



Highlights

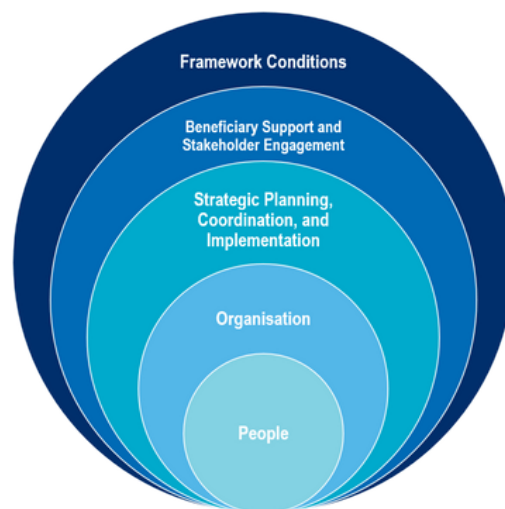
Forum for Managing Authorities: Building Administrative Capacity 2021-2027

The European Commission and the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#) jointly organised the **Forum for Managing Authorities: Building Administrative Capacity 2021-2027**. This event brought together more than **300 participants** from Managing Authorities, national coordinating bodies, and other organisations **across 26 countries**, to gain insights from international experts and peers on strengthening administrative capacity and to explore new ideas with peers on overcoming administrative challenges.

Forum Highlights

Rethinking the governance and management of national and subnational public investment, including the use of EU Funds, is an increasing priority. Focusing on building administrative capacity for Managing Authorities (MAs) is particularly important for maximising the impact of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy funds, the funds through the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and implementing the European Green Deal. Good governance and stronger administrative capacity can improve the use of EU funds by enhancing the quality of strategies, reinforcing engagement with partners, optimising project pipelines, and improving the management of projects.

OECD analytical framework for administrative capacity



Yet administrative capacity building is complex, and requires multi-faceted and iterative efforts. MAs can build capacity around people management, organisation management, strategic planning, coordination and implementation, as well as beneficiary support and stakeholder engagement. This is illustrated by the OECD analytical framework (figure above). In addition, MAs need to reinforce core leadership skills in order to foster a collective vision and commitment towards administrative capacity building. To scale up administrative capacity building efforts and increase efficiency, MAs need to be open toward external knowledge and engage with a variety of networks.

There has been increasing emphasis on administrative capacity building since the 2014-2020 programming period. Some EU Member States, such as Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Sweden, have conducted or planned major administration reforms at the national, regional or local levels, including introducing new systems to assess administrative capacity. In some other cases, national public agencies provide expertise to facilitate strategic coordination across sectors, support quality project planning, or help the regional and local level develop integrated development strategies and tools. Some EU Member States provide systematic training to public authorities across the country to build their capacity.

Building administrative capacity faces certain challenges. Regulatory complexity is an obstacle. While many MAs are looking to simplifying processes in order to reduce the administrative burden and increase strategic investment, greater coordination of simplification and communication efforts at the national level can help promote coherency through the Management and Control System. Another significant challenge for MAs is that they frequently deal with urgent operational issues, which often reduces the space for strategic thinking. Some MAs also face a variety of people management challenges, such as budget cuts, high staff turnover rates, or the loss of institutional memory.

Many MAs have strong building blocks in place to learn from previous programming periods, and can count on highly professional staff with in-depth knowledge of Cohesion Policy procedures and processes. This is encouraging, and points to the need to reinforce support for continuous administrative capacity-building efforts for MAs and public administrations.

What MAs Can Do

LOOK AT COHESION POLICY AS AN ‘ECOSYSTEM’; INVEST IN ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING BASED ON A STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Administrative capacity building supported by technical assistance tends to focus primarily on day-to-day management and programme implementation of individual MAs. It may neglect the different and interconnected capacity needs across the Cohesion Policy ‘ecosystem’ – MAs, Certifying Authorities/the accounting function, Intermediate Bodies (IBs), beneficiaries, or authorities in the same regions. The result is that investment in administrative capacity building does not lead to a lasting legacy within public administrations. MAs need to anchor their administrative capacity building activities in a comprehensive and strategic assessment of capacity needs, taking into account other actors in the system, providing clarity on the responsible entities, expected outcomes, type of support needed, and on how to prioritise the actions. The [Administrative Capacity Building Roadmaps](#) and the [OECD Self-assessment Instrument](#) are useful tools in this regard.

