Study on Roadmaps for Administrative Capacity Building – Design and Implementation

Final Report

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Design and Implementation

Final Report

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Contents

Acronyms

ACB	Administrative Capacity Building
AD&C	Agency for Development and Cohesion
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
BMVI	Border Management and Visa Instrument
CB	Coordination Body
CCU	Central Coordination Unit
CEDRU	Centre for Regional and Urban Development Studies
CF	Cohesion Fund
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
CSR	Country Specific Recommendations
CZ	Czechia
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DNSH	Do No Significant Harm
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EE	Estonia
EIB	European Investment Bank
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ES	Spain
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESIF	European structural and investment funds
EU	European Union
FNLC	Financing Not Linked to Costs
GR	Greece
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IB	Intermediate Body
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
ISF	Internal Security Fund
ICT	Information and communications technology
IT	Italy
JTF	Just Transition Fund
KOM	Kick-off meeting
LSPA	Latvian School of Public Administration
LT	Lithuania
LV	Latvia
MA	Managing authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MCS	Management and Control System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIPE	Ministry of Investments and European Projects
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MRRFEU	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
MSARD	Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development
NA	Not applicable
NRRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PL	Poland
PPA	Public Procurement Agency
PT	Portugal
Q&A	Questions and Answers
RO	Romania
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategies
SCO, SCOs	Simplified Cost Options
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
SSSC	State Shared Service Centre
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TA	Technical Assistance

| TSI | Technical Support Instrument |
| ToR | Terms of Reference or tender specifications |

Abstract

The 'Study 'on roadmaps for Administrative Capacity Building – Design and Implementation' provides an in-depth analysis of the development and implementation of roadmaps designed to strengthen administrative capacity in fifteen EU Member States. The study covers eighteen roadmaps at national and regional levels. Considering roadmaps that were completed, in progress, or under development by the end of 2024, the study aims to assess key factors hindering or enhancing the implementation of roadmaps. This includes an analysis of their monitoring and evaluation systems, governance models, the role of top management, and political support. It also provides an overview of the Administrative Capacity Building (ACB) actions envisaged, and their main features.

The study examines how national and regional authorities design and implement roadmaps, identifying common challenges and success factors, and highlighting good practice. By doing so, it aims to support Member States in improving the quality and effectiveness of their ACB roadmaps, while also presenting conclusions on how to support and inspire programme authorities. Key dimensions of the analysis include the scope of the roadmaps, stakeholder involvement, implementation processes, monitoring mechanisms, and coordination and communication structures. Data and information were collected by the study team through desk research and in-field activities in 15 Member States, including interviews and focus groups with the authorities responsible for the roadmaps, selected beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the conditions that enable or hinder the design and implementation of roadmaps, as well as the practical approaches involved. They also highlight the added value and shortcomings of roadmaps.

Executive summary

The ACB roadmaps context

The roadmaps for administrative capacity building (ACB) were introduced for the 2021–2027 programming period as strategic and operational tools to be developed by EU Member States at national and regional levels. Their aim is to strengthen the administrative capacity of the programme authorities responsible for managing and implementing EU funds.

As weaker institutional frameworks face greater challenges in effectively absorbing funds, it is crucial to invest in governance and strengthen administrative capabilities at all levels. Roadmaps therefore help to ensure that the systems and structures for managing EU funds are efficient and transparent.

In the 2019 Country Reports, the European Commission 'strongly recommended' that ten MS develop roadmaps, while five others decided to do so voluntarily:

Figure 1 - ACB roadmaps development

Consortium

This study collected and analysed data and information on the **design** and **implementation** of roadmaps in all 15 MS that drafted the document. The study identifies good practices and the challenges faced by national administrations, and assesses how effective the roadmaps are in promoting the strategic use of funds allocated for capacity building. The study then aims to:

- support MS in implementing and updating roadmaps;

- inform the European Commission on ways to support and inspire programme authorities in their work on administrative capacity building.

The study methodology

The study consisted of two phases: (1) documentary analysis, and (2) on-field focus groups and interviews with programme authorities and beneficiaries([1]).

The analysis was conducted along two main dimensions:

- *a vertical analysis* assessing each roadmap individually using 'roadmap reports', each including a SWOT, a 'roadmap fiche', and a 'national factsheet';

- *a horizontal analysis* examining trends, best practices and shared challenges throughout all MS.

These two dimensions ensured that the roadmaps' overall impact was understood in terms of both individual and collective aspects.

The sample included 18 roadmaps from the 15 Member States that had developed them, covering national and regional levels:

- o *at the national level,* all 14 roadmaps were analysed ([2]);

- o *at the regional level,* the study covers three of the twenty-one Italian regions (one 'more advanced', one 'in-transition', and one 'less developed'), one of the eight Romanian regions, and one of the seventeen Polish regions.

([1]) Programme beneficiaries participated in the study focus groups in Greece and in Lithuania

([2]) Italy decided to only draft regional roadmaps

Figure 2 - Study sample map
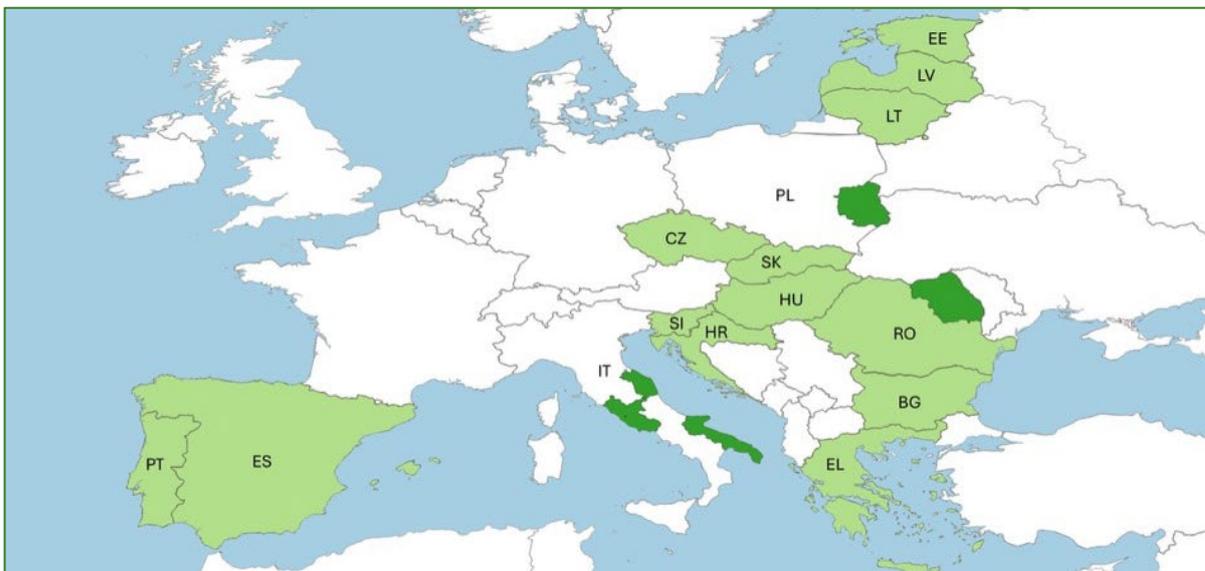
Consortium

The sample included the total number of national roadmaps prepared in the EU, and a representative selection of the regional ones. By the time of the analysis, which ended in December 2024, most roadmaps had been finalised. ([3])

The Greek national transport programme and the Polish regional programme roadmap, which are included in the sample, were prepared as part of the **DG REGIO pilot project** *'Strengthening administrative capacity in preparation for the post-2020 programming period'*, implemented in 2019 in cooperation with the OECD.

The ACB roadmap design

Regarding the design phase of the roadmaps, the study examined the assessment of needs - *'as is'* situation - and the related definition of objectives - **'to be'** situation.

The needs assessment and the analysis of the roadmap objectives are carried out to check whether the planned interventions are relevant and coherent to address the identified challenges, and in relation to the defined ex ante goals. **Examining the needs** clarifies where gaps, weaknesses or capacity shortcomings exist. The analysis highlights whether the roadmap directly addresses the most relevant territorial challenges and examines the methodology and techniques used to assess the needs. It also provides evidence of the approach used by regional and national authorities to conduct the analysis, i.e. whether they used the standardised approach suggested by

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([3]) As of December 2024, the Romanian (national) roadmap and the Bulgarian roadmap, despite progressing, had not yet been finalised. The Spanish roadmap had been finalised and started implementation, but it had not yet been sent to the EC.

the EC Toolkit for preparing roadmaps for administrative capacity building, or whether they developed and applied their own approach.

The analysis of strategies and objectives defines the desired 'to be' situation. It demonstrates the administration's capacity to set clear goals and outline how the planned interventions will contribute to broader capacity-building objectives. This shows whether the roadmap is forward-looking as well as reactive, providing a structured path from the current state to the targeted outcomes.

The analysis of the 'as is' situation outlined in the roadmaps focused on three main aspects:

1. the use of structured need analysis methods, such as the self-assessment tool included in the EC Toolkit;
2. the alignment with the European Semester, particularly the Annex D and Country-Specific Recommendations, and
3. the roadmap governance structure.

1. The use of structured need analysis methods. Using structured methodologies such as the OECD Self-Assessment Instrument or the EC Toolkit proved to be key to strategic planning, providing more coherent diagnostics, action mapping and internal coordination. Approximately two thirds of the roadmaps actually used the EC Toolkit and the self-assessment tool, while the remaining third used an 'own methodology' developed by the MA:

Figure 3 - Methodologies applied by MS

Consortium

Roadmaps developed without methodological support tended to consolidate actions already underway, simply replicating content from existing operational documents. Roadmaps that applied structured frameworks demonstrated clearer links between the identified weaknesses, proposed actions and objectives. In contrast, roadmaps that relied solely on pre-existing documentation often resulted in generic or fragmented action plans, highlighting the importance of a structured methodology.

2. The alignment with the European Semester. The analysis of the 'as is' situation also focused on the alignment of the identified needs and objectives with the European Semester and the Cohesion Policy programmes. In most cases, a clear and logical connection was established between the diagnostic phase and the formulation of objectives. This was because most roadmaps benefited from structured methodologies and participatory processes, resulting in well-targeted, actionable objectives, aligned with the country recommendations. In contrast, where diagnostic processes were less structured or absent, the objectives were often too general or merely based on existing administrative practices. Similarly, coherence with Cohesion Policy programmes was strongest where the roadmap reinforced technical assistance planning rather than functioning as a parallel or standalone document. However, when the OECD analytical framework or the EC Toolkit was employed, roadmaps tended to be more coherent and comprehensive in their approach to addressing interdependent capacity needs.

3. The roadmap governance structure. The assessment concentrated on ownership, stakeholder involvement and the top management support for the roadmap. Strong leadership and political engagement from the outset can significantly facilitate the design process and ensure the meaningful participation of stakeholders from the beginning. Conversely, a lack of ownership or leadership can hinder progress and reduce the strategic value of the roadmap.

Contextual factors such as national administrative 'traditions' and existing strategic frameworks also influenced perceptions of the roadmaps. Furthermore, the roadmaps were designed and developed during a challenging period, between 2021 and 2023, during which time programme changes were linked to the crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which in some cases limited their prioritisation.

The analysis showed that almost half of the roadmaps were generally treated as strategic tools developed through inclusive processes, while the other half tended to reflect a more formal or marginal approach with limited stakeholder engagement and weaker leadership commitment.

The analysis of the 'to be' situation as outlined in the roadmaps also focused on three main aspects:

1. Planned capacity building actions
2. Monitoring and evaluation systems
3. Preconditions, enablers, and barriers to roadmap design

1. Planned capacity building actions. The actions were examined with a focus on their design rationale, scope of intervention, types of action, those responsible for

implementation, and the intended beneficiaries. Financial and human resources were also considered. Most of the roadmaps clearly set out a strategy that is well aligned with the needs and challenges identified in the 'as is' situation, articulating the logic linking needs, strategic objectives and actions effectively. Furthermore, several roadmaps extend beyond a narrow focus on Cohesion Policy to encompass broader institutional and administrative goals. Most roadmaps include a clearly defined set of actions, often presented in a dedicated table to help structure the implementation phase. This clarifies the link between needs and results by outlining key elements such as objectives, action descriptions, responsible bodies and deadlines. However, while some Member States provide highly detailed tables, others do not follow a structured approach.

Actions are financed through various mechanisms, primarily relying on technical assistance and a combination of EU and national sources. However, few roadmaps provide a financial breakdown for implementation. Similarly, none of the roadmaps provide a clear strategy for allocating or quantifying the human resources needed to implement the actions, primarily due to shortages of qualified personnel, high staff turnover and limited capacity.

2. Monitoring and evaluation systems. While a few Member States have developed structured systems, most roadmaps lack formal monitoring frameworks and instead rely on informal practices or existing internal processes that are not specifically tailored. There are also widespread challenges in defining appropriate indicators, particularly in capturing qualitative impacts. Only a limited number of roadmaps include dedicated evaluation components with timelines and responsibilities. Conversely, some programme authorities treat the roadmaps as living documents, adapting them based on implementation feedback.

3. Preconditions, enablers, and barriers to roadmap design. Effective design was supported by a clear governance structure, an established methodology for needs assessment and existing institutional capacity. Enablers included alignment between needs and objectives, stakeholder engagement and strong ownership from top management and the acknowledgement of the roadmap as a living document, that can be updated and amended on the basis of new regional/national changes, as well as based on the implementation progress and outcomes. Barriers to progress included limited resources, low ownership and weak political support, resulting in the perception of an administrative burden.

The ACB roadmap implementation

The study then analysed the current implementation of the roadmaps, examining the **663 actions included in the 18 roadmaps**:

Table 1 - Number of actions in the roadmaps

Roadmap	National or regional	Nr. of actions
Romania	National (13) and regional (1)	236
Bulgaria	National	87
Croatia	National	63
Italy	Regional (3)	47 ([4])
Latvia	National	42
Hungary	National	41
Portugal	National	35
Slovenia	National	33
Greece	National	19
Spain	National	15
Czechia	National	14
Slovakia	National	11
Lithuania	National	8
Poland	Regional (1)	7
Estonia	National	5
Total		**663**

Consortium

Thirteen out of 18 roadmaps had commenced implementation at the time of the analysis. **By the end of 2024, around two thirds of the actions were either ongoing or had already been completed**, as shown in the following figure:

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[4] Lazio = 18 actions, Marche = 12, Apulia = 17.

Figure 4 - Implementation of the roadmap actions
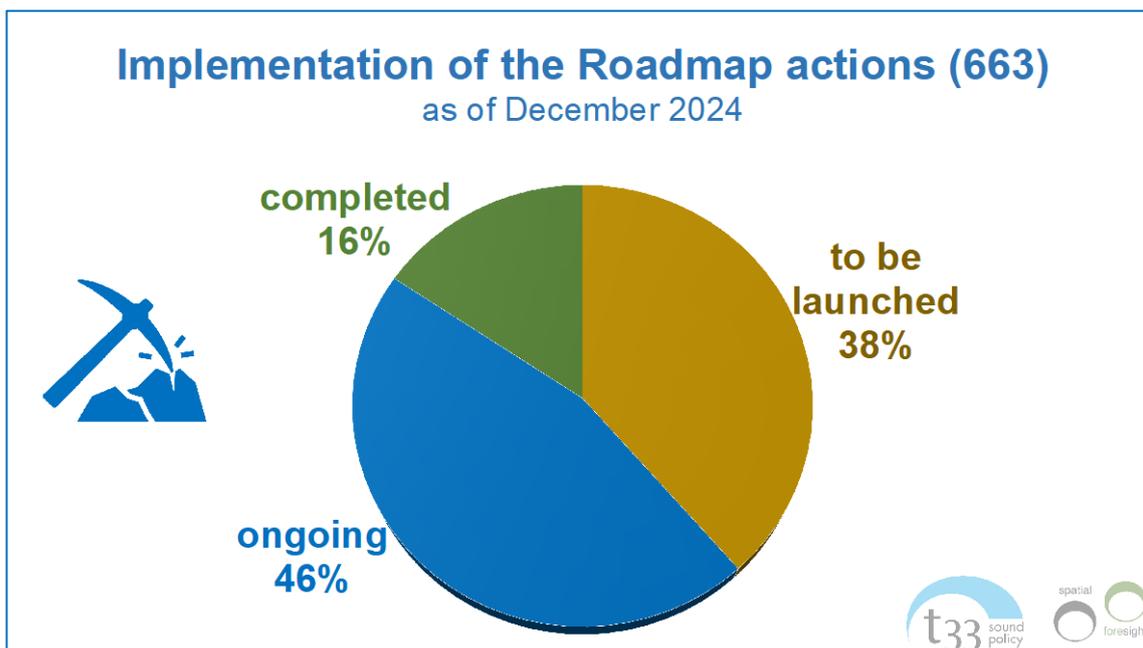
Consortium

Examples of completed and ongoing actions include training, developing handbooks and guidance documents, peer exchanges, improving procedures and HR processes, and e-learning and digitalisation initiatives.

As shown in the next figure, the implementation of roadmap actions varies significantly across Member States. Internal and external factors may determine delays in roadmap implementation.

Figure 5 - Implementation status of the actions
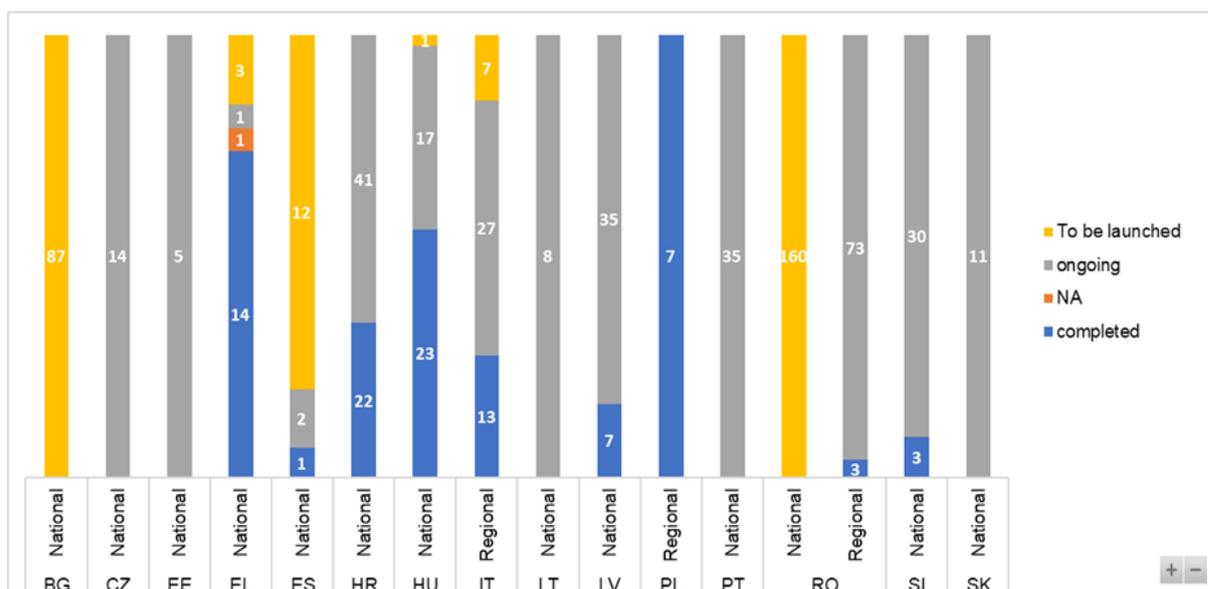
Consortium

Internal factors causing delays are related to various types of challenges. These include delays in identifying administrative needs and obstacles and defining desired objectives, as seen in the national roadmaps of Romania, Spain and Bulgaria. Other challenges include an unclear or limited definition of the roadmap governance structure, as seen in the Slovenian roadmap, and a lack of prioritisation in elaborating and implementing capacity-building interventions. This is mainly due to limited support from top management and political actors.

Moreover, delays in the creation and implementation of the roadmaps were also caused by **external factors**. The most relevant of these relates to the temporal context in which the programme authorities were operating when designing and developing the roadmaps, i.e. drafting the 2021-27 cohesion policy programmes, contributing to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and adapting the 2014–2020 programmes to pandemic-related changes. In some cases, the study reveals that the redaction of roadmaps was given lower priority than these tasks.

While the sheer inclusion of a high number of actions in a roadmap might suggest an increase in the probability of failure, the Croatian roadmap and the Romanian regional ones showed success due to strong support from political actors and top management. In contrast, Bulgaria's and Romania's national roadmaps faced challenges due to weak governance structure definition and limited political backing.

Although many actions have been designed to address specific capacity needs, the extent to which they are implemented varies: at the time of the analysis, the Member States with the most advanced levels of implementation were Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Greece and the Lubelskie region (Poland). However, the latter three were part of the REGIO pilot project, which contributed to the roadmap being finalised more quickly and the actions being implemented earlier.

While many roadmaps demonstrate strong alignment between the original needs and ongoing objectives during implementation, ensuring continued relevance and responsiveness to current challenges, others show only partial or no alignment. This is either because the documents have not been updated, or because they lack a clear long-term strategy from the beginning of the process.

Most of the analysed roadmaps were not updated during implementation, except for the Lazio (IT) and Lubelskie (PL) regional roadmaps. This is mainly related to the status of the interventions' advancement, and to the programme authorities' intention to use the document as a strategic plan to improve ACB beyond cohesion policy, and with a long-term approach.

Firstly, the roadmap 'owners' need time to observe how the roadmap is being implemented before making changes. Limited progress in implementation has hindered regional and national authorities from updating the roadmaps to address new challenges. Additionally, unclear long-term strategies have weakened the connection between identified needs and objectives, leading to vague roadmaps lacking new goals.

Quantifying needs remains a widespread challenge, as most roadmaps lack measurable targets for their actions. This limits their ability to track the impact of actions or evaluate the adequacy of responses to capacity gaps.

The analysis then identified the preconditions, enablers, and barriers to the implementation of the roadmaps. Among enablers, the study identified the support of DG REGIO, the alignment between the objectives and needs, a robust governance structure, and a continued updating of the strategy to adapt to new challenges and emerging needs. Conversely, ineffective allocation of human resources, a weak monitoring system and low levels of stakeholder and political support were identified as common barriers to effective implementation.

The outcomes of the study

The key findings of the study are presented below:

- Findings related to the roadmap design;

- Findings related to the roadmap implementation;

- 'Horizontal' findings, i.e. those related to the entire roadmap process.

Figure 6 - Summary of the findings of the study
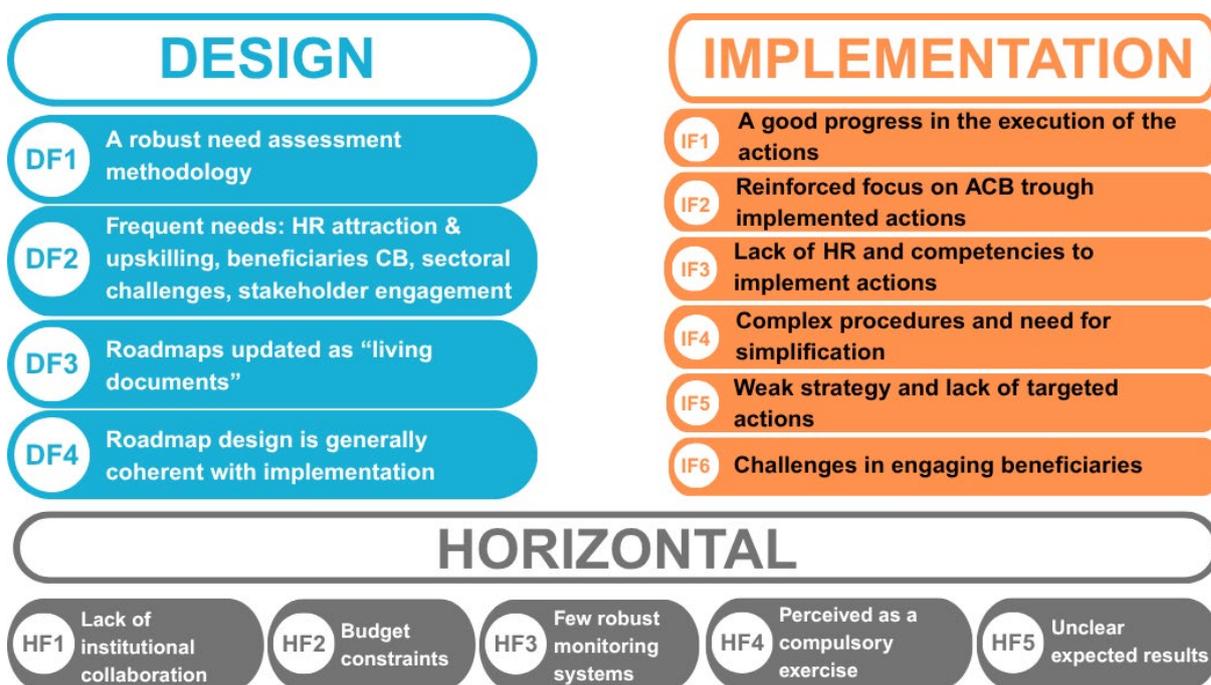
Consortium

One of the key positive outcomes of adopting ACB roadmaps is the **enhanced role of administrative capacity building** at the level of the programme authority. The roadmaps enabled Managing Authorities to establish structured processes, allowing them to focus on capacity building in their relations with other programme authorities, beneficiaries, the Commission and all programme stakeholders. This represented a significant step forward compared to the previous approaches.

Additionally, the use of the EC Toolkit and the OECD self-assessment instrument by most MS to **define capacity-building needs** provided a common structure for identifying challenges and setting appropriate objectives. The study team believes that this common structure should be maintained in the next programming period.

Finally, the adoption of ACB roadmaps led to **spillover effects**, with Member States exchanging information on the need analysis methods, as well as on ACB actions and indicators. This was particularly evident within the context of the REGIO Peer2Peer Communities, which have a dedicated community of practitioners to support Member States throughout the process, but it was also observed during bilateral or trilateral

meetings among MAs from different administration while preparing their roadmaps([5]).
Spillover effects were also observed within MS when authorities from other
programmes, or line ministries that were not involved in the cohesion policy ecosystem,
discussed ways to better define common capacity-building themes with ERDF
authorities.

However, some problematic factors were also identified, such as a **lack of
commitment from top management**. Despite stakeholders being extensively involved
of throughout the entire roadmap process, this has demonstrably hindered meaningful
progress in strengthening administrative capacity building in some MS. Furthermore,
the inadequacy or complexity of many monitoring systems demonstrates the need
for improvements in measuring capacity building in Cohesion Policy programmes. This
appears to be one of the key issues arising from the study, at a time when measuring
outputs and, more importantly, the results of programmes is set to become a key factor
in the future of Cohesion Policy([6]).

The study conclusions are organised into three categories: **FC** - Favourable
Conclusions or 'Positive effects', **UC** – Unfavourable Conclusions or 'Limiting factors',
and **NC** – Neutral Conclusions or 'Framework conditions', as shown in this figure:

([5]) As an example, the MAs of Bulgaria, Greece and Croatia had bilateral and trilateral meetings
in 2021 and 2022 to discuss their roadmap preparation.

([6]) COM(2025) 46 final. The road to the next multiannual financial framework.

Figure 7 - Conclusions of the study

Favourable conclusions: Positive Effects

FC1 The enhanced strategic role of ACB, with different actors involved

FC2 A more focused definition of ACB needs and a common structure for ACB strategy and actions

FC3 Positive spill-over effects of the roadmap process at the EU and national/regional levels

Unfavourable conclusions: Limiting Factors

UC1 Lack of commitment and vision from top management

UC2 Difficulties to monitor actions and capture results

UC3 Lack of resources for ACB actions

Neutral conclusions: Framework Conditions

NC1 What is the role of the roadmap in Cohesion Policy? The level of ambition of the roadmaps and their potential

NC2 The regulatory framing of the roadmap has opportunities and threats

Consortium

In conclusion, ACB roadmaps were not mandatory for programme authorities and were not included in the funding regulations except for a mention in recital 31 of the Reg.(EU) 1060/2021. Based on the findings of the study, this 'weak' regulatory positioning could only be maintained in the future if balanced with a stronger framework for ACB at the EU and MS levels. The study then concludes with two considerations regarding **the role of roadmaps and the positioning of administrative capacity building within the upcoming Cohesion Policy framework:**

Firstly, the strengthened positioning of administrative capacity building, established through the multi-annual and multi-level roadmap implementation, should be preserved and built upon. The current momentum and framework for planning and delivering ACB can be leveraged. Existing tools, such as roadmaps, the self-assessment tool and training programmes, can be upgraded and new tools can be introduced. While the future placement of ACB roadmaps in the 2028-34 legislative framework is subject to political dialogue, there is an opportunity to reinforce the capacity-building mechanisms introduced or reinforced during the 2021–27 period.

Secondly, strengthening and advancing the existing instruments also requires effective systems for tracking progress and demonstrating results: the Commission has emphasised the growing importance of results-based systems (such as FNLC) in the next programming period. Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 1060/2021 concerning FNLC for Technical Assistance has not yet been utilised extensively in the current programming period: however, emerging TA FNLC practices have been observed in Latvia, Italy, Bulgaria and Greece. **The absence of robust monitoring systems is a weakness of the current ACB roadmaps. Given the growing importance of result-based mechanisms such as FNLC, if monitoring systems set out in the roadmaps are to be reinforced, it would beneficial to create common indicators with which to measure administrative capacity building.**

Introduction

The study collects and analyses information on the development and implementation of administrative capacity-building roadmaps in fifteen Member States, drawing conclusions based on this analysis. The study covers roadmaps developed for the DG REGIO pilot action, as well as those developed for the 2021–2027 programmes.

The study assesses the design and implementation of the roadmaps, including monitoring, implementation progress, stakeholder involvement and update frequency.

This report provides an overview of how roadmaps for administrative capacity building have been developed, designed and implemented in Member States where such roadmaps exist, are being implemented or are still in the development phase.

The study was conducted between April 2024 and May 2025. The methodological approach involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data through desk research and fieldwork activities, including interviews and focus groups. The study team analysed the roadmaps at each stage of their lifecycle:

- Design: evaluating the foundational elements and planning that went into creating the roadmap.

- Performance and results: assessing how the roadmap was implemented and the outcomes achieved.

- Added value of the roadmap: determining the additional benefits and impacts that the roadmap brings to capacity building.

The analysis presented in this report illustrates the evidence collected and the main outcomes of the analysis in relation to the three study objectives:

- **Objective A:** collect and analyse data on the development and design of ACB roadmaps in the 15 selected MS, identifying good practices and challenges faced by national administrations.

- **Objective B:** assess the contribution of these roadmaps towards a strategic use of funds allocated for capacity building.

- **Objective C:** formulate conclusions for MS on developing and implementing effective roadmaps and advise the EC on ways to support and inspire programme authorities in their roadmap development, implementation and updates.

The report also provides a comprehensive, horizontal overview of the design and implementation of the roadmaps in the fifteen MS and regions considered for the purpose of this study.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1 – The methodological approach**

- **Sections 2– Key features of roadmap design**

- **Sections 2 and 3 – Key features of roadmap implementation**

- **Section 4 - Findings of the analysis**, relating to the roadmap design and implementation processes

- **Section 5 – Conclusions**, including positive, negative and 'neutral' considerations

The report annex include

- Annex 1 - Output papers of the 15 focus groups

- Annex 2 - Roadmap Reports

- Annex 3 - National factsheets

- Annex 4 - Roadmap fiches

- Annex 5 - Roadmap SWOT

- Annex 6 - Presentation and dissemination of the study

1. Methodological approach

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted for activities under Task 2, along with a description of the sample.

1.1. A participatory methodology

The methodology adopted is **participatory**, involving national and regional authorities at every stage - from information collection to analysis - which is carried out in two phases:

- documentary analysis, to review the roadmaps and additional relevant documents;

- focus groups and interviews, to complement and validate the document analysis.

Figure 8 – Stages of information collection

Consortium elaboration

First, the core team and the national experts (NE) contacted regional and national authorities responsible for preparing the roadmaps to introduce the study and request additional relevant documents. These included the roadmap itself, financial tables for analysing the roadmap allocations, and national or regional strategies for administrative capacity building (ACB). The **trust** that the study team has built over the years with the regional and national authorities responsible for the roadmaps facilitated document sharing and the organisation of FGs and interviews.

The **desk analysis** examined ACB roadmap governance, methodologies for conducting the needs assessment and the tools and approaches used to develop the vision for the future. The analysis matrix reflects the roadmap structure. The desk analysis helped the core team and NEs identify missing information and prepare the field activities.

The initial contact with the national and regional authorities was made in June, and by the end of August, the desk analysis had been completed. The core team carried out checks and asked for clarification, where needed, to ensure consistency across the analysis.

In early September, the core team contacted the national and regional authorities once again to plan and organise the **in-field activities**. Their full support and cooperation were crucial for both the quality and quantity of the information collected. The focus groups and interviews involved all those engaged in designing and/or implementing the roadmap actions. The support of the regional and national roadmap 'owners' was also crucial to creating a positive, open and inclusive climate in which those involved spoke directly, openly and honestly about the rationale and implementation of the roadmap. Discussions covered the challenges, difficulties and problems encountered, as well as the positive changes that have been or will be made. **The in-field activities were divided into three phases: preparation, implementation and follow-up.**

Preparation and planning for the focus groups and interviews included one to three online meetings with the regional and national authorities. These meetings served to present the study, define the scope of the focus groups and interviews, and identify the most relevant participants. They were complemented by email exchanges to refine the logistical aspects. The regional and national programme authorities generally hosted the core team and the NE at their premises or in a hotel ([7]) for the focus groups and interviews, providing coffee breaks and lunches. This demonstrated the high level of cooperation and collaboration established, which facilitated information collection.

The NE, supported by the core team, prepared and sent the input paper and interview structure to the regional and national roadmap 'owners'. This input paper outlined the scope of the FG, including the agenda and planned actions, providing all stakeholders with a common basis for discussion and helping them focus on the roadmap exercise.

The NE also prepared the PowerPoint presentation used to conduct and moderate the FG, which was not shared with the roadmap 'owners' in advance.

The regional and national authorities also supported the NE and the core team in scheduling interviews with the relevant Managing Authorities (MAs), Intermediate

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([7]) In Greece, the programme authority hosted the meeting in a hotel to ensure a 'safe space' of collaboration and transparent exchange. In Romania, the programme authorities organised the focus group and some of the interviews in a hotel because almost all the national and regional programme authorities were present, so it was important to find a suitable venue. When conducting the fieldwork for the regional roadmap, the North-East MA hosted the activities at its premises.

Bodies (IBs), or other beneficiaries. In most cases, they arranged the interviews directly, including the dates and timing.

Conducting the focus groups and interviews was a core part of the in-field activities. An expert from the core team and a NE were responsible for conducting and moderating each FG and interview.

The focus groups generally began with a discussion of the roadmap design phase, followed by its implementation, including challenges, criticisms and proposed solutions. The next part focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the roadmap as a tool for ACB and identified its initial spillover effects, both within and beyond the administration. Finally, the regional and national authorities' vision for the ACB in the post-2027 period was discussed.

Indirect observation and background monitoring were used to examine the interactions among the participants involved in the focus groups and interviews. It was important to explore the relationships between the roadmap owners, implementing actors and other stakeholders, as personal relationships between these different actors are important for information sharing and the disclosure of sensitive issues.

Follow-up activities included re-elaboration of the information collected and generation of the following documents:

- An Excel matrix in which the NE recorded the participants of each FG and interview, including their job titles and roles in the roadmap process. A separate worksheet was dedicated to the main points from the interviews, which facilitated the creation of the summaries.

- An FG 'output paper' shared with the national or regional owners of the roadmap for validation and to add any comments (see Annex 1 with the contents of the 15 output papers completed so far).

- A summary of the observation on the relationships and dynamics of those involved in each FG and interview, indicating any different approaches.

- Minutes of the interviews for internal purposes. In general, the interviewees did not ask for the minutes. When they did, the study team sent the document for validation and additional comments.

- In two cases, Bulgaria and the Apulia region (IT), the roadmap 'owners' requested a summary of the interviews. The NE and the core team expert shared an anonymised summary of the main elements, providing the owners with valuable feedback on both current and planned activities.

- A SWOT analysis of the roadmap, based on the information gathered through the desk analysis and field activities.

An online survey, active from June to December 2024, collected information from the desk analysis, focus groups and interviews. The resultant Excel file enabled a comprehensive analysis of the roadmap.

The core team summarised all this information in the:

- **Roadmap survey matrix**: This document includes all the information on the roadmap design and implementation gathered from the online survey, the desk analysis and the in-field activities.

- **Interview matrix**: This merged file includes the main points from the interviews.

- Indirect observation reports.

- **SWOT** analysis of the roadmaps.

- **Actions matrix**: The core team and the NEs also examined and categorised, where possible, planned roadmap actions based on the:

  - *Area of intervention of the action*, based on the ACB pillars: people management; organisation management; strategic planning, coordination and implementation; beneficiaries and stakeholders; and enabling framework conditions. The enabling framework conditions pillar was included as it was important for some Member States, such as Bulgaria.

  - *Status of the actions*, i.e. to be launched, ongoing, completed, not applicable;

  - *Type of actions*, relying on the classification in the DG REGIO study 'Co-design of a support scheme for administrative capacity building' ([8]);

  - Implementing actors and beneficiaries;

  - *Budget allocation*;

  - *Funding modality of the action*: financed through

    - the Specific Objective (SO) of the programmes,

([8]) The DG REGIO study 'Co-design of a support scheme for administrative capacity building' aimed to analyse and design a new support scheme to strengthen administrative capacity building (ACB) at both Member State and EU levels. The study involved mapping existing support schemes, networks and programmes ('schemes') that include activities and measures to enhance administrative capacity building (ACB). The analysis considered current and future needs for strengthening administrative capacity within the Public Administration (PA). The study team clustered the type of capacity-building actions (referred to in the report as 'scheme tools and services'). For the purpose of this study, the core team has adopted the same categorisation for capacity-building actions.

- ■ the Technical Assistance (TA) axis of the programme,

- ■ the TA programme,

- ■ Financing-not-linked-to-Costs (FNLC);

- ○ *Funding sources* – national and/or regional resources, Cohesion Policy programmes, other EU sources, or a mix of these.

A further detailed and in-depth analysis of all the aforementioned documents prepared during and after the in-field activities and covering each stage of the roadmap lifecycle was conducted:

- Design: evaluating the foundational elements and planning that went into creating the roadmap.

- Performance and results: assessing the execution and outcomes from implementing the roadmap.

- Added Value of the roadmap: determining the additional benefits and impacts the roadmap brings to capacity building.

The core team conducted the analysis along two main dimensions:

- **Vertical Dimension:** This focused on each individual roadmap, analysed by Member State included in the study. It assessed the strengths and weaknesses in both the development and implementation of the roadmap through a SWOT analysis. This provided a deeper understanding of the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities associated with each roadmap.

- **Horizontal Dimension:** This took a cross-cutting view, examining all the roadmaps collectively. The goal was to identify best practices, emerging trends, and shared patterns across the participating Member States and regions during the development and implementation of their respective roadmaps.

For the vertical analysis, the team:

- Refined and built upon the **SWOT analyses** developed during the focus group sessions.

- Elaborated a **roadmap fiche** for each strategic document, to analyse the design and implementation phase

- Developed the **national factsheet** to synthesise the analysis of the roadmap along with other pertinent documents, developed at the national/regional level.

The vertical analysis deliverable is the **roadmap report**, which includes the SWOT analysis and the roadmap fiche. The roadmap reports are all included in Annex 2.

The vertical analysis builds on the intervention logic grids – ex ante and ongoing-ex post grids- to establish clear connections between different elements of the roadmap, using 'if-then' logical links.

- The ex-ante grid was used to analyse the roadmap design phase: it scrutinises the needs, proposed resources, planned actions, and expected deliverables, assessing the readiness and potential effectiveness of the roadmap.

Figure 9 - Intervention logic grid (ex-ante)
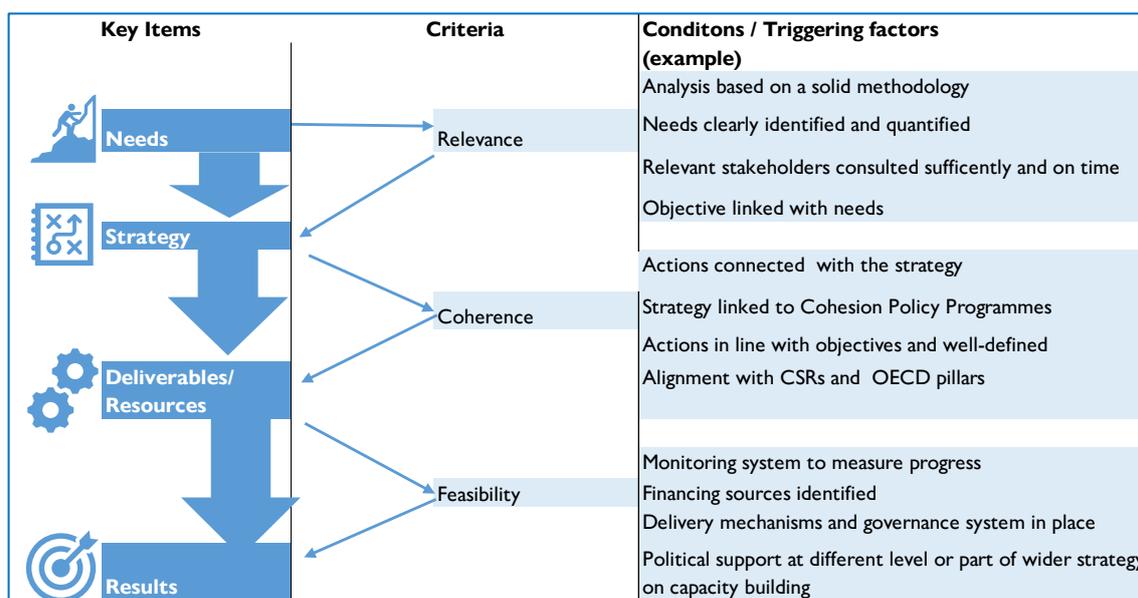
Consortium elaboration

The assessment criteria considered while using the ex-ante grid were:

- Relevance: connects needs with the strategy (the strategy of the roadmap and the specific objectives to be achieved);

- Coherence: bridges the roadmap's strategy with actions and deliverables;

- Feasibility: links deliverables and available resources with results.

