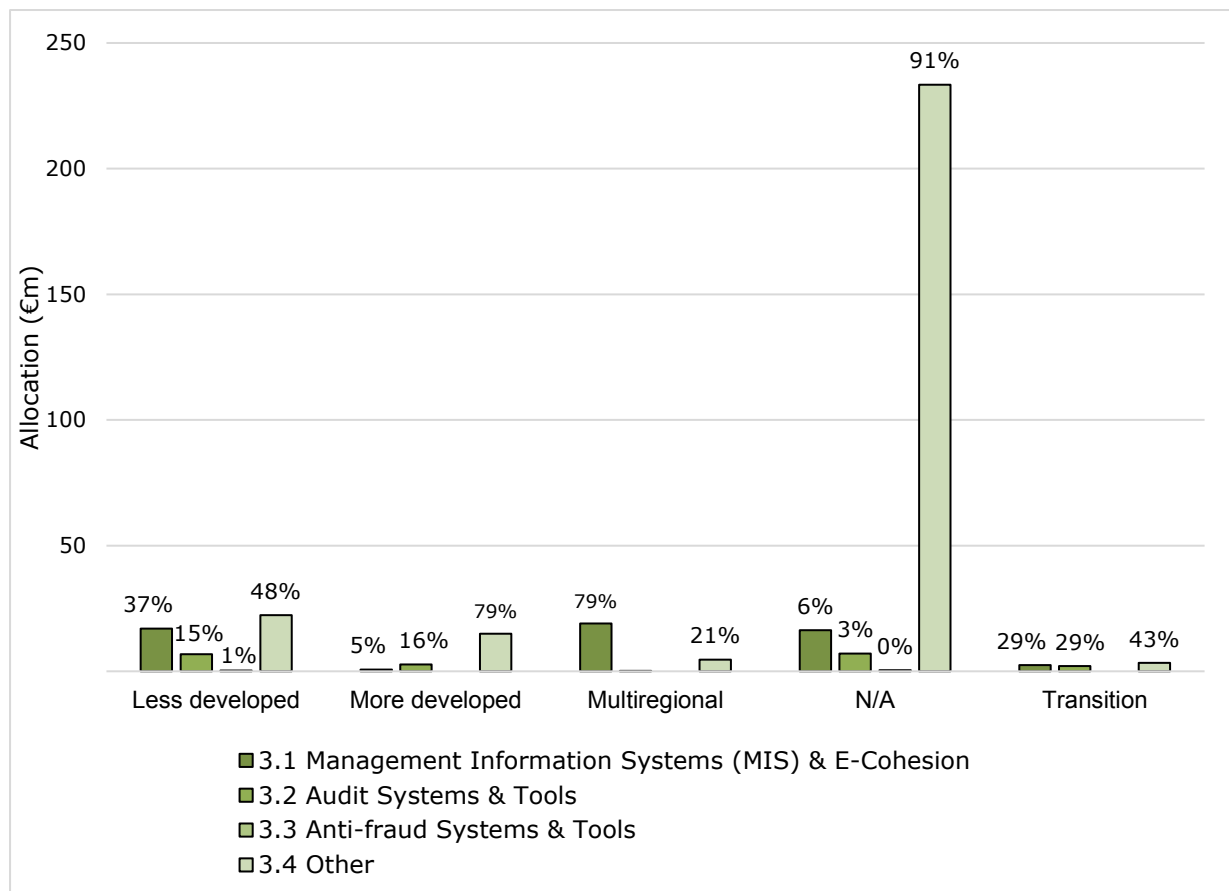
**Figure 24: Systems and tools expenditure types as share of total TA by OP.**



**The allocation of funding to different types of Systems and Tools expenditure as a share of total TA** is illustrated in Figure 24. Again, the 'other' expenditure type remains substantial in the three Polish OPs, while being absent or insignificant in the vast majority of the programmes. The MIS & E-Cohesion types of expenditure represents the highest share of total TA in the PT-Technical Assistance OP (24 percent), followed by SK-Technical Assistance and CZ -Technical Assistance (13 percent in both cases), but is marginal elsewhere with an average of two percent of TA. Even lower TA funding shares are allocated to audit systems and tools, where the greatest proportions represent 2-3 percent of total TA funding in four programmes (PL-Smart Growth, EE-Cohesion Policy Funding, EL-Technical Assistance, PL-Knowledge Education Growth).

Analysis of the distribution of Systems and Tools expenditure across categories of regions (Figure 25) shows that **'other' systems and tools (i.e. unrelated to audit, fraud and IT management) represent the dominant type of expenditure across all categories of region**. Management Information Systems (MIS) & E-cohesion account for the greatest share in multi-region programmes (79 percent) and LDR programmes (37 percent). There is no funding provided for this type of expenditure in the MDR programmes in the study sample. As noted, 'Anti-fraud Systems & Tools' expenditure is only supported in one MDR programme - EE-Cohesion Policy Funding.

**Figure 25: Distribution of Organisational Structures and Resources expenditure types by category of region (€m and %)**



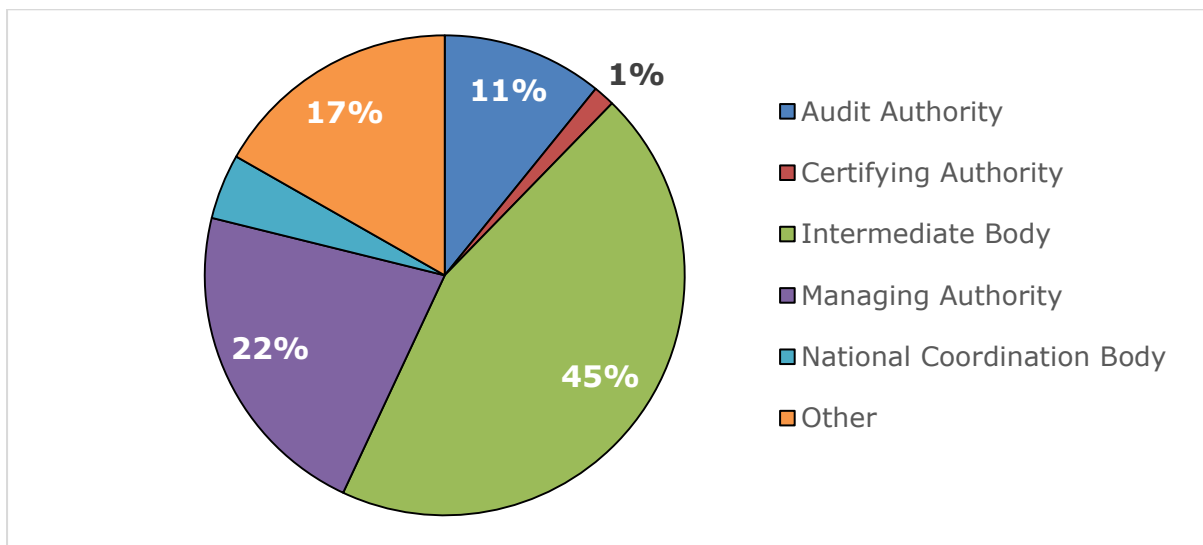
### 2.2.4 TA funding to salaries by institution

**The largest share of TA funding to staff salaries is allocated to Intermediate Bodies** (44.7 percent), followed by Managing Authorities (21.9 percent) and Audit Authorities (10.8 percent). Far less funding is allocated to salaries for the remaining institutional beneficiaries: National Coordination Bodies (4.4 percent) and Certifying Authorities (1.5 percent).

Among the beneficiaries of TA funding for staff salaries across the programmes, the major institutional shares are accounted for by Intermediate Bodies, Managing Authorities and Audit Authorities (Table 8).

- **Intermediate Bodies** (IB) are allocated the entire staff salaries budget in five programmes, namely EL-Technical Assistance, ETC-RO-BG, PL-Smart Growth, RO-Human Capital, and UK-England ERDF. A further five programmes allocate 75-90 percent of their TA salary budget to IBs: SI-EU-Cohesion Policy (74.8 percent), LT-Structural Funds (78.1 percent), RO-Integrated Regional (78.9 percent), CZ-Integrated Territorial (92.4 percent) and PL-Knowledge Education Growth (92.8 percent). By contrast, eight programmes do not provide any funding for Intermediate Body salaries.

**Figure 26: Share of salary costs between institution type (IC 121)**



- **Managing Authorities (MA)** represent a high share of TA funding to salaries in three programmes: ETC-Baltic Sea (96.8 percent), IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness (83.7 percent), RO -Technical Assistance (62.7 percent). Around a third of programmes allocate 10-30 percent of TA funding to staff salaries, while another third of OPs do not provide any funding to MA staff salaries.
- **Audit Authorities (AA)** are allocated very little or no funding for salary costs in three quarters of programmes. However, some programmes do have significant shares of HR funding for AA salary costs: RO-Technical Assistance (27.6 percent), BG-Good Governance (28.7 percent), HU-Public Administration & Civil Service (38.3 percent) and CZ-Technical Assistance (52.8 percent).
- **National Coordinating Bodies** account for a significant share of salary costs in only four programmes: BG-Good governance, CZ-Technical Assistance, PT-Technical Assistance and SK-Technical Assistance.
- **Certifying Bodies** make minimal use of TA funding for salary costs except in the BG-Good Governance and SK-Technical Assistance programme.

**Table 8: Share of salary costs by type of institution type**

Ops	Salary Costs Total (€m)	Share of salary costs (%) to:						N/A
		Audit Authority	Certifying Authority	Intermediate Body	Managing Authority	National Coordination Body		
BG -Good Governance	15	28.7	11.0	0.0	19.3	33.5	7.5	
CZ -Technical Assistance	55	52.8	7.3	0.0	8.5	20.9	10.6	
CZ-Integrated Territorial	38	0.0	0.0	92.4	7.6	0.0	0.0	
DE -Federal Germany	132	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	100	
EE-Cohesion Policy Funding	24	0.0	0.0	54.6	45.4	0.0	0.0	
EL-Technical Assistance	194	0.0	0.3	99.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	
ETC-Baltic Sea	2	3.2	0.0	0.0	96.8	0.0	0.0	
ETC-CZ-PO	2	0.0	0.0	46.1	31.8	0.0	22.1	
ETC-POCTEP	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	51.8	0.0	48.2	
ETC-RO-BG	1	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	
HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion	41	1.8	2.8	72.3	18.4	0.0	4.7	
HU-Public Administration & Civil Service	39	38.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	61.7	
IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness	40	0.5	0.0	15.8	83.7	0.0	0.0	
LT-Structural Funds	53	4.8	1.2	78.1	11.1	0.0	4.8	
LV-Growth Employment	66	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.9	0.0	79.1	
PL-Knowledge Education Growth	30	0.0	0.0	92.8	0.0	0.0	7.2	
PL-Smart Growth	3	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	
PL-Technical Assistance	293	13.7	0.0	57.0	29.3	0.0	0.0	
PT-Technical Assistance	35	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	
RO -Technical Assistance	203	27.6	3.4	5.7	62.7	0.0	0.6	
RO-Human Capital	36	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	
RO-Integrated Regional	44	0.0	0.0	78.9	21.1	0.0	0.0	
SI-EU-Cohesion Policy	22	4.5	1.3	74.8	19.4	0.0	0.0	
SK-Technical Assistance	44	9.9	12.1	0.0	23.7	24.5	29.8	
UK-England -ERDF	0.38	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	
<b>All Ops</b>	<b>1415</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>16.8</b>	

### 3 USE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE – CASE STUDY RESEARCH

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Decisions on TA investment are driven by regulatory compliance, lesson-drawing, and adaptation to political or institutional change.
- The main foci for TA use are strategic capacity-building, scaling-up of existing practices, innovation, and better management of human resources, but there are also many operational task-specific uses.
- Examples of interesting practice among the case studies cover investment in human resources, organisational structures and systems and tools.
- Support for human resources includes the provision of staff training and other professional development actions at all levels – from central government coordinating bodies, through Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies to beneficiaries, as well as other relevant stakeholder groups involved in the implementation process.
- TA investment in organisational structures has been used to fund the establishment and running costs of bodies, groups or networks or to improve coordination between different levels and ensure harmonisation of procedures.
- TA spending on systems and tools is used to develop capacity for implementing e-cohesion, as well for evaluation models, databases and analytical tools to improve the evidence base for policy. Other foci are development of project pipelines and advisory support systems for applicants, and communication systems such as websites, contact points and marketing or publicity materials.
- Successful use of TA for capacity building depends on political commitment, stakeholder buy-in, adequate skills, an appropriate governance framework, systematic learning, the right mix of tools, a culture of cooperation and a long-term mind-set.
- The usefulness of the capacity-building initiatives in the cases studied is context-specific. The success of transfer to other programmes and authorities would have to be linked to a clear understanding of needs and possibilities, a shared vision for the changes anticipated, and continuous adaptation and improvement.
- Detailed descriptions of examples of interesting practices in the use of TA for administrative capacity building are provided in a dedicated 'Compendium of practices' annexed to this report.

Building on the insights gained through the quantitative analysis of TA use, the next objective of the Study has been to understand in more detail the rationale for the choices made by Member State authorities in deploying TA. This section explores this question in more detail, based on a review of secondary sources and fieldwork research among Member State authorities and Commission services, including 13 case studies of

'interesting practice'<sup>10</sup> of how TA is planned and used for administrative capacity building. The section includes a synthesis of the cases according to their context and rationale, the role TA plays, the specific elements of interesting practice identified, and the factors contributing to their success. The scope for these practices to be transferred to other contexts is explored before a concluding section draws together the main lessons learned.

### 3.1 Context and rationale for the use of TA

TA is implemented in different national, regional and programme settings, with varied institutional arrangements for implementing ESIF (centralised/decentralised) in different types of programmes (LDR, TR, MDR) and subject to variable quality of governance. These contextual factors determine the main focus of TA use in different Member States and programmes.

- **Capacity building.** In Member States with less experience of ESIF or lower quality of governance ratings, TA is used to build and maintain the basic requirements for administrative capacity. This is particularly evident in Central and Eastern European countries where levels of ESIF and TA funding available are high compared to other sources of public investment and capacity development.
- **Capacity adaptation.** In More Developed Regions, with established administrative capacities, the more limited TA resources are often used flexibly to adapt administrative processes and systems to changing organisational, regulatory or thematic requirements.
- **Capacity coordination.** In Member States with centralised administration systems for ESIF management and implementation, TA are often used to strengthen accessibility to ESIF 'on the ground' and ensure that territorial specificities are taken into account. Where ESIF management and implementation is more regionalised, the focus of TA support is often on coordinating capacity, ensuring the standard provision of services across a range of programme authorities.

The following sections discuss these rationales in more detail, reviewing the evidence from the case studies on the factors influencing the use of TA and the roles of TA.

#### 3.1.1 Which factors influence the use of TA?

**The most basic rationale for TA use is administrative investment to ensure regulatory compliance.** In each programming period, the regulatory framework for Cohesion Policy makes demands on the administrative capacities of ESIF management and control system institutions such as MAs, Intermediate Bodies, etc. and of beneficiaries.<sup>11</sup>

- In *Latvia*, a basic impetus for the use of TA to support e-cohesion was the Common Provisions Regulation (Reg. No. 1303/2013) that sets the requirement

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<sup>10</sup> A detailed description of this study's definition of 'interesting practice' was set out in the study's Second Interim Report: distinctive approaches that have been demonstrated to work well, where the factors explaining their success can be identified, and which can be recommended as a model that could be adapted for other contexts.