CAPITALISE ON SYNERGIES BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING UNDER COHESION POLICY AND BROADER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORMS

Better governance of Cohesion Policy requires improvement in broader framework conditions. MAs should try to align their own capacity-building efforts with public administration reforms (e.g. the client-oriented public administration reform in the Czech Republic, the expert support by the Management Organisation Unit in Greece, and the centre of advisory support on local development programme in Poland) in order to optimise the investments and resources in administrative capacity building. This is particularly critical now with the National Recovery and Resilience Plans that are designed to deliver structural reforms with a shorter-term spending timeframe than Cohesion Policy.

BUILD ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC-INDUCED INNOVATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic created enormous administrative pressures but also generated remarkable innovation in communication, coordination and flexibility in workforce management. MAs could grasp this opportunity to build on these newly developed competencies and ways of working and embed them in programme management for the future.

FRAME CAPACITY BUILDING AS ‘EVERYONE’S JOB’

Developing a culture of learning and exchange within and across MAs can encourage a culture of continuous improvement. This can be strengthened holistically through training, peer learning, networking, leading to a change of mind-sets of individuals and institutions. Capacity building should be embedded in day-to-day work and involve all staff within the MAs and across MAs. In the Greek Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development MA, for example, there are 11 teams working on capacity building action, with over 40% of their total employees actively involved in the implementation of the Administrative Capacity Building Roadmap.

What Can Be Done to Support MAs

Create buy-in – including political will – for administrative capacity building among all relevant parties

Administrative capacity building needs to be supported by stable political and administrative leadership, and enjoy buy-in from all those involved in implementing administrative capacity building actions. MAs need to know that they can count on lasting political support to carry out the capacity building measures.

Understand and demonstrate what works

At the national and EU levels, better comparative data and information could be developed in order to help MAs and other authorities understand how administrative capacity building actions can be adapted in different contexts. This can help demonstrate what works and what does not, and provide evidence on the outcomes and impact of investing in administrative capacity building.

Promote co-operation between public administration and academia

At the national and EU levels, a more regular dialogue between these two worlds would help frame administrative capacity building as public policy in its own right, and not just as instrumental to other policies. This could lead to more systematic attention and support to administrative capacity building efforts, thereby increasing their potential to succeed.

Frame administrative capacity-building in a positive light rather than as a ‘tick-the-box’ or remedial exercise

There is a risk that MAs consider developing an Administrative Capacity Building Roadmap – or administrative capacity building in general – as a “tick-the-box” exercise or an extra burden to their daily work. It might even create the perception that Administrative Capacity Building Roadmaps are only intended for EU Member States that have low performance in implementing EU funds. At the European level, it would be helpful to promote the value-added of administrative capacity building by focusing on the continuous dialogue and ideas that emerged from the process.



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Good capacity is related to more effective use of the funds, in terms of the quality of strategies, engagement with partners, project pipelines, and the management of projects.

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- Dr. John Batchler, Director, Director of European Policies Research Centre, delivered a keynote speech at the Forum.

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Relevance, synergy, agency, advocacy, and cooperation between policy and academia.