The ongoing ex-post grid serves to monitor ongoing activities and analyse the outcomes. The ongoing ex-post grid tracks progress against initial plans, evaluates the results and long-term impacts of the roadmap, and reflects on actual versus anticipated outcomes.

Figure 10 - intervention logic grid (ongoing / ex post)

Key Items	Criteria	Conditons / Triggering factors (example)
Needs	Effectiveness	Ongoing expected activities
		Relevant stakeholders targeted
		Level of expected outputs achieved
Strategy	Efficiency	Financial resource absorption
		Selection of services and projects started, ongoing, or finalized
		Delivery of activities and outputs in line with the expected costs
Deliverables/ Resources		Adherence to the planned timeline
	Impact	Governance mechanism allowing real involvment of key stakeholders in decision making process
		Integration with other sources and policies
		Changes in procedures for operation selection, monitoring and evalaution, control and audit, programming, integrated territorial planning, use of financial instruments, S3, etc.
		Increase (also perceived) capacity in the beneficiaires e.g. in project design and management
Results		Institutional changes e.g. support to enabling conditions
	Sustainability	Roadmap including provisions for adapting to changing conditions or challenges
		Roadmap including mechanisms for continuous resource allocation post-2027
		New processes, policies, or approaches introduced by the Roadmap have been fully integrated and institutionalized within the administrative structures
		Mechanisms to assure the capitalisation of process transfer
		Level of continued involvement and commitment of stakeholders, including national authorities and program beneficiaries

Consortium elaboration

The horizontal analysis serves to identify best practices in the design and implementation phases of the roadmaps.

The assessment criteria considered are the following:

- Effectiveness: the extent to which intended results are achieved through actions taken and are relevant to the needs and objectives.

- Efficiency: how economically resources are used to achieve the intended results, linking resources and deliverables.

- Impact: the long-term effects of the roadmap, which might not be fully visible during the early stages of implementation.

- Sustainability: the extent to which capacity-building processes are embedded and knowledge capitalised for long-term organisational growth.

The interim report focused primarily on the results of the horizontal analysis, whereas this final report presents an aggregated analysis and data covering all the roadmaps. The roadmap fiche, SWOT analysis and national factsheet provide the vertical analysis. The application of both the vertical and horizontal analyses ensured that both individual and collective insights were captured, enabling a robust and nuanced understanding of the overall impact of the roadmaps.

The final report presents the results of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis up to December 2024.

Overall, this methodological approach ensured:

- **Transparency** for the regional and national roadmap owners and DG REGIO.

- **Sustainability of the methodology**, as it can be further used by national and regional authorities for future monitoring and evaluation of their roadmaps, with the results of the focus groups and interviews supporting the organisation of future discussions with stakeholders.

- **Support from DG REGIO** for regional and national authorities in developing and implementing the roadmaps. This included organising field activities, with the presence of experts on behalf of DG REGIO, and assuring roadmap owners that DG REGIO is following the process and is interested in its development as well as its current and future results

1.2. Sample description

The sample analysed included 18 roadmaps in the 15 MS that have effectively developed ACB roadmaps.

Five of the analysed roadmaps are regional, while the others are national.

In **Italy**, 21 regional roadmaps have been prepared; this study covers 3 regional roadmaps (one from a less developed region, one from a region in transition and one from a more developed region). In **Romania**, 8 regional roadmaps have been completed, while a national roadmap is being prepared. The study covers both the national and a regional roadmap. The **Greek** roadmap, developed within the framework of the DG REGIO pilot project, was developed for a specific thematic national programme, namely the programme for Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development 2014-2020. The other national roadmaps primarily cover the ERDF programmes or the entire Cohesion Policy funds ecosystem. The **Croatian** roadmap includes not only the Cohesion Policy funds but also the HOME funds (AMIF, ISF, BMVI) and the EARDF.

See also section 0 on fund coverage.

Figure 11 – Study sample map
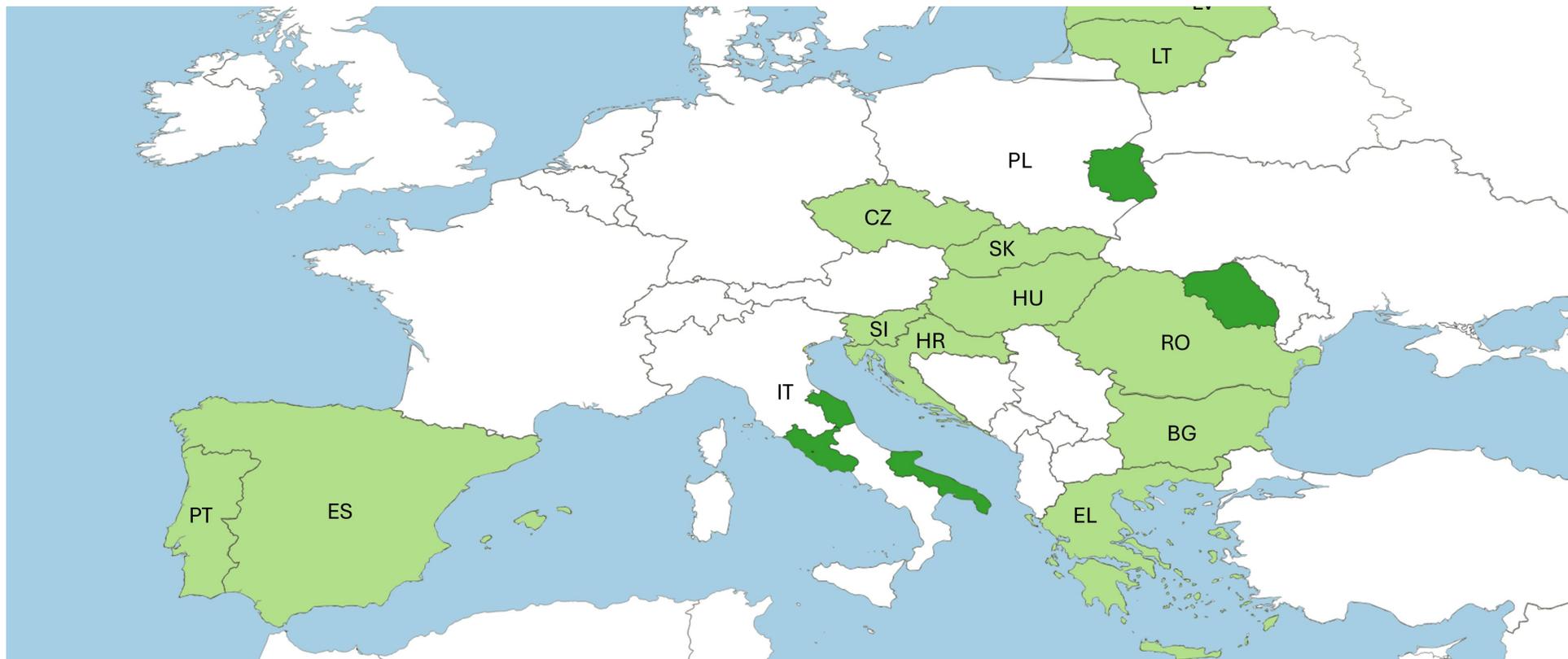
Consortium elaboration

Most of the roadmaps were finalised at the time of desk analysis and on-field activities, i.e. December 2024. As of December 2024, the Bulgarian and Romanian roadmaps were not finalised, and the Spanish roadmap (that was completed) had not yet been submitted.

- The **Bulgarian** roadmap lacks sections on the roadmap governance architecture and monitoring and evaluation. The CB plans to finalise it by the end of 2024;

- The **Romanian** (national) roadmap is being finalised through the work of a dedicated ACB network.

Only 10 of the roadmaps are available online, while 8 are not.

Some of the CBs and MAs decided against publishing the documents, as they consider them to be 'internal documents', while others are considering publishing them at a later stage.

Two of the roadmaps analysed were developed as part of the DG REGIO pilot project.

The **Greek** national transport programme roadmap and the **Polish** Lubelskie region roadmap were prepared under the 'Pilot project on strengthening administrative capacity in preparation for the post-2020 programming period'. The Pilot action was launched in 2018 by DG REGIO and implemented in cooperation with the OECD across 5 participating ERDF/Cohesion Fund MAs and IBs: the Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development programme in Greece; the Lubelskie (PL) regional programme; the Extremadura regional programme in Spain; the Competitiveness and cohesion programme in Croatia; and the Regions in Growth programme in Bulgaria.

In this current programming period, the OECD has carried out separate assignments in cooperation with the DG REGIO GEO units for the elaboration of the **Bulgarian** national roadmap and the **North-East** (RO) regional roadmap.Table 2 describes the 18 roadmaps analysed, their public availability and their finalisation status.

Table 2 - Overview of the Roadmaps

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation in charge of the roadmap	Programme authority	Roadmap available online	Finalisation Status	Pilot roadmap
1	Bulgaria ([9])	national		Administration of the Council of Ministers	CB	No	Not finalised	
2	Croatia ([10])	national		Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds	CB	No	Finalised	
3	Czechia	national		Ministry of Regional Development	CB	Yes	Finalised	
4	Estonia	national		State Shared Service Centre	MA	Yes	Finalised	
5	Greece	national([11])		MA 'Transport' 2021-2027	MA	No	Finalised	yes

([9]) The Bulgarian roadmap analysed for the purpose of this study is the national strategy including all the Cohesion policy programmes, while the roadmap developed in the pilot project was specifically linked to the ERDF 2014-20 programme Regions in Growth.

([10]) The Croatian roadmap analysed for the purpose of this study is the national strategy including all the programmes supported by the CPR funds. The roadmap developed in the pilot project was related to the 2014-20 ERDF/CF programme. The Croatian CB decided to opt for a comprehensive strategy involving all national authorities of the funds in the roadmap. This strengthens the roadmap, improving the administrative capacity of all authorities involved in the Common Provisions Regulation ecosystem and extending this exercise to other line ministries. The pilot project was instrumental in providing an overview of ACB, thanks to the OECD support. It was a pivotal experience in familiarising stakeholders with the methodology.

([11]) The Greek roadmap analysed for the purpose of this study is the one elaborated in the framework of the pilot project.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation in charge of the roadmap	Programme authority	Roadmap available online	Finalisation Status	Pilot roadmap
6	Hungary	national		Ministry of PA and Territorial Development	CB	No	Finalised	
7	Italy	regional	Lazio - More developed	MA of the PR ERDF LAZIO 2021-2027	MA (regional)	Yes	Finalised	
8	Italy	regional	Marche – in transition	MA of the PR ERDF MARCHE 2021-2027	MA (regional)	Yes	Finalised	
9	Italy	regional	Apulia - Less developed	MA of the PR ERDF- ESF+ APULIA 2021-2027	MA (regional)	Yes	Finalised	
10	Latvia	national		State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments	CB	Yes	Finalised	
11	Lithuania	national		Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments	MA	No	Finalised	
12	Poland	regional	Lubelskie	Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region	MA	No	Finalised	yes
13	Portugal	national		Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão	CB	Yes	Finalised	
14	Romania	national		Ministry of European funds	MA	No	Not finalised	

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation in charge of the roadmap	Programme authority	Roadmap available online	Finalisation Status	Pilot roadmap
15	Romania	regional	North-East – less developed region	North-East Regional Development Agency	MA	No	Finalised	
16	Slovenia	national		Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development	MA	Yes	Finalised	
17	Slovakia	national		Central Coordination Authority	CB	Yes	Finalised	
18	Spain	national		DG for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration	MA	No	Not finalised	

Consortium elaboration

2. Design of the roadmap
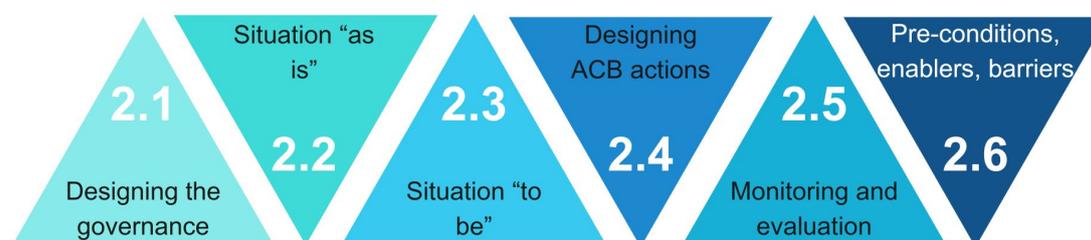
This section provides information and an analysis of how national and regional authorities organise:

- Governance structures to manage the roadmap and mechanisms to manage the activities (2.1),

- The analysis of the current (as is) and desired (to be) situations, including the assessment of needs and the definition of vision and goals to achieve (2.2,2.3),

- Actions designed to produce the desired change, along with the financial resources allocated (2.4)

- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the role played by the programme monitoring committees, and the EC (2.5).

Section 2.6 presents the analysis of the preconditions, enablers, and barriers that influenced the design of the roadmaps.

2.1. Designing the roadmap governance

This section focuses on governance structures that facilitate the implementation of the roadmap. It presents insights into the institutional and organisational mechanisms established to manage roadmap activities, as well as their monitoring and evaluation

Regional roadmaps: the study analysed 5 regional roadmaps.

The study examined **regional** roadmaps in three **Italian** regions – Lazio (more developed region), Marche (in transition), Apulia (less developed), as well as the regional **Polish** roadmap of the Lublin Voivodeship, and the **Romanian** North-East regional roadmap. The Romanian case also includes an analysis of the 13 national sectoral roadmaps, as the information combines both regional and national experiences.

National roadmaps: the other Member States selected prepared national roadmaps.

For **Greece**, the roadmap is linked to a specific national programme, namely the Programme for Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development 2014-2020, supported by ERDF and CF. The other national roadmaps primarily cover the ERDF or the entire Cohesion Policy fund ecosystem.

Fund coverage: all but one of the roadmaps focus exclusively on Cohesion Policy programmes, thus the structures include those managing ERDF, CF, ESF+ and JTF funds.

The **Croatian** roadmap covers not only the Cohesion Policy funds but also HOME funds (AMIF, ISF, BMVI) and EARDF. The Croatian Coordination Body (CB) sought a comprehensive strategy involving all national authorities responsible for funds in the roadmap. This approach strengthens the roadmap by enhancing the administrative capacity of all authorities involved in the Common Provisions Regulation ecosystem and extending this exercise to other line ministries.

The underlying structure and governance of the roadmaps are based on these specifications.

2.1.1. Institutional and organisational set up

 The roadmap includes a section outlining the governance structures for developing, implementing, and monitoring the strategy. Governance should reflect both the geographical scope of the roadmap and the fund coverage, aligning with the policy and political priorities of ACB, both for the current programming period and post-2027. However, this information is not always presented in a clear and structured manner. The overview of this section highlights three features.

Firstly, the documents analysed generally show that the Cohesion Policy ecosystem manages regional and national programmes. While this is accurate, it is not often directly relevant to the roadmap, and is not linked to ACB.

Those involved in designing and implementing the roadmap generally refer to MAs or CBs as responsible for implementing the programmes. However, the distinction

between those involved in the design and those in charge of implementing the roadmap is not clearly detailed in this section of the document. This distinction becomes clearer in the sections where specific actions are explained, detailing the identification of managers, implementers (when different), and beneficiaries (see 2.2 and 2.4).

Secondly, the pilot roadmaps feature clearer governance, probably due to DG REGIO guidance – the Toolkit, and the support provided through the OECD team.

The FGs and interviews confirmed that the OECD support was crucial to the exercise, especially since the instruments used to elaborate the roadmap, i.e. the DG REGIO Toolkit, were not well known, and the rationale of the document was new to everyone. The roadmaps developed under the pilot project adhered to the structure provided by DG REGIO and included more detailed information on governance.

Thirdly, in some Member States, the description of governance is disjointed.

Beyond details of the Cohesion policy ecosystem, there is no reference to governance for developing and managing the roadmap. These documents primarily refer to those traditionally involved in Cohesion Policy. Moreover, the sections describing the actions generally do not provide additional details about those managing and implementing the activities.

The **Bulgarian** roadmap had not yet been finalised (as of December 2024) and does not include a section on governance. The FG and interviews highlighted that the Central Coordination Unit (CCU) will be the main structure responsible for managing and implementing the roadmap. Other actors will play a role, but this has not been confirmed or clearly defined yet.

The national **Romanian** roadmaps have not been finalised either. They were developed centrally by the Ministry of Investments and European Project (MIPE-General Direction System Programming and Coordination). For the purpose of this study, all the roadmaps were available in draft versions, focusing only on general data rather than the specific objectives of the roadmap, the methodology used in its design, or its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The draft versions indicate MIPE as being in charge of both the elaboration and management, along with the ministries for each sector, i.e. health, water and waste, energy, education, transition, biodiversity, transport, digitalisation and R&I, and employment.

2.1.2. Type of actors in the roadmap governance

Considering the type of actors involved in the management of the regional and national roadmaps, several patterns emerged, as outlined below.

Table 3 - Actors involved in the governance architecture of the roadmaps analysed

#	MS	National or regional	Region	Organisation name	Authority
1	Bulgaria	national		Administration of the Council of Ministers	CB
2	Croatia	national		Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds	CB
3	Czechia	national		Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development	CB
4	Estonia	national		State Shared Service Centre	MA
5	Greece	national		Managing Authority 'Transport' 2021-2027	MA
6	Hungary	national		Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development	CB
7	Italy	regional	Lazio ([12])	MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027	MA (regional)
8	Italy	regional	Marche ([13])	MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027	MA (regional)
9	Italy	regional	Apulia ([14])	MA of the ERDF -ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region	MA (regional)
10	Latvia	national		State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments	CB
11	Lithuania	national		Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments	MA
12	Poland	regional	Lubelskie	Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region	MA
13	Portugal	national		Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão	CB
14	Romania	national		Ministry of EU funds	MA
15	Romania	regional	North-East	North-East Regional Development Agency	MA
16	Slovenia	national		Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development	MA
17	Slovakia	national		Central Coordination Authority	CB
18	Spain	national		Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration	MA

Consortium elaboration

([12]) More developed region

([13]) In transition region

([14]) Less developed region

The two main institutional and administrative actors responsible for managing the roadmaps are the MAs of the national or regional programmes, in 11 cases, and the national CBs in 7 cases.

These actors may be embedded in different ministries, such as the Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds and the Ministry of Finance, or they may fall under the supervision of the Council of the Ministries.

The **Italian, Polish and Romanian regional roadmaps** are managed by the MAs for regional programmes supported by Cohesion Policy funds.

Most national roadmaps are managed by structures within the Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds.

This reflects the nature of the document and its scope, which aims to support and strengthen the policy and political architecture of the organisation responsible for managing Cohesion Policy funds. In this framework, some Member States indicate the **CB** as the main structure for elaboration and management.

In **Hungary**, the CB is the Ministry of Administration and Regional Development.

The **Czech** roadmap designates responsibility to the National Coordinating Authority. Similarly, in the **Slovakian** model, the Central Coordination Authority at the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation is in charge. The key governance body for the **Croatian** roadmap is the CB, i.e. the Directorate for Strategic Planning and Coordination of EU funds within the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds (MRRFEU).

In a few cases, the Ministry of Finance is the MA for Cohesion Policy programmes and the roadmap.

In **Estonia**, roadmap management is embedded in the State Shared Service Centre (SSSC), a government agency under the administration of the Ministry of Finance (MoF), while the **Lithuanian** roadmap is managed by the Ministry of Finance, acting as MA of the Cohesion Policy programme.

Bulgarian governance of the roadmap is a mix, where the CCU is the CB and part of the Ministry of Finance.

There are two cases with a clear and detailed description of the roadmap governance.

Latvia has one of the best governance model descriptions: the State Chancellery is the main body in charge of the roadmap implementation, and acts as the CB, supporting the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers in policy-making.

Roadmap governance structure in Latvia

The ACB roadmap was developed by the **State Chancellery** and the Latvian School of Public Administration (LSPA) in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the Central Financing and Contracting Agency and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The State Chancellery defines the overall policy for skills and competence development, while LSPA serves as a centre for public administration development and knowledge transfer. LSPA provides learning and development activities for the largest target groups identified in the roadmap, as well as other planning documents, implemented centrally. LSPA will also establish the substantive and administrative framework for planning and implementing the priority learning and development actions in the roadmap. Additionally, it will provide a platform for knowledge transfer within public administration and in cooperation with the non-government sector, businesses and wider society. There is a clear and effective mechanism for the development, review and implementation of the ACB roadmap with clear roles, responsibilities and rights outlined in the inter-ministerial agreement. The roadmap has nine priorities, each with specific activities to achieve them. Each priority is managed by a designated institution or owner, forming a structured plan of activities for ACB in the context of Latvia's 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy. An inter-ministerial team will implement and monitor the activities and progress of the roadmap. This team includes all strategic partners of the roadmap – the Ministry of Finance, the Central Financing and Contracting Agency, LSPA, the Procurement Supervision Bureau, the Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional Development (since 1 July 2024 MSARD), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the State Police and other institutions as required. In 2020, while implementing the Public Administration Reform Plan, the State Chancellery, in cooperation with LSPA and other institutions, developed the Public Administration Workforce Training and Development Plan 2021-2027. This plan serves as the basis for the long-term development of human resource capacity to achieve the objectives set out in the National Development Plans 2021-2027. The ACB roadmap is integral to the Public Administration Workforce Training and Development Plan 2021-2027. Annex 2. 'Actions and results of the Plan's priority directions' mentions the ACB roadmap as a key instrument for implementing the 5th strategic priority 'Professionalisation of human resources and improvement of administrative capacity'.

Consortium elaboration

The **Portuguese** governance model assigns a pivotal role to the Agency for Development and Cohesion. Acting as the CB, the agency developed the roadmap and is in charge of implementation. As an indirect State administration body, it operates under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the supervision of the Deputy Minister for Territorial Cohesion.

Roadmap governance structure in Portugal

The **Agency for Development and Cohesion** is the central coordinating body responsible for developing the roadmap. It provided strategic guidance and ensured the roadmap aligned with national and EU priorities. The Agency also facilitated

technical coordination and ensured stakeholder engagement throughout the process. The Agency coordinates with the Centre for Regional and Urban Development Studies (Centro de Estudos e Desenvolvimento Regional e Urbano – CEDRU) and EY (Ernst & Young Portugal).

The Agency played a crucial role in coordinating the MA and IB to develop the roadmap and its alignment with national and EU strategies. Furthermore, the Agency is instrumental in ensuring that the roadmap is perceived as a national document, enhancing the national administration, rather than merely serving an administrative request from the EC.

Consortium elaboration

2.1.3. Ownership

Ownership of the roadmap refers to the analysis of its owners, i.e. how national and regional authorities perceive the roadmap - either as their instrument or as an imposition by the Commission.

The indirect observation approach was crucial to capturing these elements during each FG and individual interview. It provided insights into the varying degrees of ownership and the relationships between the different actors. This nuanced method was essential for identifying the subtleties of leadership dynamics and their impact on the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives. Understanding these interpersonal and inter-organisational relationships also provided a richer context for implementation of the roadmap and its impact on administrative capacity development.

The table below presents an overall assessment of ownership levels (high, medium, low) and highlights the key elements that influenced the different degrees of ownership in each MS.

The main elements shaping the degree of ownership are the following:

- Commitment and involvement of the programme authority when kicking off the roadmap process;

- Involvement of the top management in the roadmap process, both in the analytical part and in the implementation of the actions;

- Ongoing involvement and commitment of the programme authority and stakeholders, including national authorities and programme beneficiaries, during the implementation of the actions;

- Ability of programme authorities to maintain and sustain momentum on ACB topics, and include them in the policy and political agenda;

- Positive attitude and approach of the programme authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders, viewing the document as a supportive tool rather than an imposition from DG REGIO; Support from DG REGIO and the OECD team during the roadmap elaboration.

- Support from the DG REGIO community of practitioners on ACB roadmaps ([15]), where continuous exchange and support for the roadmap finalisation was given.

([15]) The REGIO Community of Practice on ACB roadmaps continued the work done in the REGIO pilot project on roadmaps: it was launched by REGIO in July 2021 and managed by t33 until January 2024, providing full support for the development of roadmaps in more than 10 MS and the drafting of a final 'Policy Brief' on roadmaps and ACB in Cohesion Policy.

Table 4 – Degree of roadmap ownership

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
1	**Bulgaria**	national		Administration of the Council of Ministers	**CB**	**High**	With support from the OECD, the Bulgarian CCU developed an initial document and shared its initial actions at meetings in late 2024, even before the roadmap was finalised. They aim to involve all stakeholders in the implementation, demonstrating a strong commitment and positive attitude supported by collaboration with the OECD and the DG REGIO Geo Unit. However, the top management and political actors were not involved in the roadmap elaboration, and they did not prioritise it in their political and policy agendas. The continued implementation of the roadmap depends on the commitment and involvement of the programme authorities..

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
2	Croatia	national		Ministry of Regional development and EU funds	CB	High	The Coordinating Body (CB) within the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds (MRRFEU), responsible for designing, implementing, and coordinating with other management and control bodies, decided to kick off the process, and built the roadmap on the pilot exercise. The support provided by the REGIO-GEO unit was crucial in helping the CB decide to start working on the roadmap. However, the CB appears to face some challenges in its collaboration with other sectors within the MRRFEU, resulting in a limited degree of communication. While this issue is less evident in its relationship with the Ministry of Labour (ESF+ MA), there is still a perception that the CB could enhance its coordination efforts regarding the roadmap's implementation. In particular, stakeholders have noted the need for more opportunities to bring together the owners of Roadmap measures to exchange experiences and ideas for more effective and coordinated implementation.. This is compounded by the fact that all units seem to agree the roadmap design phase was not entirely successful and did not prioritise strategic ACB activities sufficiently. Instead, it allowed all stakeholders to submit their ideas for ACB actions without proper filtering. As a result, owners and implementers lost interest over time, seeing it as an additional and sometimes unnecessary administrative burden rather than a strategic tool for effective long-term ACB.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
3	Czechia	national		Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development	CB	Low	The roadmap is part of the Partnership Agreement and is overseen by the Ministry for Regional Development via its National Coordination Authority (NCA). The MAs were neither committed to nor involved in the designing phase; it was mainly a top-down exercise. There is no governance framework in place to coordinate the implementation that is integrated into existing operational programmes and monitored through standard practices such as the annual report on administrative capacity. Strategic oversight comes from the Ministry and the NCA, while implementation is handled by various national, regional and local stakeholders. The roadmap lacks explicit political backing but aligns with ongoing administrative capacity-building efforts within the Cohesion Policy framework. As there is not widespread information on the roadmap, beneficiaries and key stakeholders are not strongly involved in the process.
4	Estonia	national		State Shared Service Centre	MA	High	The State Shared Service Centre (SSC) in Estonia perceived the exercise very useful to strengthen specific aspects of ACB administrative capacity building. The SSC is also able to maintain high attention and interest in the implementation of the roadmap actions. The coordination with the Ministry of Finance reinforces the commitment and involvement of all parties interest in implementing the roadmap.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
5	Greece	national		MA 'Transport' 2021-2027	MA	High	The roadmap was developed in 2019 and led by the MA of the national operational programme. being part of the pilot exercise, the OECD supported the design process by providing its capacity-planning methodology. The MA engaged multiple stakeholders, including line ministries, inter-ministerial committees, the National Competent Authority (NCA) and the EC, in a collaborative process involving workshops, study visits and surveys to identify needs and co-create actions. During implementation, the MA led efforts with support from the Management Organisation Unit (MOU), focusing on training, skills development, and knowledge-sharing events such as the 'knowledge workshop'. This highly participatory approach was tailored to the specific context, ensuring transparency, staff engagement, and sustained momentum.
6	Hungary	national		Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development	CB	Medium	The CB and all actors involved in implementing the roadmap are committed to the roadmap actions. However, they perceive the document as an imposed top-down administrative burden, which hampers its effectiveness and efficiency. As a result, the degree of commitment and involvement of the programme authorities has also been modest. They limit themselves to complying with the requirements and implementing the actions. Involvement of the hierarchy and top management has been very limited throughout the process, which has hampered efforts to elevate ACB issues in the policy and political agenda.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
7	**Italy**	regional	Lazio(.[16])	MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027	**MA**	**High**	The roadmap (or in Italian PRigA) was created in response to the EC recommendations to improve public sector skills, digitalisation, and local service delivery. Led by the ERDF Lazio MA, it was co-designed with input from beneficiaries to address issues from the previous programming period, aiming to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and promote a sense of ownership. The PRigA has been revised over time to reflect evolving needs, with the latest version presented to the Monitoring Committee in October 2024. The committee welcomed the approach and encouraged ongoing updates, underlining the MA's commitment to transparency and stakeholder involvement.
8	**Italy**	regional	Marche(.[17])	MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027	**MA**	**Low**	The MA of the ERDF programme is in charge of the design and implementation. The roadmap builds on the second phase of the PRA (concluded in 2020), which established the governance framework for the ERDF and ESF programmes and serves as a reference for assessing administrative capacity in line with EU regulations. There was no involvement of the programme beneficiaries and key stakeholders, and the MA perceived the roadmap not among the top political priorities. Therefore, the degree of ownership and commitment to the implementation is low.

([16]) More developed region

([17]) In transition region

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
9	Italy	regional	Apulia([18])	MA of the ERDF-ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region	MA	Medium	The Apulia region developed the first version of its roadmap in 2022 and disseminated it, but without the wider involvement of all stakeholders active in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem or other regional line structures. The design phase had a significant impact on external ownership of the roadmap: the limited time available in 2022 made it difficult to carry out a broad consultation. Moreover, the limited time frame for sharing the document, due to the end of the 2014-2020 programming period and the beginning of 2021-2027, hampered knowledge and ownership for other actors.
10	Latvia	national		State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments	CB	High	The team in the Latvian State Chancellery working on the national roadmap has been fully committed from the very beginning of the roadmap design process. Although Latvia has received the EC recommendation to develop the roadmap, the programme authority showed high commitment during the situation 'AS IS' phase, and currently in the implementation phase. Programme stakeholders are informed about the advancement.
11	Lithuania	national		Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments	MA	High	The Lithuanian Ministry of Finance (MoF), in charge of the roadmap development and implementation, showed dedication and attention to this exercise. Lithuania did not receive a recommendation to develop the roadmap, but the MoF opted for it, as it was perceived as a valuable tool to strengthen ACB. This also demonstrates the national authority's ability to incorporate ACB into the policy and political agenda.

([18]) Less developed region

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
12	**Poland**	regional	Lubelskie	Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region	**MA**	**High**	The governance of the roadmap is aligned with the structure of the Operational Programme and is managed by the MA, with the Marshal's Office in Lublin acting as owner. Developed in collaboration with DG REGIO and the OECD, as well as regional entities, the roadmap emphasises the importance of political support and commitment from senior management. It originated from a bottom-up initiative in response to staff turnover and burnout, with the MA recognising the need to address challenges relating to workforce retention and capacity. While external partners supported the process, the MA led the design and retained decision-making authority.
13	**Portugal**	national		Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão	**CB**	**High**	In June 2022, the Portuguese Agency presented its finalised roadmap to stakeholders from the Cohesion Policy ecosystem in Lisbon, including communication experts and officials from other ministries. The presentation emphasised the inclusive design process and set out the next implementation steps. Encouraging broad stakeholder involvement promoted shared ownership and accountability. Since then, the Agency has maintained a strong focus on administrative capacity building, actively engaging programme authorities, stakeholders and beneficiaries. The agency's senior management, including its vice president, has demonstrated a strong commitment to the roadmap and ACB efforts, reflecting their high priority.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
14	**Romania**	national		Ministry of EU funds	**MA**	**Medium**	The line ministries involved in preparing the national sector roadmap seem to perceive it as merely another tool to address ACB issues and challenges. The MA, IB and other stakeholders were not involved in the design process. The MIPE, in charge of the design and implementation, has a strong ownership, but a lack of ownership among the other actors involved hampered and limited the relevance of the document.
15	**Romania**	regional	North-East	North-East Regional Development Agency	**MA**	**High**	The roadmap developed with OECD support is owned by the MA which perceives it as their own document to address ACB challenges and involves the implementing actors and beneficiaries in the process. The MA sustain the momentum to enhance the relevance, as well as implementation of the roadmap. Moreover, the involvement of the MA in other related initiatives promoted by DG REGIO, and supported by the OECD team, plays a crucial role in maintaining the attention on this topic.
16	**Slovenia**	national		Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development	**MA**	**Low**	The MA of the Cohesion policy programme is responsible for preparing, updating, and managing the roadmap for the 2021–2027 Cohesion Policy, with the option to delegate specific tasks. The MA was not supported by other ministries, nor involved programme beneficiaries and key stakeholders to draft the roadmap. Commitment and engagement was limited, also due to low political priority of the roadmap, and concurrent deadlines, i.e. elaboration of the NRRP and the Cohesion Policy programme. Moreover, the roadmap has been treated more as a formal obligation than a strategic tool. Due to a change in government, its implementation has not been prioritized, leading to limited awareness among stakeholders and a lack of political support or emphasis on administrative capacity building.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
17	Slovakia	national		Central Coordination Authority	CB	Low	There is a low perception of the roadmap ownership. The authorities in charge of the national roadmap were created two years ago and are dealing with much broader administrative capacity activities. Furthermore, there are other strategies and plans to address capacity challenges and problems([19]), so the roadmap was merely perceived as an overarching strategy, bringing together processes, decisions and documents produced elsewhere. However, the officials participating in the focus groups and interviews were particularly open to discussing the challenges related to the low interest in administrative capacity initiatives and the reasons for the low relevance of the ACB in these MS.

([19]) Other documents and strategies mentioned in Slovakia are: Framework for the implementation of the [EU] Funds, version 1, Model Procedures Manual for the Managing Authority MA/IB, Methodological guidance on support for integrated territorial development, Guide to the implementation of the Central Training Plan for the Administrative Capacities of the EU Funds for the programming period 2021-2027. As to Czechia, the roadmap was elaborated as a summary of the existing documents, not specify during the interviews and the FG.

#	MS	National / regional	Region	Organisation	Authority	Ownership degree	Rationale
18	Spain	national		Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration	MA	Medium	The roadmap is managed by the Directorate General for European Funds. The MA is responsible for the design and implementation of the actions. A multidisciplinary working group comprising participants from various relevant sub-directorates was established to identify and propose to the Directorate the measures needed to monitor and follow up on the actions included in the roadmap. The group monitors the implementation of the actions contained in the roadmap and collects information on the indicators that have already been identified. However, the commitment and involvement of the IBs was very limited, and the approach was significantly top-down. Programme beneficiaries and key stakeholders were not involved in the design phase, and they play a limited role in the implementation. Political support is also quite limited.

First, the analysis looks at the degree to which the actors responsible for designing the roadmap perceive it as a document for their own improvement and objectives.

In almost all Member States, those designing the roadmap, be they the MA or CB, perceive the roadmap as their document, which should help the administration improve implementation of the Cohesion Policy programme. The commitment and engagement expressed in the FGs and interviews showed this sense of ownership of the document in most Member States.

> **Good practices regarding roadmap ownership**
>
> The **Lazio** region (IT) prepared a roadmap, despite not receiving a formal recommendation from DG REGIO to do so. It views this document as a tool to systematise ACB activities from the end of the previous programming period to the beginning of the current one. The MA developed the roadmap in early 2022 and revised it in 2023 and 2024. Its ownership was further demonstrated during the FG organised for this study in October 2024, when it decided to formally present the 2024 version of the roadmap to members of the ERDF programme monitoring committee. The regional MA aimed to convey that it is taking concrete, structured steps to address ACB challenges and issues.
>
> The **Bulgarian** CCU invested human resources in developing the roadmap and requested support from the OECD. Although the roadmap was not yet finalised, the CCU representatives disseminated the ACB actions during meetings of the National Cohesion Policy Programme monitoring committees in October and November 2024. The CCU representative wants to disseminate this document to all actors in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem and to further involve them in implementing the actions. Although the political actors and the top management were not involved in the elaboration and design of the roadmap, the Bulgarian CCU was fully committed, and showed a positive attitude and approach towards this exercise, as it was perceived as necessary to strengthen the administrative skills and capacities of the Partnership Agreement ecosystem. This sense of commitment and motivation was also reinforced by the support of the OECD team, working in collaboration with the DG REGIO Geo Unit.
>
> The **Portuguese** Agency presented the finalised plan in Lisbon in June 2022 to all those involved in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem, as well as communication experts, external consultants and officials from other line ministries. The presentation reported on the design process, involving most of those present and described the next steps to implement the roadmap. The involvement of stakeholders at different levels ensures shared ownership and accountability. Since the 2022 presentation of the roadmap, the Agency has been able to maintain the momentum and keep attention on ACB issues high, involving programme authorities, stakeholders and programme beneficiaries in the implementation of the actions. The hierarchy and top management of the Agency are highly committed to the process, i.e. the participation of the Vice-President of the Agency in the interviews for the purpose of the study and his willingness to share and talk about the roadmap and ACB, in general, shows the attention and relevance given to this issue.

Consortium elaboration

Three Managing authorities, those of Lazio (IT), Lithuania and Estonia, voluntarily decided to develop a roadmap, without an EC recommendation in the 2019 European Semester Country Reports.

Indeed, during the FGs and interviews, they showed a strong sense of ownership, considering the document important for improving the capacity of their administration and beneficiaries.

Intervention of the Lithuanian MA during DG REGIO webinar 'Study on roadmap for Administrative Capacity Building – Design and Implementation'

The Lithuanian Ministry of Finance demonstrated notable dedication and engagement throughout the process by recognising its potential as a valuable instrument to strengthen administrative capacity and highlighting the national authority's ability to embed it within the political agenda. The roadmap was also viewed as a valuable opportunity to engage multiple institutions, fostering inter-institutional cooperation and knowledge sharing, which has already contributed to increased administrative maturity. However, challenges remain, particularly the lack of dedicated funding, and concerns that the roadmap may be perceived as an additional administrative burden. For this reason, the need for continued support was underlined.

Consortium elaboration

Ownership was also examined from an external perspective.

This implies assessing whether those who are not involved in managing the roadmap perceive it as their own and see the document as a living strategy that could also improve their work. This perception is strongly influenced by the institutional and administrative framework for managing the roadmap and by the relationships between those involved in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In most Member States and regions, other structures involved in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem lack a comprehensive overview of the roadmap, i.e. units or departments within the Ministry where the MAs are located, or departments in charge of the ESF+ programmes. In many cases, they were unaware of the existence of the roadmap and only familiar with certain ACB actions.

This mainly depends on how the MA or CB designed the roadmap, i.e. whether they consulted all Cohesion Policy actors or not, i.e. MA of the ESF+ programme, regional or territorial development agencies, intermediate bodies, association of municipalities In addition, effective communication and dissemination play a crucial role in sharing the approach and providing information on the implementation of actions.

To sum up, some key elements emerged from the analysis:

- **Most of the roadmaps analysed present strong ownership**: In many Member States, MAs and CBs view the roadmap as their own strategic

tool to improve administrative capacity and programme implementation. This sense of ownership was evident in both formal actions and attitudes during FGs and interviews. Moreover, some of the MA and CB kept in touch with the core team and informed it about the novelties on the implementation of the roadmap actions, even after the conclusion of the FG and interviews. This was also evident during the in-person and online dissemination events organised and supported by DG REGIO. Some MAs and CBs were actively participating and updating the audience on their further advancement. This is a key sign of the commitment of ownership.

- **Mixed external perception and dissemination gaps**: while MA and CB ownership is generally strong, external stakeholders (outside MAs/CBs) often lack awareness or engagement with the roadmap. This is primarily due to limited consultation and ineffective communication strategies during the design and implementation phases.

- **Low Ownership in Some Member States**: Member States like **Hungary**, **Czechia**, **Slovakia**, and parts of **Romania** perceive the roadmap as an administrative burden or secondary to other national strategies. In these cases, ownership is low, particularly among broader stakeholders and top management.

- **Challenges with Stakeholder Coordination and Sustainability**: Cases like the **Croatian** and **Apulia** (IT) regional roadmaps highlight issues in stakeholder coordination, limited consultation during the design phase, and mistrust between actors. These challenges reduce long-term engagement and limit the roadmap effectiveness as a strategic ACB tool.

2.1.4.   Role of stakeholders

The analysis examined how regional and national authorities selected **stakeholders to design the roadmap and how they plan to implement the actions**. The involvement of all stakeholders in the design phase is crucial for identifying administrative capacity issues, challenges and needs; co-designing potential solutions; and gathering input and ideas directly from them. It also ensures their voices are heard and that they are involved in implementing the actions.

The different approaches to the roadmaps covered in this study are linked to the stakeholders and the ways they are involved.

The analysis takes the following criteria into account:

- The type of stakeholders involved, namely whether they are public organisations, such as programme authorities, national ministries (not acting as programme authorities), national or regional public agencies, or private organisations, such as representatives of companies and NGOs.

When possible, this information is also complemented by the size of the stakeholders involved, specifically whether they involved a limited number of actors or a wide range of them. The exact number of stakeholders involved in the roadmap design is never provided in the roadmaps.

- The nature and quality of their contribution, i.e. whether they are simply informed about the roadmap, or whether they have been involved in the analysis 'AS IS' phase by providing feedback and ideas, participating in focus groups, meetings, consultations, and surveys. In some cases, the actors in charge of the roadmap involved other national or regional line services to contribute to the elaboration of the roadmap on limited parts of the document, such as those parts related to the actions.

- Their impact on the development of the roadmap, i.e. whether their contribution was taken into account and included in the roadmap, or whether it influenced the development of the actions and their ongoing implementation in any way. NA means that there is no information available to assess the quality of the stakeholders' impact.

The table below synthesises the criteria used to assess the impact of the stakeholders in the roadmap design.

