Case study analytical framework, guidance and template

Guidance document

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1. Introduction

This document provides the overall analytical framework for the case study research including guidance and a template for writing up the COHESIFY case studies. The key methodological requirement in the Horizon 2020 project call was a comparative case study approach based on "genuine and innovative case studies from Members States with different current and historical territorial administrative frameworks and regional identities." COHESIFY is addressing this requirement through an innovative mixed-methods design employing qualitative and quantitative methods (surveys of citizens and stakeholders, in-depth interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis, content analysis of political party manifestos and media framing analysis); and by adopting a cross-cutting approach with a common case study structure to facilitate comparative analysis, addressing the core themes in each work package:

1. the socio-economic context and background of identity formation in the case study countries/regions (WP2);
2. the implementation and performance of Cohesion policy, including policymaker surveys and interviews (WP3);
3. the communication aspects in terms of the media and the effectiveness of communication strategies, based on the framing analysis, surveys and interviews (WP4); and
4. public perceptions of Cohesion policy and the impact of Cohesion policy on identification with the EU, drawing on the citizens survey and focus group tasks (WP5).

All partners are required to undertake 1-2 case studies for each country that they are covering in the research. Most partners have agreed to focus on a single Member State with the exception of CUT (2 countries) and CEU (3 countries). While most of the case study tasks will be undertaken by each partner individually (e.g. interviews, focus groups, analysis of survey results and communication strategies), a number of complementary inputs to the case studies will be provided by other partners with responsibility for specific tasks (e.g. socio-economic context/typologies, manifesto analysis, citizens survey, media framing analysis)

The remainder of this guidance document sets out the key requirements and template for the case studies structured into three sections

- Overall case study structure
- Case study tasks – detailed framework for analysis and guidance
- Template for case study reports

2. Overall case study structure

The case studies will need to follow a common structure corresponding to the overall COHESIFY work package structure:

1. Introduction

- Objectives
- Case study rationale
- Research methods

- Structure of the case study

2. Context and background (WP2, partly WP3)

- EU attitudes and identity
- Socio-economic context
- Political context

3. Cohesion policy implementation and performance (WP3)

- Desk-based analysis
- Survey analysis
- Interview analysis

4. Communicating Cohesion policy (WP4)

- Desk-based analysis
- Survey analysis
- Interview analysis
- Media analysis

5. Citizens views of Cohesion policy and the EU (WP5)

- Citizens' survey analysis
- Citizens' focus groups

6. Key findings and conclusions (WP5)

- Scientific conclusions
- Policy implications and recommendations

3. Case study tasks – detailed guidance

3.1 Introduction

Provide an introduction to the case study including selection rationale, objectives, rationale, methodology and structure.

3.2 Context and background (WP2)

This section of the case studies will set the contextual scene by reviewing the socio-economic context and political background (public opinion on the EU, territorial identity issues and political context including party manifesto analysis).

3.2.1 Socio-economic context and EU attitudes and identity (tasks 2.2-2.4)

This section reviews the socio-economic context and EU attitudes in the cases based on literature review and POLIMI inputs

Tasks

POLIMI to provide summary tables/charts for each case study region with comparable data from tasks 2.2. and 2.3 along with averages (for case study sample, the country and European) for comparison.

All partners should complement POLIMI inputs with analysis of other relevant data and literature review. For instance, descriptive information on the socio-economic context of each case study will be available in Cohesion policy documents (e.g. operational programmes and annual implementation reports have a chapter on the socio-economic context).

Sources

POLIMI tables; Operational Programmes and Annual Implementation Reports; desk research

3.2.2 EU Cohesion policy framework

Content

Summary of EU Cohesion policy framework in each case study and evolution over the two programme periods 2007-13 and 2014-20 based on literature review and EUROREG (WP3) inputs.

Tasks

Each partner to provide a brief overview of national and regional EU Cohesion policy frameworks in terms of the key funding objectives and priorities, management and implementation systems and key changes between 2007-13 and 2014-20.

EUROREG to provide contextual information from WP3.

Sources

This information will be available in Cohesion policy documents (operational programmes, annual implementation reports, OP evaluations, ex-post evaluations etc.). A useful summary of ERDF programmes in each country is available here: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/

3.2.3 Political context (incl. parties/manifesto analysis (task 2.5)

Content

Summary of the political salience of the EU and Cohesion policy in each case study and over time based on literature review and inputs from MZES

Tasks

MZES will undertake content analysis of party manifestos in the regions included in the study (as many as possible) to establish how parties frame European integration in general and whether and in which way they mention the support of EU Funds over time.

All partners should complement this information with further background analysis of the political salience and related issues surrounding the EU or Cohesion policy through literature review

Sources

Literature review of European, national and regional academic, political and policy-related sources

MZES Output 2.5 (in Strathcloud Sharefile)

3.3 Cohesion policy implementation and performance (WP3)

The aim of this section is to analyse the implementation and performance of Cohesion policy in the selected case studies through desk-based analysis, an online survey to stakeholders and interviews.

3.3.1 Desk-based analysis of implementation and performance

(i) Objectives and background

The main objectives of the desk research are to:

- summarise the content of the case study programme strategies and implementation systems
- review and outline the existing evidence of performance and achievements
- identify policy implementation challenges

In line with the COHESIFY analytical framework, three key dimensions of performance can be distinguished

- effectiveness: the achievement of the policy and programme goals and targets (e.g. output, result and impact indicators) and wider economic development
- utility: the extent to which the policy impacts on society's needs and resolves socio-economic problems, which may not be explicitly defined in the programme's formal goals
- added value: a broader concept that relates not only to impacts on developmental outcomes, but also to governance/administrative, learning, and visibility effects as well as spill-overs into domestic systems and related innovation and efficiency improvements;

Programme indicators for monitoring and reporting effectiveness typically distinguish:

- Outputs: indicators relating to funded activities, which are measured in physical or monetary units (e.g., length of rail/road constructed, number of firms financially supported, etc.).
- Results: indicators relating to the direct and immediate effect on direct beneficiaries in terms of their behaviour, capacity or performance. Such indicators can be of a physical (reduction in journey times, number of successful trainees, number of roads accidents, etc.) or financial (leverage of private sector resources, decrease in transportation cost, etc.) nature.
- Impacts: refer to the consequences of the programme beyond the immediate effects. Specific impacts are those effects occurring after a certain lapse of time but which are directly linked to the action taken and the direct beneficiaries (e.g. productivity improvements in firms). Global impacts are longer-term effects affecting a wider population (e.g. GDP, employment).

(ii) Key sources

The primary sources of information for desk research of policy implementation and performance are:

- OPs

- Annual Implementation Reports
- Evaluations
- National Strategic Reports (2009-12) and Progress Reports (2017)
- Other available studies, impact assessments, academic literature

Operational programmes

The planning framework for Cohesion policy in all Member States involves the elaboration of an overarching national strategy - National Strategic Reference Framework in 2007-13, relabelled Partnership Agreement in 2014-20 - and Operational Programmes at national or regional level providing more detailed information on the approach to Structural Funds spending. The most important components of the OPs for drafting a summary of the OP are the sections on the socio-economic context, the strategy (e.g. objectives, priorities, indicators) and the implementation arrangements.