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- Keywords of the speech by Dr. Laura Polverari, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Padua, Co-Director of the Institutional and Administrative Capacities Observatory #CAPIS

(Access her full speech [here](#))



People Management

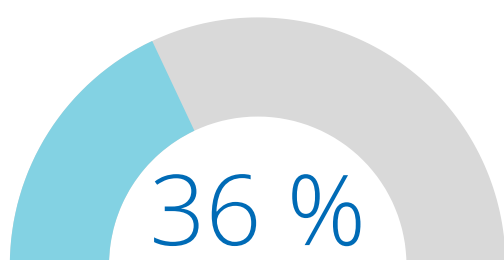
- People management is not just about Human Resource teams in the MA. Designing and updating effective people management strategies should involve stakeholders from across the Management and Control System.
- Continuous learning and development programmes are needed. MAs were particularly interested in learning opportunities on management and communication skills, conflict resolution, leadership, and time/task management.
- While Cohesion Policy is a technical field, essential competences for working in the field of Cohesion Policy include the ability to work under pressure, resilience, motivation, communication, adaptability, enthusiasm, emotional intelligence, project management, and awareness of rules.



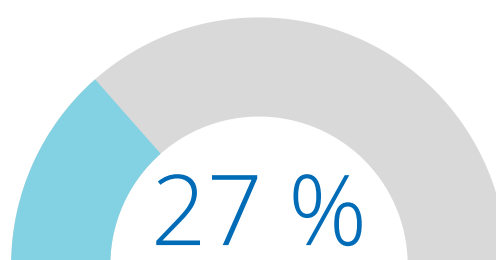
Having staff with the ability, motivation and opportunity to apply their skills is a critical part of administrative capacity. However, many MAs face a range of people management challenges. In fast-changing contexts, skills needs evolve rapidly and MA recruitment and selection systems need to keep pace. In addition to technical skills related to public procurement or interpretation of legal texts, for example, the complexity and importance of investment through Cohesion Policy calls for a broader range of competences, such as the ability to problem-solve and develop creative solutions. Better communication around the variety of careers – and career development possibilities – in EU funds management can help attract more candidates with the right mix of skills and competences.

Engaging and motivating the workforce is also a core part of administrative capacity: high-performing MAs draw on a range of data to develop policies and ways of working likely to be able to retain key staff. Building human resource planning capacity in management teams may be one promising avenue to help boost retention.

The biggest people management challenges voted by Forum participants



Attracting new staff with the right skills



Engaging and motivating the workforce

What MAs Can Do

- Engage with employees to understand the problems they face (e.g. through staff surveys, 'Town Hall' meetings, suggestion boxes, etc.).
- Promote capacity building as a continuous initiative between and within institutions.
- Enhance management skills and support managers to encourage continuous learning and development (e.g. through online and on-site training modules focussing on transversal competences).
- Strengthen communication across the Management and Control System to encourage information and expertise sharing, with the aim of promoting strategic objectives.
- Promote career opportunities and communicate career development and growth opportunities in the field of EU funds management.
- Pay more attention to attracting and retaining staff with technical as well as socio-emotional skills (e.g. adaptability, communication and emotional intelligence).
- Identify and support the development of high-performers with the potential to move into leadership positions in EU funds management.
- Modernise recruitment schemes to evaluate the new skills needed to enhance administrative capacity in the field of Cohesion Policy funds.



The OECD worked with Croatia, Greece and Poland to improve people management strategies. In Croatia and Greece, the OECD conducted a competency gap analysis to identify important but hard-to-articulate competences required for effective Cohesion Policy management. Through a series of online workshops (due to the pandemic), the OECD supported each MA to identify and prioritise competences to support with further development through learning and development action plans. This effort produced a common vision for what type of competences were missing in the MAs, and how they could be developed through learning journeys. In Greece, for example, the management team of the MA completed a tailor-made learning programme focussing on management facilitation and communication. The programme was a combination of self-directed learning, coaching, and interactive workshops.