<sup>11</sup> The case study examples mentioned for illustrative purposes do not present comprehensive coverage of all the procedures that TA can support. Other activities (e.g. anti-fraud systems and tools) can also be the focus.

for MS to ensure the development of a system for recording and storing in data in an electronic form and demands that all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and programme authorities can be carried out by means of digital data exchange systems.

The introduction of new instruments in the 2014-2020 ESIF regulations was a particular challenge for some programme authorities, for example the management/implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI).

- One example is Wałbrzych (**PL**), where TA support for ITI was focused on the local level as there was full delegation of tasks to an implementing body at municipal level. Another is the Six Cities Strategy in **Finland**, where a single ITI connects cities located in several functional urban regions, requiring the development of an administrative model based on a coordinating Strategy Office.

**A second motivation for TA use is lesson-drawing from past experience** such as evaluation evidence, external critiques or internal reviews.

- In **Poland**, ex post evaluation of the Technical Assistance OP for the 2007-2013 period highlighted the need for strengthened co-ordination of tasks, including communication and promotional activities, providing a strong justification for the improved ways of use of TA to support investment in these areas.
- Studies and evaluations of Cohesion Policy implementation in **Slovakia** from the 2007-2013 period identified capacity gaps at the level of Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and Audit Authorities. In 2012, the Government Office of the Slovak Republic commissioned a study to identify the main causes of insufficient administrative capacity and efficiency. This identified issues with staff turnover and the lack of a standardised training system for human resources involved in Cohesion Policy delivery. This informed the 2014-2020 use of TA.
- TA use in **Lithuania** was guided by a realisation in the European Social Fund Agency that the growing number of operations was putting pressure on the management and implementation model and that reforms would have to be introduced, with TA support.
- An internal reassessment in **Wales** led to TA being used to support a more focused model of resource allocation in the 2014-2020 period, allocating funding to a smaller number of operations but with a greater regional strategic rationale.
- Reflections on evaluation arrangements in the Czech Republic 2007-2013 identified the dominance of process and organisational evaluations and led to a revised approach to evaluation. This included TA-funded capacity building in the national evaluation unit and support for increased emphasis on impact evaluation.
- In **Sweden**, the awareness that there was not a standard approach among regional offices of the MA in the provision of services for beneficiaries prompted a focus on investing in coordinating capacity through a central office.
- ETC OPs, including the **Interreg OP Saxony (Germany) – Czech Republic**, typically face specific challenges: differences in the type and number of supporting documents that must be submitted at the application stage; different rules regarding procurement procedures; differences regarding the assessment of project proposals; and different guidance such as handbooks, etc. Programme managers and controllers require the capacity not only to follow national regulations, but also rules in the partner countries to avoid sending out contradictory messages to project partners or interpreting rules differently. TA



has been used to improve coordination and harmonise mechanisms between the ETC authorities.

**The third driver of TA use comprises political and institutional factors in the Member States.** This is associated with political or organisational changes that are beneficial for the management and implementation for ESIF and for which TA supports the consequent administrative adaptation and 'embedding' of that adaptation.

- In **Wałbrzych**, local political leaders were keen to take responsibility for ESIF-funded sustainable urban development in their area, which was an important impulse for the TA-supported development of capacity to implement the ITI.
- Senior political leadership in the **Czech Republic's** Ministry of Regional Development drove TA-supported evaluation capacity building. This was evident in the hiring of an experienced manager to set up and operate an overall strategy for evaluation capacity building-through the OP TA and champion the use of evaluation use in supporting learning and as a policy management tool.
- The establishment of the Social Innovation Mission Structure (EMPIS) in **Portugal**, supported by TA, was driven by the increasing prominence of the social economy and social entrepreneurship on the policy agenda and the enactment of legislation that facilitated the launch of missions as issue-specific, time limited structures with contractual objectives.

### **3.1.2 What is the focus of TA support?**

TA is used to pursue a wide range of ESIF management and implementation procedures, reflected in the 'interesting examples' of TA use within the practice case studies (see Table 9).

**The case studies indicate four overarching foci for TA: strategic capacity-building; scaling-up of practice; innovation; and better management of human resources.**

- (a) Strategic capacity development.** The rationale for TA-supported capacity building often has a strong strategic element. Examples include strengthening capacity to focus on an important thematic field (such as social entrepreneurship in **Portugal**), or to ensure the inclusion of territorially-specific priorities in ESIF operations (e.g. through Regional Engagement Teams in **Wales**).
- (b) Scaling-up of previous practices.** Capacity building is an iterative process and in several cases TA funds are being used to develop or broaden practices that have been effective. For instance, in **Finland** and **Poland** partners in the ITI strategies had some previous experience with collaboration but are now developing their capacity to take such practice to a new, more comprehensive level. In Poland, the value of coordinated communication with beneficiaries through channels at regional or local levels was recognised in 2007-2013, and TA investment in 2014-2020 is being used to broadening and deepen these processes.
- (c) Innovation.** The case studies provide examples of TA being used to manage a 'step change' via new or innovative approaches. In the case of the **Czech Republic**, for example, although a National Evaluation Unit operated in 2007-2013, its activities were very limited. For 2014-2020, the Evaluation Unit at the National Coordinating Authority (NCA) was re-established and strengthened with the support of TA with the aim of moving beyond process and organisational evaluations towards more sophisticated impact evaluations and a general

strengthening of the evaluation culture. This has included the establishment of a database of evaluation strategies; provision of support for the realisation of annual evaluation conferences and workshops that network MAs and evaluators; funding for operations aimed at strengthening the links between evaluations and the indicator system, and initiatives aimed at developing a theory-based evaluation approach. Further examples of innovation in TA use can be found in Portugal, where TA was utilised to strengthen the public administration's capacity to deal with social innovation; in Latvia, where a more integrated EU funds management system has been achieved through e-cohesion, and in Lithuania with the introduction of a number of procedural innovations and a new figure, the 'versatile project manager'.

**(d) Better management of human resources.** In some Member States, an important focus of TA has been developing a more coherent and coordinated approach to the development of human resources. This is the case in **Italy**, where each public administration involved in the implementation of an ESIF programme is required to prepare a TA-supported Administrative Strengthening Plan (PRAs). These are programmatic documents identifying a set of actions aimed at the strengthening of administrative capacity along with quantifiable targets and implementation deadlines. The actions identified in the PRAs, which are part financed through TA resources, are subject to regular monitoring and evaluation.

A further example is from **Slovakia**, where a 'Central Training Plan' (CTP) is part of interventions funded by the TA OP, to support ESIF staff training. Rather than being based on single events, this initiative takes an evolutionary approach to deepening expertise and enhancing career growth. The Plan combines centrally-funded training modules on general skills and development with specific training. This involves different strands (the combination of specific classes, exchange of experience, workshops, internships etc.) as part of a comprehensive approach to boosting the level of skills and experience among ESIF staff. The main idea behind the introduction of the Plan was that employees involved in the management, implementation and control of the ESI Funds should possess some key competencies in order to be able to perform their tasks satisfactorily. The CTP was designed with the involvement of key stakeholders to provide training on all the key themes related to Cohesion Policy delivery, while individual institutions can initiate their own training on other specific topics. For each staff position, the CTP defines a set of 'compulsory' and 'non-compulsory' training modules, reflecting the content of work and key competences required. Progress achieved with the 'learning path' of individual employees is regularly monitored and assessed.

**Beyond these broad organisational goals, many of the foci of TA are task-specific,** related to particular stages in Cohesion Policy implementation, particular regulations or types of operation, as these examples from the case studies illustrate.

- **Project generation & selection (CPR Art. 125(3)).**<sup>12</sup> Implementing bodies must generate and select operations that are explicitly in line with strategic goals set out in programmes. In this context, TA is being used to develop links between programme authorities and specific groups important to these key strategic alignment.
  - In **Wales**, TA supports the work of Regional Engagement Teams under the Managing Authority (the Welsh European Funding Office). These teams work across all sectors to ensure the effective participation and success of

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<sup>12</sup> Articles refer to Common Provisions Regulation for 2014-2020, Reg, 1303/2013.

EU funded investments – adding value to existing/planned investments within the context of established and emerging regional and thematic activities and opportunities. They are involved in networking and engagement with beneficiaries, regional 'proofing' of project ideas and proposals and prioritisation of regional objectives through support of partnership structures, awareness raising etc.

- In **Sweden**, the ERDF Managing Authority (*Tillväxtverket*) established the Unit for Operational Support in 2014 to facilitate the development, selection and implementation of projects. This includes providing information to applicants, tools to manage applications, support to the officers who assess the applications etc. Domestic funding is used for these tasks, but these activities provide valuable insights for the use of TA in other ESIF contexts.
- **Information support & training for beneficiaries (CPR Art. 115, 125 (3) c, d).** Perceptions of excessive administrative costs taken on by ESIF beneficiaries are widely shared across Member States. These costs encompass the staff, overhead, and external costs for beneficiaries to comply with obligations and procedures required by Cohesion Policy legislation, such as State aid, public procurement and environmental legislation.<sup>13</sup> Based on financial support from the TA OP, **Bulgaria** operates a network of Regional Information Centres to provide information and publicity, strengthen transparency of ESIF implementation and raise awareness among beneficiaries and stakeholders. This includes specific support for beneficiaries (e.g. information and advice for beneficiaries on technical issues such as dealing with public procurement, using SCOs etc.) and broader awareness-raising activities among stakeholders through publicity measures.
- **Evaluation (CPR Art. 54-57).** TA is continuing to address weaknesses in evaluation capacities in some contexts. The most prominent example among the case studies comes from the **Czech Republic**, described above.
- **Management verifications (CPR Art. 125 (4) (5)).** The need to simplify procedures and reduce complexity of ESIF implementation and administration and related administrative burden for beneficiaries and programme authorities is well established. In **Lithuania**, the length of time taken to assess applications and lengthy project control procedures were seen as the major obstacles in achieving higher efficiency in the ESF Agency. In response, TA has been used to establish the model of the 'versatile project manager' through the 'Lean' initiative.<sup>14</sup>
- **Communication and visibility (CPR Art. 115-117).** The role of TA in arrangements for ESIF communication and visibility is prominent in 2014-2020, linked to the aim of regaining citizen confidence and trust in European integration. Training and capacity building activities for implementing authorities is important for ensuring the quality, consistency and effectiveness of Cohesion Policy communication. **In Poland**, this consistency is particularly important, given the complex combination of multiple national and regional programmes. In this context, TA supports a national network of programme communicators (appointed as per CPR art. 117) that has a clear capacity-building purpose, with training, exchanges of knowledge and experience etc.

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<sup>13</sup> Spatial Foresight and t33 (2018) *New assessment of ESIF administrative costs and burden*, Final Report to European Commission, October 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Based on the adoption of the Lean Process Management System.

- Strengthening e-cohesion (CPR Article 122(3)). The need for capacity building to develop integrated, user-friendly electronic platforms was highlighted both by Member States and by the Commission's High Level Group on Simplification. In Latvia, TA has been used to develop further the EU funds management information system module in line with administrative and technological challenges. It includes ensuring electronic data exchange between the beneficiaries and programme authorities and the development of tools to improve the use of data to inform programme management and implementation.

**Table 9: Case studies – sources of motivation and use of TA**

Focus of support	Case	Motivation for TA use	Use of TA
General			
Training	SK	Need to establish and implement systematic training for standardised job positions for ESIF implementing bodies	Training process set as an integral part of capacity building strategy. Three related interventions in TA OP, supporting ESIF staff training through Central Training Plan.
HRM & decision-making	IT	Structural challenges in ensuring strategic quality and consistency across central and regional public administrations	TA supports some of the actions of Administrative Strengthening Plans (PRA) which are guidance documents identifying actions to strengthen administrative capacity along with quantifiable targets and implementation deadlines.
	ETC DE-CZ	Development of coordinating capacity for ETC: ensuring coordination between implementing bodies and achieving a stable institutional framework	TA supports a management structure for bundling and centralisation of tasks in a Joint Secretariat, also the decentralisation of tasks in the Czech District Authorities and 4 Euroregions to reinforce the programme's regional presence.
Coordination	PT	Need to support the establishment of new Portuguese Social Innovation Mission Structure (EMPIIS) for the implementation of the Portugal Social Innovation Initiative.	TA OP finances logistical and administrative support for EMPIIS as a permanent instrument of the Portugal Social Innovation to boost social investment and to promote innovation and social entrepreneurship.
	Task-related		
Project generation & selection (CPR Art. 125(3)) <sup>15</sup>	UK	Ensuring strategic quality of operations, good fit between project ideas generated and strategic priorities of the programme	TA used for establishing Regional Engagement Teams to engage with beneficiaries in the development of project proposals, the targeting of specific themes or actors important to the programme's strategic objectives.
	SE	Need for a standard approach among regional offices of the MA in the provision of services for beneficiaries.	Establishment of an Operational Support Unit as a central source of resource, including staff training and competence development to ensure applicants and beneficiaries received the same support across the country.
Information support & training for beneficiaries (CPR Art. 115, 125 (3) c, d)	BG	Need to provide information, publicity and transparency of the ESIF implementation and raise awareness of beneficiaries and all stakeholders	TA support for beneficiaries through the 27 Regional Information Centres; information campaigns and training of beneficiaries in all phases of project cycle, incl. implementing the Public Procurement Act, SCOs, UMIS 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Articles refer to Common Provisions Regulation for 2014-20, Reg, 1303/2013.

**Table 9: Case studies – sources of motivation and use of TA**

Focus of support	Case	Motivation for TA use	Use of TA
Evaluation (CPR Art. 54-57)	CZ	Limited evaluation culture – need to improve the conceptual and strategic management in public administration, including the introduction of modern analytical and evaluation tools in the PA.	TA used to strengthen national evaluation unit, establishment of a database of evaluation strategies; support of annual evaluation conferences; strengthening links between evaluations and the indicator system; developing a theory-based evaluation approach.
Management verifications (CPR Art. 125 (4) (5))	LT	Administrative complexity and need for administrative simplification; need for efficiency improvements aimed at effective management of the general functions.	'Lean' process review leads to introduction of the concept of a 'versatile project manager', which gradually replaced the functional division of labour at the ESF Agency, supported by TA.
Communication (CPR Art. 115-117)	PL(1)	While general awareness of the presence of the EU funds is very high, real knowledge about the purpose and the type of support being provided is insufficient.	TA supports communication and awareness raising activities organised by the MA, presenting interesting practices in ESIF implementation at project level and facilitating synergies with other events and platforms.
E-Cohesion (CPR Article 122(3))	LV	Need for a comprehensive system for: recording and storing electronic data; allowing the use of tools to organise data to inform programme management and implementation; serving also project applicants and taking into account their needs and requirements.	TA used in the implementation of the e-cohesion system module as part of the 2014-2020 CP Funds management and control system, developed as a single central IT system.
ACB for new territorial instruments (CPR Art. 32-36)	FI	Capacity building for launch of new territorial instrument in 2014-2020 based on a single ITI, connecting 6 cities located across functional urban regions.	ERDF provides support for coordination and networking through the Six City Strategy Office. The Six City Strategy Office includes centralised personnel (4 staff members) and 6 city-coordinators.
	PL(2)	Building capacity for the implementation of new instruments – ITI.	TA support for the Implementing Body as the only ITI in Poland with fully delegated implementation responsibilities, operational at the local level.

Source: EPRC research.