- Socio-economic context: background information on the socio-economic context of the region/country and policy needs
- Strategic priorities, objectives, targets and financial tables: provide the basic starting point for understanding the substantive content of the programme and for assessing policy performance against pre-defined goals.
- Governance and implementation framework: sets out the roles and responsibilities of key actors (e.g. managing authority, intermediate bodies, monitoring committees)

Key changes in the EU regulatory framework for 2014-20

- Integrated programming is allowed through multi-fund programmes combining the ERDF, CF and ESF (but not EAFRD or EMFF), instead of single-fund programmes as in 2007-13.
- a more results-oriented programming process by requiring more clearly specified objectives, intervention logics and result indicators with targets;
- the introduction of a 'performance framework' based on key output indicators to assess performance at the mid-stage of implementation and allocate a performance reserve.

Annual Implementation Reports

Annual implementation reports (AIRs) are a key element for monitoring the performance of programmes, based on information collected from funding bodies and beneficiaries through programme monitoring systems. Although there are well-known weaknesses in the reliability and quality of information provided in the reports, they provide the main information source for monitoring and reviewing OP implementation progress in monitoring committees and accounting for the use of funding to the Commission (along with evaluations). AIRs are produced annually to review OP implementation during the previous calendar year. The reports are prepared by the OP Managing Authority and are discussed and approved by the Monitoring Committee, before being submitted to the European Commission for approval by the end of June each year. The main required content in the AIRs that is relevant for the COHESIFY case studies includes:

- Changes in the socio-economic context
- Implementation progress both for the programme overall and by priority axes in relation to financial and physical indicators and targets

- Steps taken to ensure the quality and effectiveness of implementation, including a summary of any significant problems encountered in implementing the programme and any measures taken;
- Substantial modifications to programmes (e.g. shifts in funding across planned priorities or to new interventions)

Programme period	Eligibility of expenditure	Deadlines for Annual Implementation Reports	Deadline for Final Implementation Report and closure docs
2007-13	2007-2015	Yearly from 2008-2016 covering previous year	31 March 2017
2014-20	2014-2023 (extra year of eligibility due to new n+3 rule)	Yearly from 2016-2023 covering previous year. Unlike 2007-13, the first report is produced in third year (2016) covering both 2014 *and* 2015 in a single report.	15 February 2025

Key changes in EU regulatory framework for 2014-20:

- a stronger focus on performance including reporting on the new performance framework targets and fulfilment of ex-ante conditionalities
- The first two years of implementation (2014 and 2015) are reviewed in a single report produced in 2016 (instead of annual reports in 2015 and 2016),
- Providing a citizens' summary
- Providing a synthesis of evaluation findings [not entirely new]
- Lighter content/information than in 2007-13 although twice during the period (in 2017 and 2019) MAs are required to submit more detailed information

The Cohesify case studies will be able to draw on all of the AIRs for the 2007-13 period, and the first two AIRs for the 2014-20 period:

- AIR for years 2014-15 (produced in 2016). There will be limited information on implementation and performance during the first 2 years due to the delayed launch of programmes. Nevertheless, the first AIR prepared in 2016 must include the following sections and content (based on a common EU model template), which should be reviewed and summarised in the case studies:
    - Section 2. Overview of OP implementation - Key information on the implementation of the operational programme for the year concerned, including on financial instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data
    - Section 3.1. Overview of implementation by priority axis - Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
    - Section 3.2. Common and programme specific indicators
    - Section 4. Synthesis of evaluation findings
    - Section 6. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken

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- AIR for the year 2016 (produced in June 2017) must provide additional and more detailed information on performance than the first AIR. Specifically, it should include:

- Section 3. Milestones and targets defined in the performance framework. Reporting on financial indicators, key implementation steps, output and result indicators used as milestones and targets for the programme's performance framework.
- Section 11. Achieving the objectives of the programme. For each priority axis, assessment of progress towards achieving the objectives of the programme, including the contribution of the ESI Funds to changes in the value of result indicators, when evidence is available from evaluations.

Evaluations

Evaluations of programmes are formally required by the EU to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of programmes at three stages:

- Ex-ante evaluations are carried out for each programme to support the development of programmes and are submitted to the Commission with the programme.
- During the programming period, evaluations are carried out according to need (in 2007-13), although in 2014-20 it is a requirement for each priority axis of a programme to be evaluated.
- Ex-post evaluation is a Commission responsibility, although many Member States undertake their own ex-post evaluations of programmes.

Key changes in the EU regulatory framework for 2014-20:

- As noted, a requirement to undertake at least one evaluation during the programming period of how the ESI Funds have contributed to the objective for each priority;
- a requirement for an evaluation plan to be drawn up by the Managing Authority or Member State (previously evaluation plans were voluntary) for a programme or several programmes, which should be submitted to the first Monitoring Committee meeting.

Programme evaluations in the case study regions/countries will be published on the programme website.

There are also relevant EU commissioned evaluations on the DG REGIO website. The focus tends to be on the national level but they often include subnational assessments of regional programmes. See in particular:

- Ex-post evaluation of 2007-13: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/ec/2007-2013/
- Expert Evaluation Network Reports on achievements: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/ec/2007-2013/#1

National Strategic Reports / Progress Reports. Aside from programme-level reports, the Member States are required to produce periodic national reports on Cohesion policy implementation and performance of the national strategies and programmes. For 2007-13, two strategic reports were required in 2009 and 2012 to review the socio-economic situation and trends, including the impact of the crisis; and achievements, challenges and future prospects in relation to implementation of the agreed strategy.

The Strategic Reports for each Member States are available here: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/stages-step-by-step/strategic-report/2007-2013/

The reports should include relevant information on policy performance although sometimes at an aggregate, national level rather than for specific regional programmes/cases.

Key changes in the EU regulatory framework for 2014-20:

- The Strategic Reports have been renamed Progress Reports and must be submitted to the Commission in August 2017 and August 2019.
- The Progress Reports will review the new performance framework targets/milestones for each programme

For COHESIFY case study analysis of the 2014-20 period, the first Progress Report will be available in 2017.

(iii) Case study research tasks and structure

EU Cohesion policy strategic and implementation framework

1) Operational Programme for [case study region] 2007-2013

A. Desk research

Provide a brief introduction of the Cohesion policy programme/s investigated, associated geographical area, volume of funding and changes over the two funding periods.

Provide a narrative outlining the content of the programme strategies in 2007-13 and 2014-20 and key changes in allocations and priorities. It is not necessary to provide exhaustive detail on the priorities and measures in each programme. Instead, provide a narrative of how EU funding was used, the main funding priorities and how this has evolved over time distinguishing the two periods clearly.

Key research questions

1. What are the main funding priorities of Cohesion policy support?
2. What are the main changes in funding priorities for 2014-20?

Priority axes and allocations in 2007-2013 (example table)

[case study] ROP 2007-2013		
Priority axes	EFRD allocation (%)	EFRD allocation (EUR)
1. SME development and innovation	19.1	179,195,202
2. Knowledge society	5.5	51,524,282
3. Urban and metropolitan functions	17.4	163,295,176
4. Regional transport system	23.7	222,224,998
5. Environment and environmentally friendly energy	6.0	56,620,300

[case study] ROP 2007-2013		
Priority axes	EFRD allocation (%)	EFRD allocation (EUR)
6. Tourism and cultural heritage	4.7	44,253,288
7. Health protection and emergency system	3.8	35,402,630
8. Local basic infrastructure	13.2	123,909,207
9. Local social infrastructure and civil initiatives	3.8	35,402,630
10. Technical assistance	2.8	26,551,973
Total	100.0	938,379,686

B. Interviews

Q2. In your opinion, what are the main socio-economic needs and problems that the programmes are trying to address over the last two programme periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)? [this question may help to contextualize the strategic approach and priorities]

2) *Operational Programme for [case study region] 2014-2020*

A. Desk research

In line with the above section, highlight key changes if possible

Priority axes and allocations in 2014-20 (example table)