Organisation Management

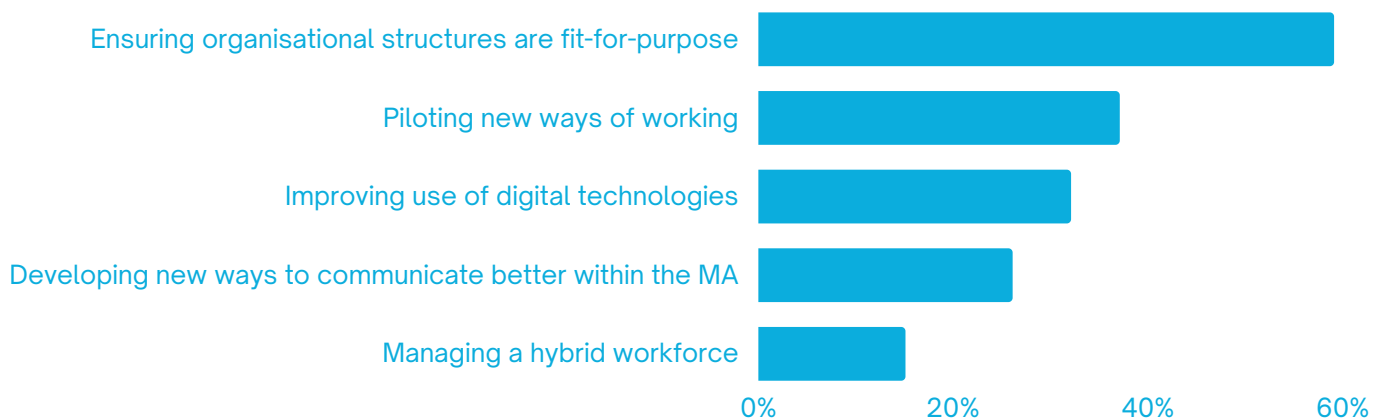
- There is room for adjustments and improvement of organisational structures while still remaining within the rules – the challenge is to identify the margin for manoeuvre.
- There could be potential to establish a European network of MAs to exchange good practices on a regular basis.
- Trust is a critical ingredient in how organisations can use and optimise their organisational structures and processes.



Organisational arrangements and procedures must comply with relevant legislation, but they must also be "fit-for-purpose". This suggests a need to periodically evaluate whether processes and organisational structures make sense as needs and priorities evolve. In addition, MAs must have knowledge management mechanisms to build and maintain institutional capacity over time. High-performing MAs invest in the capacity for resource flexibility in order to adapt to changing strategic needs and circumstances.

Achieving these types of capacities may prove difficult, however, due to the underlying complexity in managing European funds. One of the big challenges is not just the regulations or the systems themselves, but the difficulty in identifying ways to do things differently in an environment that is framed by specific rules and procedures. It is often possible to optimise work substantially by changing the mind-set and internal habits. This is why informal discussion groups or thematic communities of practice in MAs are ways to help identify margin for manoeuvre – while still staying within the rules.

Administrative capacity-building priorities voted by the Forum participants



Identifying the margin for manoeuvre may be more straightforward in organisations with clear objectives articulated by the leadership team, and where these are reflected throughout the organisation. A clear and shared core purpose is an important basis for the development of measurement frameworks that can help achieve sustainable long-term development. However, some MAs may face challenges navigating different objectives, and this can have a negative impact on how they align resources and procedures to achieve specific goals.

Organisational capacity is also affected by trust. Where strong trust levels exist between individuals and across different business units, organisations can experiment with agile and innovative ways of working. Building this type of trust can be fostered by improving recruitment systems to hire quality professionals motivated by values. While this is hard to achieve overnight, clarity around objectives and work processes can help reduce the need for overly-burdensome verification processes and create more efficient organisations.



Some Forum participants noted that occasionally they felt 'lost' when trying to think about how to improve organisational structures and processes in their MA. One way to begin is to develop a 'baseline' on which to base further initiatives. For example, the OECD worked with MAs in Croatia, Greece and Poland (Lubelskie) to design and run an (anonymous) employee engagement survey. The purpose was to gather information on a variety of work preferences and attitudes, and to share the results with senior management. Regarding organisational issues, one interesting result was that although staff felt that greater mobility to other parts of the MA would be a good thing, they themselves did not consider that mobility would add particular value to their career. This finding suggests the need to better structure and encourage mobility programmes, which is a priority for the MA in question going forward.

What MAs Can Do

- Improve dialogue with stakeholders and beneficiaries to better understand their needs.
- Standardise organisational processes and internally evaluate ineffective procedures.
- Ensure that organisational objectives are clear and supported by flexible and adaptable structures.
- Promote an organisational environment based on trust.