Table 5 - Impact of the stakeholders in the roadmap design

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
1	**Bulgaria**	national	**Administration of the Council of Ministers**	**CB**	Survey to all the below mentioned actors, and 4 round tables for the roadmap pillars. Stakeholders consulted: all MAs, Management and Control System (MCS) bodies, NGOs representing various beneficiary groups, and key state institutions such as the PPA (Public Procurement Agency) and the Institute for Public Administration (IPA).	Contribution with feedback and ideas on the analysis 'AS IS'	n/a

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
2	Croatia	national	Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds	CB	The CB organised: a) two introductory meetings in 2021 with 90 participants from 34 different bodies, ranging from MAs to MCs; b) 4 workshops on 'people and organisation' pillars with 70 participants from 31 MAs and MC bodies; c) 5 workshops for 'strategic planning' with 69 participants from 31 bodies, d) 2 workshops on users and stakeholders with 63 participants from 31 bodies e) in 2021 and 2022, 6 online and 1 in-person workshops to present results, priorities and the harmonisation of activities and 6 meetings to finalise the needs and opportunities assessment.	Contribution with feedback and ideas on the analysis 'AS IS'	High

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
3	Czechia	national	Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development	CB	Meetings organised to develop and elaborate the PA were also instrumental in designing the roadmap. However, there are no specific details on the people involved.	n/a	n/a
4	Estonia	national	State Shared Service Centre	MA	Input on the needs mapping was provided by the ministries responsible for the sectors, which received input from their sectoral partners. This was followed by discussions in the respective ministries- Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, State Chancellery, Mo Environment. Moreover, 18 umbrella organisations were consulted to provide suggestions for the roadmap actions.	Contribution with feedback and ideas on the analysis 'AS IS'	High
5	Greece	national	Managing Authority 'Transport' 2021-2027	MA	Questionnaire was developed to gather input, and a mid-term review helped validate the roadmap. Meetings involving various stakeholders, such as the MA, the MOU, beneficiaries, and other key actors, supported the finalisation of the strategic document.	Contribution with feedback and ideas on the analysis 'AS IS'	High

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
6	**Hungary**	national	**Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development**	**CB**	The document did not mention any consultation process with programme beneficiaries, nor key stakeholders.	n/a	n/a
7	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	Although the roadmap does not mention any form of consultation with programme beneficiaries or other stakeholders, the MA highlighted that there were informal meetings with some key programme beneficiaries and the IB to develop targeted measures.	Informal exchanges	Low
8	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	No consultation with key programme beneficiaries and stakeholders.	Contribution limited to writing some sections of the documents, with pre-planned actions that were to be implemented regardless	None

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
9	Italy	regional	MA of the ERDF - ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region	MA (regional)	There was no involvement of programme beneficiaries and key stakeholders in the design phase of the roadmap. The development was mainly guided by the MA. Other regional line services were consulted after the finalisation of the roadmap.	None	None
10	Latvia	national	State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments	CB	Key stakeholders and programme beneficiaries were included in round tables and meetings to define the roadmap: these included senior managers and human resources managers, policy planners, project managers, process managers, customer service specialists, and those in controlling and monitoring functions. The beneficiaries of the Cohesion Policy were also involved in the development of the roadmap. Other key institutional actors were the Latvian School of Public Administration, Ministry of Finance, Central Financing and Contracting Agency, and the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development (MSARD), and the Procurement Monitoring Bureau.	Involvement through focus group	High

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
11	Lithuania	national	**Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments**	MA	The design process involved ministries, agencies, and partners (via surveys), though beneficiaries had limited involvement.	Involvement at different stages of the roadmap elaboration, and with different modalities of involvement	Medium
12	Poland	regional	**Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region**	MA	High number of stakeholders involved, all coming from the regional framework - programme beneficiaries, social partners, NGOs	Working in a 'pre-monitoring committee' modality, they were engaged in three series of workshops	High
13	Portugal	national	**Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão**	CB	The design of the roadmap envisaged a participatory approach, in the form of focus groups and surveys involving various stakeholders. The focus groups included MAs, IBs, beneficiaries, public agencies and government departments, research and innovation entities, educational institutions, social economy and employment entities, evaluation and audit bodies, promoting shared ownership and accountability.	Focus groups, surveys and consultations	High

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
14	Romania	national	Ministry of EU funds	MA	The MIPE asked for written contributions from other ministries, programme authorities, EIB, and key experts for each sector. However, the level of involvement and the extent to which they were considered in the design are not specified.	Written contribution, but not clear for the entire roadmap	n/a
15	Romania	regional	North-East Regional Development Agency	MA	In-person meetings, written consultations, and videoconferences were organised with a wide range of stakeholders – county and municipal level authorities, businesses, NGOs – to identify their needs, problems, development opportunities and potential solutions.	Inputs coming from in-person meetings, videoconferences and written consultation	High
16	Slovenia	national	Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development	MA	High number of stakeholders involved, as they were consulted in the context of the PA elaboration, and for designing the roadmap .	Indirect contribution of the stakeholders to the roadmap exercise	Low
17	Slovakia	national	Central Coordination Authority	CB	High number of stakeholders involved, as they were consulted in the context of the PA elaboration, and for designing the roadmap .	Indirect contribution of the stakeholders to the roadmap exercise	Low

#	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	Stakeholders involved	Type of contribution	Impact of their contribution
18	**Spain**	national	**Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration**	MA	An online survey was conducted to identify the needs of stakeholders. It helped the IB and MA to understand what their weaknesses are and how to address them.	Contribution with feedback and ideas on the analysis 'AS IS'	Medium

In half of the roadmaps, regional and national authorities involved selected stakeholders to define the situation 'as is' and gather input for the activities to be included in the roadmap.

In a few cases, the documents reference the MA, IB, programme beneficiaries and third parties involved. Good examples of this are in the **Croatian, Portuguese and Latvian** national roadmaps and the **Romanian** regional roadmap.

Although the document does not report on stakeholder involvement, the FGs and interviews revealed that the **Bulgarian** approach involved an extensive and lengthy consultation process involving several stakeholders. The same is true for the **Spanish** national roadmap, which is currently being finalised. The FG and interviews with the MA of the national ERDF programmes and regional MAs made it clear that they, the IBs and beneficiaries were consulted for input and proposed actions to design the roadmap. Indeed, the Spanish Autonomous Communities act as IBs in the management and implementation of funds. This includes designing the regional programmes, selecting and monitoring actions, ensuring the correct implementation of the programmes, and reporting to the national MA.

Stakeholder involvement

During the design phase, the **Bulgarian** CCU undertook extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including all MAs and Monitoring and Control System bodies, NGOs representing various beneficiary groups, state institutions (Public Procurement Agency (PPA), Institute of Public Administration (IPA), etc.) to ensure wide support. The CCU surveyed up to 600 stakeholders to identify challenges and needs and then held round tables for each pillar of the roadmap. The design phase took about two years. The consultation process added value to the development of the roadmap. Given the wide range of actors involved, their willingness to contribute openly and frankly and the significant number of actions proposed, the CCU could then start with an 'as-is' analysis and better define the scope of the roadmap.

The document was to be finalised by the end of November 2024 and adopted in early 2025.

The **Spanish** national MA of the ERDF programmes led the consultation involving a wide range of stakeholders. It sent a questionnaire to all Cohesion Policy MAs and IBs. In the Castilla-La Mancha programme and other regional programmes, the questionnaire was shared with regional actors involved in the implementation, and the data were then aggregated at the regional level. During the self-assessment, each IB provided its perspective on specific challenges, which facilitated a roadmap that responds to these operational realities.

The self-assessment resulted in specific actions to support agencies facing limitations, such as human resources, flexibility in project management and greater clarity in regulations. Some roadmap actions are a direct response to requests and suggestions from autonomous regions and cities, as well as regional actors involved in the implementation of the funds, such as the Centre for Technological

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> Development, the Ministry of Science, the 'Carlos III' Health Institute, and the Spanish National Research centre.

Consortium elaboration

Stakeholder engagement in designing the **Croatian** national roadmap was inherited from the experience of the roadmap developed under the 2018-2019 pilot project, adopting the same approach as the OECD to engage with active Cohesion Policy stakeholders. The **Greek** roadmap provides an overview of stakeholder engagement in the national transport programme, as outlined below.

Stakeholder involvement in the Greek and Croatian roadmaps

The MA of the **Greek** Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Programme (now the MA of the Transport programme) received support from the OECD for stakeholder involvement in developing the roadmap, as it was developed within the framework of the DG REGIO Pilot action between 2019 and 2021. Study visits, workshops, surveys and exchanges helped complete the needs analysis and define the actions. Various stakeholders were involved including MA units, the National Coordinating Authority, the Management and Organisation Unit, the monitoring committee, beneficiaries and others. The methodology and results were adapted to the Greek context. Once the roadmap was established, the MA informed all its units about the needs and actions and initiated the action process by forming teams and groups to implement the roadmap. The actions were in line with the needs and were all completed within the proposed timeframe.

The **Croatian** CB actively involved a much wider range of programme bodies managing EU funds in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the roadmap. These included the Ministry of Labour, Pensions, Family and Social Policy (ESF+), the Ministry of the Interior (AMIF, BMVI, ISF), the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration (responsible for the National Public Administration Development Plan 2022-2027) and the Ministry of Agriculture (EAFRD, EMFAF). Other ministries were consulted on specific issues (e.g. the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development to strengthen public procurement), as well as organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry). 16 workshops involving over 200 participants from 31 institutions helped identify the specific challenges of ACB at the time. This phase illustrates the nature of the roadmap as a shared document that incorporates all stakeholder inputs and will be regularly updated to include new activities, as a 'living document'. The participants in the focus group and interviews highlighted that the Coordination Body had faced challenges in prioritising the needs and clustering the actions to be included in the roadmap. However, the roadmap now includes all the proposals from the stakeholders.

Consortium elaboration

The **Lithuanian** case is mixed as the consultation process involved a wide range of stakeholders but in different ways and at different stages of the process. Needs were determined through expert-led activities including interviews, focus groups and events. Over 600 challenges were identified, which were summarised and prioritised. Ministries and agencies participated, but beneficiaries were not directly involved. Social partners (e.g., NGOs and associations) contributed through surveys.

In most cases, stakeholders are not specifically mentioned, the document states they were consulted, but does not specify their role or detailed involvement.

Focus groups and interviews with the Slovenian and Slovakian stakeholders responsible for the roadmaps revealed that, at the time of the Partnership Agreement, stakeholders in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem were consulted. In other words, the consultations for the Partnership Agreement were also used to design the roadmap.

Their feedback and input were also incorporated into the roadmap document inspiring ACB actions.

2.1.5. Top management and political support

The analysis considered support from top management and the hierarchy related to specific Cohesion Policy programmes, as well as political actors involved in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem. This may include for example political actors working in other ministries and top management positions in national agencies. NA refers to situations where this information is not available.

The table below synthesises whether the actors in charge of the roadmap received support from top management and political actors, at regional and national levels, and whether this impacted the roadmap development and implementation. The table also provides a preliminary explanation of the positive or negative effects associated with the presence or absence of political and top management support. NA refers to situations where this information is not available.

Table 6 - Top management and political support to the roadmap

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Top management support	Political support	Preliminary and potential outcomes
1	**Bulgaria**	national	**Administration of the Council of Ministers**	CB	Low level of support from top management, that delegates to technical staff.	Political actors from ministries involved in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem were not involved. High uncertainty due to political instability	In the implementation phase, political and top management support will be needed to avoid the risk of undermining the roadmap potential
2	**Croatia**	national	**Ministry of Regional development and EU funds**	CB	No strong support from the top management, who declared their interest, but were not actively involved in the process.	Political actors from the Ministry of regional development and EU funds not involved.	Political actors are currently more interested in the roadmap implementation. No positive or negative influence..
3	**Czechia**	national	**Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development**	CB	No support from top management.	Political actors from the Ministry of regional development were not involved, and did not show strong support for this exercise	No positive or negative influence

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Top management support	Political support	Preliminary and potential outcomes
4	**Estonia**	national	**State Shared Service Centre**	MA	n/a	Political actors were not involved as the SSC did not need it.	No positive or negative influence.
5	**Greece**	national	**Managing Authority 'Transport' 2021-2027**	MA	Support from the top management of the national programme to take part in the pilot project (2018-2019).	No strong support from the political sphere	Top management support positively impacted the decision to take part in the exercise, but it was not strong throughout the process, and MA staff reported that they would have needed this back up all along the roadmap implementation. Lack of political support did not notably hamper the process.
6	**Hungary**	national	**Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development**	**CB**	No strong support from the top management, some form of interest was displayed.	Political support not directly mentioned.	No positive or negative effect.
7	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	n/a	Political support not mentioned.	n/a
8	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	n/a	Political support not mentioned.	n/a

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Top management support	Political support	Preliminary and potential outcomes
9	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the ERDF - ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region**	MA (regional)	No strong support displayed, even though they showed some interest.	Political support not mentioned.	n/a
10	**Latvia**	national	**State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments**	**CB**	Top management of State Chancellery and other relevant ministries and agencies informed and included in the consultations on roadmap.	n/a	No positive or negative influence.
11	**Lithuania**	national	**Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments**	MA	Top management of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of the Interior included in the meetings and consultation for the elaboration and implementation phases.	n/a	Top management positively influenced the exercise, as it was a voluntary choice to develop the roadmap, and they took part in meetings to follow the implementation.

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Top management support	Political support	Preliminary and potential outcomes
12	**Poland**	regional	**Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region**	MA	Support from the top management of the Marshall office to take part in the voluntary pilot action (2018-2019).	n/a	Positive as it was senior management who chose to opt into the pilot actions. It did not hamper the roadmap implementation.
13	**Portugal**	national	**Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão**	**CB**	Top management of the ADC fully involved in the roadmap elaboration.	Political actors from Ministries only involved in the presentation of the roadmap (June 2022).	Positive influence as the presentation of the plan was backed up by the Ministry himself. No influence in the implementation phase.
14	**Romania**	national	**Ministry of EU funds**	MA	n/a	No political actors involved	n/a
15	**Romania**	regional	**North-East Regional Development Agency**	MA	Strong top management support.	No political actors involved.	Top management support facilitates a smooth and effective implementation of the roadmap. No positive or negative influence from the political sphere.
16	**Slovenia**	national	**Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development**	MA	No strong support displayed, even though they reported some interest	No political actors involved.	Lack of political support was signalled as a negative factor which could have hampered the roadmap exercise

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Top management support	Political support	Preliminary and potential outcomes
17	**Slovakia**	national	**Central Coordination Authority**	**CB**	n/a	No political actors involved.	n/a
18	**Spain**	national	**Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration**	MA	n/a	n/a	n/a

In many Member States, a lack of political support or top management interest in the roadmap hampers its impact.

Regional and national authorities mentioned that top management and the hierarchy were not directly involved in the process and that officials who were not directly involved did not perceive it as important for tackling weaknesses. A lack of political focus and dissemination may thus have had a negative impact.

In Bulgaria and Romania, in particular, political instability and changes in the policy framework negatively impacted implementation.

In **Bulgaria**, three years of political instability has had a strong impact on the design process, which was prolonged for two years, and the stability of the CCU, which was moved between the Council of Ministries and the Ministry of Finance twice. This fragmented situation also affected the credibility of the stakeholders who were involved in a long design process without seeing any results. The FG and interviews highlighted fears that the roadmap will only be implemented at the end of the 2021-27 programming period.

There is similar political instability in **Hungary**. The institutional structure changed in summer 2022 as a result of government restructuring, with administrative authorities operating within the Prime Minister's Office under the leadership of the Minister of Territorial Development. Further changes to the institutional system are planned. This has not had a major impact on the implementation of the roadmap actions, but stakeholders in the FG and interviews noted that these changes impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative machinery.

In **Slovenia**, the top management hierarchy did not show much interest in developing the roadmap, which was perceived as an administrative burden.

In other Member States, political support is not perceived as crucial to the implementation. MAs implement the roadmap, even when political support is not strong or obvious.

The **Spanish** case seems similar to the **Italian** regional scenario. The MA organised meetings with political leaders to discuss the scope and objectives of the roadmap. Although no particular political backing was forthcoming, the MA continued to design the roadmap.

Officials from **Croatia and Greece** made it clear that political support was higher and more visible during the pilot exercise. OECD support and DG REGIO's attention significantly contributed to the hierarchy commitment.

The situation in Italy and Romania requires particular attention.

In **Romania**, the regional MAs and MIPE decided to develop the regional and national roadmaps. The main issue was the lack of political coordination in developing national and regional strategies, which resulted in limited meetings between the regional MAs

and the national structures to define the scope of the roadmaps and the architecture of interventions. Insufficient coordination at the top management and political level led to a lack of attention and commitment to ACB.

In **Italy**, the lack of coordination between regional and national levels has created difficulties in achieving a synergistic approach to administrative capacity building.

The roadmaps were initially realised with the operational support of DG REGIO for the southern (less developed) regions and then followed by those in the Centre-North (in transition and more developed) and the North (more developed). This resulted in all 21 Regional governments presenting roadmaps. However, since many regional roadmaps included national ACB measures under the national programme for capacity building for 2021-2027 (named 'CAPCOE', capacity for cohesion), a growing mismatch of both targets and activities emerged. This mismatch has yet to be addressed and, for the time being, has partly undermined support for the administration.

Coordinating and aligning the efforts with CAPCOE would have indeed required considerable effort from the national structure in charge of ACB. While such efforts have indeed been made, especially for the less developed regions, they met with limited success mainly due to the late delivery (and subsequent late approval) of the national CAPCOE programme and administrative changes. The organisation in charge of the MA was indeed reshuffled and incorporated into the Department for Cohesion and the South within the Council of Ministers. This slowed the coordination process between the regional MA drafting the roadmap and the national organisation in charge of ACB activities.

In addition, the lack of a unified and structured vision for ACB at the national level has hindered the positive change that regions have been calling for.

A key finding from the overall analysis conducted so far, particularly through indirect observation, is the lack of political vision at both the regional and national levels. The regional and national actors within the Cohesion policy ecosystem consistently reported a void in long-term political vision. This has resulted in an unclear understanding of the role and place of public administration, not only in the Cohesion Policy framework, but across all regional and national policy areas.

2.1.6. Synthetic assessment

This section provides a synthetic assessment of the governance structure analysed in the selected roadmaps, primarily considering the following: ownership, the role of stakeholders, and the commitment and involvement of political actors and top management.

These elements represent **pre-conditions** - foundational factors that are already in place at the outset of the roadmap design, or even earlier. They serve as the structural pillars upon which the MA or CB builds the roadmap. As illustrated above, these can hamper or facilitate the design and development of the roadmap. Involvement and commitment from top management and political actors can significantly facilitate the

design process and positively impact the timely engagement of stakeholders and key programme beneficiaries. This may be crucial for maintaining momentum and support for the roadmap.

The table below presents a synthetic overview combining the degree of MA and CB roadmap ownership, the role of stakeholders, and political and top management support for the roadmap design.

Table 7 - Synthetic assessment on the governance structure

	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	A	B	C	D	A+B+C+D
					Ownership	Stakeholder contributions	Top mgmnt support	Political support	Synthetic assessment
1	Bulgaria	national	Administration of the Council of Ministers	CB	High	n/a	Low	Not involved	🟨
2	Croatia	national	Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds	CB	High	High	Medium	Not involved	🟩
3	Czechia	national	Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development	CB	Low	n/a	None	Not involved	🟥
4	Estonia	national	State Shared Service Centre	MA	High	High	n/a	Not involved	🟩
5	Greece	national	Managing Authority 'Transport' 2021-2027	MA	High	High	High	Medium	🟩
6	Hungary	national	Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development	CB	Medium	n/a	None	Not involved	🟥

	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	A	B	C	D	A+B+C+D
					Ownership	Stakeholder contributions	Top mgmnt support	Political support	Synthetic assessment
7	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027**	MA Lazio	High	Low	n/a	Not involved	🟧
8	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027**	MA Marche	Low	None	n/a	Not involved	🟥
9	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the ERDF -ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region**	MA Apulia	Medium	None	Low	Not involved	🟧
10	**Latvia**	national	**State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments**	CB	High	High	High	n/a	🟩
11	**Lithuania**	national	**Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments**	MA	High	Medium	High	n/a	🟩
12	**Poland**	regional	**Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region**	MA Lubelskie	High	High	High	n/a	🟩

|	MS	National / regional	Organisation name	Authority	A	B	C	D	A+B+C+D
					Ownership	Stakeholder contributions	Top mgmnt support	Political support	Synthetic assessment
13	Portugal	national	Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão	CB	High	High	High	Medium	🟩
14	Romania	national	Ministry of EU funds	MA	Medium	n/a	n/a	Not involved	🟥
15	Romania	regional	North-East Regional Development Agency	MA North-East	High	High	High	Not involved	🟩
16	Slovenia	national	Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development	MA	Low	Low	None	Not involved	🟥
17	Slovakia	national	Central Coordination Authority	CB	Low	Low	None	Not involved	🟥
18	Spain	national	Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration	MA	Medium	Medium	n/a	n/a	🟨

Some of the key elements that emerge from the table:

- The **'green' cells in the synthetic assessment** are used when the degree of roadmap ownership, stakeholder impact on the roadmap design, top management and/or political support are high and/or medium in three out of the four columns A, B, C and D. This reflects the case in which the roadmap is perceived as a valuable strategic tool, developed through an inclusive process involving various actors in the design and implementation of the Cohesion Policy programme. Although the role of political actors may not be fully visible, this does not pose an explicit or implicit obstacle.

- The **'orange' cells in the synthetic assessment** are used when the degree of roadmap ownership, stakeholder impact on the roadmap design, top management and/or political support are low or were difficult to detect, and little information was available (in the table: N/A, not applicable) in three out of the four columns A, B, C and D. It describes cases in which the roadmap appears to be a marginal or formal exercise, with minimal stakeholder involvement, unclear leadership commitment, and low strategic relevance. This information should, however, be complemented by taking national specificities into account. For example in the Slovakian case, the primary documents used to develop ACB actions are the Framework for the implementation of the EU Funds, the Model Procedures Manual for the Managing Authority MA/IB, Methodological guidance on support for integrated territorial development, and the Guide to the implementation of the Central Training Plan for the Administrative Capacities of the EU Funds for the programming period 2021-2027. In **Czechia**, the roadmap was developed as a summary of the existing documents. On another note, in the **Marche** region (IT), where the roadmap was developed as an EC requirement, the programme authority does not perceive it as a tool that can support the institution to enhance and further advance the work on ACB.

- The **'yellow' cells in the synthetic assessment** are used when the degree of roadmap ownership, stakeholder impact on the roadmap design, top management and/or political support are medium and/or low. It describes cases in which the roadmap is perceived as a formal requirement rather than a strategic tool, with limited engagement, partial buy-in from stakeholders, and weak leadership support.

Overall, the analysis should consider the historical context in which the programme authorities were operating when designing and developing the roadmaps. This includes the development of Cohesion Policy programmes, involvement in the elaboration of the NRRP to varying degrees, and the implementation of the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy programmes, including all the amendments required due to the impact of the pandemic.

Although the roadmap is not always seen as a strategic document that can further improve ACB, it was designed and developed during a challenging period in history that did not facilitate it being prioritised within the Cohesion Policy ecosystem.

2.2. Identification of needs: situation "as is"
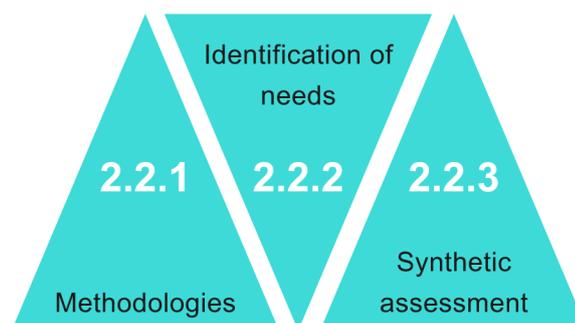
The situation 'as is' refers to the current state of administrative capacity within the authorities that manage and implement EU Cohesion Policy funds. It includes an assessment of how well public administrators are structured and equipped (in terms of people, systems, and processes) to perform their tasks effectively and meet the requirements of the respective programming period.

The main elements used to define the situation 'as is' include methodologies and processes which identify the needs and gaps in administrative capacity in the Member States when designing and developing their roadmaps.

2.2.1. Methodologies

The first step to developing a roadmap is to define the methodology to identify administrative capacity needs and gaps.

The methodology outlined in the document 'Roadmaps for administrative capacity. A practical toolkit' developed by DG REGIO, the 'EC toolkit', has been used by most Member States.

The OECD's support through its methodology and the 'EC toolkit' proved very helpful as it provided a clear structure with a step-by-step process to follow. In addition, the OECD also offered hands-on support, with OECD and DG REGIO experts participating in various workshops, in particular in the Member States that participated in the REGIO Pilot project, in the **North-East** (RO) region and in Bulgaria. This was also supportive throughout the needs assessment process. Most programmes using this methodology adapted it to their national context as in **Bulgaria, Greece and Poland**. This adaptation process was smooth in Greece for example, which translated the

methodology into the national context through multiple workshops and exchanges. It was more difficult in Bulgaria as the methodology had to be applied at national level, across different ministries and organisations, rather than for a single MA.

Challenges perceived by MS when developing the roadmaps

There were several challenges during development of the roadmaps. First, the timing, during the closure of the 2014-2020 programming period and preparation for the next one as some programme authorities perceived the process as an additional administrative burden to their already demanding tasks. Furthermore, the lack of dedicated funding for this exercise and limited support from the EC was also seen as a challenge. Apart from the assistance provided by the EC toolkit, interviewees reported the need for ad-hoc guidance to develop the monitoring system, particularly on output and result indicators. Finally, the staff changes during preparation of the roadmap, as well as a lack of participation in the workshops and networks increased the complexity.

Consortium elaboration

Although the methodology in the EC toolkit was used in most cases, several countries followed different approaches, without developing a structured method.

For instance, in **Czechia**, no clear or official methodology was followed to design the roadmap. Instead, it consisted of a summary of various issues that had arisen and were compiled into a single consolidated document. **Slovakia** did not follow a clear methodology either, but compiled a number of other analyses, consultations and experience from previous programming periods into a consolidated document.

Who develops the roadmap?

The players involved in developing the roadmaps varied per Member State. In some cases, the process was carried out by programme authorities with the support of external consultants, as in **Greece** and **Portugal**. In others, it was internal, as in Latvia, where those who defined the methodology to follow were also involved in drafting the roadmap.

Consortium elaboration

Some programme authorities developed their own methodology.

Some methodologies were based on previous evaluation reports, studies and assessments, as was the case in **Lazio (IT)**. Similarly, **Estonia** designed its roadmap based on the 2014-2020 programming experience, relevant reports and the evaluation of Thematic Objective 11. It also drew on the goals, policy areas and sector strategies of the Estonian national strategy. Estonia started the process without a guiding methodology to hand, as the EC toolkit was not yet available at the time. As a result, the process was largely based on existing ACB experience. Nevertheless, there was a clear need to increase social partner capacity to participate in policy making and implementation. For a number of **Romanian** roadmaps, the methodology followed the

EC toolkit without explicitly referring to it, analysing the current situation and defining objectives for the desired situation.

2.2.2. Identification of needs

Identification of needs based on the OECD analytical framework.

Most of the roadmaps assessed in this study employed the identification of needs as described in the OECD analytical framework. This diagnostic approach revolves around five interrelated pillars:

- Pillar 1: People
- Pillar 2: Organisation
- Pillar 3: Strategic planning, coordination, and implementation
- Pillar 4: Beneficiaries and stakeholders
- Pillar 5: Enabling framework conditions

Each pillar is further subdivided into goals, and each goal is supported by a set of capacities and good practices. These goals form the structure of the assessment matrix proposed by the OECD for the development of roadmaps for Administrative Capacity Building.

 Pillar 1: People.

This pillar addressed the human capital required to effectively manage and implement Cohesion Policy. It comprises four different goals: (1) attracting and recruiting the right candidates, (2) a strategic approach to learning and development, (3) an effective and engaging performance management system, and (4) effective and capable leadership in the MAs.

Attracting and recruiting suitable candidates into the administration is a key need in countries like **Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania** and **Slovenia**. Developing a more strategic approach to human resources management, keeping employee motivation high, as well as enhancing leadership capability and employee flexibility through better management, is also necessary. Other needs highlight the importance of employee engagement and motivation, especially during hiring freezes or periods of limited career growth.

The need for internal staff skills development was highlighted by **Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Latvia** and **Romania**. This includes training new staff, passing on knowledge, practical skills, vocational training and overall skills enhancement.

**Table 8 - Identification of the main ACB needs per MS
Pillar 1: People**

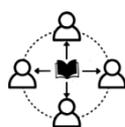| GOALS MS	GOAL 1: Attracting and recruiting the right candidates	GOAL 2: A strategic approach to learning and development	GOAL 3: An effective and engaging performance management system	GOAL 4: Effective and capable leadership in the MAs
BG		x		
CZ	x	x		
EE		x	x	
ES	x	x		
GR		x	x	
HR		x	x	x
HU		x		
IT – Lazio		x	x	
IT – Apulia	x	x	x	
IT - Marche		x		
LT	x	x		
LV		x	x	
PL		x		
PT		x		x
RO – national	x	x		
RO – regional	x	x		
SI	x			x
SK				

Consortium elaboration

Pillar 2: Organisation.

The second pillar evaluates how well the organisational framework supports the work of MAs. It includes three different goals: (1) ensuring organisational structures are fit for purpose([20]) (2) improving knowledge management and information-sharing mechanisms([21]), and (3) improving resource flexibility through better workforce planning and mobility([22]).

Latvia and **Portugal** have identified needs for strengthening information systems and internal knowledge management, and proposed actions under this pillar. **Lithuania** identified critical needs around workforce planning, particularly regarding staffing flexibility and retention.

Table 9 - Identification of the main ACB needs per MS
Pillar 2: Organisation

	GOAL 1: Ensuring organisational structures are fit for purpose	GOAL 2: Improving knowledge management and information-sharing mechanisms	GOAL 3: Improving resource flexibility through better workforce planning and mobility
BG			
CZ		x	
EE		x	
ES	x	x	
GR		x	
HR		x	x
HU		x	

([20]) Examples include: a) the organisational structure of the MA optimises performance; b) A transparent and clearly defined organisational structure.

([21]) Examples include: a) Ensure effective staff collaboration; b) ICT systems support and drive knowledge management, information-sharing and records-management.

([22]) Examples include: a) Financial management rules enable an appropriate level of managerial flexibility; b) Matching people and workflows through internal reallocation; c) Strategic workforce planning.

	GOAL 1: Ensuring organisational structures are fit for purpose	GOAL 2: Improving knowledge management and information-sharing mechanisms	GOAL 3: Improving resource flexibility through better workforce planning and mobility
IT – Lazio		x	
IT – Apulia			x
IT - Marche	x	x	
LT			x
LV	x		
PL			x
PT		x	
RO – national	x		
RO – regional			x
SI		x	x
SK	x		x

Consortium elaboration

Pillar 3: Strategic planning, coordination, and implementation.

This pillar reflects the MA's capacity to align programme planning with broader public investment goals. It includes four goals: (1) taking a more strategic approach to Programme planning, programming and priority setting([23]), (2) optimising coordination and communication for Programme design and implementation([24]), (3) rendering the

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([23]) Examples include: a) Ensure the Programme is coherent with and linked to higher-level (national or sector) strategic frameworks; b) Ensure that Programme investment priorities reflect national, regional and/or local development needs; c) Capture the complementarities and synergies across Priority Axes; d) Support cross-jurisdiction cooperation.

([24]) Examples are the followings: a) Ensure an effective mix of "hard" and "soft" coordination mechanisms throughout the Management and Control System (MCS); b) Make the most of

Programme implementation process more strategic([25]), and (4) expanding performance measurement practices to better support outcome evaluations([26]).

Coordination remains one of the most commonly observed challenges. **Slovenia** noted weaknesses in multi-level governance. In countries like **Bulgaria** and **Poland**, strategic alignment between priorities and national plans needs reinforcement. **Apulia** (IT) and **Greece** identified gaps in performance monitoring systems.

Table 10 - Identification of the main ACB needs per MS
Pillar 3: Strategic planning, coordination, and implementation

GOALS MS	GOAL 1: Take a more strategic approach to Programme planning, programming and priority setting	GOAL 2: Optimise coordination and communication for Programme design and implementation	GOAL 3: Render the Programme implementation process more strategic	GOAL 4: Expand performance measurement practices to better support outcome evaluations
BG	x			x
CZ	x	x		
EE				
ES		x	x	x
GR	x	x	x	
HR	x	x	x	
HU				

exchange opportunities offered by the European Commission; c) For national MAs Ensure effective coordination with national and subnational level authorities; d) For regional MAs (RMAs) Ensure effective coordination with national and subnational level authorities; e) Share information and knowledge throughout the MCS in a timely and effective manner.

([25]) Examples are the followings: a) Align project calls and selection with beneficiary capacity; b) Design calls and selection criteria that identify innovative projects; c) Minimise the need to carry projects forward into the subsequent programming period.

([26]) Examples are the followings: a) Build robust measurement systems for Programme investment performance: b) Ensure effective data collection; c) Update indicators to support outcomes evaluations and use the results to improve Programme implementation; d) Strategically use the Monitoring Committee for better Programme implementation.

GOALS MS	GOAL 1: Take a more strategic approach to Programme planning, programming and priority setting	GOAL 2: Optimise coordination and communication for Programme design and implementation	GOAL 3: Render the Programme implementation process more strategic	GOAL 4: Expand performance measurement practices to better support outcome evaluations
IT – Lazio				
IT – Apulia	x	x	x	x
IT - Marche		x		x
LT		x		
LV	x	x		
PL	x	x		x
PT		x		x
RO – national	x	x		
RO – regional	x	x	x	x
SI	x	x	x	x
SK				

Consortium elaboration

Pillar 4: Beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The fourth pillar focuses on enabling effective participation by beneficiaries and stakeholders. It includes two goals: (1) building beneficiary capacity effectively([27]) and (2) actively engaging with a broad base of external stakeholders (e.g. subnational entities, private sector representatives, civil society) ([28]).

The need to increase the capacity of beneficiaries was emphasised both in the **Greek** and the **Estonian** roadmaps, which focused on social partners, as well as the **Hungarian** and **Latvian** roadmaps, which highlighted the need to enhance the capacity of NGOs. Information sharing with stakeholders, beneficiaries and partners is also a key need in **Italy** and **Bulgaria**. This relates to weak collaboration practices, where beneficiaries fail to share knowledge. Enhancing communication will foster transparency and greater engagement among partners. Furthermore, the insufficient involvement of internal and external stakeholders in programming and priority setting was identified as a concern in **Poland**, while **Slovenia** underscored the need to engage them more.

Table 11 - Identification of the main ACB needs per MS
Pillar 4: Beneficiaries and stakeholders

GOALS MS	GOAL 1: Build beneficiary capacity effectively	GOAL 2: Actively engage with a broad-base of external stakeholders (e.g. subnational entities, private sector representatives, civil society)
BG	x	x
CZ	x	
EE	x	
ES		x
GR	x	
HR	x	x

([27]) Examples are the following: a) Provide tailored and quality support to beneficiaries; b) Communicate with beneficiaries in a timely and effective manner; c) Promote ongoing information exchange with and among beneficiaries.

([28]) Examples are the following: a) Understand the needs of a broad range of stakeholders; b) Building stakeholder capacity to participate in Programme design and implementation; c) Build multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms for broader and more effective stakeholder input.

GOALS MS	GOAL 1: Build beneficiary capacity effectively	GOAL 2: Actively engage with a broad-base of external stakeholders (e.g. subnational entities, private sector representatives, civil society)
HU	x	
IT – Lazio	x	
IT – Apulia	x	
IT - Marche	x	
LT	x	
LV	x	x
PL		x
PT	x	
RO – national	x	x
RO – regional	x	
SI	x	x
SK		

Consortium elaboration

Pillar 5: Enabling framework conditions.

This pillar refers to the broader regulatory, legal and institutional environment under which programmes operate. Although often outside of the MA's control, elements such as procurement rules, audit practices and legal certainty have a critical impact on programme delivery.([29])

Several roadmaps, including those from **Bulgaria**, **Hungary** and **Latvia**, identified regulatory complexity and legal instability as key obstacles. While direct reform is not always possible at the MA level, some authorities have worked to improve coordination

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([29]) Examples are the following: a) Strategic planning, procedures and mechanisms for consultation, coordination and cooperation; b) Measures holding decision-makers and managers accountable for performance; c) Transparency to maintain/increase public trust in the administration.

with national institutions, using dialogue platforms or cross-ministerial working groups. Actions under this pillar often focus on improving regulatory clarity, reducing bureaucracy, and fostering a more enabling environment for investment planning and implementation.

Table 12 - Identification of the main ACB needs per MS
Pillar 5: Enabling framework conditions

GOALS MS	GOAL 1: enabling framework conditions
BG	x
CZ	
EE	
ES	
GR	x
HR	x
HU	x
IT – Lazio	
IT – Apulia	
IT - Marche	
LT	x
LV	x
PL	x
PT	x
RO – national	
RO – regional	
SI	
SK	

Consortium elaboration

Other regional and national programme authorities applied different methodologies for the needs assessment.

While the majority of the roadmaps assessed followed the structure provided by the OECD analytical framework and the EC's Toolkit, this was not the case for all of them. Several MS either used alternative methods or approached the identification of needs in a less structured and/or comprehensive manner. Either way, it was still possible to observe a repetition of the same types of needs across these roadmaps, as illustrated in the tables above.

2.2.3. Synthetic assessment

The synthetic assessment of the situation "as is" focuses on (i) the use of support mechanisms, external advisory or tools, (ii) alignment with the European Semester's Annex D and Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs), and (iii) the process for the adoption of roadmaps at the national or programme level. These are the main elements that influence how roadmaps are designed, how they align with wider EU policy objectives, and how they are expected to be implemented.

The assessment revealed varying degrees of methodological robustness and completeness across the roadmaps' design phases. Most roadmaps reported having applied the OECD self-assessment instrument and followed the methodology proposed by the EC. A consistent strength across the sample is the identification of needs, which was addressed in all cases, with no roadmap omitting this step entirely. In contrast, the quantification of needs proved more challenging: only five roadmaps fully addressed this aspect, while nine did not include it at all. Stakeholder engagement methodologies were generally described, although three roadmaps provided no details on this process. Overall, the findings highlight gaps in both the quantification of needs and the consistent application of methodological frameworks, indicating broad opportunities to reinforce coherence and analytical depth in future roadmap development efforts.

Use of support mechanisms, external advisory or tools

The presence or absence of structured support mechanisms during the roadmap design process is an indicator of its strategic ambition. In cases where Member States employed external methodologies such as the OECD Self-Assessment Instrument or the EC Toolkit (e.g. Greece, Bulgaria, Lubelskie (PL)), the roadmaps tend to show a clearer articulation of capacity needs, a more detailed mapping of actions, and some level of internal coordination. These cases reflect a commitment to diagnosis-based planning, despite inconsistencies in implementation.

By contrast, roadmaps developed without any structured tool or methodological support were prone to mirror existing operational programme content. In these cases, the roadmaps became a descriptive registry rather than a planning instrument, simply consolidating actions already underway.

The uneven uptake of the tools revealed diverging understandings of what the roadmap for Administrative Capacity Building is for. In places where support mechanisms were used, the roadmap acted as a trigger for reflection and planning. Where they were absent, it often confirmed existing patterns of administrative functioning rather than challenging them.

## Approach for adoption at the national or programme level

Where the roadmaps have been formally adopted as working documents, they are more likely to be embedded in annual reporting cycles and to involve a range of institutional actors. In these cases, the roadmap operates as a platform for coordination, supporting dialogue between ministries, agencies, and beneficiaries. It contributes to an ecosystem of continuous improvement, despite the gaps remaining. By contrast, where roadmaps exist in isolation from formal governance structures, they tend not to acquire operational significance or clear follow-up procedures. In such contexts, the roadmap has limited relevance for those responsible for managing administrative capacity in practice. Additionally, low stakeholder awareness and the absence of top-level political support undermine the visibility and legitimacy of the roadmap. Where roadmaps are not discussed in Monitoring Committees or cross-governmental platforms, they are unlikely to serve as strategic reference points.

Identification and quantification of needs

The quality of the needs assessment strongly influenced the strategic relevance of the roadmaps analysed. Where the OECD analytical framework was applied – such as in **Latvia**, **Greece**, and **Portugal** – the diagnosis produced clear links between the identified weaknesses, actions and objectives. These cases demonstrated a capacity to reflect critically on internal challenges.

In contract, some roadmaps relied primarily on existing documentation or regulatory summaries, with limited self-reflection or stakeholder involvement. Even when similar challenges – such as staff shortages, coordination gaps, or limited beneficiary support – were acknowledged, the absence of a structured diagnostic process led to fragmented or generic action plans. This suggests that where the process was driven through the methodology, the respective roadmap gained better strategic direction; where it was formalistic, its role as a planning instrument remained weak.

2.3. Strategy and vision: situation "to be"
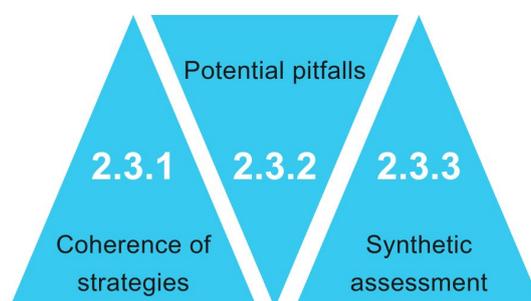
The situation 'to be' refers to the desired state of administrative capacity that MAs aim to achieve through the implementation of their roadmaps. It serves as a strategic vision for how public administrations should evolve to effectively manage EU funds and deliver better results in the respective programming period and beyond.

This section focuses on the link between the identified needs and the strategy developed in the roadmaps. It also reflects on whether the roadmaps are aligned with other EU Cohesion Policy programmes, with the European Semester process and the ACB pillars. Finally, the expected results of the strategies and the pitfalls to avoid are presented.

2.3.1. Coherence of strategies

Overall, the objectives developed are, in most cases, consistent with the needs identified in the roadmaps.

Fourteen roadmaps explicitly established the link between strategic objectives and the identified needs, indicating that most actors were careful to ensure coherence between the diagnostic phase and the strategic outlook. In the case of **Bulgaria**, the goals in relation to human resources directly address the identified needs and focus on improving talent acquisition, career development and training. Similarly, in response to the need for greater stakeholder involvement, the roadmap promotes more targeted support for beneficiaries, more effective information exchange and diversifying the learning formats. In the regional roadmap for **Apulia** (IT), the identified needs are clearly linked to the strategy, in particular regarding simplification and digitalisation to streamline processes. Overall, the roadmap aims to ensure that the public administration is well-equipped to meet the various challenges and enhance the standard of its service quality.