[case study region] ROP 2014-2020			
Priority allocation	Source of financing	ERDF allocation (%)	ERDF allocation (EUR)
1. Commercialisation of knowledge	ERDF	161,213,250	8.65
2. Enterprises	ERDF	174,647,688	9.37
3. Education	ESF	116,385,257	6.25
4. Vocational education and training	ERDF	67,172,188	3.61
5. Employment	ESF	223,677,915	12.01
6. Inclusion	ESF	114,306,948	6.14
7. Health	ERDF	107,475,500	5.77
8. Conversion	ERDF	161,213,250	8.65
9. Mobility	ERDF	335,860,939	18.03
10. Energy	ERDF	214,951,001	11.54

	[case study region] ROP 2014-2020		
Priority allocation	Source of financing	ERDF allocation (%)	ERDF allocation (EUR)
11. Environment	ERDF	120,909,938	6.49
Total		**100.0**	

B. Interviews

Q2. In your opinion, what are the main socio-economic needs and problems that the programmes are trying to address over the last two programme periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)? [this question may help to contextualize the strategic approach and priorities]

3) Implementation framework and partnership structures

A. Desk research

Summarise the implementation framework identifying the key actors (e.g. managing authority, intermediate bodies) and programme stakeholders (e.g. Monitoring Committee members) distinguishing the two programming periods clearly and any changes in approach between 2007-13 and 2014-20

Given the potential relevance of partnership-working for mobilising public debate, provide a summary of partnership arrangements. In practice, the approach to partnership in designing the programme involves public consultations or setting up working groups. During programme implementation, the Monitoring Committee is usually the main forum for partnership working, because EU rules require the committee to integrate key stakeholders in the programme area to provide a forum for overseeing and discussing policy implementation. There may also be other formal/informal governance bodies and fora that have a broader remit than Cohesion policy (e.g. covering wider domestic policies) but that are relevant to partnership-working in Cohesion policy.

Research questions

1. Who are the main managing and implementation actors involved in administering funding?
2. What are the main changes in implementation arrangements for 2014-20?
3. What are the main partnership structures and forums for discussing Cohesion policy implementation and performance/achievements?
4. What are the main changes in partnership structures for 2014-20? [new question for desk research based on interview checklist]

B. Interviews

Q5. What are the key features of the management structure for the programme/s?

Q8. What are the main partnership structures and forums for discussing Cohesion policy implementation and performance/achievements?

Assessment of performance

1) *Programme performance*

A. Desk research

Provide a narrative reviewing performance outcomes for each programme based on Annual Implementation Reports and evaluations/studies assessing achievements and impacts, distinguishing the 2007-13 and 2014-20 programmes.

The effectiveness of implementation systems and implementation issues that have affected achievements should also be reviewed here. This may include issues such as administrative complexity, government capacity, compliance challenges etc.

Research questions

1. What are the main outputs and results reported? Include qualitative as well as quantitative information. A table can be included.
2. Are the achieved output and results of funding at the end of the period in line with the ex-ante targets set or with stated policy objectives?
3. Is there any evidence that the expenditure financed is having the intended effects in the different policy areas? (e.g. in increasing innovation in SMEs, improving their competitiveness, boosting tourism, reducing congestion in cities through investment in urban transport, and so on)
4. To the extent that intended results or targets have not been achieved in particular policy areas, what are the main reasons for this (such as the crisis, implementation issues etc.)?
5. Were implementation structures effective in delivering programmes/projects? What were the main implementation challenges?

B. Interviews

Q3. What have been the main achievements of the programmes over the last two periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)?

Q4. What challenges and problems, if any, led to parts of the programmes failing to meet their goals?

Q6. Where these implementation structures effective in delivering programmes/projects? What were the main challenges?

Q7. What is the relative priority placed on the tasks of 1) spending the funds 2) compliance 3) performance and 4) publicising achievements? Why?

C. Stakeholder survey

Q1. How well – in your opinion – have Cohesion policy funds been used in your municipality and region?

Q2. To what extent have the Cohesion policy objectives reinforced the development objectives of your municipality and region?

Q3. To what extent have Cohesion policy funds helped to increase or decrease

Q5. How significant was the impact of the following problems and challenges during the implementation of Cohesion policy projects?

Q6. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

Q9. In what Cohesion policy workshop or training sessions did the representatives of your organisation/municipality/region participate in the last two years (select all that apply)?

2) *Partnership*

A. Desk research

Drawing on documentary evidence (e.g. annual implementation reports, monitoring committee documents or minutes if available, and evaluations/studies of the programme area), provide an assessment of the effectiveness of partnership arrangements in mobilizing territorial stakeholders and encouraging civil society engagement in Cohesion policy.

Research questions

1. To what extent are the [partnership and discussion] structures effective in promoting stakeholder debate and multilevel governance?
2. To what extent are these forums open and accountable to civil society?

B. Interviews

Q3. What have been the main achievements of the programmes over the last two periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)? [respondents may have highlighted partnership issues e.g. mobilizing a wide range of territorial stakeholders around a common strategy etc.]

Q9. To what extent are these [partnership] forums open and accountable to civil society?

C. Stakeholder survey

Q7. The partnership principle requires the participation of a wide range of partners throughout the different stages of programming and implementation through consultations, monitoring committee work and other mechanisms. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the operation of the partnership principle in practice?

Assessment of added value

A. Desk research

Provide a narrative of any evidence of EU added value arising from Cohesion policy. Added value is a broader concept than implementation or effectiveness that relates not only to additional impacts on developmental outcomes provided by EU involvement in regional policy, but also to governance, learning and visibility effects as well as spill-overs into domestic systems and related innovation and efficiency improvements. Based on a review of the annual implementation reports, evaluations and academic/policy studies, answer the following questions

Research questions

- What are the main manifestations of the EU added value of cohesion policy in different fields:
    - financial (additional funding from public and private actors),
    - strategic (interlinkages between domestic strategies programmes and EU funded programmes),
    - administrative (implementation of innovative approaches to domestic policy systems, changes in monitoring and evaluation techniques and requirements),
    - democratic (strengthening the role of consultations and partnerships, multilevel-governance)?
- Is the wider EU added value of programmes important in comparison to direct outputs and effects of these programmes?

B. Interviews

Q3. What have been the main achievements of the programmes over the last two periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)? [respondents may have highlighted aspects of the added value of Cohesion policy compared to domestic policies for regional development]

3.4 Cohesion policy communication (WP4)

This section of the guidance sets out the analytical framework for the case study analysis of the effectiveness of communication strategies under Task 4.2 of Work Package 4. The analytical framework and guidance presented here corresponds to Output 4.3 of the grant agreement.

All case studies will provide an assessment of how Cohesion policy is communicated and the effectiveness of the communication strategies and measures based on documentary analysis, an online survey and interviews. The objectives are to

- review the different approaches to Cohesion policy communication in different contexts;
- explore the factors contributing to the effective design and delivery of communication strategies and measures;
- identify good practice examples

Based on a review of the available comparative literature on Cohesion policy communication (see the next section on objectives and background), the core analytical themes to be investigated are

- The visibility and profile of Cohesion policy including media coverage
- The strategic approach to programme communication in terms of key priorities, measures and target groups
- The governance of communication, including capacity and networking
- The relative use and effectiveness of different communication tools and activities, including good practice examples

Data collection and analysis of these themes will rely on a mixed methods approach including desk-based analysis, a stakeholder survey and interviews. Analysis of the framing of Cohesion policy by selected mainstream (offline and online) media will be undertaken by CUT.