- **Implementing new instruments (CPR Art. 32-36).** Capacity building is also needed for specific instruments that are new or have increased prominence in 2014-2020. This includes capacity building for public authorities involved in financial instruments and the new territorial development tools (ITI, CLLD). **Poland** has allocated the highest level of funding to ITI and TA is playing a key role in funding structures, operational costs and human resources for these investments. The Wałbrzych ITI involves a higher level of delegation of implementation tasks from the Dolnośląskie regional OP Managing Authority to the ITI Intermediate Body than elsewhere in Poland. To ensure appropriate capacity, higher-than-usual funding from the ROP's TA budget has been used. In **Finland**, a single ITI entitled the 'Six City Strategy' (6Aika) represents an ambitious approach to implement ITI beyond a single functional territory. Investment in administrative capacity is key in this, in the operation of the coordinating management group, steering group, city coordinators and lead project partners, in the organisation of workshops etc.

### 3.2 The specific role of TA

Support from TA for capacity building is provided in different ways. A basic distinction can be drawn between direct TA funding and instances where TA can be instrumental to the development of capacities in an indirect way.

In relation to direct funding, TA is used to fund primarily the following types of expenditure in the cases examined.

The **funding of staff salaries is the dominant type of TA support** according to the detailed analysis of 25 programmes (as discussed in Section 2). Examples of this type of support are represented by the Implementing Body for the Wałbrzych ITI IB, the Joint Secretariat of the Saxony-Czech Republic ETC OP, the Lithuanian European Social Fund Agency and the Latvian ESIF management system as a whole.

- In the **Wałbrzych ITI**, according to interviewees, TA has been indispensable in maintaining the operation of the IB. A majority of funds (between 88 and 92 percent, depending on the year) are used to finance the cost of operational staff salaries, including social security and bonuses. The number of staff in the IB increased from just five at the beginning of the period to 50 in just a few years. During this period of organisational growth, the biggest challenge was to recruit, train and retain skilled and experienced staff. TA funds facilitated the creation of a comparatively strong remuneration and incentives system which attracted administrative staff from other regional and local administrative units. Further, since there was no sufficient supply in the local market of experienced staff, TA was also utilised to raise the competences of new employees who had more limited experience in ESIF implementation but were motivated to acquire new competencies.
- In **the Saxony-Czech Republic Interreg OP**, the Joint Secretariat which supports the Managing Authority in its day-to-day programme management tasks comprises 12 FTE members of staff financed entirely through TA (including overhead costs).
- Similarly, the staff of the **Lithuanian European Social Fund Agency**, which is an intermediate body responsible for the financial management and control of EU programmes in Lithuania, is paid for by TA. All of the main activities related to the introduction of an innovative way of working within the organisation, the aforementioned 'versatile project manager' model, are financed by TA (such as the participation of staff in training courses, mentoring, feedback and discussions,

development of new procedures and organisational structure, preparation of training programmes, etc.).

- The majority of TA resources in **Latvia** are used for capacity building measures which include co-financing salaries in order to increase staff retention (as well as investing in staff training and professional development). These investments are planned to reduce staff turnover in EU funds management institutions from 25 to 16 percent (the target value to be reached by 2023).
- Other examples of this type of TA use are represented by the **Welsh RETs** (Regional Engagement Teams) and **Italian PRAs** (Administrative Strengthening Plans). In Wales, TA part-finances the staff of the RETs, representing the largest heading of TA expenditure under this project. In Italy, while TA only funds a small portion of activities within the PRAs, the salary of some staff working in the national PRA Technical Secretariat is part funded by the TA allocation of the NOP Governance.

The cases include prominent examples **of competence-mapping exercises**, related to the management and delivery of the ESI Funds, **and the development of training strategies** to address the capacity building needs within the administrations. While training is foreseen in many of the practices reviewed, the most significant example of this type of systematic and structured HR development support is represented by the above-noted Central Training Plan (CTP) in Slovakia and the PRAs in **Italy** - which include HR support activities that may be funded not only by the programmes' TAs but also by TO11 allocations or with domestic sources, or a combination of these.

**Targeted capacity building for applicants, beneficiaries and stakeholders** are also evident in several cases.

- The **Interreg Saxony-Czech Republic** OP operationalised dedicated measures for the support of applicants in the development of applications and of beneficiaries for the implementation of the projects. This responds to the specific challenges entailed by territorial cooperation projects and the fact that problems with implementation are generally caused by a lack of skills and experience in their management. The activities funded include the organisation of information days and launch events in the regions for programme stakeholders; individual consultations for applicants (by staff from the Joint Secretariat and the Regional Contact Points (in the Czech Republic); training seminars and consultations for lead and project partners on topics such as financial reporting and control; tutoring for each project by a project advisor from the Joint Secretariat that follows the project throughout its entire lifecycle and acts as a first point of contact for project partners' questions and problems; as well as the provision of written guidance for applicants and beneficiaries, factsheets and templates/sample documentation (e.g. on project communication).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kooperationsprogramm Freistaat Sachsen – Tschechische Republik 2014-2020 (2017) *Statistik Öffentlichkeitsarbeit 2017*.

Kooperationsprogramm Freistaat Sachsen – Tschechische Republik 2014-2020 (2018) *Jahresdurchführungsbericht. Berichtsjahr 2017*; Kooperationsprogramm Freistaat Sachsen – Tschechische Republik 2014-2020 (2018) *Erfüllungsstand der Kommunikationsstrategie 2018*; Kooperationsprogramm Freistaat Sachsen – Tschechische Republik 2014-2020 (2019) *Jährlicher Kommunikationsplan 2019*. Geplante Informations- und Kommunikationsmaßnahmen; Metis (2018) *Programmbegleitende Evaluierung zum Kooperationsprogramm Freistaat Sachsen – Tschechische Republik 2014-2020. Bewertung der implementierten Verfahren und Strukturen (Durchführungsevaluierung)*.



- Another example is the **Bulgarian Regional Information Centres (RICs)** which provide information and advice to beneficiaries on technical issues regarding project applications under ESIF programmes and broader awareness-raising among stakeholders through communication and publicity. Network activities and the staff of individual RICs are paid for under the TA allocation of the 'Good Governance' OP. TA funds activities that ensure the functioning of the RIC, the production and distribution of information materials, and the organisation and participation in public information events (information events, seminars, training, conferences, exhibitions, meetings, etc.), working with the media.

TA also funds the costs related to travel and subsistence connected to **the organisation of meetings, training or networking events**. An example is the activities funded by TA under the TA OP for the **Polish national network of programme information and communication officers** (art. 117 CPR) which include a whole array of activities ranging from training events, exchanges of knowledge and experience, networking events and the likes.

**The development, maintenance and implementation of management information systems is another area of TA support.** In particular, in **Latvia**, TA funding is targeted at the bodies involved in the management of EU funds, as well as at beneficiaries and project applicants. The system goes beyond the requirements set by the CPR, extending the electronic communication system to applicants who can submit project applications by using an online application and track the progression of the application, thus further reducing the administrative burden and ensuring the completeness and integrity of the whole system. TA supports the continuous development of the system. New functionalities are added on an ongoing basis, based on requests and feedback received from users. There are regular surveys to appraise users' satisfaction. There is scope to integrate new requirements as they emerge from the 2021-2027 regulations and to provide training activities necessary for the implementation of the system.

**External, specialist support, for example for publicity/marketing, is another prominent use of TA.** Again, this is the case in the Wałbrzych ITI in **Poland**, where TA funds external services in areas such as legal advice, design and production of promotional content, advertisements in local and regional media etc.

It should be underlined that **the funding provided by the TA is sometimes marginal in financial terms or TA can be instrumental to the development of capacities in an indirect way**. For example, the TA funding for the Italian PRAs only covers about 20 percent of the interventions foreseen in the plans. In two of the cases reviewed - the Finnish Six Cities Programme and the Swedish capacity-building activities for project appraisal and selection - it is the mainstream ESIF programme budgets or domestic funding that has supported the administrative capacity building activities reviewed (i.e. not TA), but in the context of programmes for which TA plays an important role, for example, in funding staff salaries(see Box 1).

**Box 1: The indirect role of TA for the development of administrative capacities for project appraisal and selection in Sweden**

The support put in place in Sweden for project application and selection is supported by TA. The salary of the staff at the Unit for Operational Support within Tillväxtverket and those of the regional project officers are funded 50 percent by TA, whose main share is used for salary costs. The Unit was established as part of an organisational restructuring process of Tillväxtverket. It focuses on the development of templates and forms in order to simplify the work for applicants and project officers and reduce the number of errors. It also feeds into the development of the online application and reporting system, NypsCentralen, which is used for all applications to Tillväxtverket, including under ERDF.

Source: Case study. See Compendium of practices annexed to this report for more detail.

It is also worth noting that, **irrespective of whether TA support is all-encompassing or just a smaller portion of the funding, the experiences reviewed highlight that TA is significant in terms of the following.**

- **Filling a gap.** TA mobilises resources for types of administrative capacity building interventions that might not necessarily be funded otherwise. For example, without the NOP Governance and its TA support, the Italian PRA might not have been implemented. The same can be said of the Slovak Central Training Plan: without the TA programme and its goals related to the creation of a modern HR training system for the public sector, specifically human resources in institutions responsible for ESI Funds in Slovakia (and related targets), this massive investment in the creation of capacities within the Slovakian public administration would have unlikely taken place.
- **Providing the human resources.** TA support ensures that organisational staffing levels are supplemented with additional personnel or with specialist expertise. Without the support from the TA, the ordinary human resources of the institutions would not be sufficient for the undertaking of the tasks related to the management and delivery of the programmes or projects reviewed. Furthermore, TA supports the maintenance of staff levels within the administration and their skills.
- **Incentivising innovation.** TA provides support to experimental or pilot projects. An example is the Six Cities programme in Finland, which funds smaller pilot and experimental projects on novel themes ranging from smart mobility, circular economy, health and well-being, and the gaming industry to the education sector as well as several employment projects. In Lithuania, TA has supported the introduction of an entirely novel model of organising work within the European Social Fund Agency. Portugal example is very innovative too.

### **3.3 Identification of specific interesting practice elements**

The experiences reviewed encompass approaches that can be organised in terms of the specific actions involved (classified following the same taxonomy already adopted for the classification of expenditure in Section 2 of this report, i.e. human resource development, organisational structures, and systems and tools); the type of actor targeted (e.g. National coordinating bodies, Managing Authorities, Intermediate bodies, etc.), and the type of benefit that is being realised.

### **3.3.1 Investment in human resources**

With respect to human resource development, as already noted, all programmes examined in this Study's quantitative analysis commit significant levels of TA to co-finance salaries. This is a particularly important category of expenditure in newer Member States where top-ups and bonuses have been used to improve staff retention rates. Beyond this, staff training and other professional development actions are co-financed by TA at all levels – from national coordinating bodies, through Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies to beneficiaries as well as other relevant stakeholder groups involved in the implementation process.

#### (i) Boosting human resource development in programme authorities

In several cases, TA has been directed towards the professional development of staff involved in the management and implementation of ESI Funds. Among examples of actions linked to **staff training and other professional development actions**, the above-mentioned Central Training Plan in **Slovakia** has used TA to introduce a new, systematic approach to training of human resources engaged in the management, implementation and control of ESI Funds in 2014-2020. The training programme defines 'learning paths' for various target groups according to their job profile and required competences, including theoretical and practical elements, so that actors acquire the skills and competences that their job profile requires.

In **Sweden**, the Unit for Operational Support organises competence development initiatives for the project officers in the regional offices of the MA. The MA did not previously have a coherent and consistent support system for officers. Depending on the focus of the training, the person(s) responsible for the area at the Unit typically develops course material and manages the training. Training sessions have been organised for officers on topics such as public procurement and eligible costs, which are areas where errors were frequently found. Initially training sessions brought together project officers from across the country at a physical location, but in recent years e-learning seminars and pre-recorded lectures have been used more frequently. Most recently, a digital learning tool has been purchased to provide tailored support for staff, identifying specific gaps in knowledge which then informs individualised guidance (e.g. regarding specific administrative procedures).

TA support for the introduction of the 'versatile project manager' model in **Lithuania** has significantly reformed the HRD system, producing a series of benefits for staff and beneficiaries (see Box 2).

#### **Box 2: The introduction of the 'flexible project manager' in Lithuania**

In Lithuania, TA has supported the shift in the ESF agency towards a 'versatile project manager', gradually replacing the functional division of labour among staff that was contributing to overlap and duplication, particularly in project financial management and control. The capacity building plan for this process included two training programmes and an internal mentoring course, aiming to bridge the gap between existing and required staff competences and capacities. As all Agency employees had to change their position and acquire new skills in order to have the capacity to carry out new responsibilities, the implementation of the versatile project manager initiative initially increased levels of pressure on staff at the Agency. To make the transition as manageable as possible, additional activities including psychological training were organised and a survey of the working environment was carried out. These measures, as well as constant open communication, helped to increase staff's commitment to the

changes.

Several benefits can be identified:

- (i) Shorter time taken to assess project applications and carry out verification of payment claims. It has been calculated that the average duration of project application assessment has decreased from 18 hours to 13 hours (28 per cent), the duration of the check of payment claims has decreased from 21 hours to 13.8 hours (34 per cent), and the duration of the verification of the project report has decreased from 7 hours to 1.7 hours (76 per cent).
- (ii) More tailored support for beneficiaries. The versatile project manager serves as an advisor for beneficiaries in most cases exceeding the project supervision responsibilities as the versatile project manager has the comprehensive understanding about the entire project and is aware about specific issues the beneficiary is facing within the organisation or project.
- (iii) Levels of satisfaction from agency clients have increased. According to a survey commissioned by the Ministry of Finance, in 2018 81 per cent of beneficiaries confirmed that the Agency provided clear and easily understood information (for comparison, 74 per cent in 2017), 89 per cent of beneficiaries agreed that the information was provided in a timely manner (for comparison, 83 per cent in 2017).

Source: Case study. See Compendium of practices annexed to this report for more detail.

In several cases, **TA support for staff in programme authorities is strengthening their capacity to provide training**. This is improving the quality of human resources at beneficiary level in an indirect manner. In **Bulgaria**, the staff of TA-supported Regional Information Centres in Sofia and Pernik aim to satisfy the requirements of the beneficiaries through specific training (e.g. systematic training on how to apply through electronic applications). The focus is on project terminology and developing a sound understanding of project documentation.

### **3.3.2 TA investment in organisational structures**

The case studies include several interesting examples of TA use for investment in organisational structures. This concerns the establishment and running costs of bodies, groups or networks, especially at regional and local levels, or for particular themes, or mechanisms to improve coordination between different levels and ensure harmonisation of procedures.

- (ii) Establishment or strengthening of 'high level' bodies

TA provides support for the operation of structures at higher levels of ESIF management and implementation. Strengthening these bodies contributes to capacity building by **acting as a focal point, coordinating actions under specific themes or issues**. The establishment of such structures guarantees investment in capacity under a specific priority heading.

- The work of the Six City Strategy Office in **Finland** encompasses the implementation and success of the ITI strategy as a whole. Research found a shared understanding among the interviewees that the fact that several persons

could allocate all of their work time to the strategy made a significant contribution to continuously advance the strategy and its projects.

