

## Cohesion policy: Outlook for technical assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) can be a valuable tool when it comes to supporting the planning and execution of EU funds. It can, among other things, strengthen institutions and boost administrative capacity for effective EU fund management. A report appearing on the European Parliament's May plenary agenda makes various suggestions with a view to making technical assistance more efficient.

### Background

For the 2014-2020 programming period, technical assistance is included in the [Common Provisions Regulation](#) and can be deployed at the initiative of either the Commission ([Article 58](#)) or the Member States ([Article 59](#)). The new provisions for TA introduced certain innovations such as support for institutional strengthening and administrative capacity-building and measures to identify, prioritise and implement structural and administrative reforms in response to economic and social challenges in certain Member States. According to [Article 118](#) of the regulation, the resources allocated to TA at the initiative of the Commission in the current programming period amount to 0.35 % of the annual allocation of the European Regional Development Fund ([ERDF](#)), European Social Fund ([ESF](#)) and Cohesion Fund ([CF](#)), an increase of 0.1 % compared with the 2007-2013 period. In addition, EU co-financing for technical assistance at the disposal of the Member States under the European structural and investment ([ESI](#)) funds in the 2014-2020 programming period amounts to around €13.4 billion.

TA is a cross-cutting area of spending for which there is no single clear definition. As a result, it is not easy to make a detailed assessment of its importance and contribution when it comes to institutional strengthening and administrative capacity building for the effective management of the ESI funds. In addition, TA funding can be provided from a variety of budget lines and in a flexible way, making it difficult to obtain final figures or form a clear picture of its budgetary mechanisms and of the activities financed.

### European Parliament position

The own-initiative [report](#) on future perspectives for technical assistance in cohesion policy, adopted on 25 April 2017 by the Committee for Regional Development, claims that there is a serious need for coordinated, strategic and transparent reporting of TA. It calls on the Commission to report on the results achieved by the [Structural Reform Support Service](#) operations in Greece, to support other Member States that are experiencing difficulties in implementing cohesion policy, and to ensure that technical assistance measures financed by the [Structural Reform Support Programme](#) and the ESI funds are coordinated. It also recommends developing a broader technical assistance strategy to ensure effective coordination between all Commission directorates-general and highlights the importance of technical assistance in the domain of financial instruments. The report states that in certain Member States TA does not reach the local and regional levels in an effective way, even though the lower levels of governance must have a certain capacity if various territorial development tools are to succeed. It also mentions that urban authorities do not receive the necessary TA to implement integrated actions for sustainable urban development and stresses that TA should be focused increasingly on the beneficiary/project level. The report highlights the need to implement TA to promote re-industrialisation in depressed areas and to attract investment in high-tech innovative sectors. It also draws attention to the European code of conduct on partnership, which defines the need to help the relevant partners strengthen their institutional capacity with a view to the preparation and implementation of EU programmes. Finally, it asks the Commission to consider all suggested recommendations in the context of the preparation of the legislative proposals for post-2020 cohesion policy.

Own-initiative report: [2016/2303\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: Regional Development (REGI); Rapporteur: Ruža Tomašić (ECR, Croatia).