The **Croatian** roadmap also adopted an approach that aligns strategic objectives with the needs identified. These range from establishing frameworks that support human resource management, including transparent processes and objective hiring, to goals focused on enhancing beneficiary support, strategic planning and training.

Nevertheless, maintaining engagement beyond the design phase of the roadmap is crucial to prioritising and implementing the actions. Similarly, **Latvia**'s roadmap aligned its goals to the needs, mapping them in detail to ensure a close match with the different needs identified. The goals include, for instance, reducing administrative complexity, encouraging civil society involvement, strengthening NGO participation, capacity building for beneficiaries, but also, transparency in the public sector, law enforcement, improving knowledge transfer and knowledge management.

The **Lithuanian** roadmap demonstrates that the proposed actions are well aligned with the identified needs, addressing elements such as staff retention and attraction, improving communication, institutional cooperation, and methodological support for project promoters, among others. Similarly, the **Greek** roadmap shows that setting realistic, mutually reinforcing goals spread over the short, medium and long-term can lead to meaningful results. For this, the monitoring of the actions and their milestones has been helpful. The **Slovenian** roadmap also linked its actions and goals to the needs identified. However, it was noted that the 'to-be' scenario described is rather ambitious and would require additional efforts beyond the planned roadmap actions. A few cases show a different approach, whereby the actions have weak links to the needs.

These roadmaps, characterised by this strong needs-to-action logic, have typically benefited from consultation processes involving relevant and diverse stakeholders. And many have drawn on the OECD self-assessment instrument. The diagnostic processes were not used merely to justify action, but to precisely define its scope and direction. As a result, the objectives are focused, actionable, and institutionally grounded.

There have been some cases where the roadmap strategy does not match the identified needs. For the development of the **Hungarian** roadmap, the main objective of the strategy is not explicitly presented, as the roadmap was seen largely as a communication platform between the MS and the EC. Another factor is the lack of a vision, as the roadmap fails to include long-term goals and initiatives, as at the time of planning, they were uncertain.

In the national **Romanian** roadmap, there is still no clear link between the identified needs and the strategy. This is primarily because the roadmap lacks a detailed description of the strategy and instead presents a set of objectives, without a coherent strategic framework. It is important to note, however, that Romania was still in the process of completing the national roadmap at the time of drafting this report. In other cases, the link is unclear, as the objectives of the roadmap seem to be related to some aspects, but not directly linked to the identified needs. In the case of **Czechia**, the link between the needs and the strategy is rather weak, as both the needs and the objectives are only vaguely described. Although the roadmap lacks a clearly articulated strategy, the measures outlined seem to stem from the needs assessment carried out. In the case of **Slovakia**, no clear strategy is presented, and no clear objectives are mentioned. Overall, most of the strategies developed in the roadmaps are aligned with the Cohesion Policy programmes of the respective countries or regions.

In these cases, where the diagnosis-objective linkage is either weak or absent, the roadmaps tend to aggregate existing programme intentions or administrative practices

rather than framing new objectives in response to any assessed gaps. However, the coherence with programmes can still be observed in these cases, as the roadmap still serves as an instrument for technical assistance planning. In these cases, actions defined in the roadmap are aligned with specific objectives or reforms foreseen in operational programmes, contributing to the overall strategy and the mobilisation of resources.

The strategic objectives of the Cohesion Policy programmes were generally respected in the roadmap preparation. This is at least partly in line with the Commission's instructions to prepare the roadmaps together with the programmes.

This is particularly relevant as the roadmap strategies aim, among other things, to improve the administrative capacity of MAs, which will also bring added value for the next programming period. In some cases, such as **Poland** and **Latvia**, the changes envisaged in the roadmap are a result of the Cohesion Policy implementation.

In the case of **Estonia**, the roadmap goals are linked to the operational programme and, in general, the overall design and implementation of the structural funds. Similarly, in the roadmap of the region **Lazio (IT)**, links have been identified between its actions and the regional operational programme ESF+ 2021-2027 as well as the Regional ERDF programme 2021-2027. The strategy of the regional roadmap for the region **Apulia** (IT) also identified links with the operational programme ERDF/ESF+ 2021-2027 and the national programme on technical assistance. Moreover, both the **Czech** and **Slovakian** roadmaps present links to Cohesion Policy. The Czech roadmap measures and needs aim at improving Cohesion Policy implementation, while the Slovakian roadmap's overarching actions are strictly focused on the restructuring of the Slovakian operational programme.

In the case of the national roadmaps of **Romania,** the strategy has been found to align with most Cohesion Policy programmes, including the Social Inclusion and Dignity Programme, the Health Programme, the Education and Employment Programme, the Sustainable Development Programme, the Just Transition Programme, and North-East Regional Programme, as well as the Recovery and Resilience plan.

A peculiar case is the **Hungarian** roadmap, where there is no clear link between the ACB strategy and specific Cohesion Policy programmes. The roadmap merely mentions that its scope is improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Cohesion Policy programme implementation. The **Lithuanian** roadmap, on the other hand, is partially linked to the Cohesion Policy programmes and relates to the responsibilities of stakeholders. Specifically, the measures described in the roadmap fall under the competences of the MA and may be addressed at this level.

Annex D of the 2019 European Semester country reports is a key feature, providing tailored recommendations for each Member State when it comes to Cohesion Policy funding. Most of the roadmaps developed are linked to Annex D of the respective country reports, highlighting the need to strengthen administrative capacity.

The **Hungarian** roadmap is explicitly based on Annex D, as stated in the document, and is monitored not only by the Hungarian coordination body but also through ongoing exchanges with the EC. A similar approach is seen in the cases of **Slovenia** and **Lithuania.** Both countries were advised to strengthen their administrative capacity and reflect these recommendations in their roadmap actions. **Latvia** followed a similar approach, where the roadmap followed specific recommendations for the country to increase administrative capacity. The roadmap developed by **Czechia** also refers to country-specific recommendations, which were considered for the development of the roadmap, stressing the need for increasing administrative capacity. The country report of **Slovakia** also referred to the need for enhancing administrative capacity, and hence, the roadmaps have built on this recommendation. In the case of **Romania**, several national roadmaps are also linked to the country-specific recommendations and the country reports. The regional roadmap of **Apulia (IT)** and the national roadmap of Italy also follow the recommendations of their country reports to develop their administrative capacity.

The self-assessment instrument has been a useful tool for the development of several roadmaps, as reflected in the alignment between the ACB pillars and the roadmap priorities.

The OECD self-assessment instrument and the EC Toolkit identify key ACB pillars for assessing administrative capacity: *People, Organisational Management, Strategic Planning and Coordination, and Framework Conditions*. These pillars provide a structured approach to evaluate administrative systems and guide improvements by focusing on enhancing personnel skills through effective training and leadership, improving organisational structures and processes to support strategic objectives, fostering comprehensive strategic planning with stakeholder coordination, and establishing the robust legislative, regulatory, and financial environments necessary for effective administration.

Approximately half the roadmaps analysed were drafted according to the pillars to varying extents. For example, **Poland, Slovenia, and Latvia** have fully integrated the ACB pillars into their roadmaps, while **Bulgaria** has structured all its objectives under these four pillars. **Croatia, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain and Italy** (regional roadmaps) align with the OECD self-assessment instrument through the intervention lines, even though the framework is not explicitly referenced. And in some of the national sectoral roadmaps of **Romania**, challenges related to staffing and broader organisational issues were addressed through an integrated framework that aligns with part of the ACB pillars.

The ACB pillars are not explicitly mentioned, nor is it possible to infer their application in the roadmaps of **Czechia, Slovakia**, and **Romania** (national). This suggest that

there is still room to strengthen the use of the available frameworks to support more comprehensive and systematic approaches to the development of roadmaps.

2.3.2. Potential pitfalls

Administrative burden, limited human/financial resources and inadequate communication are factors that may hamper positive change in the roadmap implementation process.

The **additional administrative burden** associated with the roadmap, including drafting the document, preparing meetings, complying with the regulatory requirements, and reporting, has been emphasised by a number of countries in relation to the roadmap process, such as **Hungary**, **Lithuania**, **Estonia** and **Greece**. This burden is often exacerbated by complex regulatory frameworks and political instability, which have hampered progress in **Greece** and **Bulgaria**, respectively.

Limited financial and human resources are another obstacle. In fact, insufficient funding was cited in several cases, such as **Poland**, **Latvia**, **Estonia** and the Italian region of **Lazio**, as a hampering element. Shortages in human resources were also reported as a barrier to the process in **Portugal**, **Poland** and **Estonia**, and particularly in **Slovakia** and **Czechia**, where high staff turnover requires continuous training of new people to sustain the roadmap process. Besides this, the staff changes are also linked to a lack of knowledge sharing and insufficient documentation, making the roadmap implementation problematic, due to the absence of guidance or information on how to continue or implement the roadmap.

The lack of communication, or inadequate communication, among the roadmap stakeholders (which can be further exacerbated by high staff turnover) was also indicated as a barrier by **Hungary**. Lack of political will and lack of political support were highlighted as negative factors by **Bulgaria** and **Greece**, respectively. Last but not least, the limited ownership of the initiative and the acknowledgement that the roadmap is a request by the EC was outlined by **Slovakia** and **Hungary** as another factor hampering positive change.

2.3.3. Synthetic assessment

The main elements of assessment of the roadmaps' strategy and vision are included in section 2.3.1.

2.4. Designing ACB actions
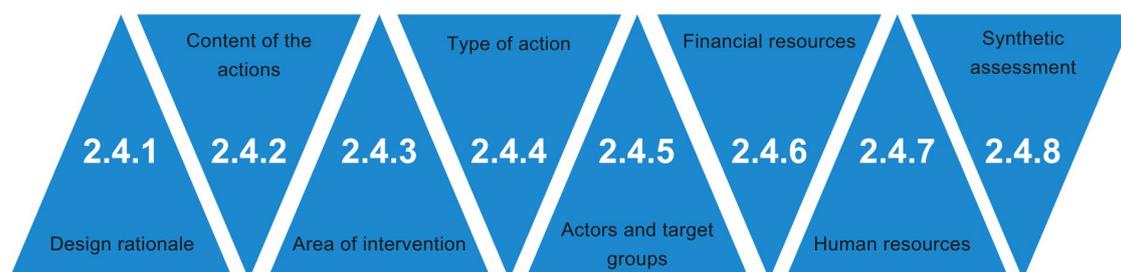
This section describes the capacity-building activities designed to enable the desired outcomes, including the:

- **design rationale**, whether actions are aligned with the needs defined in the situation 'as is' and other regional or national ACB strategies;

- **scope of intervention, based on the OECD analytical framework** – People, Organisation, Strategic planning, coordination and implementation, Beneficiaries and stakeholders, and enabling framework conditions;

- **type of actions**, relying on the DG REGIO study Co-design of a support scheme for administrative capacity building'(.[30]) classification;

- **implementing actors and beneficiaries**.

The analysis presents the rationale behind the design of the ACB actions, the main types of action planned, and the key actors responsible for implementing and benefiting from these capacity-building efforts.

The study team prepared a database(.[31]) to categorise the actions in the roadmaps according to the criteria outlined above and those specified in the roadmap budget description (2.4.6). The database is designed to highlight the current implementation status of the actions, along with their limitations and weaknesses (further details in section 3.3).

([30]) The DG REGIO study 'Co-design of a support scheme for administrative capacity building' , realised by t33 and Spatial Foresight, aimed at analysing and designing a new support scheme for strengthening administrative capacity building (ACB) at Member State and EU levels. The study entails mapping the support schemes, networks and programmes ('schemes') with activities and measures to strengthen administrative capacity building (ACB). The analysis covers current and future needs to strengthen administrative capacity in Public Administration (PA). The study team clustered the type of capacity-building actions (called in the report 'scheme tools and services'). For the purpose of this report, the same categorisation for capacity-building actions is used.

([31]) The database of the actions was delivered to DG REGIO on 10 April 2025.

The regional and national roadmaps analysed differ significantly in terms of their size, financial resources and complexity. The different colours highlight the difference in the size of the analysed ACB actions: pink for roadmaps (or sum of roadmaps, as in the cases of Romania and Italy) with more than 30 actions, and grey for the rest.

Table 13 - Number of actions in the roadmaps

Roadmap	National or regional	Nr. of actions
Romania	National (13) and regional (1)	236
Bulgaria	National	87
Croatia	National	63
Italy	Regional (3)	47 ([32])
Latvia	National	42
Hungary	National	41
Portugal	National	35
Slovenia	National	33
Greece	National	19
Spain	National	15
Czechia	National	14
Slovakia	National	11
Lithuania	National	8
Poland	Regional (1)	7
Estonia	National	5
Total		**663**

Consortium elaboration based on the 18 national and regional roadmaps analysed

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([32]) Lazio = 18, Marche = 12, Apulia = 17.

2.4.1. Design rationale

All but three of the roadmaps clearly outline the strategy for capacity-building activities in relation to the needs and challenges identified in the 'situation as is'.

The roadmap documents effectively describe the links and rationale between the needs, the strategy and the actions.

There are, however, some exceptions where the link between needs and strategy is weak.

The **Czech** and **Slovak** roadmaps present a vague and somewhat generic vision for improving and strengthening ACB within the Cohesion Policy framework. The actions listed are often formulated as objectives rather than concrete measures. For example, in Slovakia, the roadmap identifies several thematic areas for intervention and provides a detailed overview of the new delivery system and related issues to be addressed. While objectives are not clearly defined, the thorough description of the new implementation structure can broadly be understood as encompassing implicit objectives.

In the **Hungarian** roadmap, the actions are clearly described and the objectives stated, but it is difficult to link the actions to the 'situation to be', as there is no clear strategy to achieve them.

Some roadmaps identify one or more goals that target structures beyond the Cohesion Policy framework.

The **Latvian** roadmap links each action to the overarching objectives of enhancing institutional performance and developing and professionalising human resources, even beyond the cohesion policy framework. One of the most significant financial actions (€7,572,030) aiming at strengthening officials working in the cohesion policy ecosystem and beyond is the establishment of a unified training centre to enhance the skills and competencies of judges, court staff, prosecutors, assistant prosecutors and investigators in interdisciplinary areas that are essential for the effective conduct of judicial proceedings. Another intervention included in the roadmap to reinforce the entire public administration system is the creation of a Justice Training Centre. This will ensure the following: a) the uniform determination of competencies and needs, as well as the development of a new, mutually complementary curriculum that emphasises the development of competencies and skills; b) the development of the role of the judiciary, including the role of the Council of Justice in creating and determining the necessary curriculum for legal professionals; c) the development of interdisciplinary dialogue; d) the creation of a modern environment for implementing the training and education process.

A further intervention involves setting up think tanks to discuss the implementation of Integrity Pacts in Latvia with representatives of all interested parties, including state administration institutions, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, and business representative organisations. These think tanks will conduct research and develop an integrity pact standard for the state administration. Furthermore, the possibility of adopting international experience in the implementation of integrity pacts in Latvia is considered.

The **Apulia (IT)** roadmap, in turn, identified effective and efficient implementation of the regional programme along with strengthening of the regional administrative and institutional ecosystem. These objectives extend beyond the administrative capacity and competences of the Cohesion Policy programme authorities. Another example comes from the **Lazio** (IT) roadmap, which follows the structure proposed by the EC and the national structure for ACB activities. It links actions to five areas of intervention: i) actions to strengthen human resources and skills, ii) actions to standardise and simplify processes, procedures and acts, iii) actions to strengthen transversal instruments, iv) partnership and knowledge sharing actions, v) other initiatives to strengthen administrative capacity.

The **Portuguese** roadmap identifies 10 areas of interventions which were translated into six projects aiming at achieving 3 main objectives: 'i) act more intensively on the most relevant capacity-building needs in order to increase the quality and effectiveness of implementation; ii) establish a clear framework of leadership responsibilities to ensure full and effective implementation; iii) ensure that beneficiaries are identified with the actions aimed at them, creating a mobilisation of the entire ecosystem for capacity-building'. There are some actions targeting also officials working outside the scope of the cohesion policy framework. Since the Portuguese approach strives for a more territorialised and decentralised approach to public policies, the roadmap promotes training for all those involved in these processes, with the aim of strengthening strategic management capacity at the territorial level and reinforcing favourable conditions for the effective and impactful implementation of all funds, while also strengthening multi-level governance.

The Romanian regional roadmap also includes interventions targeting officials working outside the cohesion policy ecosystem. Some of these actions aim to strengthen the technical and IT capacity of public institutions to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate projects for the digitisation of public administration activities and the provision of public services. Another capacity-building intervention that goes beyond the cohesion policy framework relates to providing support to professionals at the Ministry of Transport for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Institutional Strategic Plan (PSI) for 2022–2025, as well as developing the new plan for the next period.

The **Slovenian** roadmap links the ACB pillars to national targets, e.g. the first ACB pillar is linked to the national target 'Ensure timely availability of experienced, trained and motivated staff', and the fifth ACB pillar is linked to the national target 'Ensure knowledge of systems and tools to reduce the risk exposure of beneficiaries and other stakeholders and improve their effectiveness'.

2.4.2. Content of the actions

Most roadmaps clearly define the actions to be undertaken and include a specific section with a matrix or table of actions.

Each matrix or table of actions generally presents:

(a)   the goal, i.e. the ACB objective aimed at reinforcing administrative and investment management capacity;

(b)   related ACB actions planned, including descriptions,

(c)   the owners of the ACB actions, and the implementing bodies;

(d)   the timing of the ACB action implementation;

(e)   the sources of financing,

(f)   the milestones and targets to achieve through the ACB action implementation.

Points (e) and (f) are not always present in these matrices. The **Slovak** roadmap differs in that its actions were not explicitly defined but rather inferred. Instead of describing an action plan dedicated to capacity building, the document focuses on reforms and overarching objectives, driven by a structural reform that merged all national programmes into a single programme. The roadmap identifies the needs that emerged during this restructuring, outlining the objectives of the consolidation, including simplification of the administrative framework. However, the specific activities appear to be implemented outside the roadmap framework, through complementarity but distinct strategic documents, as detailed in the following sections.

Some roadmaps also include the timetable and the financial resources, either for all actions collectively or for each one individually.

Latvia includes the priorities, sub-priorities, actions, description, 'owners' of the actions, co-responsible actors, target actors or beneficiaries, indicators, budget allocation indicators, expected results, and the timetable for implementation. This provides a user-friendly visualisation of all the actions and highlights the sub-levels of the actions.

The matrix or table of actions also clarifies the rationale. The **Bulgarian**, **Croatian** and **Romanian** national roadmaps subdivide the objectives into sub-objectives with a more detailed description of the areas of intervention.

> **Tables of the actions of the Romanian, Bulgarian and Slovak roadmaps**
>
> The 13 **Romanian** national roadmaps share a common structure for presenting actions and desired results. The strategy section also includes descriptions of these actions. The matrix is structured as follows: objective to be achieved, which can be

aligned with the ACB pillars, actions, target actors, owner of actions, expected results, funding sources/programmes.

The **Bulgarian** roadmap aligns its actions with the OECD's Administrative Capacity Building Self-Assessment Tool for MAs of EU Funds'. The actions are categorised under the ACB pillars and further subdivided under each objective. For each action, the owner, implementing body(ies), timing or deadline, deliverables, milestones and sources of funding are described.

Consortium elaboration

The **Czech** roadmap does not provide a well-defined description of measures. The measures and actions outlined in the Annex are open to broad interpretations, which subsequently limit their usefulness as a clear guide for implementation, quantification or rigorous qualitative description of the anticipated situation/result.

Not all the roadmaps detail implementation timing. When they do, actions are not always implemented as planned, nor are the dates respected.

In the **Apulia** region (IT) and **Slovenia** roadmaps, all actions were expected to have been implemented. The focus groups and interviews revealed that not all actions have been implemented, or, as in the case of Slovenia, are still being prepared.

2.4.3. Area of intervention of the actions

The categorisation of intervention areas for the roadmap actions is based on the ACB pillars developed within the OECD analytical framework, along with the enabling framework conditions.

Roadmaps following the OECD methodology already classify actions according to these pillars. In other cases, the study team categorised the actions using the OECD Administrative Capacity Building Self-Assessment Instrument for MAs of EU Funds under Cohesion Policy'.

The figure below presents the categorisation of the actions.

Figure 12 - Roadmap action categories based on the OECD analytical framework
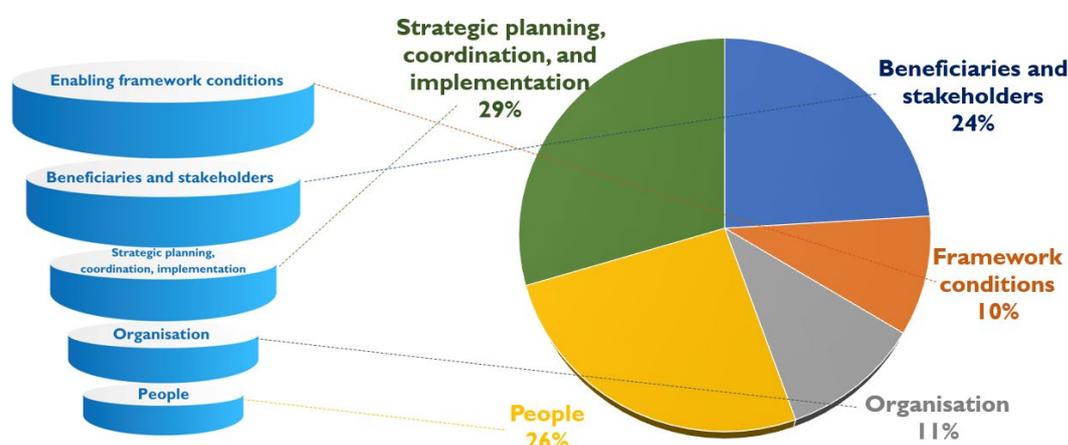
Consortium elaboration

The areas of Strategic planning, coordination and implementation (29%), People (23%) and Beneficiaries and stakeholders (22%) encompass the majority of the actions.

The Strategic planning, coordination and implementation pillar focuses on the key stages of the investment cycle: strategy development, priority setting, coordination, project planning and selection, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. It is structured around four main goals:

- Adopting a more strategic approach to programme planning, programming, and priority setting.

- Enhancing coordination and communication to improve the design and execution of programmes.

- Streamlining and aligning the implementation process to ensure a more strategic execution of programmes.

- Strengthening performance measurement practices to better facilitate outcome-based evaluations.

The scope is to foster a cohesive and effective investment cycle that delivers measurable results.

The relevance of this pillar is related to the need to improve and strengthen the skills and capabilities of programme owners in terms of programme planning, especially coordinating with other programme authorities and officers in other regional and/or national line services to implement synergies among funding instruments. Another common aspect is the need to optimise procedures to implement Cohesion Policy programmes with a results-oriented approach.

As stated in the **Slovenian** roadmap, 'it will be necessary to develop joint actions between different portfolios for the same or similar subject matter, in order to ensure better quality, avoid overlapping content, increase transparency, avoid double funding, establish uniform forms of funding or simplified forms of costs and a level playing field for operators'.

Other measures under this pillar are dedicated to digitalisation, simplification and the standardisation of procedures to manage Cohesion Policy programmes, such as 'Interventions for standardisation and simplification of processes, procedures and acts, the strengthening of transversal tools for the management of Regional Programme PR and National Programme interventions, partnership initiatives and knowledge sharing, as well as good practices', as reported in a regional **Italian** roadmap.

Another aspect is the necessity to establish forums, networks or coordination meetings to involve all those implementing Cohesion Policy programmes to ensure coordination and the smooth exchange of information. This is evident in the **Croatian** roadmap, where many actions seek to establish working groups of officers in different line ministries, to ensure synergies and cooperation: 'SP-2.1.5 Establishment of a forum at the level of the institutional framework for the use of EU funds in the Republic of Croatia in operational segments'.

This can be extended to beneficiaries and stakeholders and categorised under the Beneficiaries and stakeholders pillar.

In addition, many actions under this pillar aim at strengthening risk assessment.

The pillars Beneficiaries and stakeholders and People deserve attention.

Actions under the People pillar are the most conventional and are related to identifying and fostering the skills and competencies essential for a high-performing MA.

These include:

- Attracting and recruiting talent.
- Adopting a strategic approach to learning and development to continuously enhance the skills of team members.

- Implementing an effective and engaging performance management system that drives accountability and growth.

- Cultivating strong and capable leadership to guide and inspire the MA toward achieving goals.

These may be traditional and evergreen actions, but for all roadmap owners, they are the backbone of effective and efficient programming and implementation of Cohesion Policy programmes.

Actions under the People pillar prevail in the Greek and Portuguese roadmaps.

In the case of the **Portuguese** roadmap, these actions include training, workshops and participation in seminars and conferences to advance managerial skills and improve collaborative working methods. One such action under this pillar is 'training courses and summer schools on smart specialisation'. The scope of the activity is to equip staff in the regional and national administration with skills and competences to develop S3 strategies and implement them quickly and effectively.

Concerning the **Greek** roadmap, the actions under the People pillar mainly refer to a performance review system for the staff to map the competences needed and those already found within the organisation; surveys to improve and build on existing knowledge sharing mechanisms within the MA to enhance organisational integration and harmonisation. One of the most relevant actions is indeed to carry out an exercise to map what competences exist in-house and which competences are lacking – possibly through a self-assessment questionnaire or tool similar to the EU's competency framework and self-assessment instrument. The action was completed in 2020, thanks to OECD support during the pilot action. Another significant action included was develop internal rules of procedure, common to all MAs and applying to all MA staff, which aims at streamlining processes and procedures to reduce the administrative burden, time and the risk of error.

There are many actions under the Beneficiaries and stakeholders pillar, as shown in the following figure, especially in Bulgaria, Croatia and Estonia.

Figure 13 - Categorisation of actions per Member State, based on the OECD analytical framework
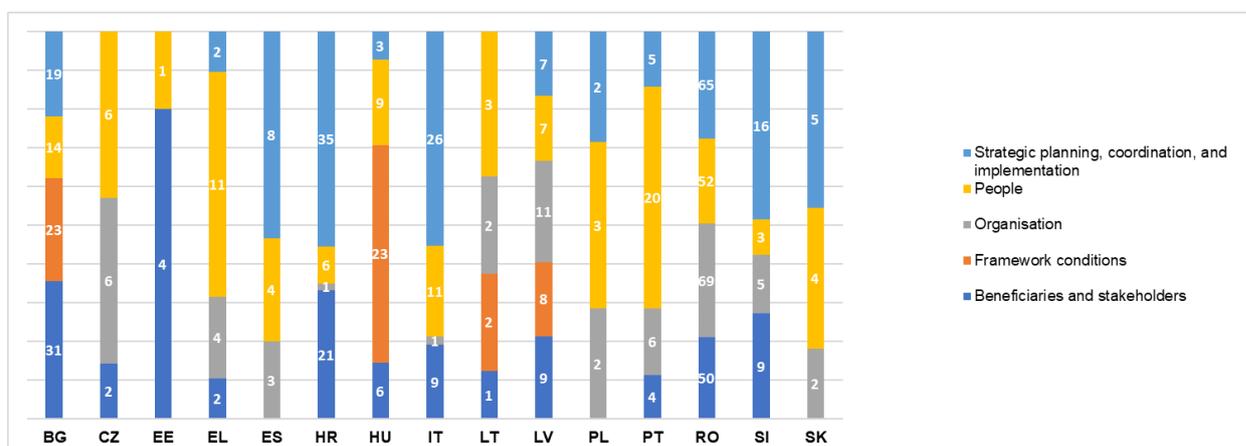
Consortium elaboration

In **Estonia,** the entire roadmap targets beneficiaries, named partner organisations. As mentioned during the interviews and FG in Tallinn, 'there was a need to increase the partners' capacity to actively participate in the policymaking and implementation.' The roadmap supports and strengthens what the Estonian programme authorities see as the most fragile section of the programme pyramid, beneficiaries and stakeholders of the national Cohesion Policy programme.

The **Greek** roadmap also focuses on one action under this pillar, developing and launching a series of 'knowledge workshops' for beneficiaries on a specific theme, sponsored by the MA (or a group of MAs or NCAs). These workshops target specific topics and bring together relevant stakeholders to learn about managing or resolving issues surrounding the selected topic. This action was particularly relevant for the 2014-2020 roadmap, as the programme authorities aimed at strengthening programme beneficiaries, in particular to jointly identify solutions to specific problems. The actions also aimed at ensuring regular and well-structured exchanges with beneficiaries to support the MA in speedily identifying regional needs and better addressing them. Attention to beneficiaries is also included in the national planning 2021-2027, with 'Introduction of Special Authority for Technical Assistance and Beneficiary Support', and in the national transport programme interventions target beneficiaries to strengthen their administrative capacity ([33]).

The current programming period places increasing emphasis on beneficiaries and stakeholders, a focus which is also reflected in these strategic documents beyond the scope of the roadmap initiatives. This heightened attention highlights the urgent need

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([33]) Presentation of the Greek Champion of the DG REGIO Peer2Peer Community on ACB roadmap in the framework of the joint meeting of the DG REGIO Peer2Peer Communities on NRRP-Cohesion Policy and ACB roadmap, Florence, 24-25 October 2023.

to strengthen the capacity of actors responsible for designing and implementing strategies and projects, responding to calls, minimising the need for adjustments, and contributing to data collection and reporting to support monitoring and evaluation. The **Polish** Technical Assistance programme MA and the **North-East** (RO) MA expressed positive feedback on the pilot initiative launched by DG REGIO 'Supporting MAs to build the capacity of Cohesion Policy funds beneficiaries' ([34]).

The **Polish** Technical Assistance programme MA participated in a similar initiative during the previous programming period which worked on several levels: a) enhancing cooperation between the national MA and the beneficiaries working at regional and national levels, b) strengthening the skills and competences of private and public officers in local and regional structures, enabling them to participate in public calls and tenders and thus access public funds; c) supporting pilot initiatives, for example the focus on urban regeneration and smart cities. The positive feedback and results attained have encouraged them to participate in similar initiatives in the 2021-2027 programming period.

The Bulgarian and Hungarian national roadmaps include actions under the Enabling Framework Conditions pillar. During the FG and interviews, the **Bulgarian** programme authorities stressed that the decision to intervene on this aspect was theirs, and the EC and OECD agreed on the need for action. The majority of these actions deal with new amendments in areas such as public procurement, or new bodies or structures in the Ministry of Finance, where the CCU operates. In **Hungary,** many actions relate to setting up a new national strategy for public procurement, especially anti-fraud and anti-corruption, risk management and improved digital platforms.

2.4.4.   Type of actions

This section presents the actions based on categories in the DG REGIO study 'Co-design of a support scheme for administrative capacity building' (2022), and refined under the DG REGIO Peer2Peer Community on ACB for roadmaps (2021-2024).

This categorisation is structured as follows:

- **Handbooks, guidance documents and other toolkits**: which can improve data collection, evaluation and summaries of practice already in place, or to be implemented.

- **E-learning (websites, platforms, tutorials, MOOCs, etc.)**: including the setup or use of digital portals, communication through media, automated processes, ICT solutions, data models and information systems.

- **Training (online or in person)**.

([34]) https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/administrative-capacity-building-for-regional-development.html

- **Seminars and conferences**: internal for regional or national institutions, or events organised at the EU or international level.

- **Communities of Practice**: including participation in the DG REGIO Peer2Peer Communities of practitioners, or regional or national communities of practice, or even the establishment of such networks.

- **Peer exchanges**: study visits and exchanges among officers of different regional and national institutions to learn and support knowledge sharing mechanisms.

- **Helpdesks/Hotlines/Q&A**: these can include setting up dedicated web sections in regional or national institution websites to exchange information between the MA and beneficiaries, for example, or to collect needs and problems through direct and faster communication channels.

- **Direct expert support/coaching**: including direct support for specific units or departments of regional or national institutions, or programme beneficiaries, for example, to launch calls or big project implementation.

- **Pilot projects**: including pilot actions and new capacity-building initiatives.

- **Implementing procedures**: adoption or modification of legislative procedures, legal acts and implementation of systems and measures to guarantee the programme functions.

- **Repositories of good practices**: including setting up repositories of good practice and labelling them systematically.

- **Human resources processes**: human resources initiatives, for example, promoting remote working, individual development plans for staff, competency gap analysis, and improved recruitment procedures.

- **Creation of new structures**: such as new bodies and organisational structures

- **Simplification measures**: the introduction of simplification and standardisation.

Figure 14 presents the actions under the above categories.

Figure 14 - Type of capacity building actions included in the roadmaps
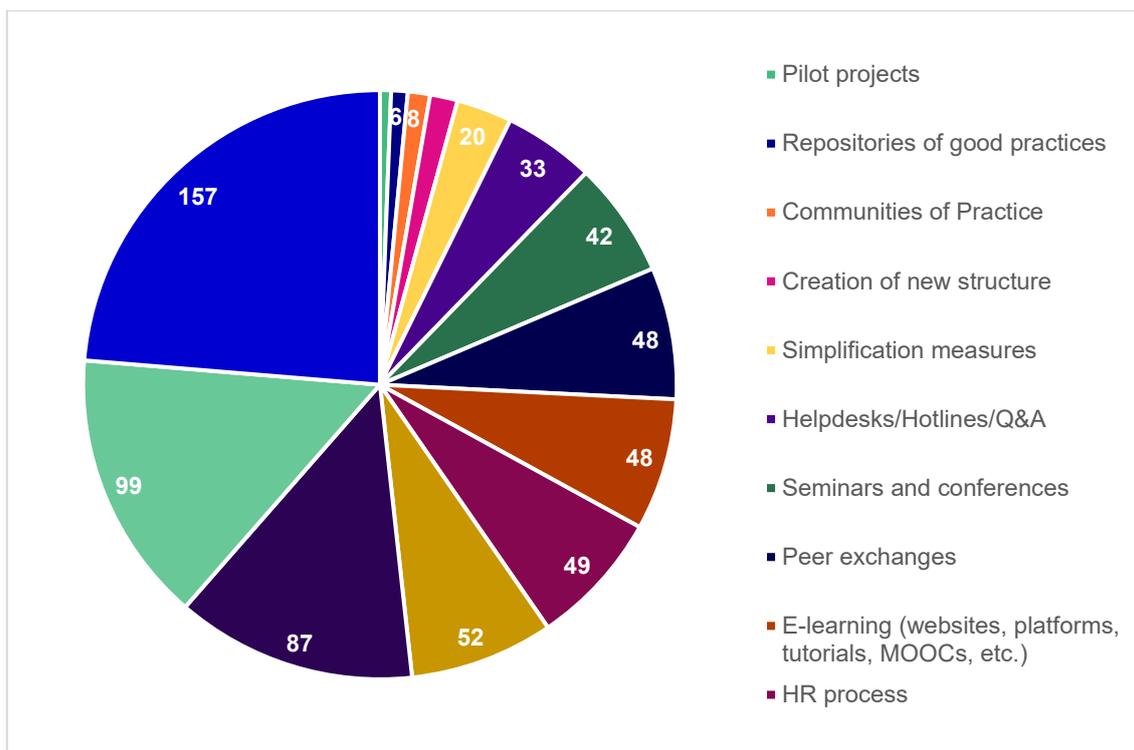
Consortium elaboration

The figure below shows the type of capacity-building actions envisaged in each national or regional roadmap analysed. (^{35})

(^{35}) Slovakia is not included in this graph because the SK roadmap does not describe the actions: they can be inferred in general terms, but there is not a section dedicated to explaining or summarising the actions

Figure 15 - Type of capacity-building actions, per Member State
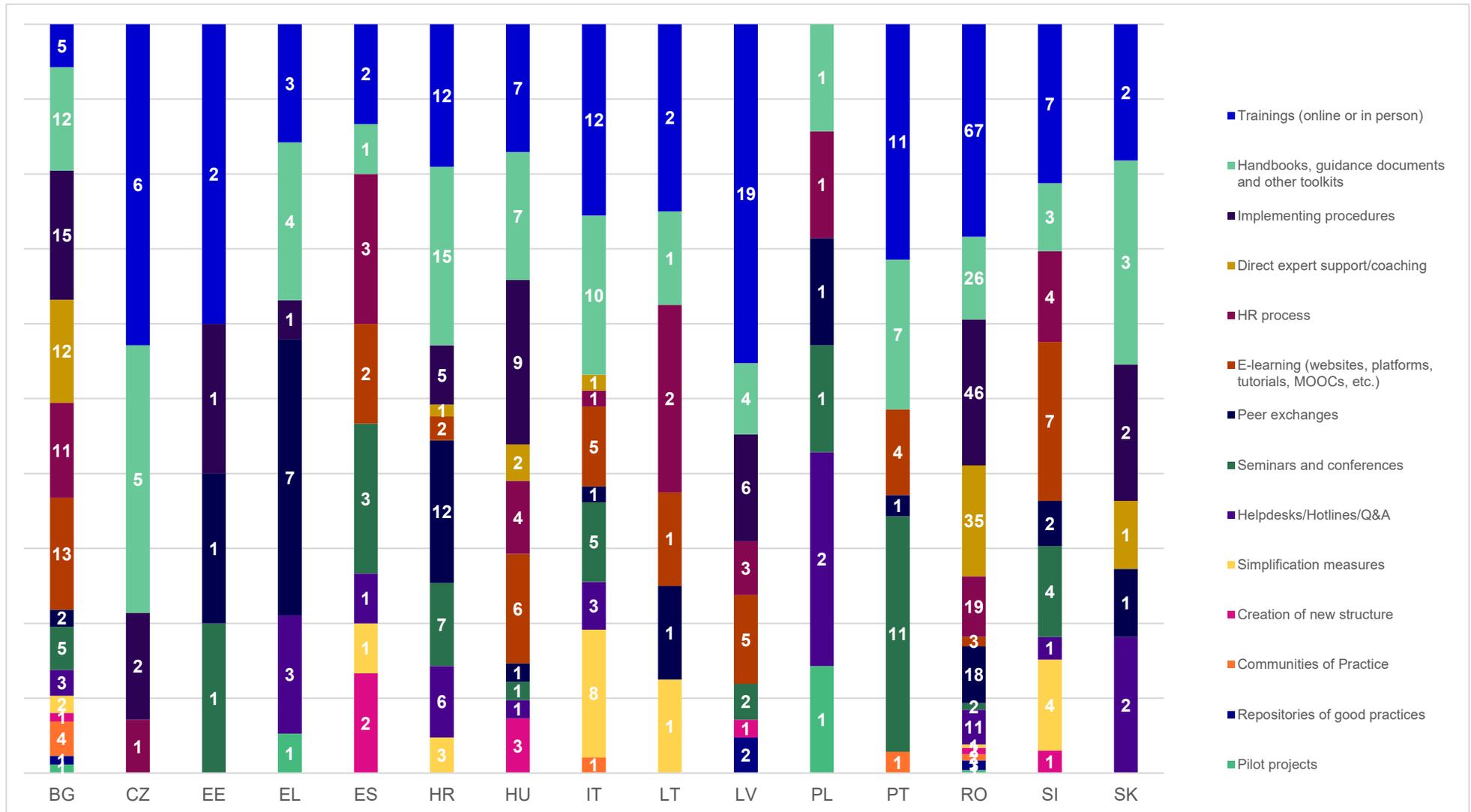
Online or in-person training is the most used action in the analysed roadmaps, where data is available.

This traditional tool helps strengthen the administrative capabilities and skills of staff, beneficiaries, and stakeholders. Training sessions are designed to enhance expertise in specific areas such as Smart Specialisation Strategies, public procurement, state aid, the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, and monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, these sessions can foster personal development and improve organisational dynamics, including leadership skills. In some roadmaps, training is planned for programme authorities to build their capacity in managing EIB instruments such as JASPERS or engaging with the TSI programme. Certain roadmaps, such as the national Romanian one, also incorporate team-building activities.

A similar approach is taken with handbooks, guidance documents, and guidelines, which are intended to assist programme authorities in the planning and programming process while also keeping beneficiaries informed about updates to Cohesion Policy.

Under the category of implementing procedures, initiatives focus on the development of digital systems. These aim to enhance project evaluation quality, accelerate implementation, improve human resource planning, strengthen coordination among implementers of Cohesion Policy programmes, and foster a smart, adaptable, and efficient work environment.

In addition to the more common and traditional measures, most roadmaps also incorporate peer exchanges, seminars, conferences, and human resources-related processes and procedures. Peer exchanges involve meetings and informal discussions among colleagues focused on specific topics, aimed at sharing experiences and fostering innovative practices. In the **Romanian**, **Bulgarian**, and **Portuguese** roadmaps, these actions include the development of communities of practice for both programme authorities and beneficiaries.

Human resources-related actions focus on staff development and training within programme authorities, establishing mobility schemes, and attracting new talent. Some initiatives also propose conducting competency gap analyses to identify the skills and capabilities needed by programme authorities.

Four pilot project actions—featured in the **Romanian**, **Greek**, **Polish**, and **Bulgarian** roadmaps—are particularly noteworthy for their innovation. These pilots promote synergies across different areas of intervention, enhance the administrative capacities of beneficiaries, and support staff mobility within programme authorities.

Some roadmaps envisage simplification measures to streamline the work of programme authorities and beneficiaries. These measures are mostly present in the regional Italian roadmaps, as well as those of Spain and Bulgaria. While some actions are not fully detailed, they generally refer to process optimisation, or the use of Simplified Cost Options to enhance efficiency.

The study team also categorised the actions based on their level of 'innovation' within the **Cohesion Policy ecosystem.**

The ACB actions were clustered into 'traditional', 'moderately innovative' and 'innovative'. This classification was made by considering the formal and informal exchanges with the programme authorities and relevant programme stakeholders regarding the most common actions implemented and planned to enhance ACB. These actions were considered either more common and traditional for the **Cohesion Policy ecosystem or innovative.**

The image below shows the ACB actions classified as 'traditional', 'moderately innovative' and 'innovative'.