3.4.1 Desk-based analysis of communication strategies

(i) Objectives and background

The objectives of the desk-based analysis component of the case studies aim to review the different approaches to communication, the effectiveness of communication measures and to identify examples of good practice based on a review of communication strategies, implementation reports, evaluations and other relevant sources.

The significance of publicity and communication is twofold: responding to the EU priorities of improving the visibility of the contribution of the EU to economic and social development and promoting the image of and support for the EU; and improving information to applicants about available opportunities and how to access them to ensure transparency and enhance programme delivery and performance.

Over the past 25 years, successive reforms have increased the regulatory obligations for Managing Authorities and other bodies with respect to publicity and communication (Table 1). Greater efforts have been made to improve the professionalism and sophistication of communication strategies, to ensure that they are embedded in programme management and project delivery and ensure effective engagement among stakeholders.

For 2014-20, the main EU requirements on communication for Member States and the managing authorities of operational programmes are (Regulation EU 1303/2013):

- designing and implementing a communication strategy for operational programmes, with annual updates;
- establishing a website providing information on all operational programmes;
- informing potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities;
- publicising to citizens the role and achievements of Cohesion policy;
- publishing a list of project beneficiaries, to be updated at least annually;
- organising a major information activity publicising the launch of the operational programme or programmes, even prior to the approval of the relevant communication strategies;
- carrying out one major annual information activity; and designating an information communication officer to coordinate coordination activities
- displaying the Union emblem at the premises of each managing authority;

The communication strategy must include:

- a description of the approach taken, including the main information and communication measures aimed at beneficiaries, multipliers and the wider public;
- a description of materials that will be made available in formats accessible for people with disabilities;
- a description of how beneficiaries will be supported in their communication activities;
- the indicative budget for implementation of the strategy;

- a description of the administrative bodies, including the staff resources, responsible for implementing the information and communication measures;
- the arrangements for the information and communication measures for the public and beneficiaries (in Annex XII Point 2 of ESIF Common Provisions Regulation), including the website or website portal at which such data may be found;
- an indication of how the information and communication measures shall be assessed in terms of visibility and awareness of policy, operational programmes and operations, and of the role played by the Funds and the Union; where appropriate, a description of the use of the main results of the previous operational programme;
- an annual update setting out the information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year

Project beneficiary requirements include:

- Communication activity has to acknowledge support from the Funds by displaying the EU emblem, with a reference to the EU and the specific Fund(s);
- Information about the project has to be provided on the beneficiary's website, including a short description of the aims and results, and highlighting the support received from the EU;
- Upon request of the Managing Authority, communication activities have to be described at the project application stage
- Placing at least one poster with information about the project at a location readily visible to the public;
- For educational projects support by the ESF, ERDF and CF, the beneficiary shall inform participants of this funding;
- For infrastructure projects receiving more than €500,000 by the ERDF/CF, billboards and permanent plaques must be set on project sites, including the EU emblem, a reference to the EU and specific Fund concerned.

Table 1: Communication Cohesion policy – evolution since 1989

Programme period	Evolution of requirements to inform the public
1989-1993	Commission to be 'informed' by Managing Authorities (MAs) about information towards beneficiaries and general public.
1994-99	Publicity must be addressed in 'development plans'. A Commission Decision laid down arrangements for 'a coherent set of measures' to be implemented by 'competent national, regional and local authorities in co-operation with the Commission', including billboards and plaques for infrastructure projects
2000-06	A specific Regulation is introduced on 'information and publicity measures' containing a new requirement for a communication action plan for each programme, including strategy and budget, persons in charge at national and MA levels for monitoring and co-ordinating the plans. An informal network of communications officers, the Structural Funds Information Team (SFIT) is established. In 2002, European Transparency Initiative (2005) requires access to funding data.

2007-13	Communication provisions included in the Commission Implementing Regulation, setting out requirements for the communication plan, roles and responsibilities for informing beneficiaries and the public Programme communication plan must be approved by the Commission. A list of funded projects/beneficiaries must be published. Annual Implementation Reports must include examples of information measures and a chapter evaluating the results of communication (in 2010 report and 2017 final report) INFORM (DG Regio) and INIO (DG Empl) become formal networks of communication officers including annual meetings.
2014-20	A seven-year communication strategy to be accompanied by annual action plans adopted by the Monitoring Committee (not the Commission). Single website for all EU Cohesion policy programmes at national level; Definition of lists of beneficiaries more detailed and updated every six months. Annual Implementation Reports must include examples of information measures and a chapter evaluating the results of communication (in 2016 report and 2018 final report)

Evaluation research has provided a mixed assessment of the effectiveness of Cohesion policy communication. A review of EU Cohesion policy programme communication plans for 2007-13 found that communication with the public was a key strategic priority and that the most commonly used tools to address the public were television and radio media (Technopolis 2009). A key strategic weakness in most cases was a lack of differentiation in the communication plans according to target groups and civil society. Further, the strategic rationale for communicating with the public was often vaguely formulated hindering the assessment of expected impacts.

A more recent study by the Evaluation Partnership (2013) identified and assessed good practices in regional policy communication targeting the public, based on case studies in eight Member States and an assessment of communication activities by DG Regio. More than 50 approaches, activities and tools were identified as good practice within the Member States for various reasons, such as their design, content, the language used, outreach, novelty effects, visibility of the EU and the extent to which key messages defined by the EU are reflected. Significant challenges in communicating with the public were also highlighted, relating to the complexity of regional policy coupled with low levels of awareness, a lack of media interest and a deterioration of public opinion towards the EU following the crisis.

With respect to the role of the European Commission, the study found that communication has not been a key priority for DG Regio and that its approach to communication has been rather conservative, risk averse and detached from issues that are of concern to the general public. While there have been improvements in media relations, and some outreach activities are viewed very positively by stakeholders, the focus has been mainly on specialist audiences rather than reaching the general public. Further, coverage of EU Cohesion policy has been relatively low in much of the media and there has been a tendency to report negative stories. Subnational media are more likely to report regional policy-related stories, but seldom emphasise the EU dimension. Key recommendations include the need for a more strategic approach to communication, underpinned by a digital strategy and a stronger focus on story-telling to communicate the benefits and impact of regional policy to citizens. Greater efforts are also needed to help MAs communicate more effectively with the general public.

Taken together these studies highlight several important factors that are critical for understanding the effectiveness of communication and that have been integrated into the analytical framework:

- The strategic approach and extent of differentiation of target groups and prioritisation of civil society
- The clarity of objectives and availability of indicators for assessing outcomes and impacts
- The role of the media in communicating about Cohesion, particularly the level of coverage, the emphasis on the EU dimension of funding, and the tone of coverage (negative/positive)
- The importance of governance, including the capacity for communication in managing authorities and the support from the European Commission and communication networks
- Assessment of the effectiveness of communication activities should take account of criteria for communication good practice (including design, language, content, outreach, novelty, EU visibility, EU messages)

(ii) Key sources

The desk-based analysis of communication will be based on the following documentary sources for both the 2007-13 and 2014-20 periods:

- Operational Programmes
- Communication strategies/plans
- Information and communication manuals
- Annual Implementation Reports
- Evaluations of communication strategies
- Communication guidelines elaborated by the communication networks
- Database of good practices
- Other available literature in the countries/regions

Evidence of the results of the 2014-20 communication strategy may be limited and it may be necessary to rely on interviews/surveys.

EU requirements, guidance and comparative evaluations on Cohesion policy communication

A Commission **guidance document on communication** outlines EU requirements for 2014-20 and changes with respect to 2007-2013 in various EU languages (link here).

