

Event Report of RSA CPNet Cohesion Policy Research Network



This is a report of the event 'Building Administrative Capacities for Cohesion Policy' at TU Delft, 21-22 November 2019 organised by Marcin Dabrowski (local organiser), Ekaterina Domorenok and Laura Polverari (Scientific Convenors). Co-organisers included Nicola Dotti (VUB, BE), Piotr Idczak & Ida Musiałkowska (Poznań University of Economics & Business, PL), Jiannis Kaucic (University of Vienna, AT), Oto Potluka (University of Basel, CH).



This event was organised to take stock of existing knowledge on the

administrative capacity that is required for implementing Cohesion Policy and how it can be fostered. There is a wide body of research that emphasises the importance of institutions for effective regional development. Part of this research has focused specifically on the role of administrative capacity as a factor for the effectiveness of ESIF programmes and concluded that effectiveness is conditional on the ability of national, regional and local administrations to design robust strategies, allocate resources effectively and administer EU funding efficiently (amongst the most recent, Hagemann 2019; Di Cataldo, M. and Rodriguez-Pose 2017; Mendez and Bachtler 2017; Surubaru 2017; Tosun 2014; Bachtler et al 2013; Terracciano and Graziano 2013; Lorvi 2013; Filippetti and Reggi 2012; Farole et al 2011).

This research has prompted policymakers to pay more attention to the development of institutional and administrative capacity. Within cohesion policy, in particular, administrative capacity building in the current, 2014-2020, period is supported through a variety of means, including Technical Assistance, Thematic Objective 11 (“institutional capacity”), Thematic Objective 2 (“e-government, open data”), peer learning through exchanges and networks (e.g. ‘European Week of Regions and Cities’, ‘Taiaex Peer-to-Peer’), and others. Yet, there is still a limited understanding of the effectiveness of these measures, of the sustainability of the capacity building outcomes achieved, and of the wider institutional and administrative capacity needs of public administrations and stakeholders.

Against this background, the conference included papers that explored the following research questions:

- What types of measures do current ESIF programmes foresee to strengthen administrative capacity at different territorial levels? Are they achieving their objectives?
- How synergic are the administrative capacity building (ACB) measures supported by the ESI Funds with other ACB initiatives and PA reform programmes implemented by the Member States?
- Have the implemented ACB measures been effective and comprehensive?
- Do current ACB measures effectively address cross-sectoral policy design and the challenges entailed by new thematic priorities (e.g. digitalisation, the SDGs, smart specialisation, poverty, social inclusion, the integration of migrants etc.)?
- Which factors impact on the effectiveness of ACB activities?

- Which specific administrative capacity building aspects should be fostered in the 2021-2027 programming period? What types of innovations should be introduced?

There were about 20 speakers between paper presenters, chairs and keynote speakers, coming from a variety of EU Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland), UK, Switzerland and Turkey. Altogether, there were about 30 participants altogether (including also non-presenting delegates and members of the audience).

The following papers were presented by the speakers highlighted in bold:

- Elisa Gerussi, **Nicholas Harap** and Ruslan Stefanov (European Commission Joint Research Centre - IPTS) - 'How efficient ecosystem governance and ESIF/H2020 can boost local innovation in lagging regions. The case of Bulgaria'
- **Nicola Matteucci** (Marche Polytechnic University) - 'Administrative Capacity building and the performance of the EU regional policy. The Italian policy for NGA Networks'
- **Mario Paris** (Politecnico di Milano) - 'Urban regeneration as a challenge for administrative capacities: limits and opportunities of multilevel interactions from the Metropolitan city of Milan'
- Julia Bachtrögler (WIFO, Vienna), **Ugo Fratesi** (Politecnico di Milano) and Giovanni Perucca (Politecnico di Milano) - 'The territorial determinants of cohesion policy impact: a two-stage analysis'
- **Serafin Pazos-Vidal** (COSLA) - 'From Structural Funds to Structural Reform and back. First assessment of post 2020 Von der Leyen's proposals'
- **Elisabetta Marinelli** (European Commission, Joint Research Centre - IPTS) - 'Role playing as institutional capacity building: the experience of the project S3 Targeted Support for Lagging Regions'
- Tolga Bolukbasi (Bilkent University) and **Ebru Ertugal** (Ozyegin University) - 'Making administrative capacity work in EU pre-accession States'
- **Oto Potluka** (University of Basel) and Eduardo Medeiros (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa) - 'Administrative capacities of civil society in EU cohesion policy: Case of the Integrated Urban Sustainable Development Plans in the Czech Republic and Portugal'