- The establishment of the Unit for Operational Support as a central body in **Sweden** has boosted coordination capacity. This includes coordination across regions through the provision of standardised guidelines and tools (alongside the scope to provide tailored support for individual regional offices). The work of the Unit also involves coordination of operational support for EU and domestic policy initiatives as both of these are covered under the remit of the Unit.
- Coordinating bodies are particularly important in ETC programmes. In the **INTERREG OP Saxony-Czech Republic**, the Joint Secretariat, through TA, offers a range of support such as information events, training, and individual consultations to build capacities in applicants and beneficiaries across country borders. Support is needs-based, tailored to the legal specifics of Saxony and the Czech Republic. It is flexible, in that it offers personalised support and provides each project with a single point of contact in the Secretariat.

Further, TA is used to raise awareness, **mobilising stakeholders** and increasing the potential for **spillover** across public administration units.

- TA support for the EMPIS structure in **Portugal** has strengthened the engagement of stakeholders, including those from the non-governmental sector, in a specific theme of increasing importance. Increased engagement in social innovation is demonstrated by project uptake: a total of 279 public and private investors have been engaged, granting a total of €30 million. As a result, the non-governmental sector has been reinforced through the support of EMPIS and it is able to submit applications for ESIF financing through the relevant financial instruments.
- Reinforcement of the Evaluation Unit in the National Coordinating Authority (NCA) in the **Czech Republic** through TA has broadened its activities and supported the development of an evaluation culture. The evaluation unit has been staffed with high-quality employees who, through TA, have received intensive training in specific evaluation aspects. As a result, the quality of evaluations and awareness of their value in informing policy-making has increased. According to former and current representatives of the Evaluation Unit NCA, evaluation is becoming part of strategic management in other NCA units too. The establishment of a formal working group for analytical departments from state administration in the framework of the Czech Government Office can be highlighted as a spillover effect of this process. This working group was initiated through a 'bottom up' dynamic as analysts from domestic programmes and employees from evaluation units in EU programmes gradually recognized they faced very similar problems with access to the data needed for policy evaluation and analytical work. This platform shares knowledge between the ESIF and national programmes on evaluation methods, barriers and possibilities for joint approaches to solve data issues for evidence-based policy analysis.

(iii) Establishing groups or networks especially at regional and local levels

TA support for the strengthening of high-level structures is often accompanied by support for the operation of network-based models. The benefits of this approach are apparent in several of the case studies examined. Benefits of these network-based initiatives include the **strengthening of regional or local engagement** by enhancing the interface between programme authorities and beneficiaries, with a view to improving the quality of ESIF design and delivery.

- The funding of a network of regional 'activators' in **Portugal**, one per region, under EMPIS, ensures close interaction with communities, spreading knowledge on funding opportunities for social innovation and mobilising partnerships.
- Through the Wałbrzych ITI Implementing Body in **Poland**, TA is used to provide extensive support to beneficiaries. Meetings and seminars with potential beneficiaries provide tailored and practical information related to project submission and appraisal etc. and the IB is actively engaged in constant dialogue with local communities. This TA-funded outreach has produced concrete results in terms of the capacity to produce quality projects. For instance, when the IB consulted with stakeholders on the selection criteria for thermal upgrading projects prepared by housing associations, it emerged that demand was higher than anticipated and that stakeholders could meet higher co-financing rates. As a result, selection procedures were modified, more projects have been launched, and more stakeholder funds have been leveraged under this heading.
- The TA-funded **Joint Secretariat in the INTERREG Saxony-Czech Republic OP** places strong emphasis on the regional 'anchoring' of the programme. The intense involvement of programme stakeholders in the programme pulls additional thematic and territorial expertise and ensures strong local ownership. The Joint Secretariat has established thematic focus groups, and organised experts meetings with regional stakeholders on a variety of topics, including in relation to the preparation of the 2021-2027 programme. Meetings are generally first organised at the regional level and then the discussion is moved to the cross-border level. Thematic networks aim to bring in additional, specific expertise in projects and lead to new project ideas that are sound, meaningful and well-embedded in regional needs.
- In **Wales**, the regional remit of the RETs is perceived by programme authorities to have added value to their activities. This approach has given beneficiaries a regional 'voice' and representation in nationally-led, top-down programmes or initiatives, based on a 'two-way' process. For example, a representative of the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) participates in the 'regional proofing' panel of the South East RET, bringing non-governmental sector interests to the exercise. Similarly, a representative of the RET sits on the WCVA grant award panel for ESF. The 'two way' representation supports mutual capacity building, raising the profile of non-governmental sector projects and interests and allowing the wider regional context to be taken into account.
- The Six City Strategy Office in **Finland** uses city coordinators to mobilise funding applications and implement collaborative projects. Some cities have only developed these capacities during the implementation of the Strategy. For instance, capacity has been built in the city administration of Espoo through the hiring of new, dedicated EU coordinators at the city level to facilitate funding applications in the future.
- In **Bulgaria**, the added value of the TA-funded Regional Information Centres is to target and build the capacity of potential beneficiaries to implement Cohesion Policy, based on a network approach. The RICs themselves, as territorial mechanisms for the implementation of ESIF, contribute to a stronger regional dimension in the governance of broader development policy. By attracting a wide range of different interests, meeting the specific needs of the territory and of individual beneficiaries in the process of implementing ESIF programmes, the RICs create a strong sense of responsibility or 'ownership' and stakeholder participation.

Another method for improving regional and local engagement and network development is by **strengthening coordination capacity** to facilitate collaboration and synergies. TA has been used in several of the case studies to support the development of cooperative working within and across networks, overcoming capacity issues caused by fragmentation, duplication or even rivalry in the design and implementation of strategies and interventions.

- The Department of European Funds' Promotion in the Ministry of Funding and Regional Policy in **Poland** has used TA to create a network of communication officers from the Managing Authorities of national and regional programmes.<sup>17</sup> The network provides opportunities to exchange experiences and a forum for discussing problems, solutions, interesting practice, for strengthening coordination and coherence (e.g. in implementing communication strategies, developing guidelines for information and promotion of operational programs, and conducting joint activities such as Poland's European Funds Open Days).
- In the **Czech Republic**, the National Evaluation Unit has used TA to develop evaluations capacity and an evaluation culture on the side of suppliers. This includes organisation of an annual evaluation conference, open to the entire evaluation community free of charge, offering opportunities for common learning and a space for mutual interactions among evaluators, the ESIF implementation structure, the academic sector and invited international experts. Moreover, TA supports the organisation of working groups involving the National Coordinating Authority and evaluation units in Managing Authorities, which creates functional networks and builds mutual trust.
- The networks organised by the Regional Engagement Teams (RET) in **Wales** are regarded to be beneficial in developing new coordinating capacity among stakeholders and facilitating a cooperative culture. They facilitates the effective flow of information about wider regional development activities and changes, face-to-face meetings with other project leaders involved in the same field for exchange of experience, and provide support and opportunities for wider networking. For example, the North RET was able to provide the University of Bangor, in relation to a project proposal, with information about similar activities being undertaken by a university in Cardiff, in the south of Wales. The RET acted as an unbiased facilitator, making introductions and setting up conversation between the two organisations. This led to a perceived positive interaction, including amendments to the original proposal for ESIF funding. Although funding was not in the end successful in this case, the links and relationships formed had a positive value in themselves.

### **3.3.3 Investment in systems and tools**

Interesting practices in TA spending on systems and tools are also apparent among the cases examined for this study. Developing the capacity to comply with the Commission's e-cohesion requirements under Article 122(3) CPR is one aspect, but TA can also be an important supplement to other forms of capacity building. Other types of support include the development of evaluation models and the construction of databases and analytical tools to boost the evidence base for policy design. Other foci are the development of project pipelines and advisory support systems for applicants, and communication systems such as websites, contact points and marketing or publicity materials.

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<sup>17</sup> There is also TA support for communication activities in Intermediate Bodies although this is not covered in this study.

(i) Extending the use of ICT and digital tools

A common focus of TA investment in the case studies was the upgrading of ICT systems and the extended use of digital tools. This served several purposes, for example to **support programme authorities and beneficiaries in ESIF implementation**. The strengthening of ICT systems and tools has given programme authorities greater capacity to gather and analyse data that is important in informing strategic decisions. It has also provided scope for capacity building based on internal reflection, self-assessment and exchange of information. These systems and tools also provide crucial support to applicants and beneficiaries in accessing guidance and data.

- In **Sweden**, digital tools have supported the work of the Unit for Operational Support and project officers in the regions. The use of digital tools to improve coordination is important in countries where the geographical distance between central authorities, regional units and beneficiaries can be substantial. In Sweden, an online discussion forum is used for project officers in the regions and staff at the Unit for Operational Support. Competence development initiatives have increasingly been organised as online training sessions and it increasingly common to include all regional offices for online video meetings rather than bringing them together in one location. Through this capacity building, support for project applications and project implementation has become more coordinated and project performance has improved.
- The National Evaluation Unit in the **Czech Republic** has used TA support to establish an online single library of evaluations realised with the cooperation of all Managing Authorities of OPs. Since 2013, a central monitoring system ensured the online publication of final evaluation reports and executive summaries, building up a valuable database of evidence on ESIF that is being used to inform decision-making.
- In **Latvia**, TA support for an e-cohesion module in the EU funds management information system provides an example of interesting practice (see Box 3).

**Box 3: TA support for e-cohesion module in Latvia**

In Latvia, TA has been used to fund the implementation of e-cohesion in its ESIF funds information system, investing in the development of systems and tools to meet Commission requirements, support programme authorities in decision-making and facilitate engagement with beneficiaries and programme authorities. The new module has the following three elements.

The development of a 'one stop shop' for beneficiaries. Beneficiaries now have a reliable source of up-to-date information about all activities at the project level in a single place. The system receives data from other official systems, e.g. from the enterprise register information system, state addresses register information system, register of penalties, tax information system, municipal real estate tax accounting system. In this way, it ensures timely information exchange and reduces the administrative burden for beneficiaries and programme managers by providing all information in a single platform.

Contribution to strategic decision making. Another element of capacity building is the data analytics and visualization tool. The e-cohesion system module now facilitates the development of customised reports. It allows, for example, the Managing Authority to develop analysis for assessing the 'market demand' in one sector/strategic objective



and to use this information in decision making. This informs decisions on the redistribution of funds from one measure to another, and also to contribute to the planning of priorities in the next programming period.

Facilitating cooperation between different institutions. In the development of the module, cooperation agreements were concluded with other data holders to ensure efficient data and information exchange and reduce the number of documents required from beneficiaries and project applicants.

Source: Case study. See Compendium of practices annexed to this report for more detail.

(ii) Production of handbooks or guidance

TA has also been used to develop and disseminate guidance tools to ensure the provision of standardised services to beneficiaries, for example, internal and external **guidance for programme authorities and for beneficiaries**.

- The Unit for Operational Support in **Sweden** has developed internal and external guidance tools to ensure common approaches and the provision of standardised services across the country. Tools are developed to support for capacity building directed at applicants and beneficiaries as well as staff in regional offices of the MA. A key tool for external support for applicants and beneficiaries is the *Handbook for EU Projects*, published for the first time in 2014, which is available online, providing guidelines for the application process and for reporting. Similarly, an internal handbook has been developed for project officers and economists working on administration of ERDF projects. The handbook for officers, and an online discussion forum where staff at the Unit for Operational Support answer questions, together provide a support function called 'Guru'. This facilitates a streamlined approach to project administration across the country and codifies practice for both new and existing staff.

(iii) Supplementing other capacity building initiatives

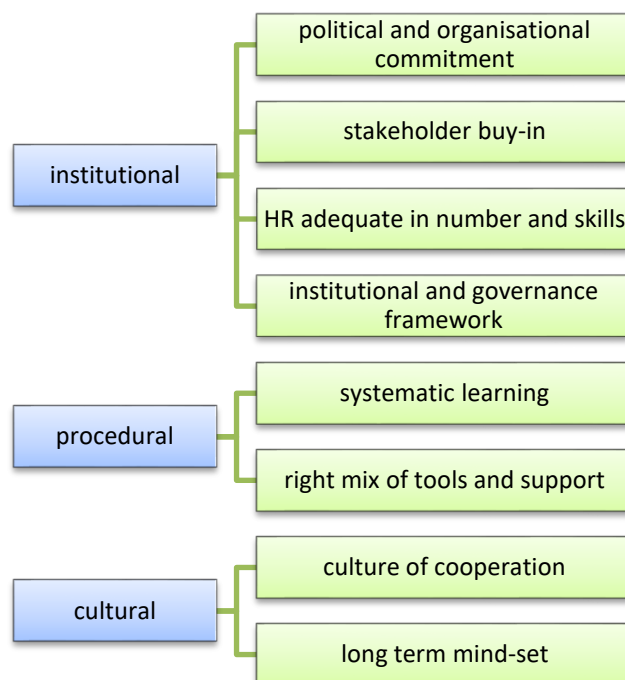
The establishment or consolidation of IT systems and incorporation of new functionalities is often a crucial accompaniment to building capacity **in organisational structures and networks and in human resource development** initiatives.

- In **Slovakia**, the launch of the Central Training Plan (CTP) was accompanied by the TA-supported development of a comprehensive information and communication system that is innovative in the Slovakian context. This was essential to implement the CTP training plan across almost 3,000 employees involved in ESIF management and implementation. The information system represents the first comprehensive information system for management of training activities in the state administration in the country. It contains registers of all employees participating in Cohesion Policy, information on training modules, lecturers and representatives of relevant institutions (contact persons). The information system also facilitates communication between the coordinator of CTP and contact persons in relation to organisation of training courses and participation of eligible participants. Through the information system, the Department of Administrative Capacities is able to monitor progress in individual 'learning paths' as well as access data on specific categories of participants (e.g. according to type of job profile).

### 3.4 Success factors

There are several factors, both internal and external to the administrations involved in the capacity building activities reviewed, that contribute to effective TA capacity building initiatives. These can be subdivided in terms of institutional, procedural and cultural factors (Figure 27).

**Figure 27: Factors contributing to the success of administrative capacity building**



Source: Own elaboration.

First, **the availability of political and organisational commitment** has proved to be essential, particularly for the types of interventions that entail changes to the way public administration staff works (e.g. Czech capacity building strategy, 'Lean' initiatives in Lithuania, the PRAs in Italy, the Latvian e-government reform and Slovak Central Training Plan). Ensuring that this was in place was key to the success of the initiatives and was often built into the management of the project from the start.

- **Lithuania.** The need for a versatile project manager was identified by the Agency as a means to address challenges to meet the project management and control timetable and the rapidly growing number of projects. A key component in the initiative was a structured process of internal discussions – though Kaizen<sup>18</sup> groups – to build ownership and identify a plan for change in a participatory way, thus taking into account the existing capabilities of staff. Active staff involvement reduced pressures and resistance to change.
- **Italy.** Organisational commitment to the PRAs was ensured by the governance structure established at the national and regional levels. This ensured that political commitment would filter through the administration thanks to the

<sup>18</sup> 'Improvement' in Japanese.

oversight of 'political referents' (generally the regions' Presidents and national Ministers) and the leading role of 'technical referents'.

- **Czech Republic.** The strong mandate provided by the political leadership and its decision to hire an experienced manager to set up and operate the capacity building strategy, and push evaluations as a managerial tool, was fundamental to achieve the significant improvement in the awareness of the importance of evaluation and knowledge of evaluation methods. As noted, some of the initiatives reviewed introduced changes that were made necessary by the EU regulatory framework. This provided political and administrative leaderships with the impetus and legitimisation that they needed to stimulate the commitment of the other actors involved (e.g. the measures for the strengthening of communication, e-cohesion and of evaluation in Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic).