Figure 16 - Categorisation of the ACB actions, as innovative, moderately innovative and traditional
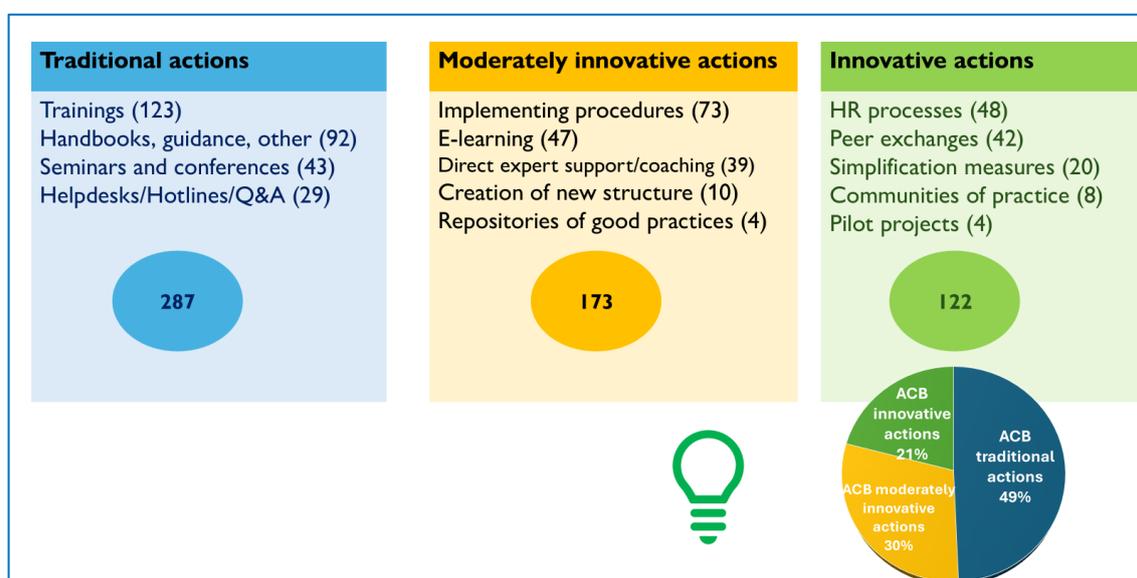
2.4.5. Implementing actors and target groups of the actions

The analysis of the capacity-building measures categorises those implementing the activities and the target groups of said actions as:

- Managing authority (MA)

- Intermediate body (IB)

- Coordinating body (CB)

- Audit Authority (AA)

- Programme beneficiaries

- Partnership actors, i.e. universities, polytechnic institutes and research centres, NGOs, social partners, representatives of business entities, Association of Municipalities

- Other stakeholders, i.e. consultants, specialised media, school of national administration.

Most actions are implemented by MAs and coordinating bodies, which are usually the owners of the roadmaps.

Figure 17 - Implementing actors of capacity-building actions
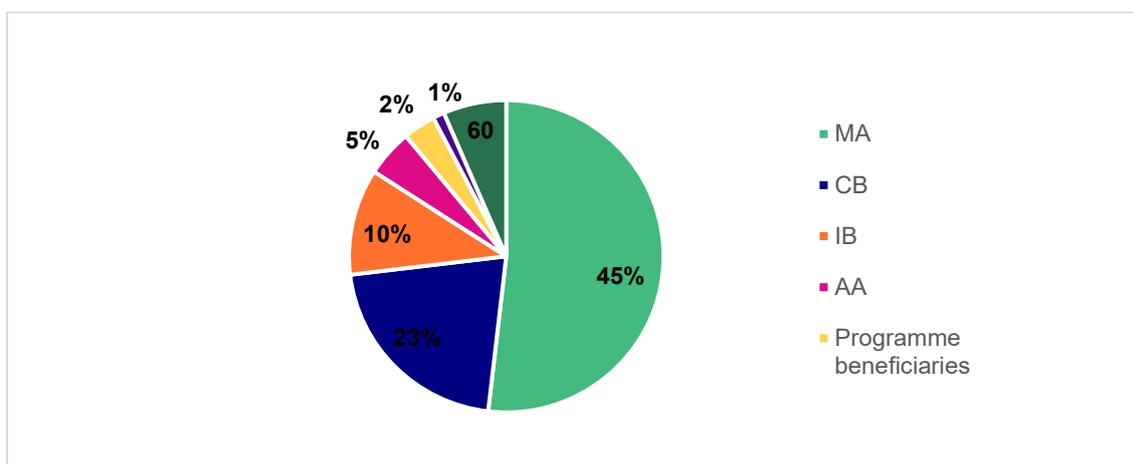
Consortium elaboration

Figure 18 shows that type of actors in charge of implementing the ACB actions per Member States.

Figure 18 - Type of actors in charge of implementing CB actions per Member State

Consortium elaboration

Regarding the **Croatian** roadmap, the coordinating body is the owner and the main implementing actor, along with the MAs, and for a minority of actions, with the audit authority. The majority of actions in the **Portuguese** roadmap are carried out by the coordinating body, followed by the MA. 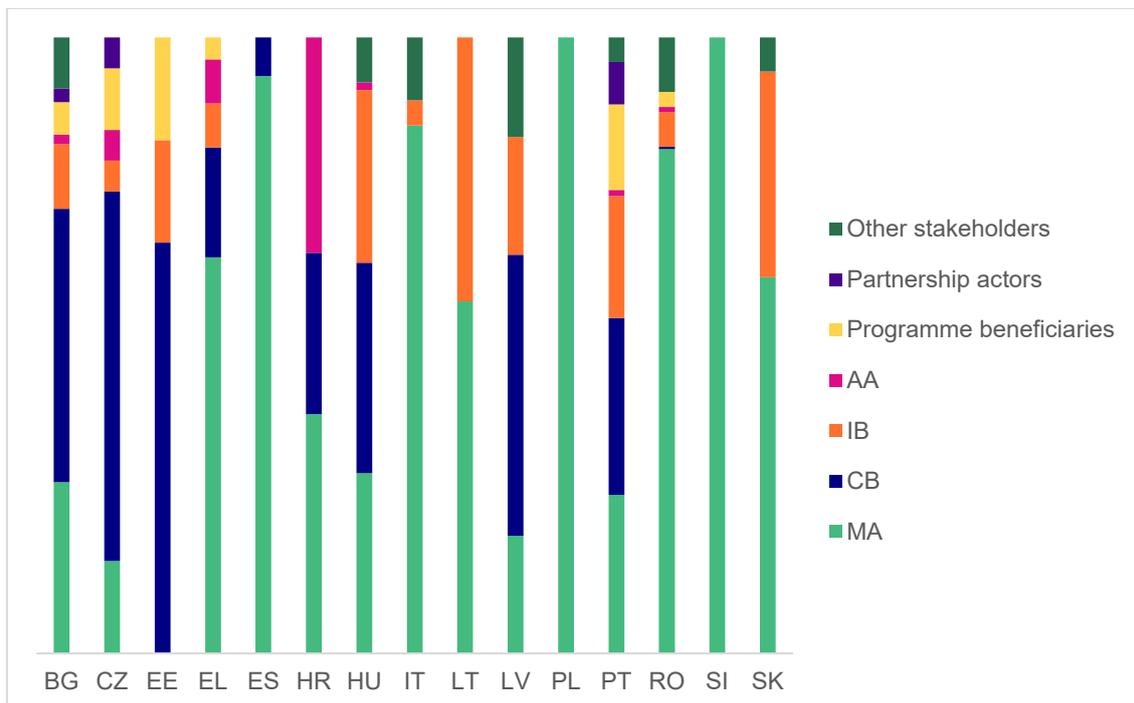Beneficiaries play a role in actions devoted to communication and visibility of the programmes, where the beneficiaries work on setting up innovative initiatives to inform various target audiences about all the programmes.

'Other stakeholders' can be consultants, specialised media, schools of national administration, communication experts, public procurement departments, and regional or national line services not involved in Cohesion Policy.

Another interesting element is the role of audit authorities in some capacity-building measures. As seen in Figure 18, this is evident in the **Croatian** roadmap. These actions mostly refer to organising seminars and conferences, training programmes for other programme authorities and beneficiaries, or setting up a coordination network. There is a specific action in the **Bulgarian** roadmap, where the audit authority has sole responsibility: 'Publish annual analyses of the errors detected by the Audit Authority and summaries of the infringements related to discriminatory criteria and guidance for their avoidance'.

The main target groups of the ACB capacity-building actions are MAs (30%) and programme beneficiaries (23%).

Figure 19 presents the types of target groups in the roadmaps.

Figure 19 - Types of target groups of the capacity building actions of the roadmaps
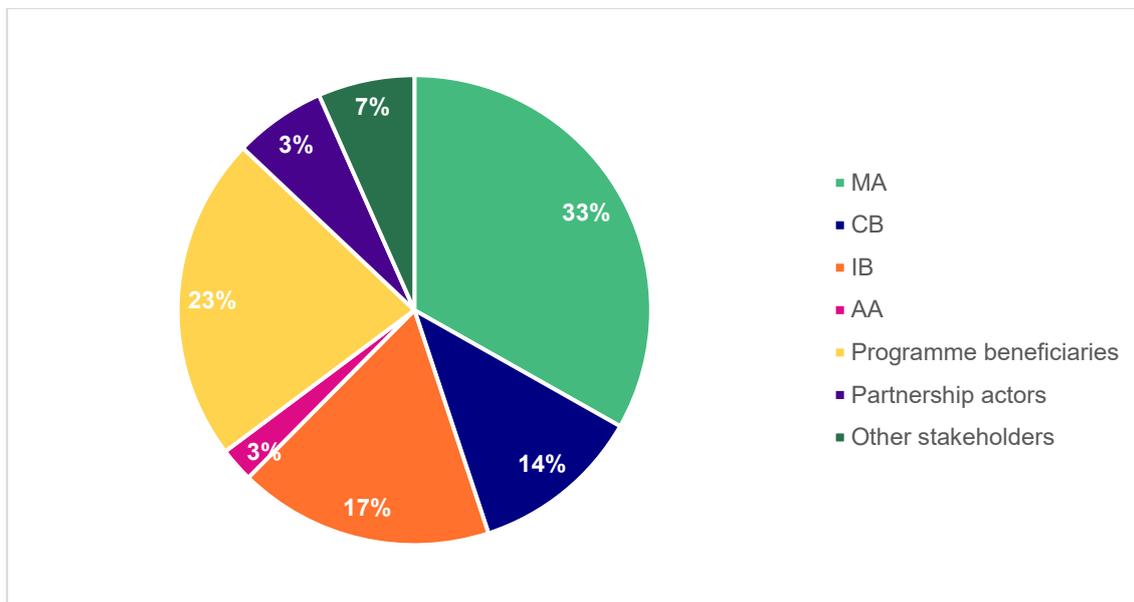
Consortium elaboration

This reflects the objectives of the ACB strategy: to strengthen the administrative capacities and competences of the actors responsible for programme management and implementation, and their beneficiaries, as they play a pivotal role in the success of the programme, and benefit from it.

The figure below indicates that IBs are the third-largest target type.

Figure 20 - Type of actions targeting MAs and IBs

- Communities of Practice
- Creation of new structure
- Direct expert support/coaching
- E-learning (websites, platforms, tutorials, MOOCs, etc.)
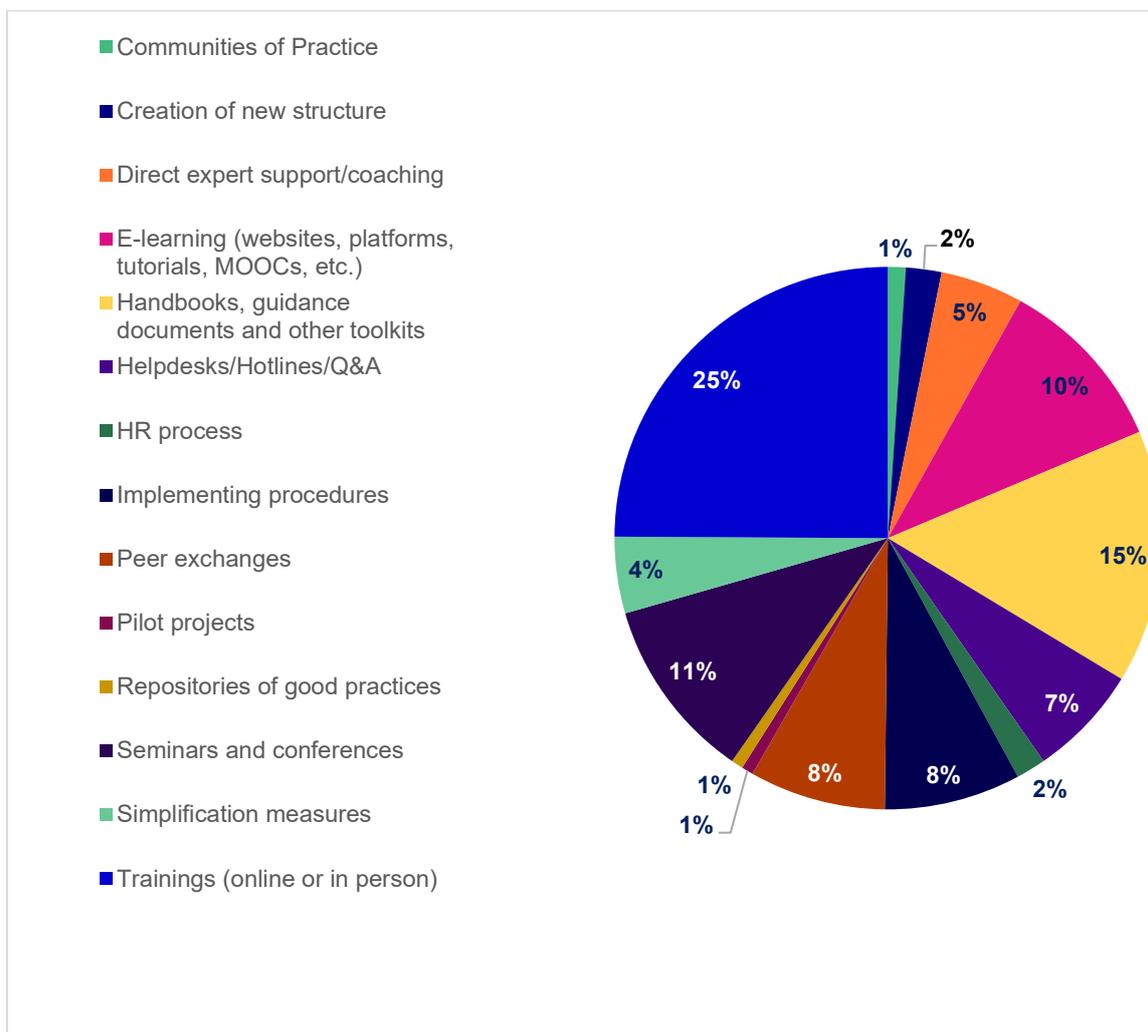- Handbooks, guidance documents and other toolkits
- Helpdesks/Hotlines/Q&A
- HR process
- Implementing procedures
- Peer exchanges
- Pilot projects
- Repositories of good practices
- Seminars and conferences
- Simplification measures
- Trainings (online or in person)

Consortium elaboration

The traditional actions remain the most commonly included in the ACB roadmaps targeting MAs and IBs. These primarily consist of training, handbooks and guidance, followed by implementing procedures and human resources processes, as shown in Figure 20.

An innovative project for MAs and IBs is the Funds Academy - Academia dos Fondos, in the **Portuguese** roadmap, which aims to qualify people responsible for programming, management, monitoring and control with a view to continuously improving processes and procedures, using the self-assessment matrices developed under the roadmap as a reference.

Another noteworthy initiative in the **Hungarian** roadmap involves developing an e-learning curriculum to build the capacity of staff involved in public procurement and the legal control of EU-funded public procurement documents. Another action is planned for the new staff with three modules of multi-day basic training. This is the basis of the knowledge management system, which will also develop knowledge on preventing fraud and corruption: 1. Protection of the financial interests of the European Union

(irregularity management); 2. Protection of the financial interests of the European Union (EU regulation); 3. Prevention and detection of abuses and irregularities - warning signs.

Dedicated training on specific topics in the **Slovenian** roadmap aims to develop programme authority competences in the circular economy: training will be developed to fill skills gaps regarding the low-carbon, circular economy, as well as joint programming. This initiative is linked to the implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Project Decarbonising Slovenia through the transition to a circular economy.

Figure 21 presents a similar scenario when referring to actions dedicated to programme beneficiaries, with training handbooks and guidance being the most frequently planned measures, followed by seminars, conferences and e-learning tools.

Figure 21 - Type of actions dedicated to programme beneficiaries

Consortium elaboration

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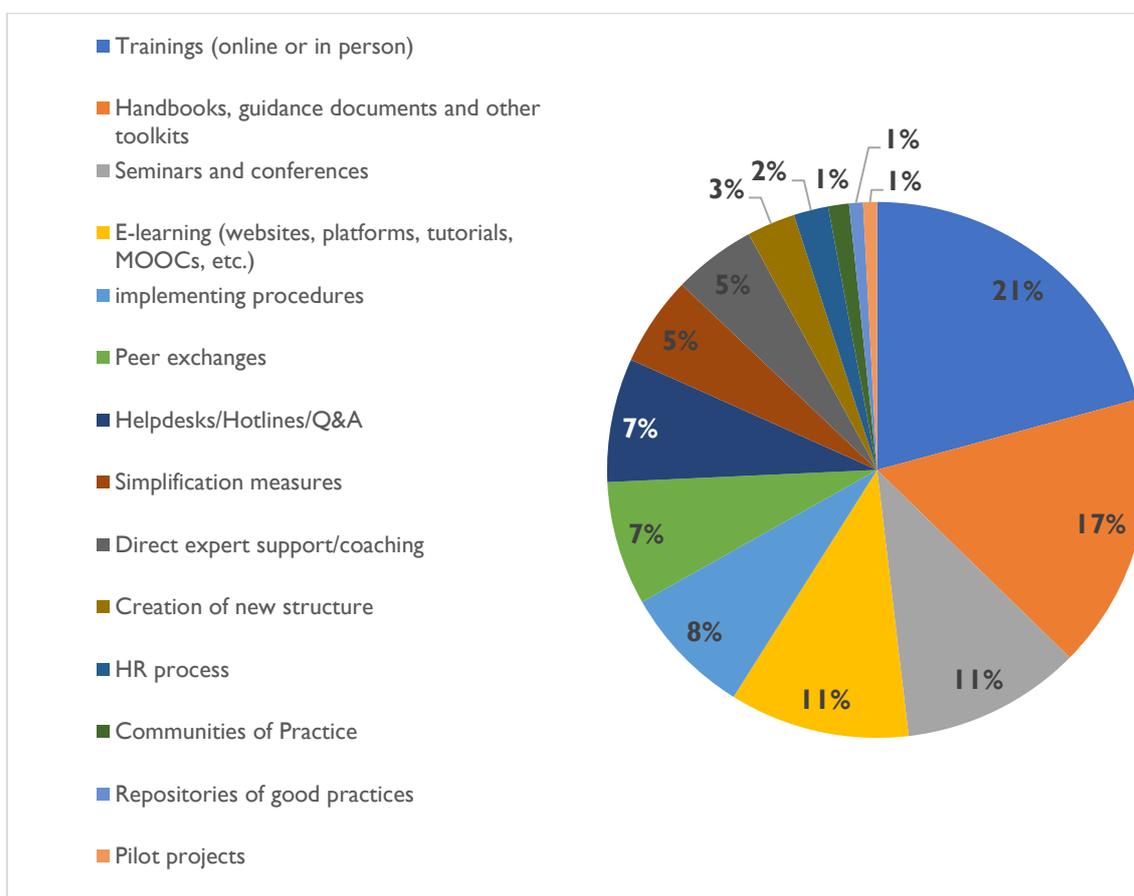
Seminars, conferences and e-learning tools are widely used to support both private and public programme beneficiaries. These initiatives help beneficiaries navigate the programme website and explore sections dedicated to calls and tenders, or programme novelties, including new funding opportunities.

Examples in the **Portuguese** roadmap include developing a digital collaborative portal for territorial actors to provide information on territorial interventions. This shares information and disseminates good implementation and monitoring practices. Another example is in the regional Romanian roadmap, where an action aims to disseminate data and information on the programme via a brochure specifically targeting the monitoring committee. The **Spanish** roadmap focuses on an action to develop an online training course, targeting programme beneficiaries to develop capacity and competence related to monitoring, management and the control of funds. Some actions are also for direct support and coaching, such as the Italian regional roadmap, which offers a helpdesk for beneficiaries covering monitoring and reporting that includes training on the monitoring and reporting system.

Roadmap for municipalities developed in the pre-accession phase by the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria

The National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria reported that a roadmap targeting Bulgarian municipalities was developed when the Member State was accessing the EU. The association developed it to help municipalities better understand the EU regulatory framework and requirements to access EU funds. The association organised training on strategic planning for municipalities, the application process, setting up unions of municipalities, and human resources processes to attract staff, especially those with foreign languages. The association prepared the municipalities to look for EU funds and consequently manage them. Some of the roadmap actions included study tours, networking activities, and peer exchanges within and outside Bulgaria.

Consortium elaboration

2.4.6. Financial resources

An analysis of the roadmaps explores the source of funding for capacity-building actions. As explained in the EC toolkit, actions can be funded through:

(a) **The budget allocated to the Specific Objective(s) – capacity building directly related to investments**. This is described in Article 3 (4) of ERDF REGULATION (EU) 2021/1058.

(b) **The budget dedicated to Technical Assistance – 'standard' technical assistance**, as described in Article 36 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060

(c) **Financing-not-Linked-to-Costs (FNLC),** as depicted in Article 37 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060.

(d) **Other resources**, such as national and/or regional funds, or EU funds such as RRF, TSI, and EIB instruments, such as JASPER.

Financing actions may utilise the Technical Assistance axis of the regional and/or national Cohesion Policy programme, or the dedicated national programme.

The same reasoning can be applied to FNLC, i.e. Article 37 can be used in the national programme and the Technical Assistance axis of the regional and/or national programme.

The roadmaps can combine all the above mechanisms to fund capacity-building actions.

Regarding point a, the Italian regional roadmaps and the Romanian regional roadmap opted for Article 3.4, capacity building directly related to investments. This was used in combination with point b, i.e. 'traditional' Technical Assistance.

All three regional roadmaps include capacity-building actions financed through the budget allocated to the Specific Objective. In particular:

- 4 actions under Policy Objective 1 – Marche (IT), Lazio (IT), Regional Romanian roadmap

- 6 actions under Policy Objective 2 – Marche (IT), Lazio (IT), Apulia (IT), Regional Romanian roadmap

- 1 action under Policy Objective 3 – Regional Romanian roadmap,

- 3 actions under Policy Objective 4 – Marche (IT), Lazio (IT), Regional Romanian roadmap

- 3 actions under Policy Objective 5 – Lazio (IT), Apulia (IT), and Regional Romanian roadmap

Examples relate to support for programme authorities and beneficiaries in developing Urban Strategies and Strategies for Inner Areas, implementing the Natura 2000 Network Strategy Instrument for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, or supporting the IB in enhancing the quality of published calls for tenders. Actions also include support for MAs and IBs developing and enhancing skills in S3 strategies, increasing their capacity and exploiting the benefits of digitalisation. Additionally, actions aim to increase the number of completed projects compared to those financed and improve the ratio of eligible expenditure to reported expenditure.

Regarding point b, 'traditional' technical assistance, envisaged in Article 36 of REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060, is the most common form of support for financing capacity-building actions in the national and regional roadmaps.

Figure 22 presents Article 36 support for capacity-building actions in the Technical Assistance axis of regional and national programmes, and/or a national Technical Assistance programme.

Figure 22 - Use of Article 36 to finance capacity-building actions in the roadmap (%)s
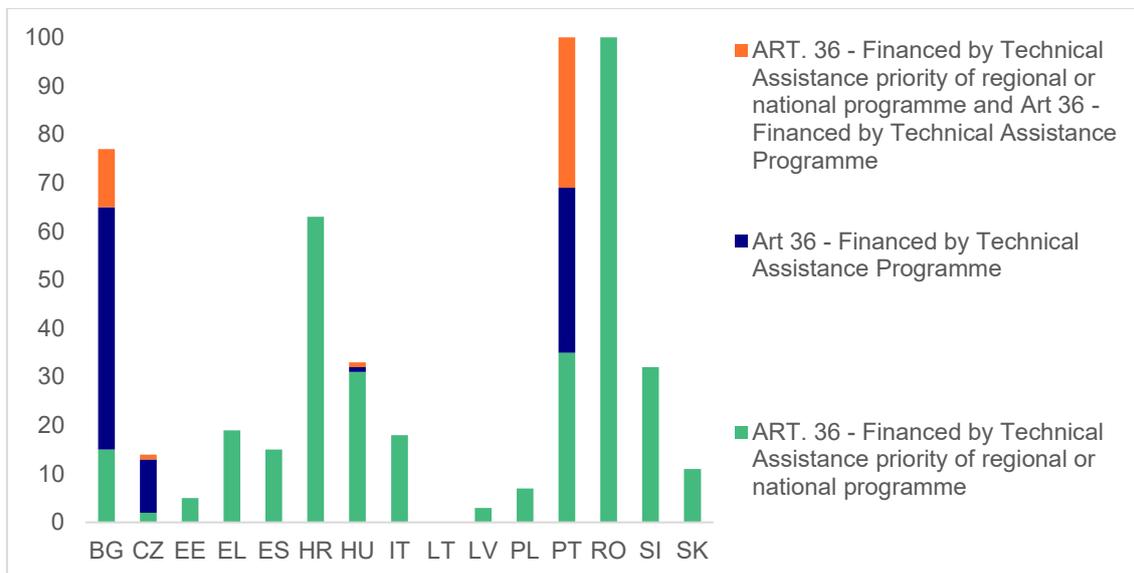
Consortium elaboration

The following emerged:

- **Portugal** plans to fund capacity-building actions from the Technical Assistance axes of the regional and national programmes, and from the national TA programme.

- The **Greek** national transport roadmap made exclusive use of the Technical Assistance axis of the programme to support capacity-building actions, as did the regional Polish roadmap, which was developed as a pilot.

- The **Romanian** and **Bulgarian** roadmaps envisage using funds allocated to the Technical Assistance axis of regional and national programmes, as well as the budget of the TA programme, to support capacity-building initiatives planned in the roadmaps.

Regarding point c., financing capacity-building actions through Article 37, FNLC TA, is planned by Latvia and Bulgaria.

Latvia applies Article 37 on TA to fund its actions within the national programme included in the roadmap, while the national **Bulgarian** Programme 'Development of the Regions' will use FNLC under one of its programme axes.

Regarding point d., in some cases, roadmap actions can be financed by other EU resources, unrelated to Cohesion Policy.

Figure 23 shows that the EIB instruments are used to finance actions, especially in **Romania**. TSI is another programme financing actions in the **Czech**, **Bulgarian** and

national **Romanian** roadmaps. RRF is planned for use in **Estonia**, **Hungary**, **Latvia** and **Romania**.

Figure 23 - Capacity-building actions financed through other EU resources
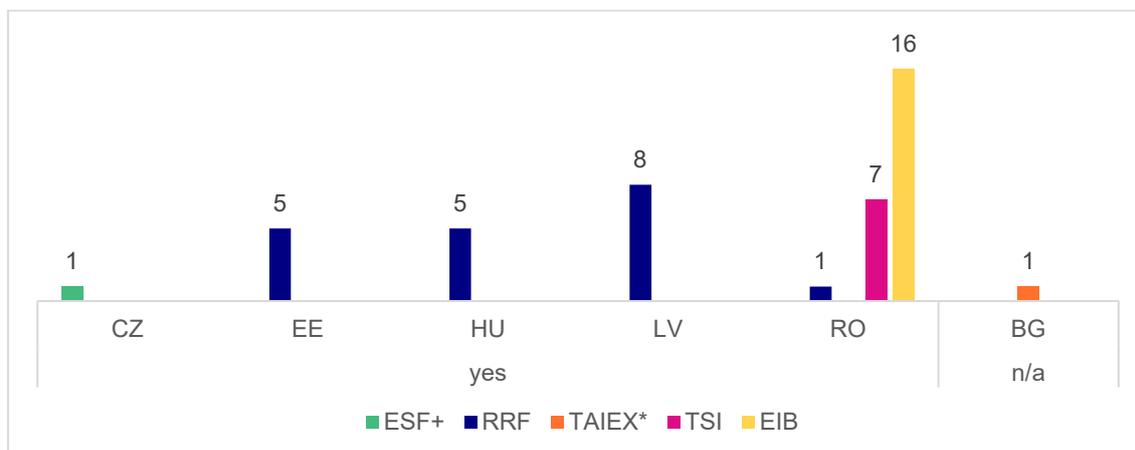
*Comprising TAIEX Peer-2-Peer, TSI, JRC, Jaspers, OECD, WB

Consortium elaboration

Finally, some roadmaps allocate national or regional resources to fund the actions, as presented in Figure 24.

Figure 24 - Capacity-building actions financed through national or regional resources
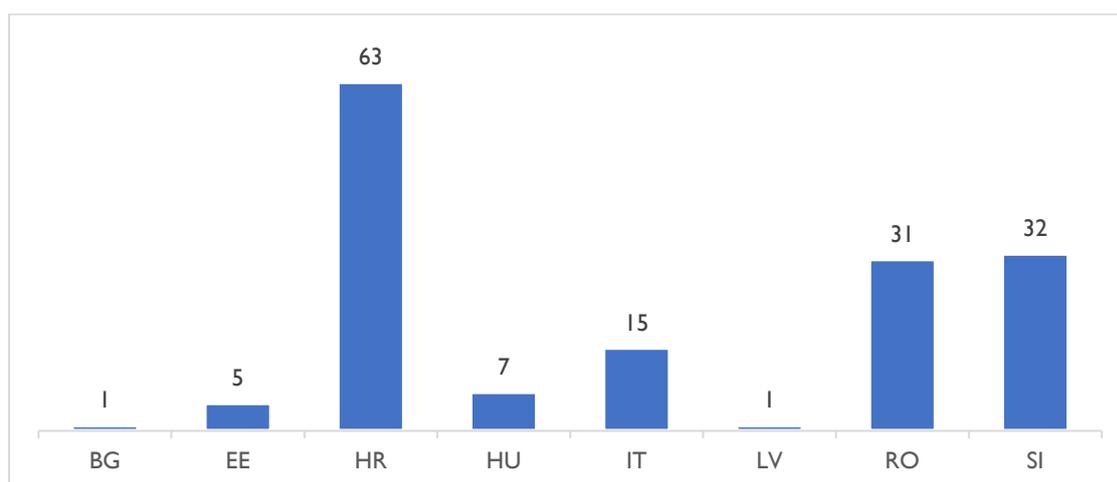
Consortium elaboration

The roadmaps combine different sources of funding to support actions, as presented in the following table, except for:

● The **Greek**, **Slovakian** and **Polish** roadmaps, which are entirely financed by the Technical Assistance axis of the national programme, and

- The **Spanish** roadmap, which plans to use the Technical Assistance axis of the national and regional programmes.

Table 14 - Combined source of funding of the roadmaps per Member State*

Funding source per MS	PT	EL	EE	LT	RO	HR	HU	ES	IT	PL	SI	CZ	LV	BG	SK
Art. 3(4) ERDF					5%				32%						
Art. 36 in regional/national PR		100%			51%		68%	100%	36%	100%		7%		3%	
Art. 36 in TA PR					5%							71%		43%	
Art. 36 in regional/national PR + Art. 36 in TA PR	100%				4%		2%							13%	
Art. 36 in regional/national PR + EU Resources + Own Resources			100%		1%										
Art. 36 in regional/national PR + National Resources					1%	100%	5%		2%		97%				
Art. 36 in regional/national PR + Art. 36 in TA PR + EU Resources												7%		1%	
Art. 36 in TA PR + EU Resources					2%										
Art. 36 in TA PR + EU Resources + Own Resources					1%										
Art. 36 in TA PR + OwnResources					1%									1%	
Art. 36 in regional/national PR + EU Resources					1%										
Art. 36 in TA PR + Art. 37 in TA PR															
Art. 36 in regional/national PR + Art. 36 in TA PR + National Resources					2%										
Art. 37 in TA PR															
Art. 37 in regional/national PR													55%	7%	
Art. 37 in TA PR + EU Resources															
OwnResources					9%		12%		30%				2%		
EUResources					8%		12%						24%		
EUResources + OwnResources					5%										
N/A				100%	5%						3%	14%	19%	32%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Consortium elaboration

* The Lithuanian and Slovakian roadmaps did not indicate the source of funding.

Budget dedicated to the roadmaps

The study also explored the budget allocation for capacity-building actions in the roadmaps.

Very few roadmaps provide the total allocated budget.

The roadmaps of **Bulgaria**, **Czechia**, **Greece**, **Spain**, **Hungary**, **Lithuania**, **Poland**, **Slovakia** and **Slovenia**, as well as the national and regional roadmaps of **Romania**, make no reference to the budget for implementing the actions. They indicate the source of funding, but neither the total financial allocation nor the financial amount dedicated to individual actions is made public. Many programme authorities explained that it may be difficult to accurately define (at the time when the roadmap is drafted) how much an action will cost. This can partially explain the reason why most of the roadmaps do not provide a comprehensive picture of the budget allocation.

The national **Croatian** roadmap and the Italian regional **Marche** roadmap include the financial amount, but only for some actions.

The only roadmaps where the financial allocation is available for all actions are:

- **Estonia**: EUR 5,115,753

- Regional **Lazio** roadmap (IT) EUR 17,984,208 – a financial allocation from PN CAPCOE has to be defined,

- Regional **Apulia** roadmap (IT): EUR 59,600,000, and EUR 9,000,000 from PN CAPCOE.

- In **Portugal**, a total budget of EUR 41,469,920 is available, but the document does not provide the allocation for individual actions.

- For the **Latvian** roadmap, the total budget allocated for the roadmap actions shared with the study team was split by the source of funding:

  o National resources: EUR 6,114,036;

  o Technical Assistance axis of the national Cohesion Policy programme, FNLC: EUR 6,051,539;

  o RRF: EUR 31,162,040;

  o Other EU funding: EUR 7,417,130.

According to roadmap 'owners', the lack of a dedicated budget for specific actions can hamper implementation, while the use of mixed funding sources can slow down and complicate the process

2.4.7. Human resources

The analysis of the ACB roadmaps explores whether human resources have been identified, quantified and allocated to implement the capacity-building actions.

Firstly, no roadmap outlines a strategy to ensure the effective allocation of human resources for its implementation and related activities. None provides any estimate of the human resources needed to carry out the actions, nor do they indicate whether future versions will include this information. Therefore, the information comes from the interviews and focus groups.

A common pattern is the lack of qualified staff to manage the lifecycle of Cohesion Policy programmes. Programme authority interviewees mentioned that working in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem entails knowledge of the CPR Regulation, the dedicated fund regulation, as well as guidance and handbooks for other EU resources. Programme authorities underscored the difficulties of attracting such highly skilled personnel and referred to:

- The general personnel shortage,

- The shortage of personnel with specific skills, in particular for green investments and digitalisation.

- The high turnover, also within the public administration. This is not generally considered a loss for the public administration's 'knowledge hub', as staff transfer skills from one sector to another, which can increase the skills of other personnel and enhance the service. However, in the short term, personnel turnover negatively affects the ministries responsible for Cohesion Policy programmes by reducing their 'knowledge hub'.

- Unattractive employment conditions, in particular, lower salaries, and low degree of flexibility, i.e. teleworking modalities, career advancement, than in the private sector.

- The complexity of Cohesion Policy regulations and programme lifecycle requiring continuous investment in training and education.

The programme authorities have designated the staff responsible for following up the implementation of the roadmap. However, the main concerns are related to

- the overall workload, as the roadmap implementation will be just one of the many tasks they have been assigned, on top of other tasks.
- the lack of skilled staff, both the staff already employed, and the challenges inf recruiting newskilled staff to implement and monitor the programmes means the current staff are overloaded

The potential risk is limited time and attention, despite its aim to strengthen administrative capacity skills within the administration. In addition, as reported in

section 2.1.3, lack of ownership by the staff in charge of designing and implementing the roadmap, and/or by the MA hampers the implementation process, setting aside the roadmap from the policy and political agenda.

. The analysis also explored the skills programme authorities and beneficiaries need to work on Cohesion Policy. There are no breakthroughs from this perspective. Programme authorities and beneficiaries noted similar competences and skills that should be developed further.

For horizontal skills and competences, programme authorities and beneficiaries need to be constantly updated on new regulatory requirements and implementing provisions. This means training, exchanges with colleagues within the same structure and other regional or national administrations, and participation in seminars and conferences to learn from good practices.

Some programme authorities, such as the MA of the ERDF programme in Apulia (IT), the **Croatian** representatives of the ESF+ programme, the **Latvian** CB representatives, and beneficiaries highlighted the benefits of joint training for all those involved in Cohesion Policy, particularly on horizontal topics, such as the regulatory framework. This approach fosters mutual trust, facilitating collaboration and shared understanding.

Another element relates to the development of soft skills, such as management and leadership competence, which help create a positive and 'friendly' working environment. Officers have development plans to grow professionally with opportunities to experiment, learn and gain insight from colleagues across different departments, regions and Member States. This increases job satisfaction and, in the long term, boosts productivity.

Interviews with the **Croatian** authorities highlighted an element, which was also mentioned in other interviews but with less emphasis, namely the necessity to welcome and introduce the   new staff   bin the public administration environment. They proposed 'welcome days', where new personnel receive guidance on navigating the ministry or regional department and understanding the working rules, roles and procedures. This can be accompanied by mentorship schemes, where senior leaders pair with juniors to support and help them grow within the organisation.

Capacity-building actions to improve staff well-being in the Polish regional roadmap

The MA responsible for the regional Polish roadmap identified a significant issue of staff burnout and a lack of interest in daily tasks. In the past, staff lost interest in their work due to the routine nature of their work. To address this, the MA, supported by the OECD team, included a dedicated action in the roadmap. In the new mobility programme, staff can move between the MA offices and the IB structure. However, because this relies on employee initiative rather than managerial oversight, there is a need for additional tools to proactively address workforce well-being. Therefore, this flexibility should have been introduced in a more structured way. Moreover, a new approach and pathway on career advancement for employees, was implicitly suggested, although not described.

> Moreover, the ACB roadmap established regular 180-degree reviews, a comprehensive evaluation method that integrates self-assessment, managerial feedback and external evaluations. This goes beyond identifying performance gaps to provide employees with personalised career development paths, empowering them to grow within their roles. By addressing individual strengths and challenges, the assessment system has enhanced workforce morale and competency, creating a more capable and motivated administrative body.
>
> Together, these organisational and structural reforms have not only enhanced administrative effectiveness but have also set a precedent for inclusive, adaptive and forward-looking public administration practice.

Consortium elaboration

Balancing work and training remain a challenge. It is crucial to carve out specific time slots for training or, alternatively, prioritise either work or professional development, avoiding situations where the staff attending training activities work during the sessions, e.g. replying to emails or calls, without paying attention to the training. Without dedicated time for training, the effectiveness of these initiatives may be compromised.

The most commonly cited technical skills and competences needed pertain to digital skills, including the ability to use and manage ICT tools for monitoring and reporting, as well as using AI. Additionally, there is a need for niche competences in green investments, energy and sustainable development regulations and inclusive green growth. Interviews and exchanges with programme authorities highlighted SCOs and FNLC schemes as the most urgent competences to acquire

2.4.8. Synthetic assessment

For the section 2.4., the main elements of assessment of the design of the roadmaps' actions are included in sections 2.4.1 to 2.4.7

2.5. Monitoring and evaluation system

Evaluation plans

2.5.1 **2.5.2** **2.5.3**

Monitoring systems

Synthetic assessment
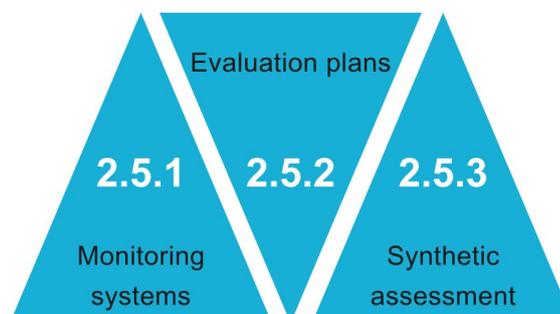
This section reviews the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the roadmap, as well as the role played by the programme monitoring committees and the EC. It also outlines the ways results and outcomes are evaluated and the administrative and political responsibilities for monitoring.

Few roadmaps describe the means to assess the implementation of the ACB actions, while nearly all devote a section to monitoring them, with varying degrees of detail.

The next two sections present distinct overviews of the monitoring and evaluation systems, including their specificities and challenges in the Member States and regions.

2.5.1. Roadmap monitoring systems, role of the programme Monitoring Committee and the EC

The **monitoring systems of the roadmaps** and their arrangements differ notably from both those developed during the pilot phase and those developed at the beginning of this programming period.

The Polish region case, and to a lesser extent Greece, reported that during the pilot phase, they did not develop a monitoring or evaluation plan, nor indicators to monitor the implementation of the roadmap.. Attention was more focused on the analysis of challenges and the elaboration of the situation 'to be'. Work on actions for administrative capacity absorbed the majority of the time and focus of the project.

The **Polish** regional roadmap does not have an official monitoring or evaluation system. However, informal monitoring does take place in practice - not through formal reports but rather reviews of MA activities. The programme monitoring committee contributed to discussions on the implementation of actions, although it did not hold a formal role. Improvements in organisational and programme management are evident and serve as indicators of progress.

The absence of dedicated funding for official monitoring renders it difficult for the MA to plan and implement such activities within a limited budget. Nevertheless, the 2021

version of the regional roadmap was updated taking into account the results of the monitoring activities , which led to the modification and elimination of actions no longer considered relevant. However, this process did not constitute a formal evaluation, and no external entities were involved. DG REGIO did not act or intervene in the monitoring activities of the roadmap and did not formally request reports or documentation on the roadmap implementation.

The **Greek** national roadmap does not include a formal monitoring or evaluation system for capacity-building actions, their impact or follow-up either. However, there are quarterly reports to monitor progress. The document outlines outputs and milestones, and the MA and stakeholders reported that they set clear and measurable actions.

On the other hand, the EC toolkit for roadmap development in 2021-27 requires owners to describe the monitoring and evaluation system.

