



TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER: a Tool Bringing Together Cohesion Policy Practitioners

Overview of 2 years of implementation

1. What is TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER?

1. TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER instrument was set-up by DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) to facilitate sharing of experience between institutions that manage funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF). It helps public officials involved in the management of these funds meet their counterparts from other Member States and exchange knowledge, good practice and practical solutions on cohesion policy topics.
2. The instrument is open to public sector institutions and officials involved in the management of ERDF/CF (managing authorities, intermediate bodies, audit authorities, certifying authorities).
3. Exchanges under PEER 2 PEER take the form of (i) an expert visit, (ii) a study visit or (iii) a workshop. These are short-term exchanges, lasting for up to 5 days.
4. The instrument was launched in March 2015 and will run until 2020.
5. PEER 2 PEER is implemented using the TAIEX infrastructure and experience available at DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).
6. Online application forms and other information on PEER 2 PEER is available on Inforegio website: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/p2p.

2. PEER 2 PEER implementation: March 2015 – May 2017

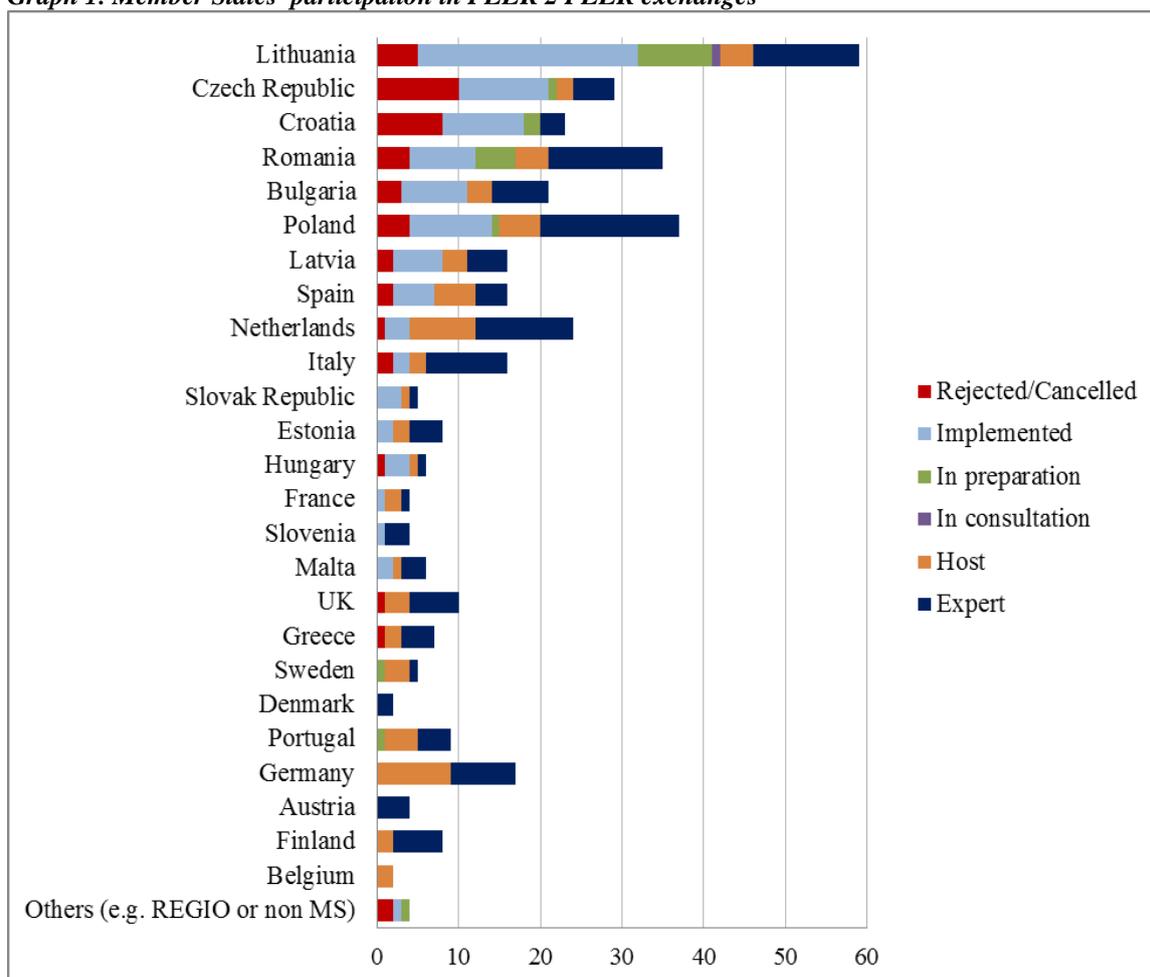
7. **Key statistics.** The table below presents key figures concerning the implementation of PEER 2 PEER in the period from March 2015 to May 2017.