Second, **stakeholder buy-in** has also been crucial in many of the experiences reviewed. In the Wałbrzych ITI, for example, from the design stage of the strategy, the ITI IB organised wide-ranging consultation processes with key stakeholders. These include local authorities, representatives of the NGOs and business organisations (e.g. employers' associations, education institutions etc.). This allowed stakeholders to input to the process in a more targeted manner. Some of these consultations have been more formalised, i.e. structured surveys are sent to specific groups of stakeholders and specific information sessions are organised. Other processes are more informal, drawing on existing networks and working contacts. The results of such consultations are visible, e.g. project selection criteria are adapted to the needs of the specific groups or formal rules are changed to smooth project selection and implementation procedures.

Third, **a high baseline level of capabilities** to start with or the possibility to quickly mobilise adequate HR have also been essential as the following examples indicate.

- **Latvia.** There was a general consensus across the community of ESI Funds implementers on the need for a transparent and strong political drive by the competent Minister to realise the e-cohesion agenda. However, realising this vision was made possible by the fact that the CFCA possessed qualified and highly skilled human capital. This was essential for creating a one-stop-agency and developing one, integrated e-cohesion system.
- **Sweden.** The effective functioning of the Unit for Operational Support, established by *Tillväxtverket* at the beginning of the 2014-2020 period, was realised by harnessing staff centrally to support the regional offices. Importantly, the composition of the staff reflects the different functions (project application support, legality, finance) that are in place across the country.
- **Bulgaria.** The Bulgarian Regional Information Centres were effective in their operation thanks to the fact that their staff was selected through a competition that made sure that they possessed the necessary competences and skills. Further, additional developmental activities were organised for the RICs' staff through more training and deepening their knowledge of specific local needs, including through work placements with Managing Authorities and the central support provided by the Central Coordinating Unit.

Capabilities do not only relate to the technical skills and competences that are required by the specific activities foreseen by projects, but extend also to the interpersonal skills that are essential to foster the proactive engagement of all actors involved. For example, one of the strengths of the Regional Engagement Teams in **Wales** have been the good interpersonal skills possessed by RET staff, which is very valued by beneficiaries and regional stakeholders.

Fourth, a **conducive institutional and governance framework** – whether already in place or created ad hoc – has also been important for the success of the initiatives reviewed. This includes not only having the right organisational structure in place, with clear accountability lines and dedicated resources overseeing and stimulating implementation, but also guaranteeing the necessary continuity in the administrative staff allocated to key positions.

- The smooth introduction of the Central Training Plan in **Slovakia** was possible partly due to the highly centralised system of coordination of Cohesion Policy in the country, whereby the Central Coordinating Authority and Ministry of Finance (Certifying Authority, Audit Authority) could develop a common methodological and implementation framework for ESI Funds at national level which would be obligatory for all operational programmes and bodies engaged in ESI Funds management, implementation, monitoring and control. The establishment of a dedicated Department for administrative capacities, furthermore, has provided a high-level focal point and coordinator at national level, responsible specifically for administrative capacities.
- A similar point can be made concerning the governance structure established in **Italy** for the coordination, monitoring, oversight and stimulus to the PRAs. Steering Committees ensures commitment and working groups and technical fora established as part of a 'PRA Network', organised and coordinated by the Technical Secretariat, support exchange of interesting practices and problem-solving.
- Similarly, in the **Czech Republic**, the capacity building for evaluation was enabled by the work of dedicated working groups which created mutual trust between the central EU National Coordinating Authority and the evaluation units within the individual MAs.

Fifth, a **reflexive system for the consolidation of learning** has been fundamental for the success of capacity building by enabling adaptation to evolving capacities and need.

- **Lithuania.** The lessons learned from the versatile project manager implementation process continue to have an impact on the Agency's activities. The experience of project implementation has confirmed the need to update comprehensive training programmes and mentoring which are applied for all new employees. Moreover, the project highlighted the significance of regular monitoring of the working environment and feedback mechanisms to highlight any issues. These measures are ongoing.
- Similarly, in **Italy**, the guidelines for the development of the second generation PRAs were developed after an extensive stock-take exercise of the strengths and weaknesses of the first round of PRAs (particularly the rationalise and harmonise the interventions implemented by the different administrations).
- Learning in some cases extended to the experience matured during the 2007-2013 period. In **Poland**, the activities carried out in the framework of the national network of communicators built on initiatives launched in the 2007-2013 period, as the coordinated pursuit of communication activities through channels relatively close to the potential beneficiaries at regional or local levels was recognised as an interesting use of TA in the second half of the 2007-2013 period and this provided a good basis for the further evolution of this approach into the new period.
- Systematic learning was also ensured by the Central Coordinating Unit for the Regional Information Centres in **Bulgaria**, which reviewed the performance and

needs each of the RICs, providing answers through training, tutoring and the dissemination of various practices and solutions to different challenges from across the RICs network.

Sixth, **fostering a culture of cooperation** has been instrumental for the development and consolidation of capacities.

- In **Sweden**, this type of culture was a necessary criterion for the successful implementation of the capacity building initiatives. A key motivation for the Unit for Operational Support was to develop a culture of cooperation: administrative staff previously accustomed to working in separate settings were willing to participate in building this cooperation and this was essential to the initiative's success.
- Likewise, in the **Czech Republic**, the willingness of the MAs to engage fully with the measures proposed by the national government for the strengthening of evaluation was essential for the success of these initiatives.
- Systematic cooperation among the Regional Information Centres and with the various operational programmes is important in **Bulgaria**. According to RIC staff, close cooperation is vital in a network-type structure and provides to all actors involved the necessary up-to-date, accurate and complete information about the activities carried out. Good cooperation with local authorities, in particular, has been vital in order to build capacity 'on the ground', by gaining knowledge of specific needs in different territories that can be supported through TA.
- Similarly, building and maintaining good relationships with regional partners has enabled the effective working of the Regional Engagement Teams in **Wales**, particularly for encouraging partnerships and collaborations acting as a catalyst for contacts and cooperation, avoiding duplication and supporting the delivery of operations.

Seventh, **committing for the long-term is crucial**. This means realising that capacity building initiatives take time to deliver the intended benefits and that they require an iterative process that adapts responses to evolving needs.

- In **Wales**, for example, the need for an SME Competitiveness Network, established and now facilitated by the South-East RET, was initially questioned but the network now successfully works together with Business Wales, all ten local authorities in the area, the HE/FE sector, the Federation of Small Businesses and other organisations.
- In similar vein, it has been recognised in the **Czech Republic** that only part of the desired improvements in relation to evaluation can be realised within the 2014-2020 period; further development will take place in 2021-27 as part of a long-term plan.

Lastly, successful capacity building required the **appropriate mix of tools and support**. In many of the cases examined, a key to the success of the capacity building endeavours has been the awareness that guidelines, codes of practice, procedures etc. alone are not enough to encourage the development (and then maintenance) of capacities. Building administrative capacity requires continuous and patient interactions with all the actors in the system; this is crucial in order to translate codified practice into actual every-day implementation. Often these interactions need to be carried out on an informal basis as this facilitates knowledge exchange and helps overcoming barriers.

### 3.5 Transferability

The cases illustrated in this report have been explored in order to identify practices that could be transferred to other ESIF authorities and programmes. There are a number of lessons with respect to transferability.

**It is important to differentiate between the scale or scope of different elements of an 'interesting practice'**, particularly given the varied levels of TA support available for capacity building across Member States.<sup>19</sup>

- **Some elements of positive practices are relatively easy to transfer**, in a technical sense. The purchase or development of tools or equipment represents a relatively uncomplicated deliverable. For example, the digital library of evaluations in the Czech Republic, contains all evaluations realised internally and externally by MAs and provides a valuable resource for policymakers, managers, implementers, evaluation professionals, academicians as well as the wider public. The creation of such an online tool in other Member States would be relatively straightforward.
- **Other elements require a more substantial change**, involving broader systemic, organisational or cultural shifts. Examples of this are new models of human resource management, such as the Central Training Plan in Slovakia, or the introduction of the 'versatile project manager' in Lithuania which require a significant change in the culture of public administrations.

Most of the case study examples reviewed combine different types of administrative capacity building. For instance, the extended use of digital tools often cuts across initiatives to strengthen structures or human resource development systems, providing support to organisational coordination, facilitate staff training etc. In taking inspiration from the case studies reviewed, policymakers should pay attention to **whether the domestic context is sufficiently 'ready'** for the implementation of the initiative and target efforts accordingly. An incremental approach will often be advisable, adopting the most easy-to-transfer aspects of the case study practices to start with.

Transfer requires **consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of institutions**, covering existing structures, processes and resources. In several of the cases, the practices built on existing administrative capacity or experience (e.g. city-level capacities and cooperative cultures in Polish and Finnish ITIs, density of stakeholder networks in the Saxony-Czech Republic INTERREG OP). There are two corollaries to this.

- **Transferability is determined by levels of demand and commitment from key actors to see changes through.** As noted above, in several cases, the launch and implementation of different practices have depended on political support. Commitment from public policy managers and public administration staff is also needed. This is clearly the case where the practices introduced entail significant change to administrative structures and job profiles, producing some disruption in the short-term. For example, introducing an initiative aimed at significantly changing the behaviour of public administrations might encounter significant resistance, and ultimately, fail if there is no political endorsement or a critical mass of actors within the administration that can push through a change in established patterns and behaviours.

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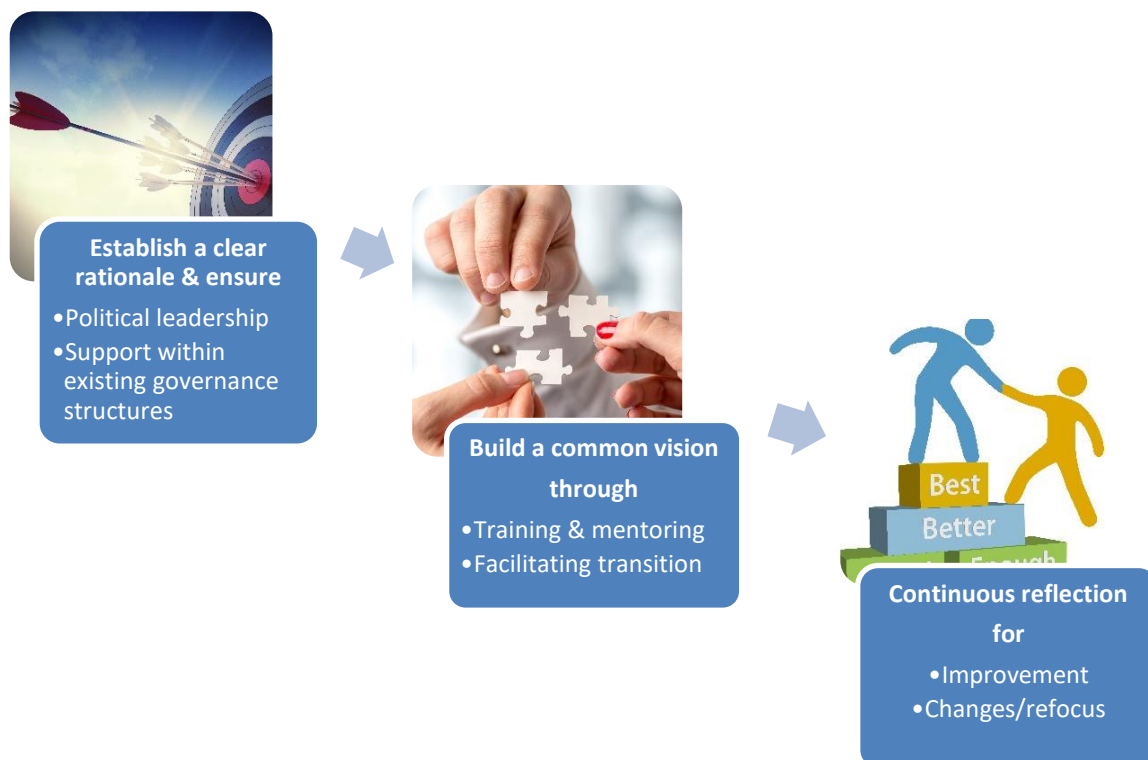
<sup>19</sup> Factors considered in assessment of 'transferability' included the extent to which the practices concerned required specific institutional settings or ESIF implementation structures (e.g. centralised, devolved) and existing administrative capacities and cultures.

- Transferring a practise from one context to another **requires careful planning and adaptation** of each step to make the transferred approach suitable to the specific context. Few of the capacity building initiatives in the cases reviewed can be regarded as 'off-the-shelf' solutions.

A summary overview of three 'steps' for effective policy transfer of TA-supported capacity-building is show in Figure 28 and can be summarised as follows.

- **Make choices and define a focus based on an identification of needs and the establishment of a clear rationale.** This process should involve political *and* administrative leaderships.
- Once goals and a precise focus have been clarified, **build a common vision and create consensus** across all involved public administration structures and staff. Support such as training and mentoring is needed to facilitate the transition towards the new practices introduced. It should be recognised that some changes will take a longer time to reap benefits.
- **Continuous reflection on the experience and its outcomes is needed for incremental improvement.** The practices (including the related administrative structures, strategic plans and processes) should not be too rigid. Feedback loops should allow room for changes and re-focusing where necessary.

**Figure 28: Steps for policy transfer**



Source: Own elaboration.





## 4 CONCLUSIONS: FINDINGS, LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### KEY FINDINGS

The past three decades have seen the use of TA evolve significantly in response to changing demands in the management and implementation of Cohesion Policy. Major bottlenecks remain, but administrative capacity-building is being strengthened further under the Commission's proposals for Cohesion Policy in 2021-2027.

The main lessons from the research are that:

- effective administrative capacity building depends on a well-founded, coherent and forward-looking strategy;
- good governance of investment for administrative capacity building requires leadership, coordination and stakeholder involvement; and
- effective strategic planning and good governance are underpinned by a learning culture.

Four groups of recommendation are important for enhancing the future application of TA for administrative capacity building:

(a) the development of roadmaps for administrative capacity building for 2021-2027, including a reorientation and more strategic use of TA to focus on a broader range of capacity building activities;

(b) the need to provide support to the entire ecosystem of ESIF management and implementation;

(c) the importance of developing a learning culture for capacity building; and

(d) the scope for the EU level to promote the coherent management of administrative capacity-building.

The objective of this study has been to enhance the Commission's and other stakeholders' understanding of the (planned and implemented) use of Technical Assistance (TA) at the initiative of Member States during the 2014-2020 period. The study is intended to provide a better understanding of the use of TA and present cases of TA-funded sustainable capacity building, particularly in the area of Human Resource Development.

The study has involved quantitative research on the use of TA across all EU28 Member States combined with qualitative research for a representative sample of programmes, together with case study research and fieldwork interviews with Member State authorities and Commission services. This final section summarises the context for the research, draws together the main results of the study, identifies lessons, and provides recommendations for 2021-2027.