A Commission **guidance document on all regulatory requirements** in 2007-13 period including commentaries and official texts of regulations (link here)

The specific **EU Regulations and requirements on information and publicity** are available in the following links:

EU Regulation / link	Key articles and provisions on Communication

2014-2020	
ESIF Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013	• Art.115-117: Key requirements in terms of responsibilities, communication strategy, communication networking • Annex XII: publication of list of projects for transparency; communication measures and responsibilities targeting public, beneficiaries; communication strategy elements. • Article 110: Functions of the monitoring commitee • Article 111: Implementation reports in 2017 and 2019 must report on results of communication strategy
ESF Regulation 1304/2013	• Art.20: Requirement to provide information on the Youth Employment Initiative
EC Implementing Regulation 821/2014	• Chapter II/Annex II: Technical requirements on EU emblems, plaques
– **2007-2013 period**	
General Provisions Regulation 1083/2006	• Article 69: General requirements on publicity as detailed rules provided in Commission Implementing Regulation 1828/2006 (below) • Article 67: Annual Implementation Report should set out measures taken to provide information on and publicise the OP
EC Implementation Regulation 1828/2006	• Articles 2-10: Detailed requirements on responsibilities, communication plan, measures, networking
EC Implementation Regulation No 846/2009	• Article 1: Minor technical amendments to Articles 8-9 of the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006)

EU Evaluations

The Evaluation Partnership (2013) Evaluation study on good practices in EU Regional Policy communication, 2007-2013 and beyond, Report to the European Commission (DG Regio), Coffey International:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/good_practices/good_practices_en.pdf

- Evaluates DG REGIO approach to evaluation and provides good practice examples of communication activities in 8 Member States (EE, FR, DE, HU, IT, PL, ES, SE): http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/good_practices/good_practices_annex1.pdf

Technopolis (2008) Review of EU Cohesion Policy Communication Plans: 2007-2013 Activities of national and regional managing authorities in the field of communication, Report to DG for Regional Policy: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/country/commu/2007-2013/review_22012009.pdf

- Provides a review of the 2007-13 communication strategies and activities across the EU27 including fiches for each EU27 country reviewing plans, implementation, tools, success factors
- Read the report's country fiches for your country/ies for background material

Approach to communication

A. Desk research

Describe the approach taken to communication in 2007-13 including the following information from the communication strategy, annual communication plans and programme annual implementation reports by every programming period:

1. **Overall approach to communication**. Specify the communication strategy's objectives and measures distinguishing target groups for each objective and measure if possible (e.g. beneficiaries/applicants, public, multipliers/opinion leaders, stakeholders/managers etc.). This can be done in a table in an Annex.

Communication strategies/plans					
2007-2013			2014-2020		
Main objectives	Measures	Target groups	Main objectives	Measures	Target groups

2. **Indicators**. List the indicators, targets, dates and corresponding measures if specified. This will provide an idea of what the objectives mean in practice and the type of data that is used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communication in the programme.

Monitoring indicators in the Communication strategies/plans 2007-2013		
Output indicators	Result indicators	Impact indicators
Monitoring indicators in the Communication strategies/plans 2014-2020		

3. **Budget**. Specify the indicative budget for implementation of the plan if included in the strategy/plan.

Total allocation	Country	Unit
Allocation [2007-2013]		EUR
Allocation [2014-2020]		EUR

4. **Governance.** List the administrative departments or bodies - including the staff resources (e.g. number of staff, full-time equivalents etc.) and existence of communication networks - responsible for information and publicity and the assigned tasks among different bodies; describe how beneficiaries are supported in their communication activities, e.g. guidance on compliance, training events, online tools etc.

Governance framework in the Communication	
2007-2013	**2014-2020**
Communication networks	***Communication networks***
Bodies responsible for implementation of the measures	***Bodies responsible for implementation of the measures***

Provide descriptive text under each of the above themes. Tables (e.g. on measures/activities, indicators etc.) can be included in the Annex.

Highlight any 1) changes in approach over the two periods with respect to the four themes 2) and the reasons for change. Note that some changes are required by EU regulations (e.g. a single website portal at national level must be set up, more detailed data must be published on funding allocated to beneficiaries).

B. Interviews

In addition, some of the answers collected through the interviews conducted may be used to complete this section:

Q15. How would you characterise the overall approach to communication in the programme in terms of the key priorities of the communication strategy, communication measures and target groups? Has the approach changed over time? Why?

Q16. Is the communication of Cohesion policy programmes and projects considered a key priority (e.g. in terms of resources, staff time, monitoring committee debates etc.)? if not, why?

C. Stakeholder survey

In addition, some of the answers collected through the stakeholders survey may be used to complete this section:

Q10. How regularly are the following communication tools used to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds?

Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies

Provide a review of the effectiveness of the 2007-13 and 2014-20 communication strategies and individual measures/activities drawing on available documentary evidence (evaluations, annual implementation reports, other programme documents, presentations etc.)

Identify the major tools used in communication, highlighting those with the biggest impact on beneficiaries and the general public.

Review the governance of communication in terms of the actor involved and effectiveness, including any communication networks in terms of structure, members, tasks, operating procedures, and effectiveness

Identify differences across the ERDF and ESF Funds' communication measures and tools and their effectiveness

A. Desk research

Specify how the information and communication strategy and measures are monitored and evaluated. If this is not specified in the communication strategy, describe the information is provided in the annual implementation report section on communication. Specify if evaluations have been undertaken or not.

For each programming period:

Provide a review of the effectiveness of the communication strategies and individual measures/activities drawing on available documentary evidence (evaluations, annual implementation reports, other programme documents, presentations etc.)

Evaluations

If evaluations of communication strategies have been undertaken, please review them and provide the following information.

1. Methods used in the evaluation (e.g. documentary analysis, surveys, interviews with managers, beneficiaries, public, media analysis, analysis of programme monitoring data etc.)
2. Analysis of approach to communication taken (e.g. relevance of aims, measures, relative focus on beneficiaries/public etc.)
3. Implementation experiences (positive and negative)
4. Achievements and results (e.g. in relation to objectives, quantified outputs, results etc.)

Progress of the monitoring indicators of the Communication strategies/plans 2007-2013							
2007-2013							
Output indicator	*Estimated 2007-2013*	*% implementation*	*Estimated 2014-2020*	Result indicator	*Estimated 2007-2013*	*% implementation*	*Estimated 2014-2020*

5. Effectiveness in raising visibility and awareness of the policy, funds, progammes; of achievements in economic/social/territorial development and benefits for citizens; and the role played by the EU

Impact indicators	*Estimated 2007-2013*	*% implementation (2010)*	*% implementation (2013)*	*Estimated 2014-2020*

6. Policy lessons and recommendations

Specify if no evaluations have been undertaken

Annual implementation reports

Review the OP annual implementation reports for evidence of the effectiveness of communication strategies and measures using the same approach as above for evaluation evidence.

Specify if the implementation reports do not provide any analysis of effectiveness, i.e. if they simply list communication activities and measures undertaken with no analysis.

Communication strategy in 2014-20

The communication strategies for 2014-20 are required to report on the results/experiences of the previous period in 2007-13. Copy over any relevant information provided (e.g. lessons, successes, challenges) and specify if it is not provided.

B. Interviews

In addition, some of the answers collected through the interviews conducted may be used to complete this section:

Q18. What is your assessment of your publicity and communication efforts so far? Which information activities have been the most and least effective? Why?

C. Stakeholder survey

In addition, some of the answers collected through the stakeholders survey may be used to complete this section:

Q11. How satisfied are you with:

Q12. To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:

Good practice examples in communication

(i) Objetives and background

A key objective of COHESIFY is to provide communication recommendations to policymakers and to disseminate good practices through the website.