What Can Be Done to Support MAs

- Develop a European network of MAs to exchange good practices. There may be several MAs in the same country that have entirely different failure demands and needs, so it may be helpful to promote the sharing of experiences and knowledge at the European level.

Strategic Planning, Co-ordination, and Implementation

- The value added that MAs can bring to strategic planning processes should be given greater weight in the programming process and their capacity for this should be nurtured.
- Coordination incentives and mechanisms can help capitalise on synergies among funds and policies to achieve multiplier effects on investment outcomes.
- A proper mix of evaluation methods – quantitative indicators and case-based assessment – can help capture the investment outcomes and inform future programme design.



The value added that MAs can bring to strategic planning of Cohesion Policy is frequently overlooked, and should be given greater weight in the programming process. MAs sit in a critical juncture in a “sandwich” position – between the strategic, national and/or regional planning activities and day-to-day project design, implementation and management activities. They spearhead programme management and frequently understand the needs of beneficiaries, the rules of different funds and instruments, and more importantly, what types of interventions and investments work the best for their sectors or regions. The expertise of the MAs can profoundly contribute to *a)* articulating the strategic links between the Cohesion Policy programme objectives and national/regional development aims and *b)* matching the appropriate funding resources and instruments with policy initiatives and measures.

Yet, as MAs are generally considered operational and not strategic entities, many of them do not have sufficient human resources and expertise for strategic planning; rather, resources usually concentrate on implementation and operations. Effective strategic planning and coordination requires MAs to build a wide range of capacities. These include the capacity to carry out stock-taking exercises and consult a broad set of stakeholders to understand investment needs. It also includes capacity to articulate clear strategic objectives, linking these to Programme objectives and mapping out investment priorities. MAs also need the capacity to understand the sectoral environment or policy sphere where investments take place, and raise the awareness of all involved actors in that sphere, in order to ensure the effective investment outcomes. Capacity is also needed in tying strategic objectives to specific activities and tangible results, and identify the agencies or bodies responsible for implementing projects that contribute to meeting these objectives.



The Extremadura (Spain) Regional MA, situated in the regional government of Extremadura, indicated that a single vision and strategy on regional development is missing, thus they were not able to anchor their ERDF programme design to a broader strategy and to meet the long-term regional development goals. Through the ACB pilot project, the Extremadura MA launched an online questionnaire and a workshop with a wide range of stakeholders to identify the regional development needs and objectives, which provided initial insights to developing a regional development strategies and to strategic planning for their ERDF programme.

In addition, determining the types of partnerships to build, how to build them, and with whom, is capacity intensive but essential in order to successfully implement EU-funded investment projects. Moving forward, MAs can develop targeted trainings for staff in these aspects and draw on technical assistance to build their strategic planning capacity.

One critical aspect of strategic planning is to identify and capitalise on synergies among funds, policies, and programmes. Doing so can help avoid parallel and overlapping programming, and more importantly, it can make the most of complementarities among investments and of public resources. Many policies, programmes and funding resources are interconnected and the whole landscape can be broad and complex. It would be a good practice if MAs could systematically identify the complementarities among various funding resources and policy areas. This could support a more integrated approach to investment and optimise the distribution of resources. Such a practice can also help identify areas that are under-funded, and explore ways to channel funds to those areas. By identifying and demonstrating the inter-dependence of various policies and initiatives, MAs can also improve the visibility of their programme(s) in various policy spheres, while also generating buy-in from a diverse sectors and stakeholders to pursue shared goals.

Synergies are captured through coordination, but coordination does not “fall from the sky”. In most cases, MAs – especially those working with different funds or in different sectors – lack the incentive or time to pay attention to policy areas outside their programme’s scope. Additional efforts to foster coordination among MAs are necessary. One way is to establish a clear institutional structure for coordination, such as the case in Piedmont, Italy.