In addition, to quote the **Spanish** roadmap, 'the monitoring of the roadmap is required by Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, in particular Article 40(1)(i), which includes among the tasks of the Monitoring Committee… the examination of 'the progress made in building the administrative capacity of public bodies, partners and, where appropriate, beneficiaries'. The Spanish roadmap establishes a multidisciplinary working group within the Directorate-General for European Funds, comprising participants from various sub-directorates, to monitor the implementation of roadmap actions and to collect information on the relevant indicators. In addition, one of the objectives under Pillar III 'Systems and tools' is: 'To have the necessary systems and tools for managing and monitoring the programming and implementation of funds, as well as data analysis and processing tools'. While actions are primarily monitored through quantitative indicators, these indicators are overly general and lack defined targets.

The **Slovak** roadmap provides a description of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in the Annex to the roadmap document. This states that the owner of the roadmap, the Central Coordination Agency in the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation, is also responsible for monitoring and evaluation. Updating the roadmap is the responsibility of the National Cohesion Policy Programme Monitoring Committee based on the implementation of the roadmap and its measures.

Each measure indicates expected outputs and results. The quantitative and qualitative indicators used are mostly limited to basic metrics such as the number of staff employed in the bodies implementing EU funds, or 'methodologies' and other related documents.

Actions also provide information on:

- The implementing body, which, although not explicitly stated, is likely to also be the monitoring body.

- Timing of the outputs – indicated through deadlines or milestones.

- Justification for the implementation of the action, which, while not designed for monitoring purposes, may indirectly help during evaluations

The roadmap does not have a formal monitoring system. When updating the document, the Central Coordination Authority generally asks intermediate and other bodies to report on any completed or implemented activities as described in the measure.

There are two monitoring systems for administrative capacity. One monitors the number of staff in each body in the delivery system, and the other monitors the training/education of staff. However, these are not linked to the roadmap but exist independently and were decided before the roadmap was conceived.

The **Croatian** roadmap presents some details on the monitoring system: once a year, the programme bodies report to the CB on the progress in the roadmap implementation. These reports are then discussed at the monitoring committees and sub-committees, and at the National Coordination Committee. Based on the information submitted, the CB prepares an annual implementation report, which includes an analysis of the progress and needs. This analysis informs planned revisions of the document, allowing it to adapt to current and upcoming needs. Changes to the roadmap can be regular or ad hoc. There is no description of the role played by the EC.

The **Hungarian** CB reported that they would reflect on the possibility of setting up sub-committees within the framework of the programme monitoring committees to examine major issues, and a monitoring committee at the Partnership Agreement level - as in the previous programme period - to examine cross-cutting issues in a comprehensive manner.

A common challenge was the establishment of appropriate indicators to monitor the actions, as noted by the Lithuanian officers.

'Initially, certain indicators failed to adequately capture actual outcomes (e.g., the number of training sessions did not necessarily reflect their quality). To address this, the decision was made to prioritise qualitative over quantitative indicators. However, upon evaluation of these indicators at the end of 2023, a new challenge arose: the established indicators were too broad to accurately measure the impact of specific actions.'

Although the **Lithuanian** roadmap does not provide for a public evaluation or monitoring mechanism, the structures implemented in the Monitoring and Control System of the programmes allow for annual evaluations of roadmap activities, including progress on ACB initiatives. Evaluations are also carried out by other ministries during their annual reviews. In addition, a report is submitted to the EC covering quantitative and qualitative ACB indicators. Evaluations assess training attendance, the frequency of recurring themes identified by the training network and other relevant content.

An urgent task is to develop more effective indicators capable of capturing change and measuring the results of capacity-building initiatives. Most results relate to intangible aspects, and most of the information is perception-based. Thus, the challenge is to collect and process information that is both reliable and objective.

Comprehensive roadmap monitoring systems: Latvia and Portugal

According to the **Latvian** Public Administration Workforce Training and Development Plan 2021-2027, a newly established Content Monitoring Board defines the thematic framework and expected outcomes of the plan's curricula and overseas implementation. This same board is expected to monitor the ACB roadmap. It will include representatives from public authorities and, where appropriate, cooperation partners. One way to assess implementation of the roadmap strategic priorities is the outcome evaluation, which will identify and assess the results, including their return/impact, as well as the extent to which the objectives have been achieved.

The return/impact of the roadmap actions will be assessed at three levels: a) individual level - how the actions have improved staff competence;   b) institutional level - how the actions have influenced and contributed to changes in the institution;   c) cross-sectoral level - how cross-sectoral and horizontal actions have influenced changes in several organisations or the Cohesion Policy environment as a whole.

An integral part of the roadmap is its annex 'Fit for Purpose - Building Administrative Capacity for Cohesion Policy: Latvia 2021-2027', which details the planned actions, responsible actors, implementation schedule, results, target groups, performance indicators, means of measurement, results, available sources of financing and other relevant information to assess the progress of implementation.

The **Portuguese** AD&C dedicated section 10 of the roadmap to presenting the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These are intended to be coordinated by the AD&C, MAs and IBs. A set of 51 different indicators (output and result indicators) will be used to measure progress towards achieving the target set for each year, from 2022 to 2027. Furthermore, the knowledge gained from developing and implementing roadmaps will be exploited by programme authorities to inform future capacity-building efforts. The programme MC does not have an explicit role in monitoring the roadmap actions. There is no reference to the role of the EC in the M&E plan.

Consortium elaboration

The MA of the regional ERDF programme of **Lazio** (IT) took the occasion of the FG and interviews organised for the purpose of this study to present the updated version of the roadmap to the programme MC. The representative of the MA presented the state of the art of the actions included in the document and the next steps for the implementation and monitoring of the roadmap. Some members of the MC attended and welcomed the document and the approach taken by the region on the topic of administrative capacity building. More meetings of this nature are hoped to of roadmap implementation.

None of the roadmaps describe or present the role envisaged for the EC in the monitoring process.

2.5.2. Roadmap evaluation plans

Few roadmaps have a proper evaluation plan.

In the **Lazio (IT)** regional roadmap, action 1.6 covers the evaluation of the strategy. This is dedicated to the evaluation of ongoing and ex-post interventions. The aim is to guide and improve administrative action through strategic evaluation of the objectives and activities set out in the plan. This measure plays a crucial role in providing the data and performance measurement tools that are essential for analysing progress throughout the planning cycle. As stated in the regional roadmap, 'it helps to identify potential problems or imbalances, allowing timely adjustments to be made to better align activities and policies with the needs of stakeholders'.([36])

The ERDF regional programme MA is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the progress of these activities. This includes not only monitoring physical and financial progress, but also a thorough review of the overall strategy. Where necessary, independent evaluations may be contracted out to ensure an impartial and thorough assessment of the effectiveness of the roadmap. In addition, as the roadmap progresses, further organisational guidance may be provided by the Regional Directorate responsible for implementation to ensure the necessary adjustments are made to keep the regional roadmap on track.

Action 1.6 is planned to be carried out in three phases: in the first quarter of 2025, 2026 and 2027. Mostly quantitative indicators are used to monitor and evaluate the roadmap.

While Lazio (IT) has the most complete roadmap linking monitoring with evaluation, other roadmaps provide detailed descriptions, as presented in the box below.

Example of a roadmap evaluation plan: Croatia

The **Croatian CB** is tasked with overseeing the monitoring, implementation, reporting and evaluation of the roadmap. Evaluations are carried out continuously throughout the programming period to assess the effectiveness of roadmap activities. The evaluation results help to guide decision-making and improvements in programme implementation. Evaluations also include consultation and the exchange of best practices through working groups and committees, with a focus on continuous capacity building. An ICT system should facilitate the tracking and reporting of evaluation findings and recommendations. This system will enable better monitoring of the status of evaluations and the implementation of recommendations, increasing transparency and efficiency in the management of EU funds.

Consortium elaboration

([36]) Piano di Rigenerazione Amministrativa del PR FESR Lazio 2021-2027, Regione Lazio, Settembre 2024 – Versione 1.1, pag. 26.

Some roadmaps are still being finalised, and sections on monitoring and evaluation have not yet been elaborated, e.g. Romania and Bulgaria.

In the **Bulgarian** document, a table of actions provides information on the milestones. The FG and interviews highlighted potential actors monitoring the roadmap: the CCU will play a central role, ensuring collaboration with all the programme authorities involved. The focus is on developing a more holistic approach to monitoring and evaluation at the Partnership Agreement level. It also emerged that the monitoring committees of national programmes will monitor and report on implementation. The idea is not to set up a specific digital reporting system.

The **Romanian** national roadmaps are more varied. At the time of writing this report, the 12 'thematic roadmaps' at the national level were still expected to converge into a single document and include the national CB network that started in 2024. Some roadmaps list expected results in the action matrix, but others do not.

2.5.3. Synthetic assessment

This section provides a comprehensive overview (see Table 15) of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms envisaged to track the progress of the implementation of actions and assess and evaluate them.

Table 15 – Monitoring and evaluation systems of the roadmaps

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Monitoring system	Evaluation system	Synthetic assessment	Role of MC	Role of the EC
1	**Bulgaria**	national	**Administration of the Council of Ministers**	CB	To be set up	To be set up		Mentioned	Not mentioned
2	**Croatia**	national	**Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds**	CB	No structured monitoring system, only reviews of the activities	Evaluation system not described, but evaluation reports to be elaborated		n/a	Not mentioned
3	**Czechia**	national	**Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development**	CB	No structured monitoring system	No evaluation system described or in place		n/a	Not mentioned

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Monitoring system	Evaluation system	Synthetic assessment	Role of MC	Role of the EC
4	**Estonia**	national	**State Shared Service Centre**	MA	No structured monitoring system	No evaluation system described or in place	🟧	Mentioned and role defined	Not mentioned
5	**Greece**	national	**MA 'Transport' 2021-2027**	MA	No structured monitoring system, only reviews of the activities	No evaluation system described or in place	🟨	n/a	Not mentioned
6	**Hungary**	national	**Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development**	CB	No structured monitoring system	No evaluation system described or in place	🟧	n/a	Not mentioned

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Monitoring system	Evaluation system	Synthetic assessment	Role of MC	Role of the EC
7	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	Monitoring system described	Evaluation planned as an action of the roadmap	🟩	Consulting role	Not mentioned
8	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	No structured monitoring system, but set of indicators defined	No evaluation system described or in place	🟨	n/a	Not mentioned
9	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the ERDF - ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region**	MA (regional)	No structured monitoring system, but indicators are identified	No evaluation system described or in place	🟨	n/a	Not mentioned

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Monitoring system	Evaluation system	Synthetic assessment	Role of MC	Role of the EC
10	**Latvia**	national	**State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments**	CB	Monitoring system described	Evaluation system described	green	n/a	Not mentioned
11	**Lithuania**	national	**Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments**	MA	No structured monitoring system, reviews of the activities	No evaluation system described or in place	yellow	n/a	Not mentioned
12	**Poland**	regional	**Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region**	MA	No structured monitoring system, only reviews of the activities	No evaluation system described or in place	yellow	Informal role	Not mentioned

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Monitoring system	Evaluation system	Synthetic assessment	Role of MC	Role of the EC
13	**Portugal**	national	**Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão**	CB	Monitoring system described	Evaluation system described	🟩	Mentioned, but in relation to the programme implementation	Not mentioned
14	**Romania**	national	**Ministry of EU funds**	MA	To be set up	To be set up	🟧	To be defined	Not mentioned
15	**Romania**	regional	**North-East Regional Development Agency**	MA	No structured monitoring system	No evaluation system described or in place	🟩	Mentioned, but in relation to the programme implementation	Not mentioned
16	**Slovenia**	national	**Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development**	MA	No structured monitoring system, but with ideas on indicators	No evaluation system described or in place	🟨	n/a	Not mentioned

#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Monitoring system	Evaluation system	Synthetic assessment	Role of MC	Role of the EC
17	Slovakia	national	Central Coordination Authority	CB	Monitoring system described	Evaluation system described	🟩	n/a	Not mentioned
18	Spain	national	Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration	MA	Monitoring system described	No evaluation system described or in place	🟨	n/a	Not mentioned

Key elements emerging from the analysis:

- **Informal or fragmented monitoring practices**: most of the analysed documents lack formal monitoring entirely, focusing instead on action planning without structured tracking mechanisms. In several cases (e.g. **Poland**, **Slovakia**, **Hungary**), monitoring is done informally through internal reviews or unrelated systems, without dedicated roadmap indicators or structured oversight.

- **Indicator challenges**: Many countries (e.g. **Lithuania**) struggle with developing meaningful indicators, as quantitative indicators often fail to capture impact, and qualitative indicators are harder to track and compare.

- **Limited evaluation plans**: Very few roadmaps include proper evaluation plans. **Lazio** (IT) and Croatia stand out as examples with defined evaluation components that include timelines, indicators, and responsibilities.

Few MSs develop comprehensive M&E systems:

- o **Latvia**: Has a Content Monitoring Board to assess impact at individual, institutional, and cross-sectoral levels, aligned with its public administration development plan.

- o **Estonia**: Tracks a wide range of output metrics annually through its Ministry of Finance.

- o **Portugal**: Uses 51 indicators, although the MC's role is not defined, and monitoring is internal.

- **Evolving and adaptive monitoring approaches**: some programme authorities (e.g. **Lazio**, the Polish region) view their roadmaps as 'living documents', adjusting them based on implementation feedback and ongoing assessments. Moreover, annual reports, committee discussions, and ICT tools are increasingly used to track progress (e.g. Croatia plans an ICT system for tracking evaluations).

The role of the MC is not defined: the strategic documents analysed do not describe the role of the MC in the roadmap monitoring and evaluation. There are few cases where the MC plays a limited role, for example, in **Estonia**, where the roadmap implementation is discussed at the annual meeting of the MC. Based on the feedback provided by the MC meeting in spring 2024, the partners have made good progress. The MA of the ERDF programme of the **Lazio** region (IT) presented the roadmap to the MC in October 2024 and asked for their contributions and feedback on it.

2.6. Pre-conditions, enablers and barriers to roadmap design

The analysis also identified the preconditions, enablers, and barriers that influenced the design of the roadmaps.

Pre-conditions are the foundational factors that exist before the initiation of the roadmap design. These include elements such as a clear and structured governance framework, and a well-defined vision of the intended outcomes- namely, an understanding of the changes to be triggered, and the existing know-how and capacity of the programme authorities.

Enablers are elements that foster the effective development and implementation of the roadmap by supporting coordination, enhancing capacity, securing commitment, and ensuring the availability of necessary resources and tools. These may include support from the EC, political actors and top management, as well as the engagement and commitment of key stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Barriers are elements that hamper and hinder the design and implementation of the roadmap. These may include uncertain political scenarios, the lack of commitment from top management, the absence or limited involvement of key stakeholders and beneficiaries, insufficient financial and human resources, and an unclear definition of the 'situation to be', i.e. lack of political vision.

The analysis indicated that effective roadmap design was sustained by two pre-conditions, namely an established methodology for needs identification and a structured governance framework. Regarding the former, both the Member States that followed the Toolkit issued by DG REGIO and those that developed their own approaches were able to reflect deeply and identify capacity-building needs, which were then consistently linked to strategic objectives. A structured governance framework, on the other hand, facilitated clearer distinction, management and the implementation of actions. In some cases, such as in the developed in **Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland** and **Portugal**, a clear definition of the governance framework supportedeffective coordination among stakeholders, and improved the elaboration of the ACB actions.

When these preconditions were in place, several enablers helped transform the roadmaps into functional, effective documents. Among them, consistency between the identified needs and defined objectives was fundamental as it ensured both strategic focus and operational clarity. Viewing roadmaps as 'living documents' further enabled the MSs to adapt to new challenges. Strong ownership and commitment from top management supported administrations in the efficient implementation of the roadmaps and helped prioritise ACB activities. A further enabler was the active participation of stakeholders, whose involvement was crucial to the identification of both administrative capacity issues and potential solutions.

At the same time, several barriers hampered efficient roadmap design. For instance, in situations where roadmaps were considered an additional administrative burden and

ownership was low, progress was hampered, as was the case when only limited funding and human resources were identified. Indeed, the absence of political support and commitment from the top management further undermined the effectiveness of administrative capacity development. In addition to this, inadequate communication among stakeholders, which was at times exacerbated by the previously listed factors, represented a further barrier to the roadmap design.

2.6.1. Synthetic assessment

For the section 2.61., the main elements of assessment are included in the previous section.

3. Implementation of the roadmap
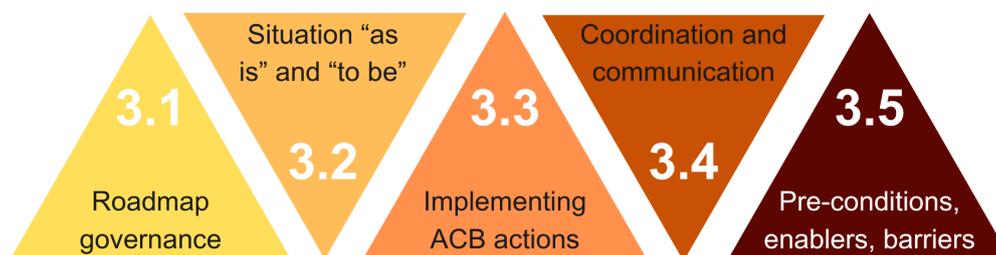
This section presents information and data on implementation of the roadmap and how national and regional authorities organise:

- governance for managing the roadmap, with mechanisms for managing and implementing the actions during implementation and whether they are the same as during the design phase (3.1),

- analysis of the 'as is', as well as the 'to be' situation, whether needs and objectives defined in the design phase are still the same, or how they have changed (3.2),

- the implementation of the actions, challenges and solutions to overcome difficulties (3.3)

- coordination and communication mechanisms in place to exchange with other programme authorities within the MS, or in other MS, and to disseminate and communicate information on the roadmap implementation (3.4).

Section 3.5 presents the analysis of the preconditions, enablers, and barriers that influenced the implementation of the roadmaps.

Not all roadmaps have started implementation.

Roadmaps that have started implementation are 13 out of 18: the North-East Region (RO), Lubelskie (PL) the National Transport Programme (EL), Croatia, Portugal, Lazio (IT), Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Czechia and Slovenia.

The **Bulgarian** CCU reported that they plan to finalise and approve the roadmap in January - February 2025. The **Romanian** national sectoral roadmaps have not yet been finalised (as to December 2024). The roadmaps of the **Marche** and **Apulia** (IT) regions are in the early stages of the implementation process, i.e. therefore are formally ongoing, but the backbone of the implementation is yet to begin.

Few roadmaps are currently publicly available, even if they have been finalised and sent to the Commission.

The study team obtained the documents thanks to the support of DG REGIO and the relationship of trust with the MA or CB responsible. In some cases, such as **Croatia**, the owner chooses not to publish it, as it is an internal 'operational' document.

3.1. Roadmap governance: implementation

This section focuses on current governance mechanisms to implement the roadmaps, reporting on changes to the planned governance model and innovations introduced to the roadmap architecture.

It provides the foundation to understand and assess whether the roadmaps can be tools to trigger the positive long-term impact needed to improve organisations in terms of ACB. In this section, the analysis considers the following:

- Institutionalisation of changes: assessing whether the new processes, policies, or approaches introduced by the roadmap have been fully integrated and whether these, in turn, have been embedded in the administrative structures, becoming a standard part of operations.

- Adaptability and resilience: determining whether the roadmap includes provisions for adapting to changing conditions and challenges, thereby ensuring gains are not lost in the face of new developments or external pressure.

- Stakeholder engagement and ownership: gauging the continued involvement and commitment of stakeholders, including national authorities and programme beneficiaries, which is crucial to maintaining momentum and support for the roadmap.

These will be covered in section 4.

3.1.1. Geographical and fund coverage of the roadmap

None of the MSs analysed changed the geographical coverage of the roadmaps, nor did they change the fund coverage during the implementation process.

3.1.2. Roadmaps' review and institutional and organisational implications

During implementation, some regional and national authorities updated and revised their roadmaps to better address the needs and challenges of their region or Member State, incorporating current problems and critical matters.

This also involved modulating certain planned actions. Examples are found in the regional roadmaps for **Poland** and **Lazio** (IT), presented in the box below.

Updating the roadmap

Developed between 2018 and 2019, with the support of OECD experts, in the framework of the DG REGIO pilot action on frontloading administrative capacity building, the **Polish** regional roadmap aimed to address critical workforce challenges including high staff turnover, burnout and skill gaps. The roadmap aimed to strengthen the MA and improve the delivery of Cohesion Policy by creating a more efficient and adaptable organisational framework. Since its inception, the roadmap has undergone significant development. The initial 2018 phase focused on consultation and problem identification, laying the foundation for structural reforms. By 2021, a revised version outlined targeted actions to address the challenges, culminating in the current action-oriented roadmap. These iterations reflect a commitment to continuous improvement, informed by feedback and practical experience.

Over the years, regular meetings have been held with other EU funds implementing bodies and regional programme counterparts, serving as platforms to assess ongoing challenges and review results.

The updates have not affected governance, which remains in the hands of the Regional Programme MA.

As elaborated in 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, the actions proposed in the roadmap led to a change in the architecture of the entire MA. Indeed, the strategy introduced an organisational system with new structures:

- ESF+ implementing unit
- ERDF implementing unit
- Audit and control unit
- Special unit to represent beneficiaries of EU funds
- Unit to certify expenditure

> - Complaints unit.
>
> This does not impact management of the roadmap but facilitates implementation of the programmes.
>
> The **Lazio** (IT) ERDF regional programme 2021-27 MA prepared the first version of the roadmap in 2022, then revised it in 2023 and 2024. These revisions did not affect governance. Updates of the actions did not change the MA structure, nor the IB.

Consortium elaboration

3.1.3. Ownership

Only marginal elements linked to roadmap ownership emerged during implementation, but in a few cases, there was strategic involvement of the MC: informing the MC, according to roadmap 'designers', can be a key step to reinforcing Administrative Capacity Building in Cohesion Policy programmes.

As mentioned in 2.1 and in 2.5, some regional and national authorities decided to present the finalised roadmap strategy to the programme monitoring committee.

In **Portugal**, during a June 2022 plenary session, the roadmap was approved and launched. There is no information on communication between AD&C, the MA and IB on the implementation of the roadmap([37]).

The MA of the **Lazio** region (IT) presented the roadmap to the monitoring committee during the FG organised for this study.

The MA of the regional ERDF programme of **Lazio** (IT) did not specify the role of the MC in the roadmap document. However, during the implementation phase, the MA took advantage of the FG and interviews organised for the purpose of this study to present the updated version of the roadmap to the programme MC. The MA representative provided an overview of the state of the art of the actions outlined in the document and the next steps for the implementation and monitoring of the roadmap. MC members in attendance welcomed both the document and the approach taken by the region on the topic of administrative capacity building. It is hoped that more meetings of this nature will be held to share updates on implementation progress and results achieved through the implementation of the roadmap actions.

([37]) For clarity and completeness of information, the Portuguese Coordination Body informed (on 20 May 2025) the core team that the first public report on roadmap implementation, covering 2022–2024, is available on the AD&C website (https://www.adcoesao.pt/wp-content/uploads/2025.05.02_RelatorioRoteiro-2024_VF-1.pdf, only in Portuguese), along with infographics (https://www.adcoesao.pt/fundos/pos-2020/infografia-roteiro/) containing key figures about the roadmap.

This reflected the need not only to disseminate information on the roadmap to stakeholders, but also to strengthen MA ownership and implementation of actions across the entire Cohesion Policy ecosystem. In other cases, the in-field activities for this study provided an opportunity for regional and national authorities responsible for the roadmap to focus attention on the strategy - several months after its adoption or completion - or as with Bulgaria, to validate the recently developed strategy.

The decision of the **Bulgarian** CCU to present the roadmap actions to the monitoring committee of the national programme in October and November 2024 reflected the need to further involve all actors in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem in supporting the implementation of the actions. This also serves as a way to disseminate the information to a wider audience.

For example, in **Portugal**, the CB welcomed the FG and interviews as an opportunity to bring actors involved in implementing the roadmap together after several months to discuss improvements. The same was true for the **Lazio** region (IT), where the MA took stock of the positive effects, also thanks to the roadmap and collected feedback from the IB and the municipality involved in the FG to improve implementation of the actions.

The focus groups and interviews in **Slovenia** and the **Apulia** region (IT) provided an opportunity to reflect on ways to improve the roadmaps. Implementation is slowing down, so the focus groups were an opportunity to take stock and think about revising and updating the roadmaps.

The FG organised in **Romania** in December 2024 was the occasion for the MIPE – acting as roadmap owner - to gather MAs at both the regional and national level, to present the semi-finalised national roadmap and to collect feedback and inputs for its improvement. The presence of the MAs of regional programmes also created the opportunity to discuss and reflect on potential synergies and complementarities between the actions developed and those to be implemented at regional and national levels. The meeting also served as a forum where MIPE representatives proposed continuing this approach, namely, comprehensive meetings involving MAs, at the regional and national levels, to monitor the roadmap implementation.

The FG and interviews organised in January 2025 in the **Marche** region (IT) represented one of the first occasions for the MA to discuss and reflect with other line regional services on the definition and implementation of the roadmap. Indeed, they defined and elaborated the roadmap, but the limited time available and the lack of prioritisation of the roadmap in the policy and political agenda hindered the organisation of a dedicated session to its monitoring.

3.1.4. Role of stakeholders & political support

The FG and interviews highlighted the difficulties of maintaining involvement, commitment and interest in the implementation of the roadmap. This is true for both the regional and national authorities managing the roadmap and the implementing actors.

In all Member States, regional and national authorities reported the same difficulties and criticisms.

The box below gives two examples from **Poland** and **Croatia**.

Difficulties in maintaining stakeholder involvement

The MA of the regional roadmap in **Poland** reported that critical to the design success was the emphasis on stakeholder engagement. By involving the Marshal's office and external partners in the design and refinement of the roadmap, the process ensured practical, widely accepted solutions that resonated with those directly affected. This collaborative approach fostered ownership and buy-in, laying the foundation for sustainable improvements. Maintaining a high level of interest and commitment to the implementation of the actions was challenging.

The FG in **Croatia** reported that although stakeholder engagement was crucial in the design phase, it was difficult to sustain. So, while there was a high level of interest with constructive input and feedback during the design phase, there has been a steady loss of momentum since. Roadmap activities, often scattered across MAs and ministries, are often perceived as lacking clear prioritisation and long-term vision. Although the CB gathered and synthesised inputs from all the agencies involved, the extensive back-and-forth process made prioritisation difficult and resulted in some measures being diluted. Limited communication and meetings between roadmap measure/action owners also contributed to a loss of momentum and created 'silos', with entities often pursuing similar actions without collaboration. Finally, the roadmap is increasingly seen as a side project, overshadowed by more urgent and immediate operational needs.

Consortium elaboration

Maintaining momentum and stakeholder commitment is also closely linked to support from senior management and political leaders. If attention to implementing the roadmap wanes and there is no support from senior management or the top hierarchy, stakeholder commitment will also decline.

In some Member States, the attention of political leaders and senior management was high during the roadmap design phase, especially when this was part of the pilot study. During implementation, political attention and commitment have decreased in all regions and Member States, impacting stakeholder engagement.

The **Bulgarian** CCU expressed concern about implementation, because:

- The roadmap is not a binding document, so political commitment can be limited, which can affect stakeholder commitment.

- The CCU has no tools to directly influence stakeholders or senior management.

- The roadmap is perceived as a secondary tool, while the main concern is programme implementation, to which most human resources are dedicated.

Regarding the wider definition of political support, all regional and national authorities used the FG and interviews to convey the message that support from DG REGIO is pivotal for the implementation of the roadmap.

DG REGIO should supervise and ensure that national and regional authorities are actively monitoring the implementation of the Roadmap.

Regular and structured communication between regional and national authorities managing the roadmap and stakeholders implementing it is also pivotal to maintaining engagement and commitment. This can be crucial especially in **Spain, Romania** and **Italy**, where the regional and national levels intervene on ACB realm. In **Romania** and, to a very limited extent, in **Spain** roadmaps were developed both at national and regional levels, therefore exchanging information on implementation and status of the actions is important to track the progress and potential pitfalls. In **Italy**, roadmaps were developed only at regional level; at national level there is a programme intervening on ACB. The transfer of information between the authorities at national and regional level is pivotal to avoid overlapping of interventions, and creating complementarities. This should be mirrored by structured and continuous dialogue with DG REGIO, to take track on the implementation status and potential pitfalls.

3.1.5. Synthetic assessment

This section provides a synthetic assessment of the governance structure of the analysed roadmaps in the implementation. In Table 16:

- Roadmaps with 3 or more 'medium' or 'high' assessments in columns A, B, C, D and E are given a positive **green** icon.

- Roadmaps with 3 'low' or 'n/a' assessments in columns A, B, C, D and E are given a negative **orange** icon.

- Roadmaps with assessments between these two are given a **yellow** icon.

Furthermore, with the arrow icon the table indicates if the governance structure changed between the design and implementation phases, starting from the assessment presented in Table 7.

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-
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Table 16 - Synthetic assessment on the governance structure in the implementation phase

					A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
#	MS	National or regional	Organisation name	Authority	Ownership	Role of the MC	Role of stakeholders	Top management support	Political support	Synthetic assessment
1	**Bulgaria**	national	**Administration of the Council of Ministers**	CB	High	Medium - Roadmap to be presented to the programme MC – consultancy role	Low	Low	Not involved	The CB presents and discusses the roadmap in the programme MC. No major changes

				A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
2	**Croatia**	national	**Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds**	CB	High, however, MA claim a lack of efficient communication	n/a	Low and difficult to keep the momentum	Medium	Not involved	Difficult to keep the interest high, and limited communication among key players
3	**Czechia**	national	**Coordinator of ACB (National Coordination Authority) - Ministry of Regional Development**	CB	Low–rising interest in the organisation of the FG, but no real follow-up	n/a	n/a	None	Not involved	No major changes

				A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
4	**Estonia**	national	**State Shared Service Centre**	MA	High	High - roadmap implementation reported to the MC	High	n/a	Not involved	No major changes. MC actors monitor the implementation, and interest remains significant
5	**Greece**	national	**MA 'Transport' 2021-2027**	MA	High	n/a	Medium	Low	Low	Difficult to maintain the stakeholder interest high, and to have continuous top management support

				A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
6	**Hungary**	national	**Ministry of Public Administration and Territorial Development**	CB	Medium	n/a	n/a	None	Not involved	No major changes, the process remains quite centralised.
7	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Lazio 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	High	Medium - Roadmap presented at the programme MC – consultancy role	Medium	n/a	Not involved	The organisation of the FG allowed the MA to strengthen ownership and present the revised version to the MC and involved key stakeholders.

				A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
8	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the PR ERDF Marche 2021-2027**	MA (regional)	Low – even after the FG, no interest in following up	n/a	None	n/a	Not involved	No major changes
9	**Italy**	regional	**MA of the ERDF -ESF+ Apulia 2021-2027 Region**	MA (regional)	Medium	n/a	None	Low	Not involved	The FG enhanced the attention on the roadmap and highlighted the necessity to enhance coordination with other regional line services. Difficulties in engaging them.

				A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
10	**Latvia**	national	**State Chancellery - Department for Foreign Financial Instruments**	CB	High	n/a	High	High	n/a	No major changes
11	**Lithuania**	national	**Ministry of Finance - Department of Investments**	MA	High		Medium	High	n/a	No major changes

					A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
1 2	**Poland**	regional	**Marshall's Office Lubelskie Region**	MA	High	n/a	Meetings with the OECD team, other EU fund implementing bodies and regional programme counterparts	More involved, as changes in the organisational structure occurred	n/a	The involvement of the Marshal's office and external partners in the design phase was pivotal for a smooth implementation phase, even though it was difficult to keep the interest high.

					A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
1 3	**Portugal**	national	**Agência para o Desenvolvimento e Coesão**	CB	High	Medium - Roadmap presented at the programmes MC – consultative role	Informed on the roadmap implementation	High	Low	The AD&C is fully committed to maintaining high levels of interest and attention on the roadmap and elaborating monitoring reports on it.
1 4	**Romania**	national	**Ministry of EU funds**	MA	Medium – effort to follow up on the meeting held in December 2024	n/a	n/a	n/a	Not involved	The MA has difficulties advancing work and engaging with stakeholders.

				A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
15	**Romania**	regional	**North-East Regional Development Agency**	MA	High	n/a	High	High	Not involved	No major changes
16	**Slovenia**	national	**Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development**	MA	Low–rising interest in the organisation of the FG, but no real follow-up	n/a	Low	None	Not involved	The MA did not advance the work, and interest remains very low.
17	**Slovakia**	national	**Central Coordination Authority**	CB	Low–rising interest in the organisation of the FG, but no real follow-up	n/a	Low	None	Not involved	The MA did not advance the work, and interest remains very low.

					A	B	C	D	E	A+B+C+D+E
18	**Spain**	national	**Directorate-General for European Funds Ministry of Finance and Public Administration**	MA	Medium - rising interest from the organisation of the same FG, and effort to follow-up	n/a	Medium	n/a	n/a	The MA pushes forward the work, despite difficulties in maintaining interest.

Key elements that emerged from the analysis:

- Since the development of the roadmaps, there are no changes in terms of their roadmapgovernance model, geographical and funds coverage.

- In one case, the **Lazio** (IT) roadmapthe MA updated its regional roadmap, which was developed in 2022, taking into account the completion of some of the actions and the subsequent emergence of new needs and challenges.

- The presentation of the document to the programme MC was an important step to making the roadmap more visible, as well as increasing the accountability and ownership of the process, not only for the MA but also for the key stakeholders and beneficiaries. The programme authorities in **Bulgaria**, **Lazio** (IT), **Portugal**, and **Estonia** presented and discussed the strategic documents during the MC of the Cohesion Policy programmes. These are the main effects identified:

    o It increases transparency of the roadmaps and makes them more visible to key stakeholders, raising attention to this document.

    o It enhances MA/CB ownership, as well as of key stakeholders involved in the process, while at the same time opens a forum for dialogue with regional/national actors, implementing bodies (IBs), and other partners.

    o The roadmap goals can be better aligned with the programme priorities.

- According to the programme authorities, presentation of the roadmap during the programme MC can enhance the engagement of key players in the process, maintaining high levels of interest and attention is difficult. Roadmaps are sometimes viewed as secondary to immediate programme implementation and therefore not pivotal.

- Commitment and support from political actors are often lacking, partly because roadmaps are perceived as secondary tools and they did not express interest in being involved. This further limited attention to the process, and thus the roadmap relevance.

3.2.   Situation "as is" and "to be"
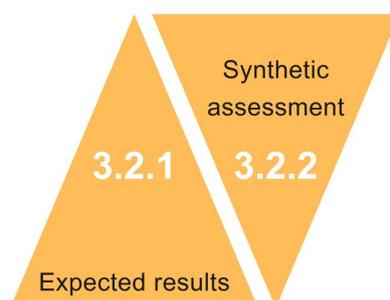
This section examines how the situation "as is" (initial diagnosis) and the situation "to be" (strategic vision) identified during the design phase are reflected in the actual implementation of the roadmaps. It assesses whether the originally mapped capacity gaps, needs, and challenges remain relevant, and to what extent the intended goals are being pursued and realised in practice. The implementation phase is when roadmaps are applied in practice not just as planning tools but as living strategies. The degree to which the situation "as is" has evolved and whether concrete progress is being made towards the situation "to be" objectives offer insights into the effectiveness, adaptability and ownership of the roadmap. This section explores whether the actions set out in the analysed roadmaps are aligned with the original logic of each document, whether updates have been made to reflect emerging needs, and whether the relevant stakeholders have remained engaged in the process. It also considers whether monitoring systems are in place and capable of tracking the implementation.

3.2.1.   Expected results

Before assessing how implementation has progressed, it is useful to restate the changes that some of the roadmaps aimed to bring about. These expected results serve as the benchmark for evaluating alignment between intention and practice.

The expected results vary across the roadmaps, with a number of cases generating positive indirect results. The section highlights both the enabling factors that positively contributed to the implementation of the roadmap, as well as the challenges that hampered the implementation or had a negative impact. The section concludes with possible solutions to consider to address these challenges and facilitate more effective implementation.

Firstly, strong institutional communication and commitment can counterbalance administrative burden, limited time, human and financial resource constraints, and lack of ownership.

The analysis has identified a number of elements or conditions that may have contributed to negative impacts during the design or implementation of the roadmaps. Some of these overlap with the negative factors previously discussed. In particular, perceiving administrative-capacity building roadmaps as an obligation or a top-down

request can have adverse implications, as seen in the **Polish** and **Hungarian** experiences. Similarly, **Hungary** and **Latvia** also reported that the urgency of responding to ongoing EC requests had at times burdened the roadmap development process. In addition, resource-related constraints were also noted, for instance, restricted funding and the limited availability of time for active participation in the process were mentioned by **Bulgaria**, **Estonia**, **Latvia** and **Poland**. The challenge to maintain momentum and high ownership among the key players was another potential negative factor, identified by **Estonia**, **Bulgaria** and the region of **Lazio** (IT).

Potential solutions to counterbalance these effects include streamlining and simplifying the overall process and providing adequate resources to ensure continuation. **Enhancing communication**, not only between the actors involved, but also with the EC, would facilitate the process, clarify the goals and foster honest exchanges on the progress, as stressed by the **Hungarian**, **Latvian** and regional roadmap of **Lazio** (IT). Exchanges among peers and other member states, peer-to-peer learning and experience sharing, exchanges on good practices, and networking can also be useful, according to **Estonia**, **Portugal**, **Lithuania**, **Bulgaria** and the region of **Lazio** (IT).

Estonia, and **Portugal** highlighted the need for **dedicated human and/or financial resources** to support roadmap activities. **Poland** proposed the launch of calls for proposals by the EC for MAs to elaborate roadmaps, while **Estonia** suggested the introduction of administrative capacity as a separate policy priority to dedicate budget to initiatives in this area. Looking for alternatives to finance the process may be a further solution, as **Latvia** did, being the first country to make use of FNLC for the implementation of the roadmap.

Overall, **strong stakeholder engagement** and fostering ownership are decisive factors in identifying solutions and counterbalances to address emerging challenges, during both the design and the implementation phase of the roadmap development.

Results vary across roadmaps, depending on the existence of a monitoring and evaluation system, the objectives and the stage of implementation of the roadmap.

Having a monitoring and evaluation process in place - defining indicators for the process, setting goals and milestones - is in most cases a key step for monitoring the progress of actions, objectives and the overall strategy. In most cases, there is a clear description of the actions and expected results. Some countries have established clear, measurable indicators, while others have focused on broader objectives, leaving expected outcomes less defined (see section 2.5 for details). **Hungary**, for instance, outlined 46 specific actions with descriptions, contributions to challenges, and clear links to expected outcomes. Of these, 19 are considered achieved, while others are ongoing. **Portugal** has a comprehensive measurement system, however, indicators and milestones defined beforehand do not reflect the actual objectives of the actions.

Not all roadmaps have developed a monitoring system for their actions. For instance, this is the case for **Poland, Lithuania, Greece, Czechia, and Bulgaria**. However, they have all set actions. **Greece** achieved its set goals, however, without any monitoring system in place. In other cases, it is difficult to assess whether the results have been

reached, because it is still too early for such an assessment, as in the case of the **Latvian, Czech, Bulgarian and Romanian** roadmaps, where the roadmap actions are still to be launched. In general terms, it is crucial for roadmaps to include a monitoring system to compare expected and achieved results effectively. In the case of the **Slovakian** roadmap, although there are targets and output indicators specified in its Annex, there is little knowledge about their achievement and their actual impact on changing the situation. Lastly, in **Lithuania**, the established indicators were too broad to measure the impact of specific actions accurately.

Indirect, positive results on the progress of the roadmaps are empirically observed in terms of increased internal and external cooperation and exchange, internal cohesion and reduced administrative burden

From a qualitative perspective, drawing upon the interviews and focus groups carried out in the framework of the analysis, several countries noted positive changes based on empirical observation regarding the progress of the roadmaps. This was for instance, highlighted in the case of **Poland**, even though not all targets had been reached. In the framework of the roadmap of the Region **Lubelskie** (PL), there have been improvements in cooperation between MAs, IBs, and beneficiaries, as well as enhanced employee satisfaction. In the case of the **Hungarian** roadmap, positive results were reported on many actions implemented in the roadmap, related to stronger internal cohesion and simplified administrative procedures.

In **Greece**, the roadmap has improved coordination across MAs and encouraged personnel engagement. The regional roadmap of **Lazio** (IT) reported increased collaboration and exchange with other MS, a reduction in the administrative burden internally and externally, as well as benefits related to the programme implementation and the opportunity to identify any weak points from the beginning. The **Latvian** roadmap also reported higher and more structured collaboration between the units involved and responsible for implementing various administrative capacity measures. The **Bulgarian** roadmap also aims to increase knowledge-sharing and experience, while a change in the mindset has also been observed; actors and beneficiaries are addressing the roadmap in a structured way, proposing actions and inputs, and a dialogue has been initiated.

Good cooperation, information exchange, increased ownership and experience can positively contribute to successful roadmap implementation.

Positive changes in administrative capacity are enabled through a combination of factors and can significantly contribute to successful roadmap implementation. Effective collaboration among the key roadmap players, along with longstanding experience of working together, well-qualified personnel and strong internal coherence, has been listed among the most important factors generating positive change. Examples are seen in the **Greek** roadmap process, where the extensive experience of personnel working in ESIF, strong cooperation with relevant national players, effective teamwork, and external support from the OECD contributed to bringing positive results.

Similarly, the **Hungarian** experience also highlights the human aspect, where strong relationships among key players and experienced personnel played an important role in the process. Furthermore, participation in networks such as the DG REGIO peer2peer scheme provided Member States with further support.

Strong ownership of the roadmap is also key in both the development and implementation of the roadmap. It reflects an increased willingness to invest time and resources, and develop internal processes that align the MA with the roadmap concept, as was illustrated by the regional roadmap experience in **Lazio** (IT).

Good timing, i.e. the roadmap being implemented in parallel with other relevant discussions, has also proven beneficial as in the case of **Slovakia**, or during the broader national structural reforms in the administrative system, in **Lithuania**. Lastly, the need for maintaining a unified funding source with consistent regulations to streamline the administrative capacity-building efforts would be a positive factor, reducing any administrative burden.