In the period 2007-2013 it was mandatory to create a database of good practices in communication. In the period 2014-2020, this obligation does not exist.

Table 2: Good practice criteria for assessing communication measures

Criterion	Description

1. Design *Extent to which the tool is attractive, eye-catching, user-friendly*	• The tool looks very professional • Is clearly better designed than other, similar tools • Is particularly eye-catching – there's something about it that stands out at first sight
2. Language *Extent to which the tool employs simple and clear wording (i.e. accessible to target audiences)*	• Avoidance of overly technical terms • Engaging language that 'speaks to' the target audience • Where appropriate, a visual format that facilitates engagement and understanding
3. Content *Extent to which the content of the tool is relevant to target audiences (not too technical, not too generic)*	• The content is well thought through so as to be relevant • Focus on simple, clear messages (as opposed to technical details) • Appreciation of what the target audience cares about and is likely to be willing and able to take in
4. Outreach *Extent to which the tool reaches target audiences / generates media interests, etc.*	• Reaching a large proportion of the general public with basic facts to raise their awareness; • Reaching a significant number of people with more direct contact; • Achieving an outreach that is far in excess of what could normally be expected for a given budget.
5. Novelty effect *Extent to which the tool is different, innovative, unlike others of the same kind*	• An innovative technical solution (e.g. use of IT) • An innovative concept • An innovative dissemination
6. EU visibility *Extent to which the EU forms part of communication*	• A real emphasis on the EU contribution • Ensuring the EU logo / slogan etc. stands out visually
7. EU messages *Extent to which the key messages defined by DG REGIO are clearly conveyed*	The three key messages are: • EC / EU supports regional development (added value and role of the EC / EU) • Regional policy contributes to Europe 2020 objectives • RP makes a positive difference in people's lives

Source: The Evaluation Partnership (2013)

To facilitate the selection of good practices in general, REGIO+ established a set of criteria:

- Degree of dissemination among the beneficiaries and the public in general.
- Presence of innovative elements
- Relation between the obtained results and established objectives.
- Contribution to a problem or need detected in the territory.

- Integration of horizontal principles
- Synergies with other policies or public intervention tools

(ii) Case study research tasks and structure

A. Desk research

Please list any examples of good practices identified in the communication strategies, evaluations and implementation reports in the form of mini case studies setting out the objectives, measures, implementation arrangements, results and identifying good practice criteria where relevant (as set out in the table). The good practices may relate to any aspect of communication such as the approach to branding/visual identity (EU Funds logo and messages); specific communication measures/activities (e.g. communication events, use of media/social media, websites, successful campaigns, etc.); support offered to beneficiaries to comply with communication requirements (e.g. online tools, meetings, helpdesks); and communication techniques (e.g. visuals, storytelling) at programme or project level.

Good practice criteria for assessing communication measures

Criteria	Description

B. Interviews

In addition, some of the answers collected through the interviews conducted may be used to complete this section:

Q20. Can you think of any communication good practices in your country/region? [probe for any aspect of communication such as the approach to branding/visual identity (EU Funds logo and messages); specific communication measures/activities (e.g. communication events, use of media/social media, websites, successful campaigns, etc.); support offered to beneficiaries to comply with communication requirements (e.g. online tools, meetings, helpdesks); and communication techniques (e.g. visuals, storytelling) at programme or project level]

C. Stakeholder survey

In addition, some of the answers collected through the stakeholders survey may be used to complete this section:

Q16. If you wish, you may supplement your reply with explanations, examples, facts and figures:
Q18. If you wish, you may supplement your reply with explanations, examples, facts and figures:

Media framing of Cohesion policy (task 4.1)

(i) Objectives and background

This task will uncover the meaning attributed to Europe and European identification though the framing of Cohesion policy in a selected number of case studies within the COHESIFY sample. Systematic framing analysis will be used to analyse the ways Cohesion policy is framed and interpreted by selected media.

The key research questions are:

- Media framing: How is Cohesion policy framed in selected regional, national and European online and offline news sites?
- Media framing: Does media-framing change across the different territorial levels?
- Audience framing: How is Cohesion policy framed in the online commentary of the selected online news sites?
- Audience framing: Does audience framing change over time and across levels?
- Relationships between frames: How are media and audience frames related to each other?

The methodology will use two sources of data:

- Newspaper articles. The framing analysis will discern the implicit meanings attributed to the notion of Cohesion policy and its role in promoting EU goals (including European identity)
- Social media. Investigation of citizen reactions in blogs, websites, social media and User Generated Content (UGC) of established media to identify different frames that appear in readers' and users' comments in online media sources and whether the latter systematically challenge (or reinforce) dominant media frames.

(ii) Case study research tasks and structure

A. Desk research

The information generated through task 4.1 of the project will be used to complete this section.

B. Interviews

The relevant interview questions to complete this section include:

Q13. How is 'Europe' and Cohesion policy viewed and reported by the media (e.g. journalist stories)? Is the tone negative or positive and why?

Q14. How do the programmes manage relations with the media? (e.g. press releases, specialised press officers, establishing strong relationships with the media so that the Structural Funds are understood in advance of press releases etc.) Could media relations be improved and if so how?

Q17. Which communication tools do you use most and least, and why?

Q19. To what extent is social media used to promote programme achievements and interactive engagement with stakeholders (e.g. through twitter, Facebook etc.)?

C. Stakeholder survey

In addition, some of the answers collected through the stakeholders survey may be used to complete this section:

Q14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

Q15. How effective do you think each of these communication measures are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

Implications for citizens CP perceptions and attitudes to the EU

A. Desk research

The results of previous population based survey conducted in the region (e.g. in the frame of the evaluation of the communication plan) can been here included and compared with the results of the COHESIFY population survey.

B. Interviews

In addition, some of the answers collected through the interviews conducted may be used to complete this section:

Q21. Can you think of any ways of improving the communication of EU policy objectives and results to the public?

C. Stakeholder survey

In addition, some of the answers collected through the stakeholders survey may be used to complete this section:

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

D. Citizen survey

Some of the answers collected through the citizen survey may be used to complete this section:

Q6 How positive or negative was the impact of the funding of the European Union on your region or city?

Q9 Have you heard about the following funds?

Q11 How do you think your region or city would have developed without EU funding?

3.5 Citizens perceptions of Cohesion policy and identification (WP5)

3.5.1 Citizens' survey (task 5.1-5.2)

This task will design and implement a survey to examine citizens' perceptions of Cohesion policy and the impact on wider attitudes to and identification with the EU in the case study regions/countries. EPRC will provide all country teams with survey data/results to integrate into the case studies.

The survey will be carried out by a market research company (contracted via tender). The sample will include representative samples at the level of regions with citizens aged over 18. The sample size for each region is planned as 500. The survey would be carried out via telephone (CATI). The sample design applied in all countries would be a multi-stage random sample.

3.5.1 Focus groups (task 5.3)

This task will involve the organisation of focus groups in the case study regions to examine citizens' perceptions of Cohesion policy and the implications for European identity. All partners will undertake a minimum of two focus groups in each of the COHESIFY case study regions/countries.

The key themes to be explored in the focus groups are awareness and perceptions of EU funded projects, attitudes to the EU and European identity, and factors shaping perceptions of the EU and Cohesion policy. A core set of questions will be defined for the country teams, while allowing flexibility to address additional context-specific issues, developing the indicative questions below.