The Directorate for Coordination of European Policies and Funds in Piedmont (Italy) coordinate all EU and national funds programming and implementation in the region, to ensure the funds are used to meet regional needs. They supported the development of a single strategic document for regional development in Piedmont in 2021-2027, mapping out the linkages among objectives at all levels and regional development needs, with a matrix to identify how different funding resources and programmes can support these objectives. The document was developed with substantial contribution from the MAs and was presented to various actors in the region to collect their feedback, spread awareness, and reinforce the partnerships with them in delivered the programmes and the shared vision.



The monitoring and evaluation system could be fine-tuned to include knowledge sharing and generating inputs to improve future programmes. This requires adjusting the criteria and methods for evaluation. Increasing emphasis has been placed on measuring investment results and outputs with robust indicators. However, ensuring that MAs, IBs and beneficiaries understand the requested indicators and have the time and resources to properly collect and report data, can be challenging for all parties. In addition, care needs to be taken to ensure the monitoring and evaluation system’s proper design. More indicators are not always helpful, and so care should be taken to avoid their proliferation. In addition, quantitative indicators alone may fail to capture the performance of programmes and their contribution to higher-level objectives. This is particularly true for projects with less directly tangible outcomes, such as innovation or building skills, as opposed to physical infrastructure projects. Thus, the monitoring and evaluation system should also consider qualitative measurement and ideally include a “practical” focus. This can include information on lessons learned from implementing EU-funded programmes and projects, innovative tools for collaboration that were developed, good practices in fostering networks, mechanisms for knowledge sharing, etc. This information can be regularly collected from beneficiaries through dialogue or other communication channels. Another suggestion is to complement quantitative indicators with project-based in-depth impact assessments. This can facilitate evidence gathering and analysis on the types of policy interventions that have a stronger impact.

What MAs Can Do

- Tap into expertise and build human resources for strategic planning function in the MA.
- Map out the tasks and capacity needs in the strategic planning cycle and develop targeted trainings for staff.
- Clearly identify sectoral and regional development needs and objectives by gathering information through existing strategic documents or conducting stakeholder surveys.
- Map out the linkages of objectives and priorities in various relevant strategic documents at all levels, and use the information to prioritise Programme investments and design project calls.
- Develop a document to identify the strategic links and synergies between the Cohesion Policy Programme and other Programmes and policy initiatives.
- Actively exchange and coordinate with other MAs operating in the same country, region or relevant sectors.
- Carry out qualitative analysis on projects and programmes to understand investment effectiveness and outcomes.
- Consolidate the insights from monitoring and evaluation and use them to reinforce strategic planning, improve project implementation (e.g. improve call design), and design future programmes.
- Develop systems to ensure programme flexibility and adaptability within the scope and structure of the MA (e.g. COVID has demonstrated the need to adapt to changing circumstances, considering both specific and broader societal objectives).

What Can Be Done to Support MAs

- Engage MAs in the strategic planning process for sectoral/regional development strategies, collecting their insights on which policy intervention work, and the funding resources and instruments to adopt for various policy initiatives.
- Provide structures, platforms, and/or incentives for MAs in the same region or operating in related sectors to coordinate with each other.
- Encourage MAs to use technical assistance to develop strategic planning and coordination capacity.
- Streamline and rationalise quantitative indicators for project and programme monitoring and evaluation.
- Encourage and support MAs to carry out in-depth qualitative assessment for programme/project implementation.

Beneficiary Support and Stakeholder Engagement

- MAs can tailor support and engagement activities to different groups of stakeholders, especially under-represented stakeholders with low capacity or little knowledge on EU programmes.
- Stakeholders should be engaged at the policy formulation stage, and this should be done in a regular and institutionalised manner.
- A broader picture of stakeholder engagement is to establish long-term collaborations and networks with and among stakeholders and hence a critical mass to support EU programmes and regional policy. This requires incentives, tools, and time.