### 4.1 Context: effective use of TA

**The past three decades have seen the use of TA evolve significantly in response to changing demands in the management and implementation of Cohesion Policy.** During the early programming periods in the 1990s, the emphasis of TA was on the development of new IT systems and monitoring and evaluation capacities to meet EU

requirements. The EU accession of Central and Eastern European countries in 2004 highlighted the role of TA in attracting and retaining staff, and the scope of eligible costs widened significantly. The use of TA continued to expand in 2007-2013 as substantial resources were allocated to the staffing and support of coordinating structures, in some cases responding to the decentralisation of Cohesion Policy management systems or the delegation of responsibilities to Intermediate Bodies. Awareness of the administrative burden on Cohesion Policy beneficiaries beyond the internal needs of the Managing Authorities meant that TA increasingly supported project development and capacity building among beneficiaries in order to mitigate complexity.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, **major bottlenecks remain in the management and delivery of Cohesion Policy programmes.**<sup>21</sup> These include procedural rigidity, the availability of qualified staff, adequate strategic planning capability, the professionalism of project generation, transparency in project selection, competence in project management and irregularities in public procurement and State aid. Moreover, the 2014-2020 period introduced new demands on programme authorities and beneficiaries. These are associated with thematic concentration, performance framework, ex ante conditionalities, management designation, audit and control, as well as new programme instruments (smart specialisation strategies, integrated territorial instruments, financial instruments). These challenges are compounded by the sizable reductions in TA allocations in some Member States compared to 2007-2013. In this context, evaluations and studies have emphasised the importance of effective targeting of TA support and the coordination of capacity-building efforts.

**The European Commission's regulatory proposals for Cohesion Policy in 2021-2027 intend to strengthen administrative capacity-building.** Capacity building and cooperation with partners within and outside Member States are horizontal priorities under all the proposed Policy Objectives. Pilot work is also being done on roadmaps for administrative capacity-building by the Commission and OECD, working with five Managing Authorities of national/regional programmes in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Poland and Spain.

## 4.2 Use of TA in 2014-2020

The first question for this study is **how TA is being used in 2014-2020.** Quantitative analysis of DG REGIO open data has provided insights into the patterns of TA use across the EU28, funds and interventions types in terms of allocations, and financial implementation. TA funding accounts for a small and variable share of ESIF across the EU28. **Around three percent of ESI Funds (ERDF, ESF and CF) are allocated to TA across the EU28,** ranging from 0.9 percent in Hungary to six percent in Luxembourg.

**ERDF accounts for almost half of TA funding** (48 percent), followed by ESF (33 percent) and the Cohesion Fund (19 percent). The allocations to TA by fund is highly

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<sup>20</sup> Metis GmbH (2014) *Co-financing Salaries, Bonuses, Top-ups from Structural Funds during the 2007-2013 period*, Final Report prepared for DG Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission, Luxembourg. KPMG and Prognos (2016) *Delivery system: Final Report on Work Package, Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF)*, Report to Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. Ferry M and Polverari L (2018) *Research for REGI Committee – Control and simplification of procedures within ESIF*, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels.

<sup>21</sup> Boijmans P, Goldsmith H and Vershelde N (2014) *Administrative Capacity Building linked to the management of ESI Funds: priorities for 2014-2016*, presentation to Committee of the Regions, 19/6/2014.

differentiated across the Member States; four countries have allocated over 50 percent of TA funding to ESF (Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and Ireland).<sup>22</sup>

**The majority of TA funding is allocated to management interventions** (IC 121), representing 81.5 percent of TA funding across the EU28. Evaluation and studies (IC 122) and information and communication interventions (IC 123) account for much less of the TA budget (8.5 and 10.1 percent respectively).

**Progress with implementing TA varies across Member States.** The average TA project selection rate for the EU28 was 50 percent at the end of 2017, ranging from 26 percent (Estonia and Spain) to more than 100 percent in Member States which have overbooked commitments (Hungary and Cyprus). Project selection rates are broadly similar under the ERDF (49 percent) and ESF (47 percent) but higher under the CF (56 percent).

There is a **positive correlation between the TA project selection rate and the overall ESIF project selection rate**, meaning that the higher the project selection rate of EU expenditure in general, the higher the project selection rate for TA funding.

A positive correlation is also observed in relation to declared expenditure. However, **TA expenditure rates were substantially lower than selection rates at the end of 2017, with an average EU28 rate of 15.2 percent. This is nevertheless greater than the total ESIF expenditure rate of 11.9 percent at the same date.** The highest spending rates are clustered in the 25-35 percent range (Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania and Greece), while the lowest rates are under five percent (in Ireland, Austria and Spain). Spending progress is similar under ERDF and ESF (14 percent) and substantially higher under the CF (21 percent). TA project spending rates are significantly higher under programme management interventions (17 percent) than communication (eight percent) and evaluation (four percent) interventions. This may be due to the greater need for management activity at the outset of implementation compared to evaluation and communication.

A detailed analysis of a sample of 25 Programmes based on a re-categorisation of TA funding provides insight into the use of TA for capacity building in terms of human, organisational and systemic resources. This analysis shows that **TA is mainly allocated to human resources.**

- **Human resource development accounts for the largest share of TA funding** with just under two-thirds of TA allocations on average (**65 percent**). For management interventions (IC 121), operational staff salaries represent the dominant type of expenditure within this category, accounting for 91.6 percent of Human Resources funding (or 55.3 percent of total TA, and 63 percent of funding to management interventions, IC 121) (Table 10). Research shows that TA support for staff salaries mainly relate to financial management, controls and audit activities,<sup>23</sup> which are critical to ensure transparent and sound spending of taxpayers' money.

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, the nature of the Fund appears to have no impact on the way that TA is allocated or spent.

<sup>23</sup> Spatial Foresight & T33 (2018) *New assessment of ESIF administrative costs and burden*, Final Report, Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission, Brussels.

**Table 10: Human Resources expenditure by type as share of theme, TA and IC 121**

1.1 Staff Professional Development			1.2 Operational Staff Salaries			1.3 Other		
% of HR	% of TA	% of 121	% of HR	% of TA	% of 121	% of HR	% of TA	% of 121
7	4.2	4.8	91.6	55.3	63.4	1.5	0.9	1.0

The main beneficiaries are Intermediate Bodies (45 percent of funding to salaries) and Managing Authorities (22 percent), followed by Audit Authorities (11 percent), National Coordination Bodies (4 percent) and Certifying Authorities (1 percent).

Staff professional development accounts for the remaining share of Human Resources (seven percent) representing less than five percent of total TA on average.

- **Organisational structures and resources (OSR) account for almost one-fifth of TA funding (19 percent).** The largest expenditure type within this category under management interventions (IC 121) is 'Operational Costs of Institutions', representing 50.5 percent of OSR funding (or eight percent of total TA and ten percent of funding to management interventions). 'Subcontracting or Outsourcing of Programme Management Tasks' is the other main type of expenditure, accounting for 39.9 percent of OSR - or seven percent of total TA, and eight percent of management interventions funding.
- **Systems and tools account for the lowest share of TA funding (16 percent).** The primary type of expenditure is management information systems and e-Cohesion, representing 21.5 percent of the systems and tools category (or two percent of total TA, and 2.5 percent of funding to management interventions). Far less funding under this category is allocated to audit systems & tools (seven percent).

### 4.3 Lessons learned

The interviews and case study research carried out for the study contain many detailed insights into the strengths and weaknesses of TA use for administrative capacity-building. It is possible to draw out three main groups of lessons relating to strategy, governance and culture. Under these three broad headings, key lessons are illustrated in the paragraphs below, where they are also related to the new Commission proposal for regulatory provisions for Cohesion policy in 2021-2027.<sup>24</sup>

**Effective administrative capacity building depends on a well-founded, coherent and forward-looking strategy**

<sup>24</sup> Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument. Strasbourg, 29.5.2018; COM(2018) 375 final; 2018/0196(COD).

As in other aspects of Cohesion Policy, the effectiveness of TA use for administrative capacity-building is dependent on a strategic approach, comprising the following elements.

**(a) Strategic framing - Administrative capacity building requires an explicit strategic rationale.** A basic factor for success within the case studies analysed was a clear understanding of capacity deficiencies and the forms of support required. Prior identification of capacity-building priorities (capacity constraints, knowledge needs, opportunities for innovation) and the development of clear strategic objectives was crucial in all cases reviewed. This is particularly the case when TA is used for staff costs or outsourcing, where the contribution to strategic capacity-building is less explicit. The quantitative analysis showed that staff costs account for the majority of TA use under management interventions, but it is difficult to assess the strategic quality of this investment.

Proposals for 2021-2027 include provisions to incentivise or facilitate strategic TA use. Moreover, MAs will voluntarily be able to develop 'roadmaps' for administrative capacity building. These roadmaps - setting out actions, defined through an evidence-based analysis of need, to be carried out independently by MAs in a longer term perspective - are intended to be a tool for strategic use of TA and enhanced strategic approach to capacity building.

**(b) Capacity-building requires a long-term perspective.** An important lesson identified in several analysed cases is to use TA to build on or 'scale up' Cohesion Policy implementation approaches that have demonstrated utility and strategic potential. This tallies with the Commissions legislative proposals for 2021-2027, which allow Member States to support actions that build capacity across programming periods.

**(c) Frontloading - i.e. realising substantial administrative capacity building strategic investments at the early stages of programme implementation - can be effective.** In several of the case studies it was necessary to invest considerable time and resources in capacity building in the early stages of the initiative. These include the launch of new systems or tools, the mobilisation of public administration staff or beneficiaries involved in these actions (e.g. training activities, awareness raising for EMPIS in Portugal).

**(d) Flexibility and targeting are critical.** The strategic planning of TA use has to be tailored to specific circumstances and be adaptable to changes. The case study research found that flexibility and targeting helped to strengthen stakeholder commitment. This was achieved, for example, via competence-mapping exercises (as in the Slovak Central Education Plan) and the provision of training in consultation with stakeholders (public officials or beneficiaries) to ensure that it responds both to immediate needs and strategic gaps. A flexible approach also enables TA to meet uneven demand for capacity-building (as in the case of the Regional Information Centres in Bulgaria).

Recent Commission initiatives that offer support to MS in the process of targeting TA include the launch of a competency framework and a self-assessment tool to help administrations identify and address competency gaps. However, these initiatives should be complemented and developed further by tailor-made solutions implemented on an individual Member State level and financed by a Member State's Technical Assistance resources.

**(e) Effective capacity-building requires a mix of different capacity-building measures.** The analysed case studies demonstrate considerable variation in the use of TA for administrative capacity-building in different MS and programme contexts, whether addressing specific implementation bottlenecks or supporting broader measures in human resource development. In most cases, effective use of TA involved coordination of different capacity-building activities. The categorisation of human resources, organisational structures and resources, and systems and tools utilised in this study is useful in emphasising the need for strategic uses of TA. Support under these three headings should work in a coordinated, complementary way (e.g. the development of electronic platforms and databases accompanied by investment in human resources for knowledge management to ensure that the data produced are used effectively etc.).

**Good governance of investment for administrative capacity building requires leadership, coordination and stakeholder involvement**

(a) One of the most important uses of TA is to **stimulate strong political and administrative leadership to drive and embed capacity building.** In several instances, agents of change (political champions, individuals within the organisation concerned or beneficiaries) are crucial in introducing innovative measures to stimulate organisational change. TA can support this, for instance through the recruitment of strategic leaders (e.g. in the case of evaluation in Czech Republic) or creating the incentives and space to help committed managers lead change (e.g. in the pilot process for the 'versatile project manager' in Lithuania).

(b) **The effectiveness of TA is enhanced when complemented by other forms of capacity building support.** The nature and scope of TA-funded capacity building are clearly linked to the broader strengthening of public administration. Ensuring coherence between these different forms of support can promote synergies and avoid overlap. Among the clearest examples of coherence are the Italian PRAs. These are viewed as the 'necessary link' between the support which is specifically targeted to programme delivery (generally funded by the programmes' TA) and the wider, more structural, strengthening of the capacity of public administrations (funded domestically or from other EU sources). However, linkages between TA-funded capacity-building and other EU-funded or domestic initiatives are often implied and should be more clearly set out. There is often permeability between the actions and goals of different sources of capacity-building support. Strengthening aspects that are specific to the administration of the ESIF programmes often has implications that go beyond the programme (e.g. building capacity for state aid compliance). This reiterates the importance of mapping strategic needs, identifying how TA can respond alongside other complementary support.

Thus, TA capacity-building activities should be integrated with broader processes in public administration. This increases the scope for spillovers and facilitates the pursuit of synergies between different capacity-building activities, which were noted as key success factors in the case study examples. Conversely, 'gold-plating' where Member States introduce additional rules and regulatory obligations that go beyond Cohesion Policy requirements makes coordinating information flows and procedures of management system more resource intensive for programme authorities. This increases the administrative costs and

draws on TA budgets for controlling compliance rather than for strategic implementation and achievements.<sup>25</sup>

- (c) **TA support can be targeted to encourage synergies and spillovers in capacity-building processes.** This has been the case where TA has supported organisations with key strategic positions in administrative systems that include coordination of a range of Cohesion Policy and national measures. Such organisations can be located at central level (e.g. the role of Czech Evaluation Unit in the National Coordinating Authority in facilitating spillovers across units) or regional levels (e.g. the role of some PRAs in Italy in linking all activities related to administrative capacity building. The TA-funded Joint Secretariat (JS) in the Interreg Saxony-Czech Republic OP is hosted by the Saxon State Reconstruction and Development Bank, which also manages all other Saxon ESIF programmes. As a result, the JS can exploit synergies.

The legislative proposals for the 2021-2027 period emphasise the importance of close coordination between TA investments and actions supported under the new Structural Reforms Support Service under DG REFORM which focuses on the broader institutional environment, based on demand from Member States.

- (d) **Effective use of TA can be identified at different administrative levels, emphasising the importance of promoting a culture of cooperation and knowledge exchange.** At national level, the focus on strengthening horizontal and vertical coordination capacity has continued in 2014-2020 in response to the ongoing evolution of network-based or collaborative governance approaches. One point worth highlighting is TA's contribution to both 'hard' and 'soft' coordination mechanisms, supporting the establishment of dedicated coordination units but also forums where informal networks strengthen trust-based administrative cultures. For programme authorities, a fundamental goal of capacity building remains simplification: finding structures, tools and procedures to ease the administrative burden on staff and on beneficiaries. Particular attention is being paid to the capacity to generate and select strategic, innovative projects as well as the complexities surrounding financial control and audit.

TA capacity building is enhanced when it contributes to collaborative governance. This responds to the demands on governments to address the dispersion of power in collaborative governance models and the increasing complexity of policy-making. TA investment in central coordination bodies produces a number of benefits. It strengthens horizontal coordination across ministries and policy sectors and between Cohesion Policy and national interventions (as in the remit of the Unit for Operational Support in Sweden). It is also important where network-based models of Cohesion Policy implementation need to ensure provision of standardised guidelines and tools across decentralised or deconcentrated bodies (e.g. in the RICs in Bulgaria). A crucial aspect of this form of TA support for coordination capacity is the potential to strengthen trust through the facilitation of informal networks of stakeholders (e.g. the Polish communication network and the Czech evaluation working groups).

- (e) **TA has an important role in supporting simplification of administrative procedures.** A clear lesson emerging from the research is the need to target TA on simplifying specific management and implementation tasks that create the biggest administrative burden, particularly the preparation of calls, the selection of projects and management verifications. This is reflected in the use of TA for

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<sup>25</sup> Böhme K, Holstein F, Toptsidou M and Zillmer S (2017) *Gold-plating in the European Structural and Investment Funds*, Research for European Parliament REGI Committee, Brussels.

procedural simplifications within OP management and control systems (e.g. in the PRAs in Italy). TA is also being used to build capacity by training programme authority staff and beneficiaries in the uptake of simplification measures, such as the use of Simplified Cost Options (e.g. in the RICs in Bulgaria) or the strengthening of e-cohesion (in Latvia).