3.2.2. Synthetic assessment

This section examines how implementation aligns with the original intent of the analysed roadmaps, particularly whether the needs, objectives, and stakeholder involvement identified during the design phase remain valid and appropriate. The analysis is structured around the following questions:

- Are the needs still relevant for the territory and organisation?

- Is the quantification of needs still valid?

- Are relevant stakeholders involved in the roadmap implementation?

- Are the stakeholders relevant for the roadmap implementation?

- Are the roadmap objectives still valid?

- Are the objectives still linked to the needs?

Together, these questions help assess whether the analysed roadmaps continue to serve as a meaningful tool or whether their implementation has drifted from the original plans.

The analysis reveals a generally strong degree of continuity and relevance in both strategic direction and stakeholder engagement during implementation. Eleven roadmaps confirmed that the identified needs remain pertinent to the territory and the organisation, with no case reporting a complete loss of relevance. While fewer roadmaps validated the continued accuracy of need quantification, none considered it entirely outdated, suggesting a partial but still meaningful analytical basis. Stakeholder involvement also reflects a positive trajectory, with most cases confirming the participation of relevant actors and the appropriateness of those engaged. Overall, these findings point to a broadly stable level of strategic and operational coherence

over time, though some variation in stakeholder depth and the updating of analytical inputs underscores the importance of regular reassessment.

Needs are mostly still relevant during implementation

The needs identified in the design phase are still relevant during implementation for most roadmaps, notably in **Hungary**, **Lithuania**, **Estonia** and **Bulgaria**. In **Greece**, the needs are still relevant as they regard administrative and regulatory framework challenges for the MA. In **Latvia** and **Slovenia**, the needs are still relevant and need to be monitored, assessed and updated regularly. In **Czechia**, the updated roadmap is similar to the previous one and the needs continue to be relevant. However, this is difficult to fully assess without clear information. The **Slovakian** roadmap is difficult to assess as some measures are complete, and the roadmap is outdated; other needs may now be reflected in other documents and processes. The **Polish** roadmap has been finalised and will not continue.

However, in some cases the identified needs are not quantified, as seen in **Slovenia** and **Latvia**, or the information is limited, as in **Slovakia**. In some instances, the roadmaps have already been finalised, as is the case in **Greece**, or quantification is not followed up, as in **Spain**, where indicators are not accompanied by targets or milestones. During the implementation of the **Hungarian** roadmap, regular stakeholder meetings reviewed the progress of actions, identified emerging needs and amended the roadmap accordingly. Similarly, in **Lithuania**, to address their needs, stakeholders developed a list of challenges focusing on skills shortages, inter-agency coordination, and the need for methodological support. In other cases, it is difficult to assess whether the originally identified needs are still relevant during the implementation of the roadmap. In **Portugal**, for instance, as in many other cases, there is no public information on the status of implementation. Similarly, the two **Romanian** roadmaps do not detail the mechanisms to ensure implementation, while the roadmap of **Bulgaria** has not been finalised yet, making assessment premature. Nevertheless, the roadmap is a 'living document' and the identified needs remain relevant and are regularly updated.

A few roadmaps mention that the objectives are still fully or partially valid and linked with needs during implementation.

The roadmaps developed by **Lithuania**, **Latvia**, **Estonia** and **Bulgaria** indicate that their objectives remain relevant. More specifically, in **Latvia**, although it is still early and no results are available yet, the overall impression is that implementation is progressing well and the objectives are still valid. The **Latvian** roadmap needs are updated regularly, and the objectives remain broad enough for ongoing adjustments. In **Bulgaria**, the development has been a lengthy process; with the document still in preparation, the objectives remain valid.

Estonia emphasises that objectives related to training and capacity building require long-term commitment and sustained effort. Although administrative capacity building

through the roadmap is delivering results and partner involvement is strong, constant capacity building is needed. Beneficiaries report annually on activities carried out during the year and on the roadmap indicators. This reporting feeds into the dialogue with the EC to describe the activities and support the implementation of the operational programme. Estonia has already seen the results of capacity building in increased participation in meetings, an improvement in the quality of reporting and stronger partner contributions to policymaking, while training remains a long-term process. Although the **Lithuanian** roadmap faces challenges with capacity and time pressure, training and skills development remain very important. For upskilling and training, annual need assessments and evaluations help guide the implementation of the roadmap. Based on these, the Ministry of Finance, develops a comprehensive training plan for the entire Management and Control System, with internal peer training for colleagues within the Ministry of Finance prioritised.

Some objectives are partially or no longer valid or linked to the needs.

This was highlighted in the cases of **Greece** and **Poland,** where roadmaps have already been concluded. This is also due to the regular emergence of new needs, so that even if some needs remain relevant, the objectives require reassessment, as seen in **Slovenia**. In other cases, it is difficult to determine whether the objectives are still valid. This is because the roadmap does not present a clear overarching strategy with defined goals and objectives, or there is no clear 'to be' situation after identification of the needs, as seen in **Slovakia** and **Hungary** respectively. Similarly, in **Czechia**, most objectives are probably still relevant, as the latest roadmap version is very similar to the old one, nevertheless an evaluation is expected which will assess whether the needs are still valid or whether new ones have emerged. In **Portugal** there are no updated documents for the results of the implementation.

Quantification of the needs

Across the examined roadmaps, the quantification of needs remains one of the most challenging aspects. While most roadmaps begin with the sound identification of needs, few proceed to translate these into measurable targets. As a result, the link between identified needs and the corresponding actions is often descriptive rather than analytical, limiting the operational feasibility of the plans.

In some cases, national or regional authorities have attempted more structured approaches to quantification, but these remain partial. The **Portuguese** roadmap, for example, introduced its monitoring system explicitly aligned with its strategic axes. Indicators were selected using a defined set of criteria, including their relevance to the strategic objective, feasibility for longitudinal tracking, and alignment with operational capacity. However, the underlying quantification of needs remained fragmentary. Many actions remained anchored to assumptions rather than numerical evidence of the gaps they intended to address, challenging the process of measuring the progress of the actions and the overall implementation of the roadmap.

The consequences of this gap are significant. Without a clear quantification of needs, it becomes difficult to assess whether the proposed actions are realistic and sufficient. Feasibility is left to assumption, and monitoring becomes more about tracking implementation than evaluating whether interventions are addressing the most pressing capacity needs. Ultimately, the move towards a more quantitative framing of needs is essential not only for improving internal coherence and accountability but also for making roadmaps more effective vehicles for administrative transformation.

Stakeholders are still important, though they differ for design and implementation.

In **Hungary**, **Slovenia**, **Latvia**, **Estonia**, **Greece** and **Bulgaria**, stakeholders involved in designing the roadmap are also involved during implementation. Stakeholder involvement is crucial during implementation, as highlighted by the Slovenian, Latvian and Greek roadmaps. In **Lithuania**, project promoters should be more involved in the roadmap activities, as enhanced cooperation can yield better results. Furthermore, including experienced project implementers would help ensure that broader interests are represented. The **Slovakian** roadmap identifies key stakeholders involved in its design, mainly through consultations held during the preparation of the Partnership Agreement. However, since specific actions are implemented outside the scope of the roadmap through complementary documents, it is unclear whether the identified stakeholders are actively involved in their implementation.

3.2.3. Synthetic assessment

For the section 3.2., the main elements of assessment are included in the previous sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

3.3. Implementing ACB actions

Synthetic
assessment

3.3.1   3.3.2

Implementation
status
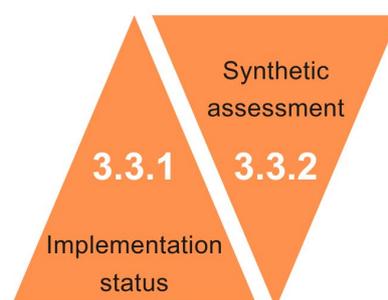
This section presents information from the desk analysis and on-field activities on the implementation of roadmap actions especially:

- The timing, whether the actions have been launched, are ongoing, or are planned (3.3.1).

- Assessment of limits and strengths of the actions (3.3.2).

3.3.1. Implementation status of the actions

As presented in section 2.4, the analysed roadmaps include very different number of actions:

Table 17 - Number of actions in the roadmaps

Roadmap	National or regional	Nr. of actions
Romania	National (13) and regional (1)	**236**
Bulgaria	National	**87**
Croatia	National	**63**
Italy	Regional (3)	**47 ([38])**
Latvia	National	**42**
Hungary	National	**41**
Portugal	National	**35**
Slovenia	National	**33**
Greece	National	**19**
Spain	National	**15**
Czechia	National	**14**
Slovakia	National	**11**
Lithuania	National	**8**
Poland	Regional (1)	**7**

([38]) Lazio = 18, Marche = 12, Apulia = 17.

Roadmap	National or regional	Nr. of actions
Estonia	National	**5**
Total		**663**

Consortium elaboration, based on the analysed roadmaps

Figure 25 presents the roadmap actions divided into three categories based on their implementation status: to be launched, ongoing, completed. Where there is no information, they are classified as 'NA', not applicable.

Figure 25 - Implementation status of the actions
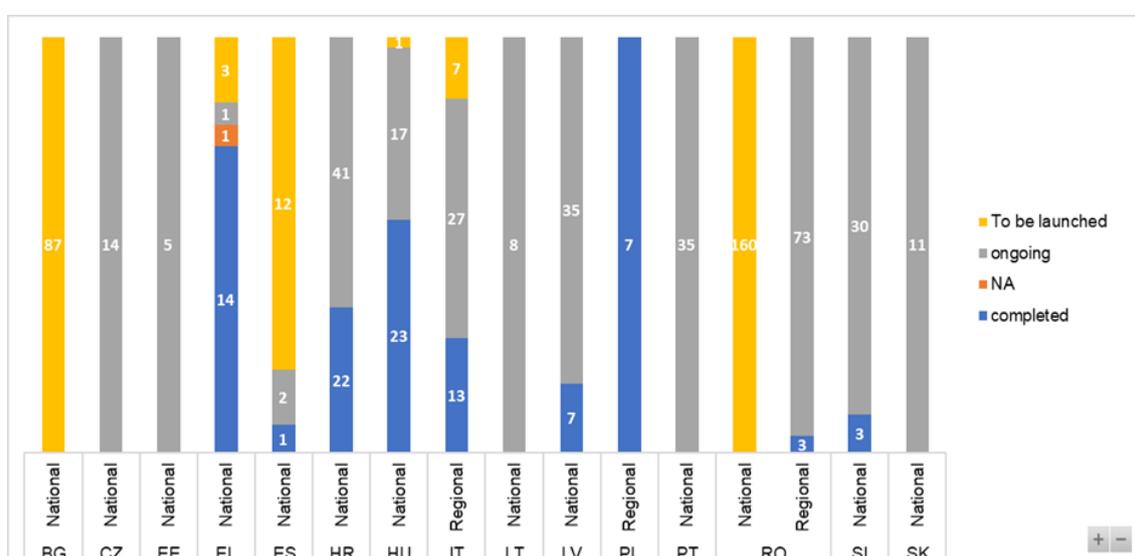
Consortium elaboration

Most roadmaps have actions that are in the implementation phase, however there is a notable disparity between Member States that can be divided in 3 main types:

"Advanced". In the **Greek** and **Polish** roadmaps most actions have been completed, mainly because these roadmaps were designed under the DG REGIO pilot project, starting already in 2020. Consequently, their advanced state of implementation may be due to their earlier initiation compared to other roadmaps, where design and implementation started later.

In the **Hungarian** and **Croatian** roadmaps a significant number of actions are ongoing, implementation is progressing faster than other roadmaps, and many actions are completed. This is also the case for **Italy** where actions, particularly under the **Lazio** regional roadmap, are progressing rapidly towards completion.

"Progressing". For the **Slovenian, Latvian** and **North-East** (RO) roadmaps, a few actions have been completed, though most are currently ongoing. This suggests that these Member States have made progress but are still actively working through a

substantial portion of their planned actions. Moreover, the **Slovenian** owners of the roadmap reported that they will review and update the capacity building actions. This applies also to the **Lazio** (IT) regional roadmap.

For roadmaps in **Czechia, Estonia, Lithuania, Portugal** and **Slovakia**, progress is underway, as actions are all ongoing, but no actions have reached full completion.

"Newcomers". In a few cases, specifically in the **Bulgarian, Spanish** and **Romanian** (national) roadmaps, most actions are still to be launched. This applies also to the **Marche** (IT) and **Apulia** (IT) roadmaps.

Figure 26, Figure 27 and Figure 28 illustrate the implementation status for each Member State.

Figure 26 - Type of completed actions per Member State
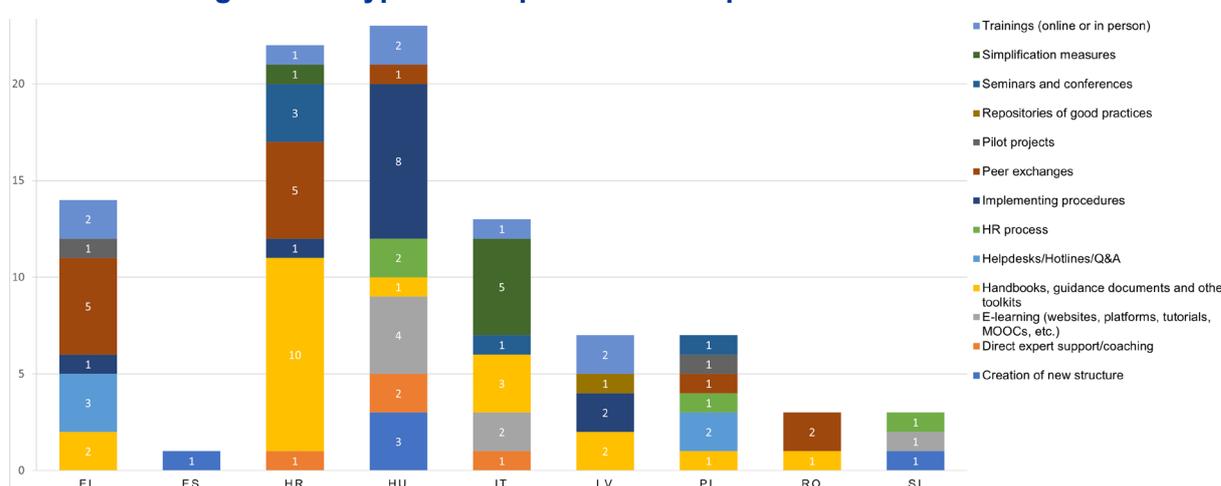
Consortium elaboration

According to the degree of implementation, the ACB actions can be defined as follows.

Completed actions

Handbooks, guidance documents, and other toolkits emerges as the most commonly completed action in **Croatia**, and frequently completed in **Greece**, **Hungary**, **Latvia**, **Italy**, **Poland** and **Romania** (regional). For instance, in **Hungary**, clear and simple guidelines on amendments to the CPR were updated and published on the institutional website, whereas in **Croatia** comprehensive reports support the development of the Territorial Plan for a Just Transition.

Implementing procedures are among the most frequently completed categories. These include actions such as strengthening cooperation with OLAF, as outlined in the Hungarian roadmap, as well as developing improved and more effective policy planning, coordination, processes and services, as seen in the **Greek**, **Croatian**, and **Latvian** roadmaps.

Peer exchange related actions have also been completed in a number of roadmaps. For example, the **Greek** roadmap introduced knowledge-sharing mechanisms within

the MA. These foster organisational integration and harmonisation across different sectors, strengthening collaborative practices and institutional cohesion. This type of actions have also been completed under the Croatian, Hungarian, Polish and Romanian and roadmaps.

Six Member States completed a number of actions related to **training**. These include the national roadmaps of **Greece**, **Spain**, **Croatia**, **Hungary**, **Latvia**, as well as the regional roadmap of **Italy**. Examples include an action plan to develop competences through internal learning based on a self-assessment questionnaire on competences, as in the **Greek** roadmap. Another example is the design of training and information activities targeted at staff responsible for managing operations financed with EU resources, as outlined in the Italian regional roadmap.

Figure 27 - Type of ongoing actions
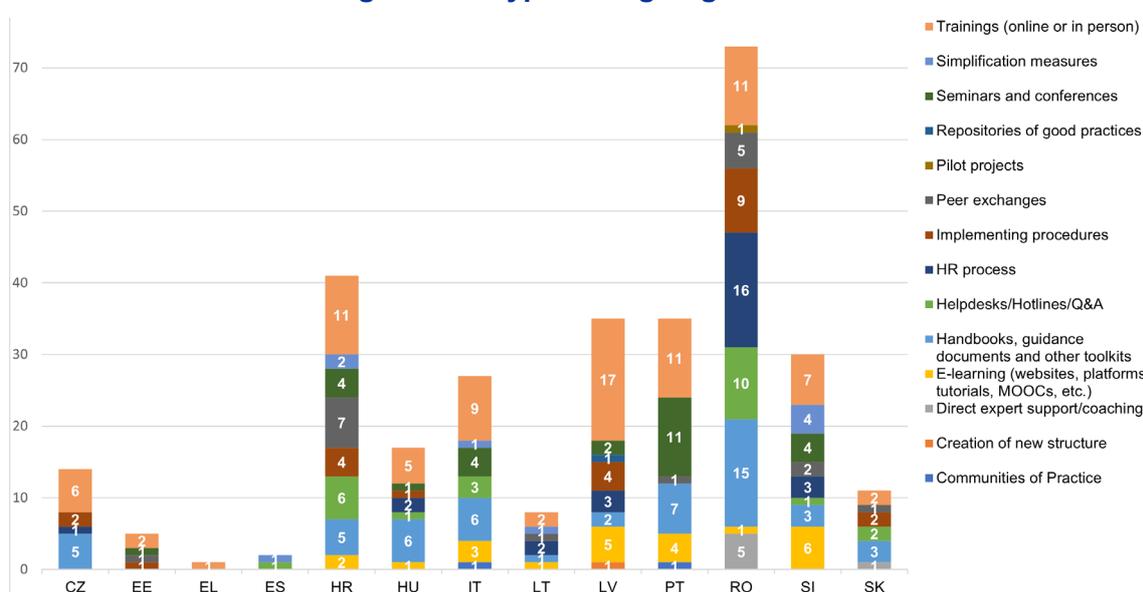
Consortium elaboration

Ongoing actions

The number of actions in the implementation phase varies by Member State. There are several ongoing ones in the national roadmaps of **Croatia**, **Latvia**, **Portugal**, **Romania** and **Slovenia**, as well as in the **Italian regional** ones. **Greece**, **Spain**, and **Lithuania** have few actions still in progress.

Trainings (online or in person) is the most frequently ongoing type of action, in the **Czech**, **Estonian**, **Greek**, **Croatian**, **Lithuanian**, **Latvian**, **Portuguese** and **Slovenian** national roadmaps and the **Romanian** and **Italian regional** roadmaps. Actions in this category include technical capacity building for beneficiaries, media and political staff in **Portugal**, or tailor-made training for NGOs in **Slovenia**. It is worth noting that training is per se the most common and 'traditional' CB action and the one that is most frequently included in the roadmaps. Moreover, given their sometimes multi-annual nature, it is quite understandable that most training actions are still ongoing.

Similarly, **handbooks, guidance documents, and other toolkits** actions are ongoing in the **Czech**, **Croatian**, **Hungarian**, **Portuguese**, **Slovenian** and **Slovakian** national roadmaps and in the **Italian** and **Romanian** regional roadmaps. Actions include a strategic framework for the fight against fraud for 2021-27, in the **Hungarian** roadmap, or tools and methodologies related to gender mainstreaming, in the **Apulian** (IT) regional roadmap.

Actions related to **human resources processes** are being implemented in the **Czech**, **Hungarian**, **Lithuanian**, **Latvian** and **Slovenian** national roadmaps, and in the **North-East** (RO) regional roadmap. These actions include identifying barriers and incentives for competency development, exploring existing and new recruitment channels, as well as identifying hard-to-recruit skills.

E-learning actions are being implemented under the **Croatian, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Portuguese** and **Slovenian** national roadmaps and in the Italian and **Romanian** regional ones. Actions in this category include digitising data, streamlining and integrating regional information systems and platforms to consolidate the digital transition in the Italian regional roadmaps, upgrading and adapting the e-MA2 information system in the **Slovenian** roadmap, and a new digital collaborative portal for territorial actor capacity building in the **Portuguese** one.

Simplification measures are still ongoing in the **Croatian, Lithuanian, Spanish**, and **Slovenian** national roadmap and in the Italian regional roadmap. This category includes actions introducing SCOs, such as in the **Italian** regional roadmaps, or integrating innovation, optimising and innovating processes for more efficient and effective implementation, as in **Slovenia**.

Figure 28 - Type of actions to be launched, per Member State
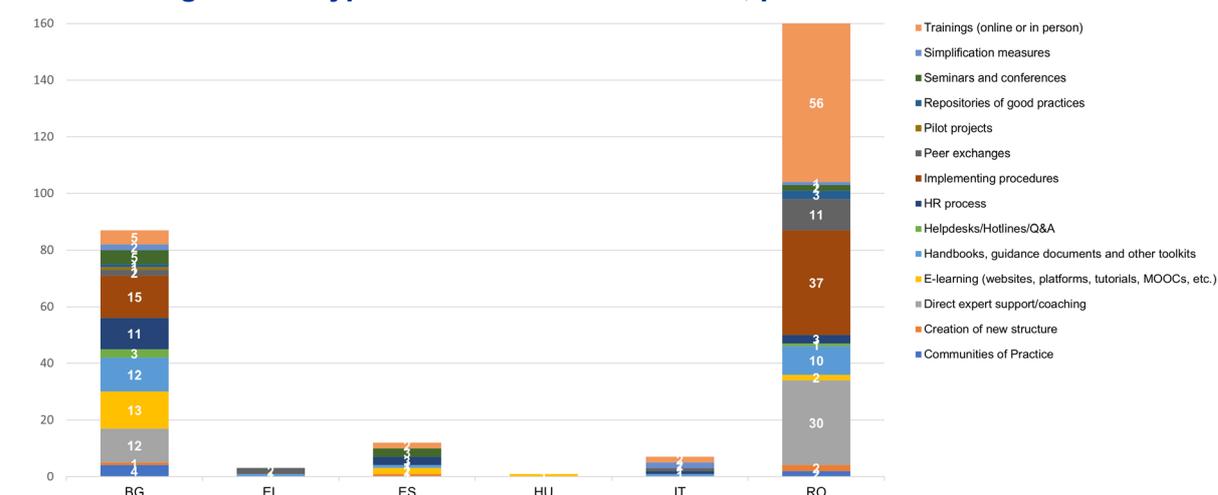
Consortium elaboration

To be launched

For the **Bulgarian** and **Romanian** national roadmaps, all the actions have yet to be launched.

For the **Bulgarian roadmap**, several actions relate to implementing procedures, including the introduction of artificial intelligence to optimise Monitoring and Control System processes. Similarly, e-learning activities are widely planned and include an online library for knowledge-sharing on programming as part of the online platform for communities of practitioners, direct expert support and coaching as well as handbooks, guidance documents and toolkits. Other actions relate to training, simplification, seminars and conferences, repositories of good practices, pilot projects, peer exchange, helpdesks and hotlines, and communities of practice.

In the **Romanian national roadmap**, several actions relate to training, for instance covering programme management structures on the health system organisation, effective public health programmes and interventions, factors ensuring project sustainability. Other actions relate to procedures to be implemented, including supporting investments to complete the reforms and actions derived from the Policy Support Facility. Several actions should deliver direct expert support and coaching, other actions include peer exchanges, handbooks, guidance documents and other tools, seminars and conferences, repositories of good practices, communities of practice, human resources processes, helpdesks, hotlines, or Q&As, and the development of e-learning activities and instruments.

Actions still to be launched under the **Spanish national roadmap** relate to different categories. In particular, they include training, seminars and conferences, human resources processes, handbooks, guidance documents and other toolkits, e-learning activities and instruments, as well as new structures to be created.

Similarly, actions still to be launched under the **Italian regional roadmaps** vary and include training, simplification, peer exchanges, human resources processes, and handbooks, guidance documents, and toolkits.

Under the **Greek national roadmap**, few actions still have to be launched, in particular peer exchanges, for instance a study visit (using TAIEX tool) to a similar MA to share experiences and identify best practices, and the delivery of handbooks, guidance and other toolkits to develop Internal Rules of Procedure, common to all MAs and applying to all their staff.

Finally, in the **Hungarian national roadmap**, only the development of e-learning services and instruments still has to be launched. The actions include updating the palyazat.gov website, to increase transparency and user-friendliness and comply with CPR requirements.

The assessment indicates moderate progress in maintaining strategic coherence and executing planned actions during implementation. Responsible actors for ten roadmaps confirmed that their actions remain aligned with the original strategy, and none reported a complete disconnect. Actions are progressing toward their targets in eight cases, and only two reported that any targets had already been achieved. Most implementation timelines appear to be

reasonably on track. Monitoring emerges as a key weakness: responsible actors are involved in the monitoring process in just six cases, and only three roadmaps have a functioning monitoring system in place. Additionally, only two roadmaps confirmed that human resources are sufficient to fully implement the envisaged actions. These findings suggest that while strategic alignment is broadly sustained and partial progress is evident, significant implementation challenges persist—especially in monitoring capacity, resource adequacy, and operational consistency—often linked to the varying stages of roadmap maturity. However, it is important to note that for several indicators, a significant number of roadmaps could not be assessed—primarily due to substantial differences in timing, levels of maturity, or the availability of data related to implementation and monitoring.

3.3.2. Synthetic assessment

For the section 3.3., the main elements of assessment are included in the previous section 3.3.1.

3.4. Coordination and communication
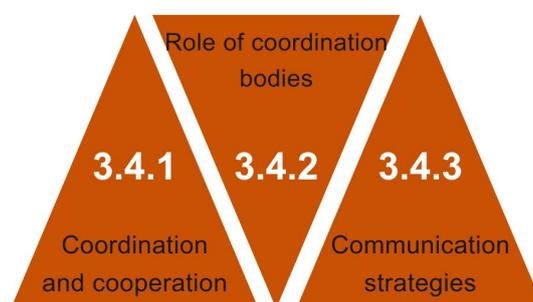
This section examines how Member States organised coordination and communication during the implementation of their roadmaps. It covers:

- Coordination, cooperation and exchanges with programme authorities, both within the Member State and across Member States (3.4.1).

- The specific role of national coordination bodies in the implementation phase (3.4.2).

- Internal and external communication and information strategies, including the dissemination of outcomes and the results of the roadmaps (3.4.3).

3.4.1. Coordination, cooperation and exchanges with programme authorities

As mentioned in section 2.1.2, roadmaps are primarily managed by the MA of the national or regional programmes and the national CBs. Effective implementation thus relies on coordination mechanisms that bring together all relevant programme authorities. Across the roadmaps that have entered implementation, coordination mechanisms vary considerably, depending on national administrative traditions or governance models, however, patterns can be identified.

Intra-State cooperation

A number of Member States developed structured intra-state cooperation **mechanisms** to support roadmap implementation, particularly where the governance model required coordination among multiple MAs, IBs, and line ministries.

The **Spanish** roadmap sets out plans for the establishment of two new bodies to improve cross-cutting coordination and support the implementation of Cohesion Policy programmes, including ACB actions.

In **Estonia**, the analysis highlights the continuous exchange of information between the programme authorities and IBs, and regular meetings to keep all parties updated. The MS recently updated the SF Extranet, a web-based knowledge pool containing guidelines, working group memos, practical interpretations of legal acts and training

materials. Ministries and IBs involve their partners in designing and preparing legal acts, which is one of the key actions set out in the roadmap. The most recent digital development is Power BI on the SF Extranet, which makes it possible to visualise goals, constantly monitor the implementation results and the respective national legislative process, and detect and react to problems immediately. This information is continuously updated and made available to all stakeholders so that the funds can be implemented on time and with maximum effect.

Consortium elaboration

In many Member States, intra-state cooperation has been reinforced through deliberate **peer-exchange actions**, which in turn support the joint implementation of all roadmap measures. For instance, several roadmaps formally included study visits, thematic seminars, and focus groups that brought together MAs and IB staff to share practical solutions.

In other cases, enhanced cooperation emerged as an **indirect benefit** of the roadmap process, even where no formal structures were originally envisaged. Several Member States reported that preparing and implementing the roadmaps created opportunities for dialogue and encouraged a more collaborative culture, as in the cases of the Lazio region (IT), Croatia, Portugal, and Bulgaria.

Exchanges with different Member States enhanced interstate cooperation

As stated in section 2.4.4, some roadmaps (e.g. **Greece**, **Bulgaria**, **Slovenia**) included actions explicitly designed to foster exchanges between programme authorities in different Member States, most commonly via study visits and peer-review workshops, to seek practical guidance, learn from others' experience, and get inputs and ideas.

3.4.2. Role of national coordination bodies

National CBs play a pivotal role in coordinating multi-actor roadmap implementation, especially when it cuts across ministries or sectors. Their responsibilities typically include defining implementation protocols, ensuring that the actions remain aligned with both national reform priorities and EU Cohesion Policy objectives. Moreover, in some countries, they oversee progress monitoring and support the timely delivery of actions across institutional boundaries. The box below presents significant examples of how the CB plays a dominant role in the design and/or implementation phase of the roadmap, with different nuances.

The **Portuguese** AD&C played a significant role both in the design and implementation phase, as it organised workshops and meetings to collect inputs and comments from MAs, IBs, programme beneficiaries and various stakeholders. It facilitated exchanges across the design phase. The Agency plays a central role in coordinating, implementing and monitoring the ACB roadmap actions. The Agency is the reference point for solving issues and challenges that may arise during the

implementation phase, and for providing an overview of the implementation status of the roadmap.

The **Latvian CB** was the main actor that defined the overall policy and strategy to elaborate the roadmap, and assessed the skills and competence development in public administration. It plays a coordinating role in the strategic planning and oversight of the roadmap, aligning with the Latvian School of Public Administration, the Ministry of Finance, the Central Financing and Contracting Agency, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. It is currently in charge of overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the roadmap.

The **Croatian** CB played a proactive, pivotal role in the design phase of the roadmap: it collected inputs and feedback from MAs and programme stakeholders and beneficiaries through the organisation of several workshops and meetings. The CB was thus the 'focal point' coordinating requests from different actors, and facilitating exchange. However, the MAs were less actively involved at the stage when the CB needed to prioritise which ACB actions to include in the roadmap, limiting support for a more strategic selection of measures. By incorporating every proposal, the CB undermined its ability to coordinate and focus on the most urgent and needed actions. Consequently, the MA currently lacks the guiding role of the CB in the implementation phase.

Consortium elaboration

3.4.3. Communication and information strategies

Effective communication, both within the public administration and towards external actors (e.g., stakeholders, beneficiaries, civil society), is essential to raise awareness and sustain momentum.

However, none of the analysed roadmaps include a dedicated section presenting the communication strategy to disseminate their implementation status and results.

3.4.4. Synthetic assessment

For the section 3.4, the main elements of assessment are included in the previous sections 3.4.1 to 3.4.3.

3.5. Pre-conditions, enablers and barriers to roadmap implementation

The analysis identified pre-conditions, enablers and barriers shaping the implementation of the roadmaps. As mentioned at the beginning of section 3, not all roadmaps had entered the implementation phase at the time of analysis, and only few had progressed to full implementation, thus influencing the extent to which observations can be drawn.

Pre-conditions are the underlying structural factors that need to be in place before the roadmap implementation phase begins. These include a clear definition of the actions, objectives and areas of intervention, as well as a solid and structured governance model. Such pre-conditions stem from a structured design phase.

Enablers can be defined as elements that facilitate effective and efficient implementation of the roadmap by ensuring ongoing relevance, securing institutional support, and maintaining strategic alignment. These include regular updates and revisions of the document, support from key stakeholders and programme beneficiaries, as well as top management and political actors. Support from DG REGIO is also important to keep high levels of attention on progress made in building administrative capacity.

Barriers are factors that hamper and undermine roadmap implementation, and include an undefined or unclear vision, the ineffective allocation of human and financial resources, weak monitoring and evaluation systems, waning commitment from top management and political actors, declining stakeholder engagement, and overly complex administrative procedures.

Regarding pre-conditions, a clear definition of the actions and their objectives, for example structured in a table or matrix, ensured greater clarity for interpretation, prioritisation and execution. This is coherently linked to the explicit categorisation of areas of intervention (highlighted in the roadmaps that followed the OECD methodology), which helped in focusing attention on key issues and ensured better long-term prioritisation. Furthermore, as was the case for the design phase, a clear structure of the governance model provided the necessary coordination and ensured both the effective integration of new processes and the efficient management and allocation of resources needed for the implementation.

> The **Latvian** experience showcases how strong roadmap ownership facilitates the definition of the strategy, ensuring that key stakeholders are involved. Despite some difficulties during the implementation, the process is well managed by the State Chancellery, which defines a clear vision for the future, aligned with the Cohesion Policy programme.
>
> The **Portuguese** AD&C provides a clear vision of the roadmap governance model from the design phase onwards. This helps all key actors involved in the implementation to understand their role, areas of intervention, and how to coordinate with the CB. Moreover, the document was presented to all the key actors, directly and indirectly involved in the implementation, in June 2022, upon completion of the document. The methodology used to elaborate the roadmap also facilitated the clear definition of the needs and vision for the future. The Agency is additionally supporting dissemination and communication activities to maintain attention on the roadmap.

Consortium elaboration

Once pre-conditions are secured, several enablers were identified as positively influencing implementation. For instance, regular updates and revisions of the roadmap allowed for better adaptation to the evolving needs and challenges, ensuring the continued relevance of the document. Indeed, where the objectives remained

consistently linked to the needs identified during the design phase, implementation was more focused. MS also stressed that constant support from DG REGIO, including ad hoc guidance, targeted technical advice, and regular feedback, is pivotal for implementation, as structured communication is needed to maintain engagement and commitment among stakeholders.

Barriers can undermine the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation. The ineffective allocation of human resources, whether through understaffing or mismatched competencies, was highlighted by all the MS as an implementation challenge. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems made it difficult to track progress and assess the effectiveness of actions. Declining commitment from top management and political actors, especially when associated with a lack of coordination and communication, determined a decrease in stakeholder engagement, including programme authorities, implementing bodies, institutional partners and private organisations, which weakened the potential impact of the roadmaps.

3.5.1. Synthetic assessment

For the section 3.6, the main elements of assessment are included in the previous section.

4. Findings

This section summarises the findings of the study, which have been grouped according to the roadmap life cycle as presented in this report, i.e. design (section 2) and implementation (section 3).

Therefore, the findings are divided into **'design findings' (DF)** and **'implementation findings' (IF).** A third group, the **'horizontal findings' (HF)** relates to the overall structure and process of the roadmaps:

4.1. Findings on roadmap design

Design findings (DF) are presented and detailed below.

DF1 - The relevance of the roadmaps is underpinned by the soundness and clarity of the established methodology combined with a thorough need assessment.

The methodology set out in the EC toolkit has been used or consulted by most Member States in the development of their roadmaps. Some Member States followed their own methodology, based on available national studies, strategies, reports and other relevant material, which however followed mostly the logic of the EC toolkit, while a few roadmaps did not follow a clear methodology in their design. Member States that adopted structured methodologies presented a clearer identification of capacity building needs, a more structured set of actions, and evidence of internal coordination.

Among the examples o good practice, **Latvia** and **Portugal** stand out. **Latvia** integrated its roadmap into a broader administrative reform plan, using structured diagnosis to identify capacity gaps across multiple institutional layers and liking these to clearly priorities actions. **Portugal** applied a similarly robust approach, using both focus groups and surveys to define needs and cluster them into actionable areas. In **Greece**, OECD-supported workshops and consultations enabled the MAs of the national transport programme to develop a sound needs-based strategy.

In contrast, countries like **Czechia** and **Slovakia** did not apply a structured methodology or self-assessment instrument. Their roadmaps often compiled existing administrative issues or actions from prior operational documents without providing specific roadmap-based diagnosis. This resulted in more fragmented or generic sets of actions, limiting the roadmap's function as a strategic planning tool. **Estonia**, although

it used its own national experience rather than external tools (due to lack of availability at the time of development of their roadmap), demonstrated that internal analytical rigour could still lead to a coherent diagnosis and the development of relevant capacity-building priorities.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

DF2 - The needs identified during the design phase of the roadmaps - and their scope - vary across Member States. Nevertheless, there are common trends in the way actions are designed.

The needs assessment carried out during the design phase of the roadmaps revealed a wide spectrum of approaches across MSs. Some countries, such as **Latvia**, **Portugal**, and **Greece**, applied structured design methodologies leading to detailed diagnosis across key dimensions of administrative capacity. Others, including **Czechia**, **Slovakia**, and **Hungary**, relied more on existing documentation or summary assessments, which led to more generic identification of capacity challenges.

Nonetheless, when examining the roadmaps as a whole, common trends emerged in the type of actions that were designed to respond to the identified needs. In particular, the following thematic trends were observed across many MSs:

- improving human resources management and attracting and recruiting new candidates;

- upskilling and training personnel continuously;

- increasing the capacity building of beneficiaries;

- addressing strenuous framework conditions and sectoral challenges, and

- increasing stakeholder engagement and involvement in the process.

For example, **Lazio** (IT), **Apulia** (IT) and **Bulgaria** included actions aimed at improving human resources management and attracting and recruiting new candidates, including reforming recruitment systems and identifying priority profiles. They also targeted upskilling and training personnel continuously through structured training plans. **Portugal**, **Latvia** and **North-East** (RO) included a strong focus on increasing the capacity of beneficiaries, offering direct support, guidance materials and dedicated learning opportunities. **Hungary** addresses strenuous framework conditions and sectoral challenges by introducing training on public procurement, anti-fraud systems, and regulatory compliance. Finally, **Portugal**, **Latvia**, and **Romania** (national) also included mechanisms for increasing stakeholder engagement and involvement in the process, such as broad-based consultations, inter-ministerial coordination groups, and participatory roadmap updates.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.2.2 and 2.4.3

DF3 - The roadmap has been perceived as a 'living document' with some regional and national authorities updating and revising the document to adapt to the evolving needs and challenges of their region or Member State.

This flexibility allows Member States to align the roadmap more closely with shifting administrative priorities, emerging policy challenges, or newly identified capacity gaps by modifying certain measures (e.g. strengthening or expanding those that remain pertinent) and removing or replacing actions that prove impractical or no longer address pressing needs. This was well understood and is being carried out in some MS, like in the regional Polish roadmap and in the regional roadmap of Lazio.

In **Portugal**, the roadmap was designed to evolve over time and is already being adjusted to match implementation realities. The existence of an internal coordination and monitoring structure enables ongoing assessment of which actions remain relevant or require recalibration. In **Lithuania**, the roadmap is also perceived as a living document, supported by a coordination mechanism and provisions for regular revision and updating. In **Estonia**, authorities perceive the roadmap as a flexible tool. The document includes a lean set of focused actions, with the possibility of adapting them based on implementation feedback and evolving stakeholder needs.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.5.1, 2.5.2 and 3.1.2.

DF4 - The roadmaps show clear links in capacity-building requirements between their design and implementation phases.

There is alignment between the objectives and needs, as well as between the roadmaps' strategies with the Cohesion Policy programmes, the Country Specific Recommendations of Member States and the OECD pillars for capacity building. Indeed, in most cases, there is a clear logic connecting the needs identified during the situation "as is" and the objectives under the situation "to be." While the alignment with Cohesion Policy Programmes is particularly evident where the roadmaps served as a structuring instrument for TA planning, the formal inclusion of references to Annex D is neither widespread nor uniform.

The desk review confirms that the connection between the diagnosed capacity needs in the "as-is" analysis and the objectives framed for the "to-be" scenario is clearer where authorities used the EC Toolkit and/or the OECD self-assessment instrument. Concrete examples include **Bulgaria**, **Apulia** (IT) and **Croatia**. Bulgaria's national roadmap translates human resources shortage into goals on talent and attraction and career development, while also addressing an identified communication gap by expanding beneficiary-support formats. Apulia's (IT) regional roadmap mirrors its need for simplification by prioritising digitalisation actions. Likewise, the Croation roadmaps addresses human resources management and beneficiary support in direct response to its diagnostic findings. These examples show that roadmap coherence spans both national and regional documents, across different types of places. Conversely, where the strategic vision less present, the link between needs and actions remained weak,

underscoring the value of implementation of a structured methodology in the design phase.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.3.1 and 3.2.2

4.2. Findings on roadmap implementation

Implementation findings (IF) are detailed below.

IF1 - Execution of the roadmap actions is progressing, with 13 out of 18 roadmaps having entered the implementation phase.

Although some of the roadmaps have not yet entered the implementation phase, as in the case of **Bulgaria** and **Apulia** (IT), the programme authorities are confident that implementation will begin in 2025.

Other roadmaps, such as the **Lazio** (IT) regional one, have already updated their action plan to respond to the current challenges and to reflect the feasibility of the proposed timeline.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 3 and 3.1.2

IF2 - The fieldwork activities carried out in the MS covered by the study have reinforced and revitalised the focus on ACB activities.

In some Member States and regions, such as **Slovenia**, **Apulia** (IT), **Slovakia** and **Czechia**, roadmaps were drawn up almost two years before the time of the analysis (end of 2024), but implementation is still lagging.

In these cases, the organisation of the activities has revived attention to these issues and also provided an opportunity to reopen the debate and start updating the roadmap where necessary. In other cases, as Latvia and Slovenia, it was an opportunity to consider whether a wider range of stakeholders and programme beneficiaries should be involved in updating the document and the actions identified.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.2.1

IF3 - A frequent challenge is the lack of human resources and specific competencies to implement actions, which are difficult to acquire or integrate into the administrative structure.

Several Member States highlighted the persistent shortage of qualified human resources, affecting both the capacity to implement actions and the overall quality of administrative performance. Staff shortages (as seen in **Bulgaria** and **Apulia**), recruitment difficulties (as highlighted by **Czechia** and **Slovakia**), salary limitations (as

observed in Czechia and **Spain**), high workloads (**Poland**), and limited professional development opportunities (as emphasized by **Greece**) have undermined the attractiveness of positions in cohesion fund management and weakened institutional effectiveness.

In many cases (particularly in Greece), these issues are compounded by structural problems such as hiring freezes, limited career progression, and a lack of soft skills training. Roadmap stakeholders have consistently emphasised the need for targeted capacity-building, more flexible recruitment strategies, and sustained investment in professional development to ensure that both new and existing staff possess the necessary skills to deliver results.