Regional development policy is among the policy areas closest to citizens and has the most potential to embed strong stakeholder engagement in the policy cycle. As was highlighted during the Forum, there appears to be a trend in some EU Member State governments to devolve responsibilities and power to subnational actors, as a way to overcome geographies of discontent, implement place-based policy, and address socio-economic inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the important role of local institutions and stakeholders in delivering key public services, and increased cooperation across public authorities and sectors. However, the voices of regional and local stakeholders are still often lost in the regional development policy-making process led by national actors.

It is important to target the under-represented groups and novel/potential beneficiaries, since these stakeholders are usually not familiar with EU Cohesion Policy and they need continuous engagement, at least at the beginning, and significant support to participate in Cohesion Policy and use the funds. MAs can map out the stakeholders relevant to different Programmes, thematic priorities, or financing instruments. With a comprehensive mapping exercise, MAs can then focus on supporting the under-represented groups in EU programmes (stakeholders and beneficiaries with low capacity or little knowledge of EU funds). These under-represented groups usually need intense or additional support from the MAs. For example, for the Bulgarian Programme of Development of the Regions, their rural municipality beneficiaries indicated that they need a contact point in the MA that can offer hands-on support, which was not requested by many urban municipalities. In addition, MAs could guide and direct micro-businesses or NGOs to Programmes or instruments that require less co-financing. Another idea is to include involving under-represented groups as a requirement in project calls, to encourage the “usual suspects” (i.e. traditional and frequent beneficiaries) to reach out and engage with the new ones.

MAs can be creative and make the most of their resource networks to engage with and support different groups of stakeholders. Different types of beneficiaries tend to have different capacities and needs. To meet this diversity, MAs need to be creative and optimise their available resources and networks. One way is to target common obstacles shared by different beneficiary groups – for instance, an MA in Brandenburg helped beneficiaries overcome public procurement challenges by contracting lawyers to provide counselling services for beneficiaries. Another way is to conduct a comprehensive survey to map out and prioritise the different needs of beneficiaries, in order to design corresponding support. The Bulgarian MA, under the administrative capacity building pilot action, undertook an online survey and directly asked how beneficiaries prefer receiving MA support. MAs can also collaborate with associations, consulting companies and agencies that work with beneficiaries, such as the case of the Danish Business Authority.



The Danish Business Authority, as a relatively small MA, communicates with their SME beneficiaries by collaborating with a professional advisory organisation that works extensively for SMEs. Such an approach can generate mutual benefits – it is the interest of the organisation to be part of the process while the MA can be closer to the SME with limited resources and time. In addition, in order to maximise the effectiveness of trainings they offer to beneficiaries, they make participation in these meetings a prerequisite for beneficiaries to then obtain funding. The aim is to minimise the scenario in which beneficiaries do not have the necessary understanding of technical issues to carry out the implementation phase successfully.

Effective stakeholder engagement starts at the agenda setting stage, and this should be regularly and formally undertaken. If stakeholders are not adequately involved at the out-set, there is greater risk that thematic and specific objectives will not meet their needs. There are some good initiatives in this regard, such as the Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes for implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies, but these processes are often ad hoc and temporary. More permanent and institutionalised platforms would be valuable. The Academy for Smart Specialisation in Karlstad University in Sweden – a permanent platform that brings stakeholders together to regularly assess and re-assess policy priorities and establish collaboration – is a good example. In Brandenburg, KBS Plus is the Contact and Advice Centre for the Support of the EU funds, which is an agency that provides support to the MA in engaging with various stakeholders and supporting the Monitoring Committee. In addition, MAs need to effectively market engagement opportunities and initiatives by demonstrating to stakeholders that they can influence policy direction and the selection of thematic areas and specific objectives in an EU Programme. This also allows them to start networking and building potential consortiums early on, which can enable them to explore synergies and opportunities for collaboration.

In preparation for the 2021-2027 programming period, the Bulgarian Programme “Development of the Regions” will take a new integrated approach to Programme implementation and new Territorial Bodies (TBs) are set up to support the implementation. In this context, the Bulgarian MA, with the support from the OECD, designed and launched a stakeholder engagement process, to identify the capacity needs of the TBs and beneficiaries, and what types of support they prefer. This process included a broad stakeholder survey, focus group interviews, and a workshop.



