

# EU Structural Funds programming requirements for the period 2014-2020

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# The EU funds' strategic programming as a challenge for the Member States

## Europe 2020 Strategy

- Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

## Cohesion Policy

- Stronger alignment with Europe 2020 and with EU Economic Governance

## Common Strategic Framework (CSF) Funds

- Delivering on the Cohesion Policy

*“For the next round of cohesion policy, programmes should select their investment priorities taking into account their baseline and concentrate on domains where investments will make the biggest contribution to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In this way, cohesion policy will become the efficient, results-oriented, integrated policy that the Union needs to realise its Europe 2020 strategy”.*

**Johannes Hahn**, Member of the European Commission in charge of Regional Policy

**László Andor**, Member of the European Commission in charge of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

*Seventh progress report on economic, social and territorial cohesion, European Union, 2011*

# The 5 targets for the EU in 2020

## 1. Employment

- 75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed

## 2. R&D / innovation

- 3% of the EU's GDP (public and private combined) to be invested in R&D/innovation

## 3. Climate change / energy

- greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990
- 20% of energy from renewables
- 20% increase in energy efficiency

## 4. Education

- Reducing school drop-out rates below 10%
- at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education

## 5. Poverty / social exclusion

- at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

*Source: Europe 2020 Strategy*

# Thematic objectives

*Each CSF Fund shall support the following thematic objectives in accordance with its mission in order to contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth:*

- (1) strengthening research, technological development and innovation;
- (2) enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies;
- (3) enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF);
- (4) supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors;
- (5) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management;
- (6) protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency;
- (7) promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures;
- (8) promoting employment and supporting labour mobility;
- (9) promoting social inclusion and combating poverty;
- (10) investing in education, skills and lifelong learning;
- (11) enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration.

Thematic objectives shall be translated into priorities specific to each CSF Fund and set out in the Fund-specific rules.

*Extract form the CPR(COM(2012) 496 final, Art. 9.*

# Associated decisions in the programming process

- Number and scope of the Operational Programmes
- Coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels

# Focus of EU Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020

- Thematic concentration on the Europe 2020 Strategy, transposed into a Common Strategic Framework at EU level
- Single strategic framework in each Member State likely to be known as 'Partnership Contract'
- Possibilities for multi-fund programmes
- Greater opportunities for territorial approaches to programming
- Stronger emphasis on performance and monitoring of results
- Concentration on earmarking provisions
- Imposition of conditionalities on Member States by the Commission – ex-ante and/or ex-post
- Simplification of the implementation process and better management of the funds

# Key premises for a new programming approach

- Strong emphasis, from an early stage, on how the programmes will actually be implemented
- Measures to break down domestic administrative and regulatory barriers to smooth and timely implementation of projects
- Well-managed partnership activity
- Develop robust pipelines of projects and schemes of various types and sizes covering at least the first 3 years of the implementation period
- Concentrate on a relatively limited number of priorities and key areas of interventions in order to maximize the impact and management efficiency



# Programming documents

- “Partnership Contract” replacing the current NSRF and covering ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund as well as EAFRD and EMFF
- Operational Programmes (OPs): programming documents at sectoral / territorial level (mono-fund, or multi-fund)
- Practical ‘measure’ level type documents, unlikely to be required by EC Regulations, but essential for implementation

# Consultation and stakeholder involvement

Key stages where consultations should be organized arranged include:

- development needs analysis: in order to elicit opinions on the accuracy of the proposed basis for programming;
- proposal of Priority Axes and detailed specification of 'measures': particularly important as the process only becomes relevant for many stakeholders at this higher level of detail;
- other stages requiring ad-hoc consultation: including help with resolution of emerging conflicts between contradictory needs and concepts.

# Programming process

- Preparation of socio-economic needs analysis
- Definition of strategy
- Financial programming
- Defining implementation arrangements
- Ex-Ante evaluation and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Conditionalities
- Project pipeline development

# Summary of key decisions to take regarding programming documents (1/3)

The main decision points related to the Partnership Contract (national framework):

- selection of development priorities (Priority Themes / Thematic objectives) and areas under them;
- level of concentration / contribution to EU2020 priorities;
- determination of the relative weight of these priorities/ earmarking limits for different objectives;
- setting the national targets (including milestones) to be achieved and the corresponding conditionalities;
- determining the main priority areas for cooperation;
- determination of OPs and their financial framework;
- definition of an integrated approach to territorial development, including the coordination mechanisms between CSF funds and other EU funds available;
- arrangements for efficient implementation, e.g. designation of MAs and IBs (also with regard to past performance) and strengthening their institutional capacity; degree of fulfillment the ex-ante conditionalities, etc.

# Summary of key decisions to take regarding programming documents (2/3)

The main decision points at Operational Programme level are the following:

- selection of Priority Axes (and link to the Thematic objectives) and determination of the relative weight of these priority axes;
- decision about the nature of any regional / territorial programmes or approaches and contribution to the integrated approach defined in the Partnership Contract;
- selection of major predefined projects;
- selection of possible intervention areas under the priorities as basis for 'measures', accompanied by clear and measurable targets of indicators;
- definition of implementation arrangements (also addressing previous shortcomings).

# Summary of key decisions to take regarding programming documents (3/3)

The main decision points regarding the Implementation Framework Documents:

- selection and specification of 'measures';
- determination of eligibility and selection criteria (including National Eligibility Rules if applicable);
- determination of grant size and rate;
- determination of 'measure' level financial framework;
- detailed definition of specific implementation arrangements for different 'measures' and schemes (if needed);
- project pipeline preparation and pre-selection of non-major projects/schemes (including modalities for pre-selection, where necessary).