Statistics 03/2015-05/2017	
No. of applications received	171
No. of applications approved	124
No. of Member States which have applied	20
No. of Member States which have provided assistance	25
No. of exchanges organised by end May 2017	103
No. of exchanges in preparation	21
No. of participants in exchanges	1541

8. **Participation by Member State.** 25 Member States have so far been involved in the initiative, either as beneficiaries or as providers of expertise. The most active

applicants are Lithuania, Czech Republic, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria. The most active providers of assistance are Poland, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Germany.

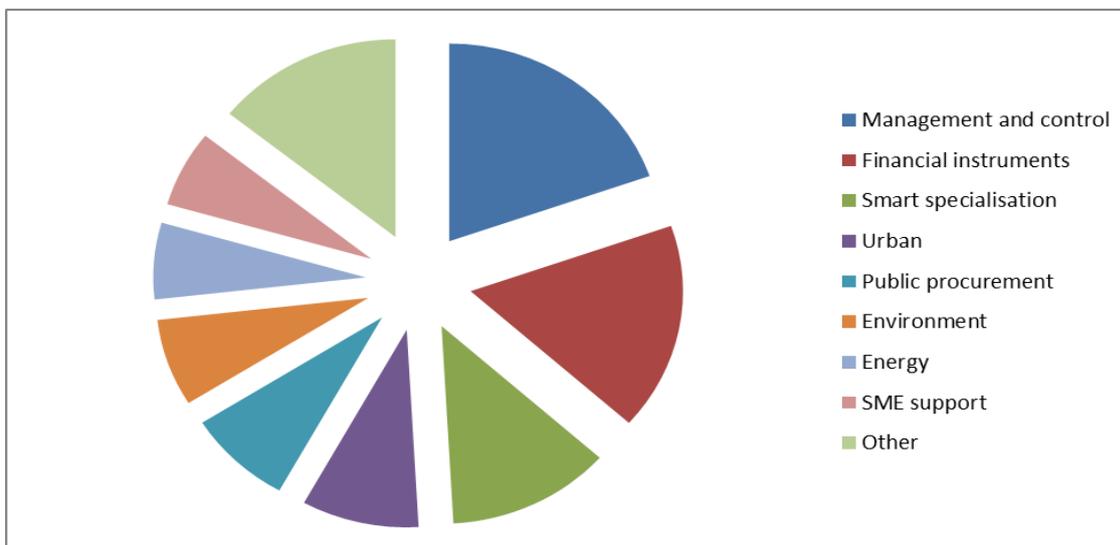
Graph 1. Member States' participation in PEER 2 PEER exchanges



9. **Participation by type of institution.** Approximately half of the institutions for which exchanges have been organised are managing authorities. Intermediate bodies make up a third of all beneficiaries under PEER 2 PEER. Audit authorities have submitted a few requests; no requests have been received from certifying authorities. In a limited number of justified cases, PEER 2 PEER assistance has been provided to other types of bodies (e.g. public procurement agencies, anti-fraud bodies, etc).

10. **Popular topics.** The variety of topics covered in exchanges is wide. The most popular topics include management and control issues, financial instruments, smart specialisation, urban development, public procurement (see graph 2).

