**BACKGROUND FICHE FOR EGESIF: LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS**

After the Commission had made the legislative proposal on the European Structural and Investment Funds for the 2014-2020 period in October 2011, **position papers** were sent to Member States in autumn 2012 and **informal negotiations** were held until the Common Provisions Regulation came into force at the end of 2013.

The informal and formal submission of **Partnership Agreements** (PAs) – with Commission observations – and **programmes** followed. The PAs were adopted between May and November 2014, the programmes between June 2014 and December 2015. Although the informal negotiations speeded up the process in comparison to 2007-2013, it took between 1.5 and 3.5 years (2 years in average) for the Member States to have their programmes adopted from the start of the informal negotiations.

Additionally, while acknowledging the positive influence on the quality of investment, the **introduction of new elements in the legislative framework** such as ex-ante conditionalities, performance framework, additional options and requirements for the use of financial instruments, territorial instruments (e.g. Article 7 of Regulation 1301/2013), new thematic concentration requirements, structured information in programmes, all slowed down the preparations due to the initial time and resource investment needed to understand and develop these new elements.

Equally, the **process of re-programming** sometimes turns out to be a heavy procedure.

The programming process is still too long and needs to be shortened. In addition, there is scope for streamlining the programming architecture to enhance its focus. The challenge is finding common solutions that are helpful to all, notably as there are conflicting views about different elements of the existing procedure among the Member States.

Suggested questions for EGESIF members:

* How would you evaluate the role of the position papers? What were their advantages and disadvantages?
* Which part of the programming process was the most complicated and time consuming from the Member State point of view and why? How should the existing procedures be modified in order to bring the most significant reduction of administrative burden?
* What was your experience with negotiating the PAs first and then moving to programme negotiations? Would it have been more useful to negotiate the PAs and programmes in parallel?
* Which part of the re-programming process is viewed as most cumbersome and why? Are the notifications of the programme amendments (not to be adopted by a Commission decision) considered as useful? What other approaches could be envisaged to streamline re-programming?
* Do you envisage requesting any additional support to be provided by the Commission which would speed up the programming process?
* Regarding the EMFF programmes, if certain conditions are met, and if the Member State specifically requests it, a simplified OP assessment procedure[[1]](#footnote-2) is used. Would it be useful to extend this possibility also to the other Funds?

1. Article 22(2) of Regulation 508/2014 and Article 1 of Implementing Regulation 1362/2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)