Research questions will include:

- **Awareness and benefits**: How aware are citizens of EU co-funded major projects in their region or city and how do they perceive the way major projects are implemented and impact on the region? Are they perceived positively or negatively in terms of implementation and outcomes? What are the narratives that are constructed by different citizens in different regional contexts?
- **European identity**: What does it means to feel European and to identify with the EU? This will take into account that identity is a multidimensional concept encompassing a range of potential meanings and components (cultural, ethnic, citizenship etc.) that can overlap, compete or mutually reinforce each other.
- **Factors shaping attitudes to the EU and identity**: Does awareness and perceptions of EU Cohesion policy influence opinions of, or identification with, the EU? What has shaped these views – political preferences, socio-economic status, personal experiences, other factors?

Research Design Principles for Focus Groups Participants

Participants' Selection

- Participant selection process is flexible.
- Target: European citizens (in theory this means participants who potentially have opinions regarding EU politics, identity and Cohesion policy in general terms). The

countries-regions from where we select citizens are those from the selected case-studies in the COHESIFY project.

Principle of selection

Systematic random sampling is less important in focus groups since the aim is not to make generalizations to a population in the same way that large-scale surveys may target. While findings of focus groups do need to be generalizable, this might be addressed simply by the coverage of the range of population.

COHESIFY could involve random selection based on snowball sampling, a strategy that is often recommended for a large target population as in our case. This strategy involves contacting individuals who are known to the research group or through an intermediary (a "nod"). Once invited participants have participated in the focus group discussion, they can be asked in turn to suggest other potential interested and eligible individuals from their own personal and social networks who could be interested in taking part in focus groups. As the procedure advances the researcher checks whether there is sufficient variety of the appropriate selected characteristics of the participants and may ask for eligible individuals with specific characteristics in order to keep the balance in the participants sample. For example, the researcher might need more female middle-aged participants to achieve balanced (or representative) samples and hence she/he may ask just for such 'type' of participants.

Focus Groups Composition

Strangers or acquaintances? One of the research goals for the conduct of focus groups is to include a variety of citizens in the selected case studies in order to explore a range of views on the effect of Cohesion policy on the (building or enriching) of some sort of European identification. There are two basic approaches that guide the way we form the composition of the focus groups.

- Pre-existing social groups (friends or acquaintances, colleagues etc.). Such groups have the advantage of providing more 'natural' setting for discussion and tend to ease recruitment efforts. Attendance is likely to be higher if the group consists of a pre-existing social group.
- Groups of strangers. Such groups have the advantage of providing more free opinions without being bounded by social desirability bias. Yet sometimes the fact that strangers are invited to discuss a general topic might not be a strong incentive for leading to a meaningful discussion.

Our decision should rely on the basic criterion of whether a particular group of participants can comfortably discuss the topic in ways that are useful to us.

Participants' crucial characteristics

The principle to fulfil in building the focus groups sample is the so-called segmentation, which refers to the decision to control composition to match carefully chosen categories of participants.

Segmentation is linked to homogeneity, which is responsible for more free-flowing discussions and analyses that examine differences in perspective between groups. Yet the variables chosen for segmentation (usually demographics are contingent on the specific research question. Eg. gender might be a crucial or non-crucial factor as a basic variable for constructing homogeneous or mixed-groups).

CUT proposal: the segmentation variable should be determined in the COHESIFY project by the literature on European identity attitudes. I suspect that there is not huge difference in attitudes on EU identity based on demographics [but younger age groups are more likely to have identify than older groups]. If this is the case then we are flexible to segment using a variable that we assume will serve practical facilitation of discussion (eg. social class). Attention here: it is not the actual differences in social class but the perception of each other to be different (in terms of social class) that determines their willingness to discuss the respective topic together. Furthermore, the suggestion is to base the composition of participants in focus groups based on the results of the survey. Hence, we can either build mixed-groups (participants with various demographic characteristics from the overall target population) or similar groups (participants with similar characteristics (eg. youngsters, men etc.).

Sample size (no. of groups and no. of individuals per group)

Number of focus groups: There is not really a rule regarding the exact number of focus groups that need to be conducted. It differs based on the specifics of every research project (participants' characteristics and research topic). Yet there is a point when the collection of focus groups can stop which is known as "saturation" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This refers to the point at which additional data collection no longer generates new arguments leading to new understanding. Nevertheless, a minimum number is suggested to be between 3-5 focus groups. The most important determinant of the necessary number of groups is the variability of the participants both within and across groups. Factors that may lead to a higher number of conducted focus groups are: heterogeneous groups; less structured interview protocols; lack of variability in responses

Practical issues related to time and money can be sensible criteria to determine the number of focus groups conducted.

Number of individuals per group: Classical approaches suggest 10-12 participants. Research, though, shows that the minimum number of participants could range from 3 to the maximum limit of 14 participants. For the purposes of COHESIFY we would suggest about 6-8 participants per group as a sufficient N for a qualitative discussion that avoids the "noise" from having a higher number of participants (Morgan, 1997). Below 6 participants, it may be difficult to maintain a discussion; above 10, it may be difficult to control a discussion. Nonetheless, these boundaries are not binding and small deviations might not lead to problems if the research topic requires it.

3.6 Conclusions and policy implications

The final section of the case studies should outline the key conclusions and policy implications of the research.

4. Template for case studies

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Context and background

4.2.1 EU attitudes and identity

4.2.2 Political context

4.3 Cohesion policy implementation and performance

4.3.1 EU Cohesion policy strategic and implementation framework

4.3.2 Assessment of performance

4.3.3 Assessment of added value

4.4 Cohesion policy communication

4.4.1 Approach to communication

4.4.2 Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies

4.4.3 Good practice examples in communication

4.4.4 Media framing of Cohesion policy

4.4.5 Implications for citizens CP perceptions and attitudes to the EU

4.5 Citizens views of Cohesion policy and the EU

4.5.1 Citizen survey results

4.5.2 Focus group results

4.6 Conclusions

4.6.1 Key findings

4.6.2 Policy implications and recommendations

4.7 References

4.8 Annexes

Annex 1: List of interviewees

Number	Type of organisation	Position	Date of research

Annex II: Online survey response rates

Overview of number of responses and response rate possibly by type of actor

Annex III: Focus group characteristics

Annex I: Online survey questionnaire

EFFECTIVENESS

Q1. How well – in your opinion – have Cohesion policy funds been used in your municipality and region?

	Very well	Well	Acceptable	Poorly	Very poorly	Don't know
1. Your municipality						
2. Your region						

Q2. To what extent have the Cohesion policy objectives reinforced the development objectives of your municipality and region?

	Completely	Largely	In some way	Not much	Not at all	Don't know
1. Your municipality						
2. Your region						

Q3. To what extent have Cohesion policy funds helped to increase or decrease:

	Decreased	Somewhat decreased	Had no impact	Somewhat increased	Increased	Don't know
1. Differences in the development level between poorer and richer regions in your country						
2. Differences in the development level between rural and urban areas in your region						
3. Differences in the development level between poorer and richer areas in your region						
4. Differences in the development level between your country and other European Union Member states						

Q4. In your opinion, has Cohesion policy during the last 10 years or so helped to make residents of your municipality/region support the European Union more?

1. It has helped a lot
2. It has rather helped
3. It has had no impact
4. It has had a rather negative impact
5. It has had a very negative impact

99. Don't know

IMPLEMENTATION

Q5. How significant was the impact of the following problems and challenges during the implementation of Cohesion policy projects?