- (f) **The role of TA support for capacity building for programme authorities is a key finding of this study.** This includes support to ensure that Managing authorities and Intermediate Bodies – which are already a major focus of TA support - have capacities in line with delegated tasks, including those involved in the implementation of specific Cohesion Policy instruments such as ITI. Wider access of beneficiaries to TA is a growing priority as this is often where the most pressing needs are identified. TA has a specific function in European Territorial Cooperation where it mobilises beneficiaries across administrative boundaries and implementing programmes under different legal frameworks.

Consequently, **the use of TA needs to go beyond management and control system institutions, reaching all parts of the wider implementation and delivery ecosystem where capacity building may be needed.** This often means moving beyond national authorities, Managing Authorities and Audit Authorities and focusing on capacity issues facing Intermediate Bodies and beneficiaries involved in implementation 'on the ground'. For instance, to be effective, TA-supported training or awareness-raising activities must be targeted to local needs or adjusted for a target group of participants. The wider use of TA should be encouraged among Intermediate Bodies and beneficiaries, including those involved in the implementation of specific Cohesion Policy instruments.

- **Intermediate Bodies (IBs) often have key delegated tasks, and their capacity should be strengthened by TA to ensure they are able to carry out these tasks.** It is important that the delegation of tasks to IBs is accompanied by TA support for capacity building. For instance, dealing with public procurement or State aid challenges has been the focus of capacity building at higher levels of public administration but this type of support is also important for IBs at the local level. The Wałbrzych ITI is a prominent example, where a higher level of delegation of implementation tasks from the regional Managing Authority to the IB was accompanied by higher funding from the OP's TA budget.
- **TA should be used to improve the capacity of beneficiaries to apply for and implement projects.** TA has an important role to play in facilitating the development of strategic projects between programme authorities and beneficiaries, particularly at the start of programme periods. TA can help programme authorities to structure negotiations carefully: starting the process early enough, demonstrating the added value of becoming involved, targeting smaller public administrative units or organisations that need specific help etc. An example of this is the use of TA in Wales for the establishment of 'Regional Engagement Teams' involved in networking and engagement with beneficiaries.
- **Wider access to TA for capacity building should be used for the effective uptake of specific Cohesion Policy instruments.** Targeted capacity building for beneficiaries is necessary where Cohesion Policy investment involves specific challenges for beneficiaries. This is the case, for example, in ITI strategies where access to TA for capacity building is particularly important for smaller, less experienced local authorities that are required to develop collaborative projects for integrated strategies. Capacity-building and trust-building at beneficiary level requires TA resources but this



investment creates bottom up benefits for all levels in the longer term. In instruments such as ITI, governance is a key aspect and capacity-building under this as a result of implementing projects can be as important as the outcome of the projects themselves.

**(g)TA plays an important role in strengthening local ownership and commitment.** This applies to Investment in Growth & Jobs programmes, which often operate with complex hierarchies of numerous stakeholders at regional and local levels. It also applies to ETC programmes which face the added challenge of different legal frameworks. Beyond the costs of controls and translation, TA can play a key role in supporting ETC programme secretariats and regional contact points in providing tailored advice to project applicants and implementers across Member States borders (as reflected by the higher co-financing rates foreseen by the legislative proposals for 2021-2027).

**Effective strategic planning and good governance are underpinned by a learning culture**

- (a) **Successful use of TA involves iterative review to facilitate reflexive learning.** Capacity-building needs to evolve in response to changing programme contexts or external circumstance. Regular assessment by stakeholders on TA-supported actions and the scope to adapt TA interventions is needed (e.g. iterative checks on the relevance of the 'versatile project manager' model in Lithuania). This learning process, and scope for responding to feedback, should be integrated in roadmaps for 2021-2027.
- (b) **Where existing capacities are low, TA can be used effectively to provide a stimulus for innovative capacity building.** In Member States or programme contexts where there is limited experience of Cohesion Policy implementation or where the focus on regulatory compliance limits such innovation, the use of TA to 'pilot' new, innovative approaches to management and implementation is valuable (e.g. the 'versatile project manager' in Lithuania).

**In addition, innovative capacity building approaches could be implemented via financing not linked to cost** (Article 32 CPR, 2021-2027 legislative proposal), according to which Member States or regions may undertake additional TA actions in order to further reinforce capacity.

- (c) **The research indicates that there is scope for more effective support for staff professional development including through training, mentoring and other types of HR development measures** (e.g. exchanges, peer-to-peer support, secondments and others). The quantitative analysis indicated that the funding allocated to staff professional development, at less than five percent of all TA in the programmes analysed, is relatively low compared to other headings of TA expenditure for human resources. This may need to be reconsidered based on the strategic assessment of staff development needs proposed as part of roadmaps for 2021-2027. A common theme within the analysed case studies was a focus on human resources development and the importance this has in raising capacities in programme authorities and diffusing knowledge among other stakeholders. Professional development support should be clearly focused on enhancing skills to achieve administrative capacity building and programme objectives.

- (d) However, **professional development measures should not be equated with the provision of training and mentoring. An important element of capacity building, and a key component of this research, is the scope for 'peer' learning and transferability.** The case studies reviewed in this report offer scope for transferability, taking into account necessary adaptations in different contexts. These practices cover a range of management and implementation tasks but in each instance transferability relies on identification of a clear need that this practice would address, political and administrative commitment to the initiative from the outset, a set of strategic objectives and supportive actions, and monitoring and evaluation provisions to facilitate regular reflection on progress.
- (e) **Robust monitoring systems for ACB activities are required for learning as well as transparency and accountability.** Understanding how TA is used, and its operational effectiveness, depend on relevant, accurate and reliable performance measurements. Basic indicators for TA use such as the number of FTE supported are very broad and do not provide insights into which types of capacity are strong or weak, and how TA use relates to capacity building. Indicators and benchmarks that cover TA use in a more specific, disaggregated way facilitate the assessment of effectiveness, highlighting the successes to be built upon and providing information on the sustainability of capacity building in the longer term. Basing these on stakeholder consultation strengthens their relevance and builds commitment to achieving targets. This is challenging but several practices analysed have developed the indicators along these lines. Again, the CPR proposals, particularly relating to the use of 'roadmaps' emphasise a clear definition of actions, indicators and milestones.

#### **4.4 Key recommendations for 2021-2027**

The above review of the lessons learned from the use of TA contain many specific improvements for the 2021-2027 period. Among these, four groups of recommendation are particularly important for enhancing the future application of TA.

##### ***R1: Develop administrative capacity building roadmaps for the 2021-2027 period including a reorientation of TA to encompass a broader range of capacity-building activities***

The research underlines the importance of capacity-building activities embracing a mix of HR support, organisational changes, and provision of systems and tools. In order to maximise the longer-term impact of TA support for administrative capacity building, there should be a reorientation of TA spending from staff salaries to other aspects of capacity building. This does not mean that the importance of salaries should be underestimated: in order to maintain the already existing capacity of institutions, the financing of remuneration of staff from TA should continue, especially as (in the view of Member States) it makes the ESIF management system resilient to possible economic crises or to the kind of rationalisation of administrative structures that have been frequent in the recent years of austerity. TA support to staff salaries is also important to contain the turnover of qualified staff, as TA can be used to make public sector remunerations more attractive. However, the **support of staff salaries should be embedded in a comprehensive capacity building framework** whereby the acquisition and retention of the necessary human resources is part of a wider, longer-term strategy which also includes the provision of learning and developmental opportunities for all involved.

The exact balance between these types of support and the precise content of each form of support need to be established within each specific context. To meet this goal, TA investments need to be based on an **evidence-based capacity building strategy and**

**accompanying roadmap**, devised under the leadership of the lead authority in charge of TA support (which can vary according to the national context) but with the involvement of all stakeholders, in order to carefully map out need and the solutions that can match that need in the most effective way. The roadmaps should make provision for peer learning and communities of practitioners. European Commission services should invest time and resources to raise awareness within Member States on the potential offered by the roadmaps foreseen (only as voluntary instruments) by the 2021-2027 draft regulations, and in ensuring that domestic authorities possess the necessary skills and resources to design, and then implement, such strategies and roadmaps.

### ***R2: Support the entire ecosystem of ESIF management and implementation***

The research has shown that TA support is, in many cases, not being utilised throughout the entire ESIF management and implementation system. TA is already being used to support Intermediate Bodies, as well as national coordinating bodies and Managing Authorities, but is not always filtering down to implementing bodies, delivery agents and beneficiaries on the ground. This is a gap which is particularly important in a place-based policy such as Cohesion Policy and that should be addressed in 2021-2027 programmes given that effective programme delivery and the achievement of results depend on the abilities of all actors to carry out the tasks assigned to them successfully.

Thus, in 2021-2027, operational mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that TA support targets the different actors undertaking key functions in the delivery of programmes, at whichever applicable territorial/governance scale. The realisation of comprehensive and shared administrative capacity building strategies and ensuing roadmaps, as noted above, could be a way to achieve this. However, other measures could include:

- (i) the realisation within Member States and regions of stakeholder consultations to enable a 'discovery' of the specific needs of different actors, following a similar approach to the design of Smart Specialisation Strategies (e.g. 'capacity building discovery processes');
- (ii) the realisation of administrative capacity-building action plans, with appropriate financial resources for each of the main delivery bodies; and
- (iii) the earmarking of set proportions of TA funds to each actor charged with management or delivery functions, in a way that it matches the administrative responsibilities of these actors (and the administrative capacity gap for the undertaking of such responsibilities).

### ***R3: Develop a learning culture for capacity building***

The use of TA needs to be flexible and adaptable to change, responding to the evolution of the internal and external environments. Administrative capacity building strategies, roadmaps and action plans should be regarded as 'live' documents, which are kept flexible: (a) to respond to evolving needs and ongoing learning from their implementation; and (b) to provide stimuli for innovative capacity building.

The national, regional and sub-regional actors charged with the implementation of TA-funded capacity building measures should put in place learning strategies that incorporate feedback and learning (including tacit learning from the 'on the job' experience of staff) and co-production with stakeholders. Evaluation has also shown itself to be an important learning tool. These learning strategies should integrate adequate monitoring, ongoing evaluation and periodic reflection moments to ensure that the implementation of capacity building measures is delivering the intended results and be able to re-target support if and where needed.

***R4: Coherent management of administrative capacity-building at EU level***

TA support can be an important lever for the development of administrative capacities among the different actors engaged in programme design, implementation and delivery. However, these actors operate within existing frameworks of rules and within administrative and institutional contexts that can hinder or facilitate the effectiveness of their actions (and of the capacity building initiatives realised to support them). In the 2021-2027 programming cycle, it will be essential to coordinate the support provided for administrative capacity building through TA with wider administrative reforms undertaken in the Member States and within the wider picture of administrative capacity-building efforts and funding sources available, including, where relevant, the actions of the Technical Support Instrument (replacing the Structural Reforms Support Programme) under DG REFORM (which focuses on the broader institutional environment, based on demand from Member States).

Member States have the primary responsibility, and the national and sub-national knowledge, to appraise capacity building needs, and to plan, coordinate and implement responses. However, not all national or programme authorities have the competences, time and ability to realise this holistic approach. Thus, DG REGIO, working with DG EMPL and other relevant DGs, including DG REFORM, should provide, where needed, support to domestic authorities in designing comprehensive administrative capacity building strategies and roadmaps that make use of all possible funding sources and support opportunities (also beyond Technical Assistance).

This task makes it important that there is a pan-EU overview of the capacity building needs and of the effectiveness of all capacity building initiatives realised with TA investments and beyond.

## ANNEX 1

**Table 1: Share of Planned TA allocations by Intervention Code (IC 121, IC 122, IC 123) - percent**

MS	ERDF			ESF			CF			All Funds		
	Code 121	Code 122	Code 123	Code 121	Code 122	Code 123	Code 121	Code 122	Code 123	Code 121	Code 122	Code 123
AT	75.1	9.7	15.3	87.1	4.2	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	81.8	6.6	11.6
BE	57.1	20.5	22.4	92.7	3.7	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	78.0	10.6	11.4
BG	73.2	18.0	8.8	68.4	7.6	24.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	71.0	13.3	15.7
CY	69.1	15.5	15.5	48.8	26.8	24.4	70.0	15.0	15.0	68.4	15.9	15.7
CZ	79.8	7.4	12.8	90.6	4.3	5.2	90.8	5.1	4.1	85.8	6.0	8.1
DE	86.5	8.7	4.8	80.1	12.3	7.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.8	10.2	6.0
DK	75.0	10.0	15.0	75.0	10.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	75.0	10.0	15.0
EE	79.4	10.3	10.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	84.5	7.7	7.7	81.2	9.4	9.4
ES	57.9	22.8	19.3	74.9	10.6	14.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.2	16.9	17.0
FI	100	0.0	0.0	93.3	3.4	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	97.3	1.3	1.3
FR	77.1	10.2	12.6	80.2	9.5	10.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	78.5	9.9	11.6
GR	77.5	14.5	8.0	68.4	22.8	8.9	78.2	13.7	8.1	75.4	16.4	8.2
HR	84.4	7.5	8.1	62.5	25.0	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	79.3	11.6	9.1
HU	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	78.9	6.1	15.0	78.9	6.1	15.0
IE	65.9	17.1	17.0	40.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	47.5	33.3	19.1
IT	73.8	12.0	14.2	74.0	11.7	14.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	73.9	11.9	14.3
LT	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.4	77.6	100	0.0	0.0	87.9	2.7	9.4
LU	89.1	8.8	2.1	80.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	84.5	9.4	6.1
LV	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	71.4	28.6	100	0.0	0.0	78.9	15.1	6.0
MT	76.0	16.0	8.0	83.0	8.0	9.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	78.3	13.3	8.3
NL	84.0	5.5	10.5	85.2	7.4	7.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	84.6	6.4	8.9
PL	85.1	3.3	11.5	88.5	3.7	7.8	89.2	1.5	9.3	88.3	2.8	8.9
PT	90.1	7.9	2.0	89.9	4.0	6.1	100	0.0	0.0	90.9	6.5	2.6
RO	80.6	4.3	15.0	96.7	1.3	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	88.3	2.9	8.8
SE	90.0	5.0	5.0	75.3	4.9	19.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.2	5.0	11.9
SI	94.0	6.0	0.0	66.1	6.0	27.9	94.0	6.0	0.0	91.0	6.0	3.0
SK	70.5	14.7	14.8	80.0	10.4	9.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	72.1	14.0	14.0
UK	73.5	17.5	9.0	70.7	12.5	16.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	72.2	15.2	12.6
TC	79.4	9.0	11.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	79.4	9.0	11.6
EU28	78.6	10.4	11.0	81.1	8.4	10.4	89.2	3.5	7.3	81.5	8.5	10.1

Source: ESI Funds Open Data, verified/corrected through document research by the Project Team (TADB1).