Stakeholder engagement in regional policy can help establish long-term collaborations and networks, and a critical mass of stakeholder support to programmes and policies. Ideally, beneficiaries that collaborate within EU Programmes can extend their cooperation to future programming periods, but also other operations and activities beyond EU programmes. Establishing these partnerships and networks can eventually lead to more structural and long-term change to the regional development ecosystem, for

example, making it more inter-connected and dynamic. In addition, these networks also help create a critical mass of stakeholder support for EU Cohesion Policy investments and generate the potential to influence broader policy and framework conditions at the national level.

Several elements are necessary for building long-term collaboration and networks among beneficiaries and stakeholders. First, MAs need to provide incentives for beneficiaries and stakeholders to exchange and collaborate with each other. In Bulgaria, where a collaborative culture among beneficiaries is lacking, the MA is making efforts to include different stakeholders in as many different activities as possible. In some cases, additional “bonus” points or funding can be attributed to collaborative projects to encourage partnerships. Second, MAs need to explore different forms of collaboration and partnership, particularly making the most of digital tools. While there is increasing emphasis on cross-jurisdiction cooperation and the concept of functional areas, collaboration can take place between actors that are not geographically adjacent but share thematic or sectoral linkages. This type of collaboration could be cultivated through digital tools, and the COVID-19 crisis has provided a window of opportunities in this respect. Finally, this takes time, continuous efforts and investment. It is a trust-based process, and requires the collective commitment of all stakeholders – MAs, Certifying and Audit Authorities, line ministries, regional and local associations, and beneficiaries – towards EU regional policy goals.



44%

of Forum participants considered "providing tailored and targeted support to different groups of beneficiaries" challenging

What MAs Can Do

- Undertake a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise according to different priorities and thematic areas.
- Target the needs of under-represented groups in the implementation of EU funds, and guide them to the most appropriate priorities and instruments.
- Direct resources to address common challenges faced by the majority of beneficiaries.
- Partner with agencies, consulting companies and other actors that work closely with beneficiaries in the application and implementation of EU funds.
- Establish systems and mechanisms to regularly involve stakeholders in the agenda-setting phase, such as programme design and priority identification.
- Properly “market” the engagement activities to stakeholders to demonstrate how they can shape policies and investments, including making use of different media.
- Provide incentives for beneficiaries to exchange and collaborate with each other.
- Create a friendly and trust-based environment where stakeholders can network and foster collaboration and partnerships.
- Encourage different types of collaboration, including using digital tools to facilitate exchange and cooperation among beneficiaries that are not geographically adjacent.

FORUM AGENDA

Forum information sheet and agenda can be found via this link:

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/good_governance_events/

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This Forum brings the lessons and insights gained from the DG REGIO pilot project “Frontloading Administrative Capacity Building for Post-2020 to a broad audience of Managing Authorities”. The pilot project, undertaken with the OECD and national and regional MAs from Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Poland (Lubelskie), and Spain (Extremadura). It resulted in Roadmaps for Administrative Capacity Building for each Managing Authority, and a series of administrative capacity building recommendations that can be found in the synthesis report [Strengthening Governance of EU Funds under Cohesion Policy](#) and its associated [Self-assessment Instrument](#), as well as [DG REGIO's practical toolkit for preparing Roadmaps for Administrative Capacity](#).



MORE INFORMATION

- [Roadmaps for Administrative Capacity Building](#)
- [Support provided by the European Commission to help Member States make the best possible use of the Cohesion Policy funding](#)
- [OECD's work on strengthening capacity of national and subnational governments in regional development policy delivery](#)
- [OECD's work on public employment and management](#)

CONTACTS

European Commission

Stefan Appel (Stefan.Appel@ec.europa.eu)

Ann-Kerstin Myleus (Ann.Myleus@ec.europa.eu)

OECD

Daniel Gerson (Daniel.Gerson@oecd.org)

Maria Varinia Michalun (MariaVarinia.Michalun@oecd.org)