Moreover, gaps are not only quantitative but also qualitative: in several administrations (as for example Latvia and Slovakia), key areas such as public procurement, financial management, and strategic planning suffer from a lack of in-depth expertise.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.4.7 and 3.2.1

IF4 - Another significant challenge to implementation is the presence of complex procedures that hinder the execution of actions.

Cumbersome procedures, overlapping responsibilities, and restrictive legal or institutional frameworks often lead to inefficiencies, delays, and added burdens for both implementing authorities and beneficiaries. For instance, in the **Estonian** roadmap audit and control rules remain overly detailed and time-consuming, while in **Czechia** efforts to simplify procedures have not fully resolved underlying complexity, with beneficiaries continuing to call for broader use of simplified cost options and other streamlining tools.

Coordination across multiple levels of government also presents a recurring challenge, particularly where numerous institutions need to align systems and processes (e.g. **Spain**), while in **Greece** and **Portugal** long administrative timelines and procedural rigidity have slowed implementation.

Moreover, even adjustments to strategic management and monitoring control processes increased the administrative workload for beneficiaries, as it was the case for **Lithuania**, particularly during the extended project design phase.

Legal constraints can add to implementation challenges, as the **Slovakian** Civil Service Act which restricts efficient assignment of personnel according to the changing needs of EU fund implementation stages, or as it is in **Poland**, with legal constraints that limit skilled personnel mobility, creating inefficiencies in aligning staff allocation with programme needs.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 3.2.1 and 3.4.1

IF5 - A weak strategy or a lack of targeted actions was also a challenge to implementation.

Some roadmaps illustrate the challenges that arise when strategies include a high number of actions or initiatives without clear prioritisation or strategic focus. For instance, the extensive volume of planned activities in **Bulgaria** might raise feasibility challenges and highlight the need to prioritise actions to make effective use of limited administrative and human resources.

Similarly, in **Croatia**, the dispersion of roadmap actions across numerous managing authorities and ministries has created the perception of fragmentation and the lack of long-term strategic direction.

For the **Apulia** (IT) regional roadmap, the need for long-term political and policy vision was necessary to align administrative capacity-building objectives.

The **Latvian** roadmap includes an abundance of capacity-building events for municipalities and regions. This has led to confusion regarding their relevance, highlighting the need for a more targeted and streamlined approach to event planning and delivery.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.3.1, 2.4.5 and 3.2.1

IF6 - Further challenges relate to engaging and maintaining the interest of beneficiaries during implementation.

For instance, for the **Bulgarian** roadmap, stakeholder engagement during the design phase was strong, but sustaining interest and participation during implementation has been problematic.

Similarly, in **Croatia**, while participation in the design phase of the roadmap saw considerable enthusiasm and input from stakeholders, this momentum has gradually diminished.

Furthermore, under the **Latvian** roadmap, identifying and categorising beneficiaries was difficult due to the absence of a unified source of information, complicating the process of targeting the appropriate group for actions in the roadmap.

The **Apulia** (IT) regional roadmap emphasised the lack of an inclusive and shared strategy for strengthening administrative capacity, which could foster constructive dialogue, ensuring the integration of diverse perspectives, leading to more effective and inclusive management. The need to communicate the strategy to internal stakeholders as well as external partners and programme beneficiaries was highlighted as essential for broad-based engagement.

Moreover, under the **Slovenian** roadmap, the lack of broad and inclusive consultation limited the opportunity for stakeholders and beneficiaries to identify and communicate capacity-building needs and challenges.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 3.1.4 and 3.2.1

4.3.   Horizontal findings

Horizontal findings (HF) refer to cross-cutting aspects that are transversal to the roadmap phases and that clearly emerge from the analysis.

HF1 – The lack of collaboration across institutional levels hampers the potential impact of the roadmaps.

In **Bulgaria**, some actions extend beyond the Cohesion Policy ecosystem, necessitating cooperation with other ministries and public administration structures not traditionally involved. The reluctance of these bodies to engage can impede the implementation of the roadmap, especially as measures involving financial incentives or HR management reforms require active participation from various departments in other ministries.

Communication and coordination deficiencies have also been highlighted in **Greece**, where challenges from organisational integration among staff members of cross-functional teams, limited synergy and restricted communication among institutional levels were identified during the roadmap design.

A similar issue arose in **Croatia**, where the lack of communication and regular meetings among those implementing the measures led to a decline in momentum and the formation of 'silos'. This often resulted in entities pursuing parallel initiatives without collaborating.

In **Portugal**, the current approach has faced some challenges, as noted by some participants in the focus group, for predominantly involving recurring participants, thereby disadvantaging potential new entrants. This underscores the need for more inclusive strategies, enhanced communication and tailored support to accommodate a range of beneficiaries.

Also in **Slovakia**, the lack of coordination across levels of governance was highlighted by the Administrative Capacity Unit responsible for roadmap implementation. This limits attention and engagement from other public bodies, complicating coordination efforts.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.1.5 and 3.1.4

HF2 - Budget constraints are perceived as a challenge, although less than other issues.

Under the **Czech** roadmap, uncertainty surrounding budgets for administrative and management staff at local and regional levels remains unresolved despite efforts to address the issue. This ambiguity affects the capacity of regional and local actors to fulfil their roles effectively.

In **Poland**, limited funding has been an obstacle to the implementation of the Lubelskie regional roadmap. While the roadmap has relied primarily on regional and national financial resources, there is a growing need for additional funds to support evaluations and systemic improvements. This constraint hampers efforts to enhance administrative capacity and ensure sustainable progress in implementing the roadmap.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.3.2, 2.4.6 and 3.2.1

HF3 – A substantial challenge is the lack of robust monitoring systems.

Only a few MSs developed comprehensive M&E systems: **Latvia, Estonia** and **Portugal**, for example. And very few roadmaps include proper evaluation plans. **Lazio** (IT) and **Croatia** are notable exceptions, with clearly defined evaluation components including timelines, indicators and responsibilities.

On the contrary, most of the analysed documents lack any form of monitoring, focusing instead on action planning without any structured tracking mechanisms. In several cases (e.g. **Hungary**), monitoring is carried out informally through internal reviews or unrelated systems, with no dedicated roadmap indicators or structured oversight. Furthermore, many countries struggle with developing meaningful indicators, as quantitative indicators often fail to capture impact, and qualitative indicators are harder to track and compare.

In **Lithuania** , the absence of a public evaluation or monitoring system for the roadmap hinders the assessment of needs, actions and impacts.

Neither **Poland** nor **Greece** developed a monitoring or evaluation plan, nor indicators, as attention was more focused on the analysis of challenges and the elaboration of the situation 'to be'. Informal reports are carried out, however they do not systematically capture outputs or outcomes.

For the **Slovenian** roadmap, establishing an effective monitoring and evaluation system was considered an additional administrative burden and was therefore not carried out.

Although the **Slovak** roadmap's Annex names responsible parties for monitoring, it does not embed a standalone monitoring system. Instead, it relies on two pre-existing, parallel systems (staff headcounts and training records) that operate independently of the Roadmap, limiting linkage between activities and actual results.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.5.1 and 2.5.3

HF4 - For some, the roadmap is perceived as a compulsory exercise offering few short-term or clearly evident benefits for administrative capacity.

In **Croatia**, the roadmap is increasingly perceived as a secondary project, overshadowed by more urgent and immediate operational priorities, diminishing its strategic importance.

The roadmap in **Hungary** is seen as a mere reporting document providing regular status updates to the European Commission and addressing emerging questions and requests, rather than as a proactive tool for comprehensive administrative capacity building.

For the **Slovenian** roadmap, the limited political prioritisation of administrative capacity building has contributed to its remaining a theoretical framework without tangible outcomes. Activities related to administrative capacity building are often carried out independently, lacking structure, coordination between ministries and services, and centralised monitoring, which are crucial to implementation. In **Slovakia**, the roadmap is perceived as less significant than other documents that carry legal binding authority, leading to its relegation as a less important, if not obsolete, element within the broader administrative landscape.

This perception, which has been observed in the aforementioned MS, can also be attributed to a lack of ownership. When the roadmap is not 'owned' by the administration, it may be perceived as an obligation imposed from outside the organisation.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.1.4, 2.1.6 and 3.2.1

HF5 -The expected impact of the roadmaps is still unclear.

Expected results vary across the roadmaps and depend on factors such as the establishment of a monitoring system and an evaluation plan, and the implementation stage of each roadmap.

In fact, the analysed roadmaps have different scopes: some focus mainly on beneficiaries, as in **Estonia**, while others cover a broad range of targets and topics, as in **Romania** (national).

Furthermore, the level of commitment to implementing the actions varies: from taking full ownership and making progress with implementation, to perceiving the roadmap as imposed from outside and making little progress with implementation.

The identified actions also vary: from being very specific with pertinent indicators, to being very broad with no suitable monitoring system.

All of these factors will influence the impact of the roadmaps. However, a few indirect and unexpected positive results were already observed during the design phase. These include;

- an increased internal and external cooperation and exchange;

- an improved 'internal cohesion'; and

- a reduced administrative burden.

Building further on cooperation, information exchange, and ownership can positively contribute to successful roadmap implementation. Conversely, ***possible hampering factors*** include administrative burden, limited funding and human resources, short implementation timelines and low levels of initiative.

In order to best determine whether the expected results have actually been achieved, roadmaps should be evaluated at national and regional level and, probably, at European Commission level. Some Member States, such as Portugal and Romania,([39]) have already begun evaluating their roadmaps, while others are planning to do so.

Relevant sections of the analysis: 2.1.4, 2.4.7, 3.1.3 and 3.2.1

Findings of the study are summarised in the following figure:

([39]) PORTUGAL: https://pat.portugal2030.pt/2025/06/26/avaliacao-de-fundos-europeus/
ROMANIA: https://mfe.gov.ro/wp -content/uploads/2025/04/2023643e7110a0f111815cbcfc4a212b.pdf

Figure 29 – Summary of the findings of the study
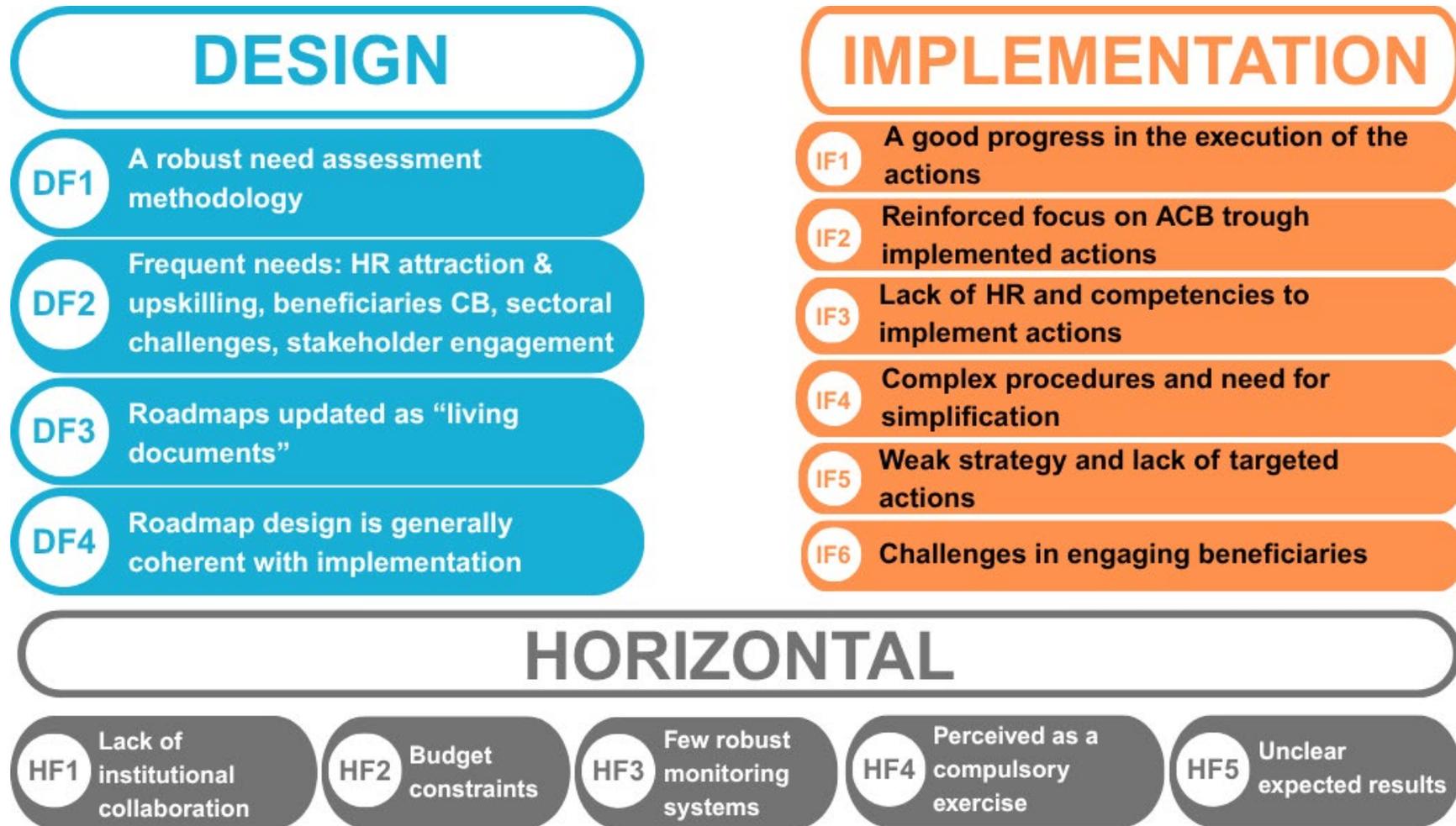
5. Conclusions

The study conclusions refer to the information collected from fieldwork in the 15 MS until December 2024, and the subsequent analysis carried out in the first semester of 2024.

5.1. From findings to conclusions

The study conclusions are based on the whole analysis (sections 2 and 3) and on the assessment of the findings (section 4).

The conclusions of the study were divided into

- 'favourable conclusions' – FC - i.e. the positive effects of the implementation of roadmaps,
- 'unfavourable conclusions' – UC - i.e. the internal limiting factors that hindered the roadmap process, and
- 'neutral conclusions' – NC - i.e. the external framework conditions that may shape future policy directions.

The linkages between findings and conclusions are presented in the next figure.
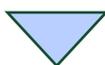
Figure 30 - From findings to conclusions

Findings of the study

DF – Design Findings,

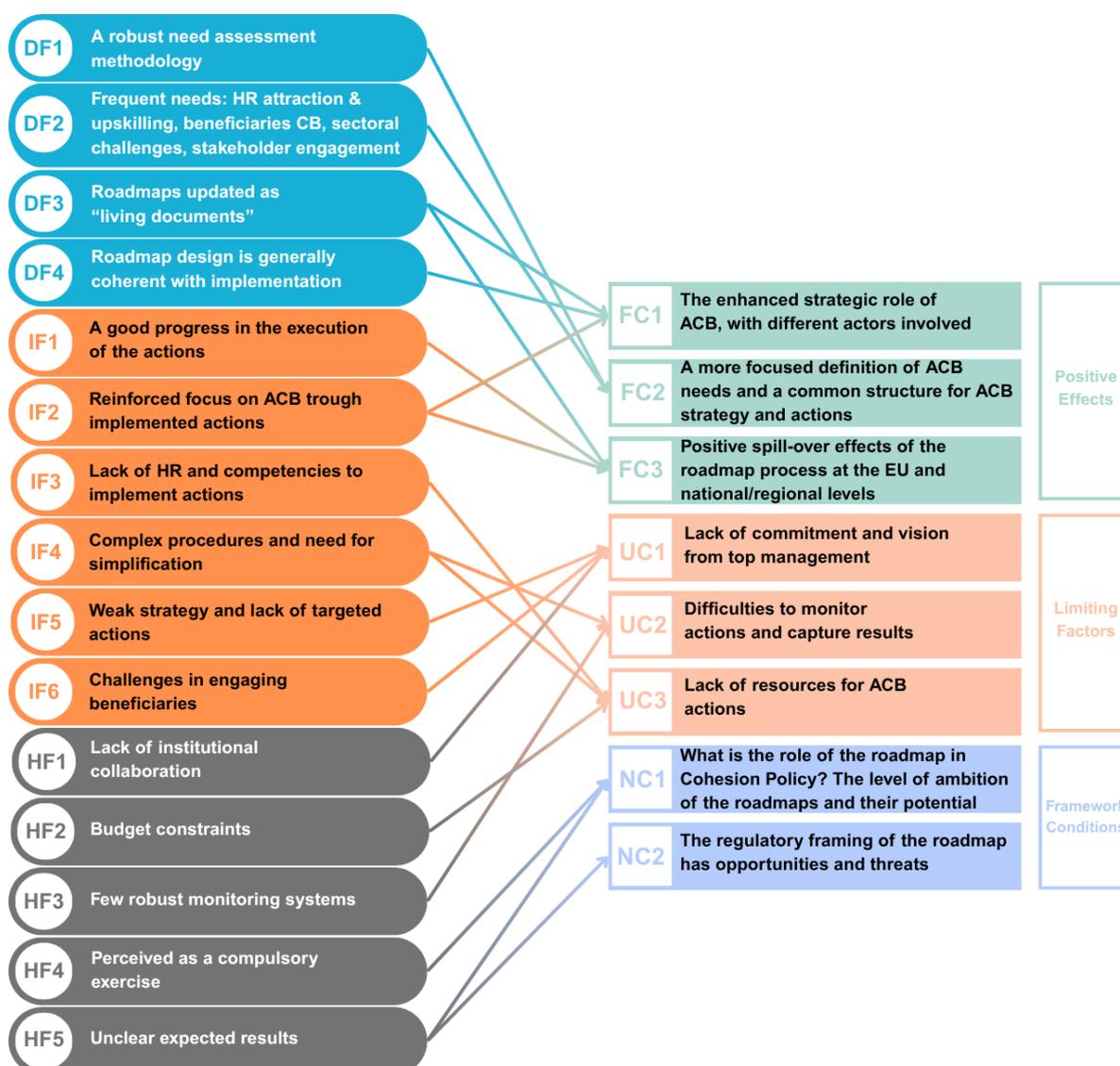**IF** – Implementation Findings,

HF – Horizontal Findings

Conclusions of the study

FC – Favourable Conclusions, or positive effects

UC – Unfavourable Conclusions, or limiting factors

NC – Neutral Conclusions, or framework conditions

DF1	A robust need assessment methodology
DF2	Frequent needs: HR attraction & upskilling, beneficiaries CB, sectoral challenges, stakeholder engagement
DF3	Roadmaps updated as "living documents"
DF4	Roadmap design is generally coherent with implementation
IF1	A good progress in the execution of the actions
IF2	Reinforced focus on ACB trough implemented actions
IF3	Lack of HR and competencies to implement actions
IF4	Complex procedures and need for simplification
IF5	Weak strategy and lack of targeted actions
IF6	Challenges in engaging beneficiaries
HF1	Lack of institutional collaboration
HF2	Budget constraints
HF3	Few robust monitoring systems
HF4	Perceived as a compulsory exercise
HF5	Unclear expected results

|		
FC1	The enhanced strategic role of ACB, with different actors involved	Positive Effects
FC2	A more focused definition of ACB needs and a common structure for ACB strategy and actions	
FC3	Positive spill-over effects of the roadmap process at the EU and national/regional levels	
UC1	Lack of commitment and vision from top management	Limiting Factors
UC2	Difficulties to monitor actions and capture results	
UC3	Lack of resources for ACB actions	
NC1	What is the role of the roadmap in Cohesion Policy? The level of ambition of the roadmaps and their potential	Framework Conditions
NC2	The regulatory framing of the roadmap has opportunities and threats	

As illustrated in the figure, 'unfavourable' conclusions are linked to the implementation phase and horizontal issues. This suggests that, regardless of how well a roadmap is designed,

issues are more likely to arise during implementation. It is therefore essential to establish a robust risk mitigation strategy specifically for the implementation stage, addressing the risk factors identified in this study.

5.2. Positive effects, limiting factors and framework conditions

The 'favourable', 'unfavourable' and 'neutral' conclusions may also be interpreted, as mentioned above, as identifying three distinct types of implications with regard to the roadmap process:

(i) positive effects, which underline the roadmap's added value;

(ii) (internal) limiting factors, which hindered its full potential; and

(iii) (external) framework conditions, which may shape future policy directions.
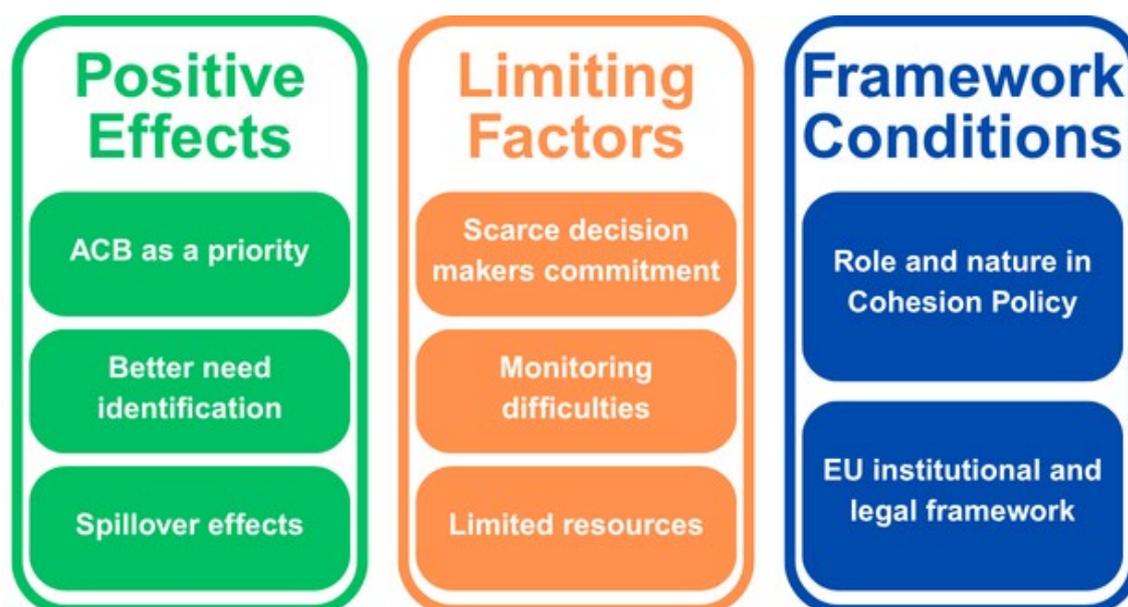
Positive effects: The introduction of ACB roadmaps has significantly strengthened the strategic relevance of administrative capacity building within Cohesion Policy. By elevating ACB as a distinct priority on the agenda of national authorities, the roadmaps have supported the development of structured processes to engage programme authorities, beneficiaries, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. This represents a clear improvement compared to previous, more fragmented approaches.

Secondly, ACB roadmaps contributed to a more consistent and robust identification of capacity-building needs. The European Commission's practical toolkit and the OECD self-assessment instrument—both widely used across Member States—enabled a harmonised

diagnosis of challenges and a results-oriented setting of objectives. The study recommends continuing this structured and evidence-based approach in the post-2027 programming period.

Thirdly, the use of ACB roadmaps produced intangible but meaningful spillover effects within and across administrations. Horizontally, Member States exchanged drafting methodologies and good practices through REGIO Peer2Peer Communities and various bilateral or trilateral exchanges. Vertically, positive dynamics emerged within Member States, where ministries and authorities not traditionally involved in Cohesion Policy collaborated around shared capacity-building themes. This broader engagement reinforced the systemic nature of administrative capacity.

Internal limiting factors: Despite these advances, several internal constraints limited the roadmaps' overall effectiveness.

Firstly, a lack of sustained commitment at senior political and administrative levels diluted the transformative potential of the process, even in cases where stakeholder involvement was broad and active.

Secondly, insufficient human and financial resources remained a common concern across Member States. Additionally, the complexity and limitations of existing monitoring systems constrained the ability to track and assess capacity-building efforts effectively. In a context where measuring results becomes increasingly central to Cohesion Policy implementation, improved monitoring mechanisms are needed. Evaluation of ACB roadmaps at regional, national and Union levels could generate structured evidence to inform and strengthen such monitoring systems.

External framework conditions: Two further conclusions relate to the regulatory and policy framework surrounding ACB roadmaps, which—while not inherently positive or negative—are likely to shape future developments.

First, the non-binding regulatory status of ACB roadmaps during the 2021–2027 period was a limiting factor. Despite encouragement via the European Semester, only ten Member States prepared roadmaps, and there was no mandatory requirement under Cohesion Policy regulations, aside from a mention in Recital 31 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

Nevertheless, the study suggests that this light regulatory approach could be preserved, provided it is supported by a more robust policy framework at both Union and national levels. This would preserve flexibility while enhancing strategic relevance.

The three main positive impacts (or **FC –** Favourable Conclusions) are presented in more detail below:

FC1 - The enhanced strategic role of ACB with different actors involved.

The preparation of the ACB roadmap provided an opportunity to highlight the urgency of supporting and strengthening the administrative capacity of regional and national policy makers. The adoption of ACB roadmaps has considerably enhanced the strategic importance

of administrative capacity building within Cohesion Policy. By positioning ACB as a standalone priority for national authorities, the roadmaps have facilitated the establishment of structured mechanisms for coordination and dialogue with among departments and units of ministries/Regions operating in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem. The exercise has reaffirmed the need to involve regional and national actors beyond those working in the field of Cohesion Policy to include those active in territorial, social and economic development as well as industrial and social innovation policies.

However, the design and implementation phases of the ACB roadmaps unfolded under different conditions.

The design phase coincided with the preparation of Cohesion Policy programmes for 2021–2027, taking place during or shortly after the peak of the COVID-19 crisis. In this period, national and regional authorities were simultaneously managing the reprogramming of funds under REACT-EU and the definition of National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs). As a result, the development of ACB roadmaps was not prioritised in many Member States, and the involvement of a broad range of actors was not systematically foreseen.

By contrast, the implementation phase—particularly over the last two years—has benefited from a more favourable context. The European Commission's support, notably through initiatives such as the REGIO Peer2Peer Community of roadmap practitioners and the present study, has helped to renew attention towards ACB roadmaps. This has allowed for the active engagement of multiple actors within the national and regional Cohesion Policy ecosystems, as well as from related domains of administrative expertise.

The positive effect of this approach can be seen in many of the Member States and regions analysed, for different aspects:

- In **Croatia, Portugal, Greece, Latvia** and **Bulgaria,** many workshops, focus groups and interviews with civil servants working in national and regional administrations and other stakeholders were organised during the design phase to identify needs and challenges related to ACB. This participatory approach has left its legacy with more acknowledgement of the ACB actions.

- In **Slovenia, Apulia (IT) and Lazio (IT),** the timing of this participatory approach and the related analysis of needs and challenges differed. The on-site analysis included actors working in regional development agencies, municipalities and municipal associations, as well as industrial associations. The opportunity to involve these people in an open and frank discussion with the ministerial units/departments in charge of the roadmap i) revived attention to this strategic document, ii) consolidated the urgency to work on ACB at different levels, iii) offered new ideas and inputs to modify the current version of the roadmap, in line with its flexible nature. In the Lazio region (IT), the FG was an occasion to reflect on the implementation status and *enable bilateral exchanges between intermediate bodies and an industrial association*.

- In **Slovakia** and **Czechia**, there was very limited involvement of key programme authorities, beneficiaries or other stakeholders. This limited knowledge of the roadmap during implementation.

These cases demonstrate the growing prominence of ACB-related issues in discussions among many of the involved MS.

FC2 - A more focused definition of ACB needs and a common structure for ACB strategy and actions.

The roadmap allows for deeper internal reflection on the needs and difficulties of regional and national administrations, especially units and departments working with Cohesion Policy funds.

The methodologies for developing ACB roadmaps were initially piloted by the OECD through an experimental phase, which led to the creation of both a dedicated toolkit and a systematic self-assessment instrument. These tools provide a structured framework for identifying internal capacity-building needs within managing authorities.

This new methodological approach has helped to focus attention on critical capacity challenges, including the shortage of qualified and experienced staff to manage EU programmes—an issue exacerbated by high turnover rates and retirements. It also highlighted the growing administrative burden linked to the design and implementation of Cohesion Policy, as well as other regulatory requirements associated with fund management.

The roadmap provides a framework and a methodology to analyse administrations, combining tools such as previous evaluations and studies, FGs and workshops involving people active in the Cohesion Policy ecosystem and stakeholders. This exercise was crucial to define needs in terms of soft and hard skills through a systematic structure. So far, this has been registered in all Member States and regions under the scope of this study. The situation is slightly different in **Slovakia** and **Czechia**, where the document is seen as an umbrella strategy, as they have already developed other administrative-capacity strategies.

Most Member States covered by the study underline the fact that the roadmap is indeed an enabling tool to develop a strategic ACB plan.

FC3 - Positive spill-over effects of the roadmap process were observed at the EU and national/regional levels.

The development and implementation of ACB roadmaps have generated **significant spillover effects**, both **across** and **within** Member States. These effects have reinforced mutual learning, facilitated peer support, and extended capacity-building practices beyond their initial scope.

 Cross-country spillover effects. Positive spillovers were observed among Member States, particularly through the **sharing of experiences, tools, and practices** related to roadmap development.

- In **Bulgaria**, national officials received **direct support from the OECD** during the development of their roadmap. This early experience drew interest from their **Croatian and Greek counterparts**, who contacted Bulgarian colleagues in 2021–2022 to gather insights into the structure and design of their roadmap.

- Later, during the **2023–2024** period, Bulgarian officials engaged in **bilateral exchanges** with the Croatian national roadmap coordination body and the **Portuguese Agency**, seeking clarification and advice on overcoming implementation challenges.

- In **Slovenia**, following focus groups and interviews conducted in September 2024, officials from the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development requested the study team to connect them with **Portuguese counterparts**, aiming to learn from their roadmap experience—particularly on **stakeholder involvement** and the **formulation of ACB actions**.

These examples demonstrate how the roadmap process has functioned as a **platform for cross-national peer learning**, actively supported by the European Commission through initiatives such as the REGIO Peer2Peer Community.

Internal spillover effects within Member States. In addition to cross-border exchanges, the roadmap process also produced valuable **internal spillovers**, leading to broader engagement across administrative systems and beneficiaries.

- In **Greece**, the roadmap initiative acted as both a **learning process** and a **catalyst for broader change**. At national level, it prompted the **horizontal expansion of capacity-building practices** across all managing authorities. The Human Resources Unit of the Ministry of Development and Investments, having participated in the roadmap development, recognised the value of the methodology and committed to disseminating it across the entire administration. At beneficiary level, **Elliniko Metro**—though indirectly involved—was inspired to design an **in-house capacity-building plan** with external support, signalling a new direction in beneficiary-level capacity building, which remains a national priority.

- In **Latvia**, the roadmap facilitated more **structured collaboration** between stakeholders involved in implementing administrative capacity-building measures, leading to more coherent and coordinated action.

- In **Lubelskie (PL)**, the ACB roadmap produced far-reaching changes within the Marshal's Office:

  o Training and assessment programmes, initially limited to Cohesion Policy units, were extended to all staff, fostering a culture of continuous learning.

  o The roadmap contributed to quality improvements in public administration, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, when remote work

practices were introduced. These adaptations not only improved work–life balance and productivity but also stimulated innovation through digital collaboration and workflow streamlining. Many of these practices have since been institutionalised as part of long-term organisational strategies.

As previously noted, in contrast to the **favourable conclusions**—which highlight the positive effects of ACB roadmaps—the study also identified a number of **limiting external factors**. While these constraints are common across several **Member States** and often **interlinked with national-level dynamics**, they are **primarily structural in nature** and originate outside the immediate control of roadmap implementers. They are presented below.

UC1 - Lack of commitment and vision from top management

Successful implementation largely depends on **hierarchical and political commitment**. While some authorities lack sustained high-level commitment from senior management, many decision-makers face **competing priorities** which limit the time or resources for ACB. Almost all the Member States reported this problem during the fieldwork activities, with the notable exception of Portugal. With ACB rarely featuring at the top of the political agenda support from the hierarchy remains inconsistent. This undermines both the relevance and to the ability to implement and achieve roadmap objectives, making the commitment of political actors and top management crucial to strengthening ACB actions.

Additionally, the fieldwork activities highlighted the **lack of a clear strategic and political vision** from political leaders regarding the shape and objectives of public administration. Roadmap owners frequently stressed the challenges of identifying clear goals and a unique and feasible strategy to improve and strengthen administrative capacity.

UC2 - Difficulties to monitor actions and capture results

As presented in the findings section (Horizontal Finding n.3 – HF3) only a few MSs developed **comprehensive M&E systems**, and very few roadmaps include proper evaluation plans. On the contrary, most of the analysed documents lack any form of monitoring, focusing instead on action planning without any structured tracking mechanisms.

Moreover, the timeframe to implement actions is often ambitious, and the expected results may only show in the long term. This highlights the problem of **selecting or creating suitable indicators** to measure ACB outcomes.

Although the Member States followed the structure provided in the EC Toolkit to prepare their roadmaps and had access to tools from DG REGIO and OECD to elaborate the approach, they expressed the need for more guidance on aspects such as monitoring and indicators: the guidance provided in the toolkit was, in a few cases, perceived as insufficient for MSs that were developing an operational document on ACBs for the first time.

The creation of a monitoring system that is parallel and not synergistic with the monitoring system of the ERDF programmes may also create difficulties and additional administrative

burdens in the programme management. Providing Member States with a set of suitable indicators to monitor ACB outputs and results can be a way to, at least partially, address this challenge.

UC3 - Lack of resources for ACB actions

The definition and implementation of ACB actions require significant human resources. The officials responsible for the roadmap stressed that they are following up on the implementation of this strategic document together with many other strategic tasks. However, in order to speed up the process and make it more structured, they need **more human resources** to deal with the workload better. An example is the **Slovenian** official who defined the roadmap is no longer working in the ministry and, most of the institutional memory of the roadmap was lost. The current official in charge of the implementation of the roadmap is mainly involved in the implementation of Cohesion Policy programmes, and the roadmap is not one of the most urgent files. In **Greece**, the managing authority in charge of the roadmap devoted extra time and effort to the document, based on personal willingness. The definition and elaboration of the roadmap was not her main activity.

The managing authority of the **Lubelskie** (PL) emphasised that limited funding was a major obstacle to implementation. While the roadmap was based on regional and national resources, there is an urgent need for additional funding to support evaluations and systemic improvements. In **Portugal**, the coordinating body confirmed that the allocation of resources for the implementation of actions has been problematic. There is **a perceived gap between the financial allocation and the capacity to implement the actions**.

The perceived scarcity of resources is one reason why the added value of the roadmap is questionable. It is necessary in theory, but the cost-benefit ratio is not always clear and depends on organisational structures and priorities. As many officials in both regional and national administrations pointed out, it depends on institutional willingness to change.

Finally, the study identifies a set of **neutral conclusions (NC)**, referring to **external framework conditions** that, while not inherently positive or negative, may exert both enabling and constraining influences on the development and implementation of ACB roadmaps. These factors are embedded in the broader EU policy and regulatory framework, and their impact depends on how they are interpreted and operationalised at national level.

NC1 - What is the role of the ACB roadmap in Cohesion policy? The level of ambition of the roadmaps and their potential for advancing reforms

The first external condition concerns **the inherent nature of the ACB roadmap** itself. By design, the roadmap has a dual character: on the one hand, it is **thematically focused**—centred on administrative capacity building; on the other, this very focus requires **cross-sectoral and multi-level institutional engagement**. This twofold nature constitutes both a strength and a weakness.

Indeed, the roadmap exercise was first and foremost developed to improve and strengthen the public administration ecosystem working on Cohesion Policy from an administrative perspective. Roadmaps have been designed to address challenges holistically, mainly from an administrative point of view. They intervene in administrative mechanisms to enable good implementation and positive results. Therefore, the primary objective of this roadmap is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programme management and implementation.

On the other hand, Roadmaps can also be seen as **a tool that looks beyond Cohesion Policy** to address cross-cutting or systemic challenges. Actions included in the ACB roadmap can be supported with national, regional, RRF or other EU funds. This represents an occasion to go beyond the Cohesion Policy administrative sphere and improve overall regional or national public administration, impacting on the entire institutional framework. : The cases of Latvia, Portugal and Romania demonstrate that the roadmaps include interventions targeting public administration officials working in units and departments not involved in the cohesion policy ecosystem. These interventions aim to either strengthen officials' ICT skills or enhance their territorial development-based approach, as detailed in section 2.4.1.

When entering the reform ecosystem, the outreach of ACB roadmaps is more limited as it forms part of institutional capacity building, which requires significant involvement from other departments and structures beyond Cohesion Policy. However, synergies can be created through Cohesion Policy itself.

What emerged strongly from the interviews and FGs is the contrast between the ambition of the roadmap and the feasibility of those actions with a broader scope.

The **holistic approach of the ACB roadmap** should be maintained and even strengthened to help regional and national administrations improve their administrative capacity. It is could be useful to further define the perimeter of intervention of the ACB roadmaps, e.g., formally specifying the fund or the funds to which the roadmap should apply, in order to make this instrument more effective and to maintain the commitment of the stakeholders.

With roadmaps, there is an opportunity to involve institutional actors in a similar exercise to complement ACB actions under EU Cohesion Policy and improve the performance of the entire public administration with a comprehensive approach at all levels.

NC2 - The regulatory framing of the roadmap has opportunities and threats.

A second external framework condition relates to the **legal and institutional status** of ACB roadmaps, which can be characterised as **hybrid**. On the one hand, roadmaps were linked to **Country-Specific Recommendations** under the European Semester; on the other hand, they remained a **non-binding, voluntary exercise**.

As a result, during the 2021-2027 programming period, only ten of the 27 EU MS were explicitly encouraged to draft ACB roadmaps. For the remaining Member States, roadmap adoption largely depended on voluntary engagement and the capacity of persuasion exercised by DG REGIO services.

This hybrid nature had clear implications. **Introducing a more formalised legal basis**—such as requiring ACB roadmaps as an **annex to Cohesion Policy programmes**—could enhance legal certainty, ensure **greater uptake**, and support a **more standardised and strategic approach** across Member States. It could also contribute to raising the **visibility of administrative capacity building** and encouraging **greater involvement from senior management and stakeholders**.

However, such formalisation may also have unintended effects. In particular, it could **increase the administrative burden** on managing authorities and coordination bodies, especially during the **already demanding programme design phase**.

In this light, the potential inclusion of ACB roadmaps in the future Cohesion Policy regulatory framework presents both **opportunities and risks**. A more prominent legal status could strengthen policy coherence and accountability, but would need to be carefully assessed to avoid creating additional complexity or discouraging ownership among implementing bodies

5.3. Final remarks

Considering the evidence presented, the study team proposes some final considerations.

Firstly, the reinforced positioning of Administrative Capacity Building (ACB)—achieved through the multi-annual and multi-level process of designing and implementing roadmaps—should be preserved and built upon. **The current momentum, which has given ACB both political visibility and a structured framework for planning and delivery, offers a valuable opportunity** that should not be lost. Existing tools can be updated and refined, and, where necessary, new support instruments may be developed to reinforce implementation. However, the question of whether—and how—to formally embed ACB roadmaps in the post-2027 legislative framework must be carefully assessed. **While stronger regulatory positioning could increase the political relevance of ACB and ensure broader uptake, it may also lead to greater rigidity and administrative burden**, particularly for managing authorities during the programming phase.

Therefore, any decision regarding the legal status of ACB roadmaps should be guided by a balanced assessment of trade-offs, taking into account both the benefits of formalisation and the costs in terms of flexibility and administrative complexity. In any scenario, ACB should retain a clearly defined role in the future Cohesion Policy architecture—not only in terms of its objectives and relevance, but also with regard to its funding modalities and implementation setup.

Secondly, the European Commission has clearly stated that results-based systems—such as Financing Not Linked to Costs (FNLC)—are expected to play an increasingly prominent role in the post-2027 programming period. Although FNLC schemes related to administrative capacity building, as permitted under Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 1060/2021, have so far been only partially or rarely applied during the 2021–2027 period, emerging cases can be observed in countries such as Latvia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Greece.

Although these developments were not the core focus of this study, they underscore **a critical need: the design and implementation of robust monitoring and evaluation systems that also encompass ACB roadmaps**. Given the intangible and long-term nature of administrative capacity-building processes, traditional evaluation methods may not be sufficient. Specific evaluation approaches and tailor-made tools will be required to effectively assess progress and outcomes.

These may include common indicators for ACB, including ad hoc result indicators that are fit for capturing complex capacity-building dynamics. These indicators should reflect the Commission's expectations in terms of performance, outcomes, and behavioural change within institutions. Developing such a set of indicators would help ensure greater coherence, comparability, and accountability across Member States.

This is especially important in light of the Commission's intention to further promote FNLC systems in the next programming cycle. Without a reliable set of indicators and evaluation mechanisms for ACB, the integration of capacity-building efforts into performance-based financing risks being inconsistent or ineffective. Clear monitoring and evaluation structures—aligned with the nature of ACB—are therefore a prerequisite for its meaningful inclusion in results-oriented funding models.

5.4. Dissemination of the study

The final phase of this study involved presenting and validating the methodology and results to programme authorities at events.

These events included:

- The conduction of a structured webinar with the REGIO Peer2Peer Community on Administrative Capacity Building - March 2025;

- The presentation of the preliminary findings of the study to the REGIO Network of Heads of Managing Authorities in Brussels - April 2025;

- The presentation of the contents and preliminary conclusions of the study in a REGIO webinar for programme authorities and other interested stakeholders - May 2025.

- The study will be presented at a workshop during the European Week of Regions and Cities, which is planned for 14 October 2025 from 14:30 to 16:00.

Annex 6 provides details of these events.

Annexes

All annexes are delivered in a separate document, as follows:

- Annex 1 – Output Papers of the Focus groups
- Annex 2 – Roadmap Report
- Annex 3 – National Factsheets
- Annex 4 – Roadmap Fiche
- Annex 5 – Roadmap SWOT
- Annex 6 – Presentation and dissemination of the study

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