**Table 2: A distribution across regional categories by Fund and share of all TOs**

MS	TA % distribution across categories of regions						TA % of all TO funding		
	ERDF			ESF			ERDF + ESF		
	LDR	MDR	TR	LDR	MDR	TR	LDR	MDR	TR
AT	0.0	86.3	13.7	0.0	94.2	5.8	0.0%	4.3%	0.4%
BE	0.0	46.2	53.8	0.0	69.9	30.1	0.0%	1.7%	1.1%
BG	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%
CY	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
CZ	98.2	1.8	0.0	87.1	12.9	0.0	2.0%	0.1%	0.0%
DE	0.0	40.5	59.5	0.0	56.4	43.6	0.0%	1.8%	2.0%
DK	0.0	79.7	20.3	0.0	79.7	20.3	0.0%	3.6%	0.9%
EE	100	0.0	0.0	4.7	44.3	50.9	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
ES	3.6	38.4	58.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0%	0.6%	0.9%
FI	0.0	100	0.0	21.8	51.3	26.9	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%
FR	28.9	39.5	31.5	58.8	18.6	22.6	0.9%	1.6%	1.1%
GR	58.8	21.0	20.2	100	0.0	0.0	1.7%	0.6%	0.6%
HR	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%
IE	0.0	100	0.0	51.3	43.2	5.4	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
IT	76.3	18.9	4.8	100	0.0	0.0	2.2%	0.9%	0.2%
LT	0.0	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
LU	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0%	6.0%	0.0%
LV	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
MT	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
NL	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%
PL	93.6	6.4	0.0	92.2	7.8	0.0	1.9%	0.2%	0.0%
PT	88.3	9.2	2.5	100	0.0	0.0	2.1%	0.1%	0.0%
RO	94.2	5.8	0.0	94.2	5.8	0.0	2.6%	0.2%	0.0%
SE	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	100	0.0	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%
SI	82.2	17.8	0.0	70.5	29.5	0.0	0.8%	0.2%	0.0%
SK	98.4	1.6	0.0	96.5	3.5	0.0	3.9%	0.1%	0.0%
UK	21.7	48.9	29.4	13.6	62.3	24.2	0.6%	1.8%	0.9%
EU 28	67.0	18.8	14.2	63.1	25.5	11.4	1.7%	0.6%	0.3%

**Table 3: Distribution of TA allocation by thematic category**

Operational Programme	Human Resources		Organisational Structures & Resources		Systems & Tools		Total (€ mill)
	€ mill	% of TA	€ mill	% of TA	€ mill	% of TA	
BG -Good Governance	18.7	68.4	7.4	27.0	1.2	4.6	27.3
CZ -Technical Assistance	60.4	72.2	11.9	14.2	11.3	13.5	83.7
CZ-Integrated Territorial	38.5	83.8	7.4	16.2	0.0	0.0	45.9
DE -Federal Germany	131.7	88.1	0	0.0	17.9	11.9	149.6
EE-Cohesion Policy Funding	87.7	81.3	12.7	11.7	7.6	7.0	108.0
EL-Technical Assistance	196.6	67.4	76.6	26.3	18.6	6.4	291.7
ETC-Baltic Sea	1.5	68.8	0.4	17.1	0.3	14.1	2.2
ETC-CZ-PO	2.5	79.7	0.6	20.3	0.0	0.0	3.1
ETC-POCTEP	1.2	79.9	0.3	20.1		0.0	1.5
ETC-RO-BG	1.8	62.1	1.1	37.9	0.0	0.0	2.9
HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion	53.1	49.7	48.4	45.3	5.4	5.1	106.9
HU-Public Administration & Civil Service	49.9	24.6	93.1	45.9	59.8	29.5	202.8
IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness	45.8	86.1	6.0	11.3	1.4	2.6	53.2
LT-Structural Funds	54.8	65.8	13.1	15.7	15.4	18.5	83.3
LV-Growth Employment	68.6	76.5	18.9	21.1	2.2	2.5	89.7
PL-Knowledge Education Growth	32.1	52.6	10.4	17.1	18.4	30.2	60.9
PL-Smart Growth	4.4	5.8	19.8	26.4	51.0	67.8	75.2
PL-Technical Assistance	299.4	61.0	33.0	6.7	158.6	32.3	491.0
PT-Technical Assistance	40.0	54.5	12.2	16.6	21.3	29.0	73.4
RO -Technical Assistance	230.6	83.3	42.0	15.2	4.2	1.5	276.8
RO-Human Capital	35.6	68.5	15.9	30.6	0.4	0.9	51.9
RO-Integrated Regional	44.6	63.7	25.4	36.3	0.0	0.0	69.9
SI-EU-Cohesion Policy	22.7	84.8	4.0	14.9	0.1	0.2	26.8
SK-Technical Assistance	47.5	55.0	23.6	27.3	15.3	17.7	86.4
UK-England – ERDF	59.6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	59.6
<b>All OPs</b>	<b>1629.3</b>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>484.2</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>410.4</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>2523.9</b>

**Table 4: TA allocation to Human Resources (HR) expenditure types across OPs**

Operational Programme	Staff Professional Development				Operational Staff Salaries				Other				TA Total of OP
	€ mill	% of HR	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of HR	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of HR	% of TA	% of 121	
BG-Good Governance	2.5	16.6	9.3	12.7	12.7	82.6	46.4	63.4	0.1	0.8	0.5	0.6	27.3
CZ-Technical Assistance	4.4	7.2	5.2	5.4	54.5	90.8	65.2	67.2	1.2	2	1.4	1.5	83.7
CZ-Integrated Territorial	.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	38.3	99.9	83.4	88.3	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	45.9
DE-Federal Germany	0	0	0.0	0.0	131.7	100	88.1	100.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	149.6
EE-Cohesion Policy Funding	50.5	71.2	46.8	57.6	20.4	28.7	18.8	23.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	108.0
EL-Technical Assistance	2.1	1.1	0.7	0.8	194.3	98.9	66.6	68.4	0	0	0.0	0.0	291.7
ETC-Baltic Sea	0	0	0.0	0.0	1.5	100	68.8	68.8	0	0	0.0	0.0	2.2
ETC-CZ-PO	0	0	0.0	0.0	2.2	96.5	71.7	88.7	0.1	3.5	2.6	3.2	3.1
ETC-POCTEP	0.1	4.4	3.3	3.7	1.1	94	71.4	79.8	0.0	1.6	1.2	1.4	1.5
ETC-RO-BG	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.4	77.4	48.1	50.0	0.4	22.4	13.9	14.5	2.9
HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion	10.7	20.4	10.0	11.3	40.3	76.7	37.7	42.8	1.6	3	1.5	1.7	106.9
HU-Public Administration & Civil Service	2.7	5.6	1.3	1.9	38.9	81.5	19.2	27.6	6.2	12.9	3.0	4.4	202.8
IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness	0	0	0.0	0.0	40.4	100	75.9	90.4	0	0	0.0	0.0	53.2
LT-Structural Funds	1.6	2.9	1.9	2.3	53.2	97.1	63.9	76.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	83.3
LV-Growth Employment	1.5	2.2	1.6	1.8	63.4	96.7	70.7	78.3	0.7	1.1	0.8	0.9	89.7
PL-Knowledge Education Growth	2.2	7	3.7	3.7	29.8	93	49.0	49.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	60.9
PL-Smart Growth	1.4	31	1.8	1.8	3.0	69	4.0	4.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	75.2
PL-Technical Assistance	6.0	2	1.2	1.4	293.2	98	59.7	68.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	491.0
PT-Technical Assistance	1.2	3.1	1.7	1.8	34.9	87.2	47.5	50.7	3.9	9.6	5.2	5.6	73.4
RO -Technical Assistance	16.0	7.1	5.8	6.1	203.4	89.8	73.5	77.0	7.0	3.1	2.5	2.6	276.8
RO-Human Capital	0	0	0.0	0.0	35.6	99.9	68.5	77.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	51.9
RO-Integrated Regional	0.6	1.3	0.8	0.8	44.0	98.7	62.9	62.9	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	69.9
SI-EU-Cohesion Policy	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.6	11.9	99.3	44.3	85.5	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	26.8
SK-Technical Assistance	2.5	5.3	2.9	3.0	44.0	92.7	51.0	53.5	1.0	2.1	1.1	1.2	86.4
UK-England - ERDF	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.4	100	0.6	100.0	0	0	0.0	0.0	59.6
All OPs	<b>106.1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>1394.5</b>	<b>91.6</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2523.9</b>



**Table 5: TA allocations to Organisational Structures and Resources (OSR) expenditure**

Operational programme	Operational Costs of Institutions				Subcontracting / Outsourcing of OP Management Tasks				Other				TA total of Op
	€ mill	% of OSR	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of OSR	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of OSR	% of TA	% of 121	
BG-Good Governance	2.75	37.4	10.1	13.8	.73	9.9	2.7	3.6	.06	0.8	0.2	0.3	27.30
CZ-Technical Assistance	5.18	43.4	6.2	6.4	4.80	40.2	5.7	5.9	.00	0	0.0	0.0	83.66
CZ-Integrated Territorial	2.13	34.2	4.6	4.9	2.89	46.3	6.3	6.7	.00	0	0.0	0.0	45.94
DE-Federal Germany	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	149.57
EE-Cohesion Policy Funding	7.24	57.2	6.7	8.2	1.02	8.1	0.9	1.2	1.00	7.9	0.9	1.1	107.97
EL-Technical Assistance	73.96	100	25.3	26.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	291.75
ETC-Baltic Sea	.30	77.7	13.3	13.3	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.09	22.3	3.8	3.8	2.24
ETC-CZ-PO	.21	32.3	6.6	8.1	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	3.13
ETC-POCTEP	.14	45.7	9.2	10.3	.06	20.8	4.2	4.7	.00	0.9	0.2	0.2	1.55
ETC-RO-BG	.58	58.7	20.0	20.8	.29	29.1	9.9	10.3	.12	12.1	4.1	4.3	2.88
HR-Competitiveness and Cohesion	12.44	25.7	11.6	13.2	23.15	47.9	21.7	24.6	.68	1.4	0.6	0.7	106.88
HU-Public Administration & Civil Service	10.43	12.3	5.1	7.4	48.74	57.4	24.0	34.6	25.76	30.3	12.7	18.3	202.84
IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness	2.94	100	5.5	6.6	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	53.21
LT-Structural Funds	10.81	82.6	13.0	15.5	2.28	17.4	2.7	3.3	.00	0	0.0	0.0	83.30
LV-Growth Employment	1.62	8.5	1.8	2.0	2.07	10.9	2.3	2.6	9.58	50.7	10.7	11.8	89.69
PL-Knowledge Education Growth	9.51	91.1	15.6	15.6	.93	8.9	1.5	1.5	.00	0	0.0	0.0	60.89
PL-Smart Growth	11.72	59.2	15.6	15.6	8.09	40.8	10.8	10.8	.00	0	0.0	0.0	75.20
PL-Technical Assistance	16.71	50.6	3.4	3.9	16.25	49.2	3.3	3.8	.00	0	0.0	0.0	490.97
PT-Technical Assistance	6.86	56.4	9.3	10.0	1.48	12.2	2.0	2.2	.71	5.8	1.0	1.0	73.40
RO-Technical Assistance	14.59	34.7	5.3	5.5	17.32	41.2	6.3	6.6	1.79	4.3	0.6	0.7	276.80
RO-Human Capital	3.66	23	7.0	7.9	6.12	38.5	11.8	13.3	.23	1.5	0.4	0.5	51.93
RO-Integrated Regional	14.15	55.8	20.2	20.2	11.21	44.2	16.0	16.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	69.94
SI-EU-Cohesion Policy	1.74	43.4	6.5	12.5	.11	2.7	0.4	0.8	.08	2	0.3	0.6	26.80
SK-Technical Assistance	2.99	12.7	3.5	3.6	20.35	86.3	23.5	24.7	.25	1	0.3	0.3	86.43
UK-England - ERDF	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	.00	0	0.0	0.0	59.59
<b>All Ops</b>	<b>212.65</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>167.88</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>40.34</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2523.86</b>

**Table 6: TA allocations to Systems and Tools (S&T) expenditure types by OP**

	Management Information Systems (MIS) & E-Cohesion				Audit Systems & Tools				Anti-fraud Systems & Tools				Other			TA total of Op	
	€ mill	% of S&T	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of S&T	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of S&T	% of TA	% of 121	€ mill	% of S&T	% of TA		% of 121
Operational Programmes																	
BG-Good Governance	1.04	93.0	3.8	5.2	.08	7.0	0.3	0.4	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.3
CZ-Technical Assistance	11.12	100.0	13.3	13.7	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.7
CZ-Integrated Territorial	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	45.9
DE -Federal Germany	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	149.6
EE-Cohesion Policy Funding	4.04	53.7	3.7	4.6	2.91	38.7	2.7	3.3	.57	7.6	0.5	0.6	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	108.0
EL-Technical Assistance	4.28	30.9	1.5	1.5	9.38	67.7	3.2	3.3	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.20	1.4	0.1	0.1	291.7
ETC-Baltic Sea	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.32	100	14.1	14.1	2.2
ETC-CZ-PO	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.1
ETC-POCTEP	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
ETC-RO-BG	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9
HR-Competitiveness & Cohesion	2.64	48.6	2.5	2.8	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.79	51.4	2.6	3.0	106.9
HU-Public Administration & Civil Service	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.14	100	4.0	5.8	202.8
IT-Enterprises & Competitiveness	1.36	100.0	2.6	3.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	53.2
LT-Structural Funds	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.07	100	2.5	3.0	83.3
LV-Growth Employment	2.20	100.0	2.5	2.7	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	89.7
PL-Knowledge Education Growth	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.01	10.9	3.3	3.3	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.39	89.1	26.9	26.9	60.9
PL-Smart Growth	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.28	2.5	1.7	1.7	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	49.73	97.5	66.1	66.1	75.2
PL-Technical Assistance	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.74	1.8	0.4	0.4	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	97.41	98.2	19.8	22.6	491.0
PT-Technical Assistance	17.57	89.2	23.9	25.6	.15	0.7	0.2	0.2	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.99	10.1	2.7	2.9	73.4
RO-Technical Assistance	.17	4.1	0.1	0.1	1.19	28.3	0.4	0.4	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.83	67.6	1.0	1.1	276.8
RO-Human Capital	.04	8.7	0.1	0.1	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.41	91.3	0.8	0.9	51.9
RO-Integrated Regional	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	69.9
SI-EU-Cohesion Policy	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.8
SK-Technical Assistance	10.83	96.0	12.5	13.1	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.45	4.0	0.5	0.6	86.4
UK-England - ERDF	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	.00	0.0	0.0	0.0	59.6
All Ops	55.3	21.5	2.2	2.5	18.7	7.3	0.7	0.9	.57	0.2	0.0	0.0	182.7	71.0	7.2	8.3	2523.9

**Table 7: Distribution of TA allocation by Types of expenditure**

<b>Thematic Category (applied to all TA expenditure, i.e. IC 121, 122, 123)</b>	<b>Types of expenditure (applied to IC 121 only)</b>	<b>% of category</b>	<b>% of 121 (HR only)</b>	<b>% of TA</b>
<b>Human Resources</b>	1.1 Staff Professional Development, including networking	7.0	4.8	4.2
	1.2 Operational Staff Salaries	91.6	63.4	55.3
	1.3 Other	1.5	1.0	0.9
<b>Organisational Structures &amp; Resources</b>	2.1 Operational costs of institutions ( <i>other than HR and Systems &amp; Tools</i> )	50.5		8.4
	2.2 Subcontracting or Outsourcing of Programme Management Tasks ( <i>other than Systems &amp; Tools</i> )	39.9		6.7
	2.3 Other	9.6		1.6
	3.1 Management Information system (MIS) & E-cohesion	21.5		2.2
<b>Systems &amp; Tools</b>	3.2 Audit systems & tools	7.3		0.7
	3.3 Anti-fraud systems & tools	0.2		0.0
	3.4. Other	71.0		7.2

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