

# Future perspectives for technical assistance in cohesion policy

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The European Parliament adopted by 580 votes to 45, with 3 abstentions, a resolution on future perspectives for Technical Assistance in Cohesion Policy.

Members recalled that technical assistance plays an **important role in all phases of implementation of cohesion policy**. However, local, regional and national authorities often lack the necessary capacity to efficiently and effectively implement the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds).

**Technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission:** Parliament welcomed the Commission's activities funded by technical assistance, in particular its work on: (i) the TAIEX REGIO PEER 2 PEER instrument, (ii) the Competency Framework, (iii) the Self-Assessment Tool, (iv) the Integrity Pacts, (v) the Guide for practitioners on how to avoid the 25 most common errors on public procurement and the Study on stocktaking administrative capacity on public procurement in all Member States.

Technical assistance instruments should have a **greater role in the post-2020 cohesion policy** and urged the Commission to raise awareness at local and regional level regarding their use.

Parliament recommended:

- the scope of the TAIEX REGIO PEER 2 PEER instrument to be extended to all partners to ensure the **broad exchange of experience**, to contribute to capacity building, and to facilitate capitalising on good practices. They stressed the need to continue and improve the work of the Task Force for Better Implementation in order to support Member States experiencing difficulties in implementing cohesion policy;
- ensure consistency with the **Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP)** while stressing that any possible prolongation of the programme should not detract from cohesion policy thematic objectives and that resources should not be taken away from ESI Funds technical assistance;
- develop a **broader technical assistance strategy** to ensure more effective coordination covering all DGs that deal with the ESI so as to streamline the support provided and maximise synergies and complementarities;
- **better streamline** the technical assistance in order to cover areas where managing authorities and beneficiaries encounter most challenges;
- analyse how **JASPERS activity** for the period 2007-2013 providing independent quality review (IQR) has improved project quality and cut the time taken for approval of major projects by the Commission;
- prepare measures and resources to set up technical assistance for the implementation of **EU macro-regional strategies**, having taken into account the varied experiences and rates of success of implementing such strategies, as well as the fact that the strategies' participants include non-Member States and countries with limited funds.

Noting that since technical assistance was first used in the area of cohesion policy, no global analysis has been done to establish its actual contribution, Members called on the Commission to **invest in improving the reporting and evaluation** system by developing more appropriate indicators ready for use in the next programming period.

The resolution stressed the importance of implementing specific technical assistance measures to promote **re-industrialisation** in depressed areas so as to attract investments in high-tech and innovative sectors with a low environmental impact.

**Technical assistance at the initiative of the Member States:** Parliament emphasised that technical assistance is different from other actions financed by the ESI Funds and that it is hard to measure its results. There is a need for a strategic and transparent approach, coordinated at the various levels of governance, as well as for flexibility to meet needs identified by managing authorities in the Member States.

Members were concerned that:

- in certain Member States technical assistance does not sufficiently and effectively reach the local and regional authorities, which usually have the lowest administrative capacity. **Sound and transparent communication channels** need to be established between the different levels of governance in order to successfully implement the ESI Funds and to achieve cohesion policy goals, while restoring trust in the effective functioning of the EU and its policies;
- in the implementation of **integrated actions for sustainable urban development**, although tasks are delegated to urban authorities which act as intermediate bodies, they often do not receive the necessary technical assistance for building up their capacity;
- many Member States are not applying the **European code of conduct** on partnership which defines the need to help the relevant partners strengthen their institutional capacity in regard to programme preparation and implementation.

Parliament highlighted that **increased communication on and the visibility of the results** and successes achieved with the support of ESI Funds can contribute to regaining citizens' trust in the EU. It called for the creation of a **separate budget** for communication within the technical assistance at the initiative of the Member State.

In order to reduce excessive procedural complications, Member States called for technical assistance to be increasingly **focused on the beneficiary/project** level regardless of whether it relates to the public, private or civil society sector. This would ensure the supply of innovative and well-designed projects fitting in with already existing strategies and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

Technical assistance must be seen as a **simple, flexible instrument** that can be adjusted to suit changing circumstances.

Members called for:

- **better reporting** by Member States in the post-2020 period of the types of actions financed by technical assistance, as well as the results achieved;
- increased use of technical assistance in **European Territorial Cooperation** and related programmes and in the field of cross-border relations;
- the Commission to implement an **ex-post evaluation** of both centrally managed technical assistance and technical assistance under shared management.