Please chose the appropriate response for each item:

	Very significant	Significant	Average	Insignificant	Not at all	Don't know

Scarcity of Cohesion policy funds						
Problems with obtaining Cohesion policy financing such as complicated rules for submitting applications						
Excessive, cumbersome reporting						
Unclear objectives for evaluating project results						
Poor cooperation between project partners						
Excessive audit and control during or after the project completion						
Lack of funds for own contribution (co-financing)						
Difficult access to credit and/or loans for own contribution						
Lack of capacity such as qualified staff						

Other – please specify including significance rating: Please write your answer here:

Q6. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements:

Please chose the appropriate response for each item:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cohesion policy funds finance those investment projects which your municipality/region needs the most						
In your municipality/region Cohesion policy funding goes to investment projects which are most valued by the local residents						
There are many irregularities in spending Cohesion policy funds due to non-compliance with EU rules						
Fraud, such as corruption or nepotism, is common in spending Cohesion policy funds						
There have been many positive changes in your municipality/region thanks to Cohesion policy funds, which would not have been achieved without the funds						
The spending of Cohesion policy funds is adequately controlled						
The money from Cohesion policy funds is in most cases wasted on the wrong projects						
The administration of Cohesion policy has been delivered in an efficient (cost-effective) manner						

PARTNERSHIP

Q7. The partnership principle requires the participation of a wide range of partners throughout the different stages of programming and implementation through consultations, monitoring committee work and other mechanisms. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the operation of the partnership principle in practice?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
1. The way the programme partnership operates is inclusive, open and fair						
2. The operation of the programme's partnership principle facilitates a shared understanding and shared commitment by partners to achieving the programme's objectives						
3. Partners are only interested in promoting their own organisational and financial interests						

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
The monitoring and evaluation reports provide adequate information on the implementation and performance of the programme/s						
The monitoring and evaluation reports of the programme/s are easily accessible						
The monitoring and evaluation reports of the programme/s are easy to understand						
The monitoring and evaluation report results are used to improve policy-making and implementation						

TRAINING

Q9. In what Cohesion policy workshop or training sessions did the representatives of your organisation/municipality/region participate in the last two years (select all that apply)?

1. Management
2. Control
3. Monitoring
4. Evaluation
5. Communication
6. Nobody participated in such events
7. Other

Other – please specify:

COMMUNICATION

– Q10. How regularly are the following communication tools used to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often

Television					
Radio					
Local and regional newspapers					
National newspapers					
Workshops, seminars					
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters					
Press releases					
Programme website					
Film clips/videos					
Plaques/billboard with EU flag					
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)					
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio					
We have not launched any action					

–

Other communication tools – please specify including rating:

–

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION

Q11. How satisfied are you with:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Don´t know
The way Cohesion policy is communicated to citizens						
The branding and messages used to communicate Cohesion policy						
The use of human interest/personal stories						
The support from the European Commission on communication						
The targeting of different groups with different communication tools						
The administrative capacity and resources dedicated to communication activities						

Q12. To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective	Ineffective	– Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used

			nor ineffective				
Conveying the achievements of Cohesion Policy programmes overall and the role of the EU							
Conveying the achievements of co-funded projects and the role of the EU							
Using social media to promote the programme and projects (e.g. Twitter, Youtube, Facebook)							
Fostering good working relations with the media and press to reach the general public							

Q12a. If you wish, you may supplement your reply with explanations, examples, facts and figures:

Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The media mainly report negative stories about EU Cohesion Policy						
During publicity events, politicians mainly highlight the local/regional dimensions of projects to claim credit for themselves, rather than the role and contribution of the European Union						
The media do not highlight the European Union role and contribution in a sufficient way						
The key programme communication messages have adopted an appropriate form to reach their target audiences						
The communication messages have been consistent at country or regional levels						
There is insufficient resources and priority dedicated to communication by programme stakeholders						

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION ON CITIZENS

Q14. How effective do you think each of these communication measures are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don´t know	Not used in my region
Television							
Radio							
Local and regional newspapers							
National newspapers							
Programme website							
Video/film clips and presentations							
Plaques/billboard with EU flag							
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube)							
Media/advertising campaigns on television or radio							
Press releases							
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters, other publications							
Events							

Other communication measures – please specify including rating:

Q14a. If you wish, you may supplement your reply with explanations, examples, facts and figures:

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The communication activities have led to an increased awareness among citizens of the contribution of Cohesion policy to regional and local development					
The communication activities of Cohesion policy funds increase the sense of belonging of citizens to the European Union					
The communication activities of Cohesion policy funds contribute to increasing citizens' support for the European Union					

Citizens mistrust Cohesion policy communication activities and messages or consider them to be propaganda					

Q15a. If you wish, you may supplement your reply with explanations, examples, facts and figures:

Q16. Do you have any concrete ideas for improving the communication of Cohesion policy achievements to citizens? Please specify and explain the reasons behind your suggestions.

Annex II: Interview questionnaire

The interviews should relate to the following key themes and questions adapted to the specificity of the organisation interviewed. As noted, all monitoring committee members should have a general understanding of all the topics covered at the programme-level, given that these topics are addressed during monitoring committee meetings that they attend.

General question

Q1. Can you describe your role in this organisation? What is your role regarding Cohesion Policy?

Socio-economic challenges

Q2. In your opinion, what are the main socio-economic needs and problems that the programmes are trying to address over the last two programme periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)?

Achievements

Q3 What have been the main achievements of the programmes over the last two periods (2007-13 and 2014-20)?

Q4. What challenges and problems, if any, led to programmes or parts of programmes failing to meet their goals?

Institutional framework and management

Q5. What are the key features of the management structure for the programme/s?

Q6. Were these implementation structures effective in delivering programmes/projects? What were the main challenges?

Q7. What is the relative priority placed on the tasks of 1) spending the funds 2) compliance 3) performance and 4) publicising achievements? Why?

Partnership/public fora

Q8. What are the main partnership structures and forums for discussing Cohesion policy implementation and performance/achievements?

Q9. To what extent are these forums open and accountable to civil society?

Visibility and profile of Cohesion policy

Q10. How high is the public profile and visibility of the Structural Funds in your region and country?

Q11. Are citizens aware of the existence of Cohesion policy funds as well as the impacts on the development of their region?

Q12. Do politicians publicly acknowledge the contribution of EU funds to regional development?

Q13. Have there been efforts to increase the profile of Cohesion policy in your region/country, and if so, how has this been done?

Media coverage

Q14. How is 'Europe' and Cohesion policy viewed and reported by the media at national, regional and local level (e.g. journalist stories)? In your opinion, is the tone negative or positive and why?

Q15. How do the programmes manage relations with the media? (e.g. press releases, specialised press officers, establishing strong relationships with the media so that the Structural Funds are understood in advance of press releases etc.) Could media relations be improved and if so how?

Approach to programme communication

Q16. How would you characterise the overall approach to communication in the programme in terms of the key priorities of the communication strategy, communication measures and target groups? Has the approach changed over time? Why?

Q17. Is the communication of Cohesion policy programmes and projects considered a key priority (e.g. in terms of resources, staff time, monitoring committee debates etc.)? if not, why?

Communication tools and activities

Q18. Which communication tools do you use most and least, and why?

Q19. To what extent is social media used to promote programme achievements and interactive engagement with stakeholders (e.g. through twitter, facebook etc.)?

Q20. What is your assessment of your publicity and communication efforts so far? Which information activities have been the most and least effective? Why?

Q21. Can you think of any communication good practices in your country/region? *[probe for any aspect of communication such as the approach to branding/visual identity (EU Funds logo and messages); specific communication measures/activities (e.g. communication events, use of media/social media, websites, successful campaigns, etc.); support offered to beneficiaries to comply with communication requirements (e.g. online tools, meetings, helpdesks); and communication techniques (e.g. visuals, storytelling) at programme or project level]*

Q22. Can you think of any ways of improving the communication of EU policy objectives and results to the public?