Graph 2. Organised exchanges by theme/sector



11. **Cost of exchanges.** The average cost of an exchange varies depending on the type of assistance.

Type of exchange	Average cost
Workshop	EUR 15,000
Study visit	EUR 4,900
Expert mission	EUR 3,900

12. Information about each implemented exchange, their agendas and other materials (if available) are published on Inforegio website¹ and are available to the public.

3. Feedback from PEER 2 PEER exchanges

13. PEER 2 PEER has an in-built feedback and quality monitoring mechanism. After each exchange, participants and experts involved are asked to fill in an online survey as well as a short report. Some key points from this feedback are presented below.

14. **Satisfaction of participants.** Surveys suggest that 90% to 96% of participants are satisfied with the expertise offered by PEER 2 PEER. As for workshops, 88% of participants considered invited speakers to be excellent or good.

Were you satisfied with the choice/offer of expertise?			
	Yes	No	Partially
Study visits	96%	1%	3%
Expert missions	90%	0%	10%

Speakers in workshops	
Excellent	50%
Good	38%
Satisfactory	9%
Poor	3%

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/p2p

15. **Satisfaction of experts.** The results of experts' surveys also suggest a positive experience with the instrument.

Would you be ready to provide expertise for/host future exchanges?		
	Yes	No
Expert missions	100%	0%
Workshops	97%	3%
Study visits	85%	15%

16. Among the **most appreciated** features of PEER 2 PEER assistance, participants tend to mention its hands-on, practical nature. Also, it is seen as providing with a timely and helpful assistance when new arrangements are being put in place (e.g. setting up SME Initiative, energy service companies, Integrated Territorial Investments, etc).
17. **Follow-up actions.** In surveys, the majority of participants (76% to 89%) declare their intentions to implement some sort of follow-up actions based on lessons learnt.

Do you expect any follow-up based on the results of the exchange?		
	Yes	No
Study visits	89%	11%
Expert missions	79%	21%
Workshops	76%	24%

4. Beyond short-term exchanges and towards communities of practitioners

18. A number of exchanges have led to follow-up meetings between newly paired partners. There are also cases where the need for a more systematic co-operation in a specific area has been voiced out (see the example of SME Initiative in Box 1 below). Such cases provide a testing ground for another DG REGIO capacity building initiative "Communities of Practitioners", which will be used to facilitate exchange of experience and co-operation beyond ad-hoc, short-term events (for more information on "Communities of Practitioners" see Box 2).

Box 1. Exchange of experience among Member States implementing SME Initiative

In 2015, upon the request of the Bulgarian authorities, a study visit on SMEI was organised to Spain. The visit was organised at the time when work was ongoing in Bulgaria to set up the new SMEI OP. In 2016, a similar visit to Spain was organised for the Romanian authorities responsible for launching SMEI. Both exchanges focused on such issues as lessons learnt from setting-up SMEI, the framework for implementation, rules and procedures for the management and control, selection of FIs, state aid, etc. Documents and manuals were exchanged.

Aforementioned study visits led to the conclusion that a more systematic exchange was needed among Member States implementing SMEI, assisted by an online platform and regular meetings. "Communities of Practitioners" measure is seen as a potential candidate to assist such collaborative efforts.

Box 2. REGIO "Communities of Practitioners" initiative

REGIO "Communities of Practitioners" initiative is about staff in managing authorities in different countries working together to identify solutions to common challenges. In this initiative, the Commission acts as a facilitator. Instead of finding solutions *for* managing authorities/intermediate bodies, DG REGIO is seeking to find the solutions *together with these bodies*. More innovative ways of working have been adopted, using a policy lab approach, with the aim of shaping communities of practitioners, clustering around a common topic/issue. Communities of practitioners work on the basis of mutual trust, are focused on concrete topics and are "owned" by its participants.

PEER 2 PEER and Communities of Practitioners can complement each other, where exchanges started under PEER 2 PEER can be extended to a larger group in a sustainable set-up via Communities of Practitioners.

For more information please visit the Inforegio website :

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/regio-communities-practitioners/