- **Themistoklis Pellas** (National Technical University of Athens) - 'Administrative capacity building for the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) of EU Member States'
- **Tharwat Jaber** (Frederick University Cyprus) - 'On the nature and micro-foundations of Dynamic Capabilities in Public Sector Organizations: A conceptual approach'
- **Judith Kalman** (Corvinus University Budapest) - 'Europeanisation and (slow) institutional change: Administrative capacities among EU Cohesion Policy in Managing Authorities in CEE and Southern Europe'
- **Györgyi Nyikos** and Eva Vyrostova (National University of Public Service, Budapest) - 'Administrative capacities within the EU Funds management systems of Hungary and Slovakia'
- **Dorota Kamrowska-Załużska and Hanna Obracht-Prondzyńska** (Gdansk University of Technology) - 'Administrative Capacity Building for Urban Regeneration Programmes: Comparative study between Pomorskie and Śląskie Regions in Poland'
- **Laura Polverari**, Ekaterina Domorenok and Paolo Graziano (University of Padua) - 'Empowerment via delegation? Implementing Sustainable Urban Development Strategies in Veneto and Scotland'

Papers were selected through a call for papers and, collectively provided a comprehensive picture of administrative capacities across a range of different policy domains, ranging from sustainable urban development to broadband infrastructure, from innovation and smart specialisation to energy and climate. All papers had to be theoretically-grounded and some included new conceptualisations of administrative capacity. Most papers were comparative and, taken together, they provided evidence from a considerable variety of EU countries, as well as Turkey.

In addition to the papers, there were two invited keynote speeches by John Bachtler (Director of the European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde) and Stefan Appel (Head of the Administrative Capacity and Solidarity Fund Unit of DG Regio, European Commission). John Bachtler took stock of the academic debates on the topic of administrative capacity (What do we know? What would be interesting to know? And where we need to go?); Stefan Appel presented the work of the European Commission in support of administrative capacity building in the EU Member States and regions and the challenges and

opportunities of the forthcoming, 2021-27, cycle. The keynote session, chaired by Paolo Graziano (University of Padua), was the occasion for lively debates with the audience, particularly on the prospects of 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy. Ieva Cerniute, also from DG Regio, and Ekaterina Domorenok (University of Padua), closed the event with final remarks. Photos from the event are available at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/K9PULNmdPaaJuBjj9>

Authors of this report

Ekaterina Domorenok is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Padua. Her research interests mainly concern policy design, implementation and learning in multi-level settings, with particular regard to European Union policies for climate, sustainability, environment and cohesion. She has taken part in several European research and cooperation projects dealing with regional and local development, environmental governance, climate policies and participatory forms of policy-making at the local level. She is author of four monographs and has published a number of articles on the aforementioned topics. Her most recent book is 'Governing Sustainability in the EU. From Political Discourse to Policy Practices' (Routledge, 2018). Her contributions have appeared in various academic journals, including Environmental Politics, Journal of European Integration, Regional and Federal Studies, Italian Political Science Review, Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche, Istituzioni del Federalismo.



Laura Polverari is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Padua, where she also co-directs the 'Institutional and Administrative Capacities Observatory'. Until October 2019 she was Senior Research Fellow at the European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, where she

undertook research on the design, implementation and evaluation of public policy, EU cohesion policy, regional policy in Italy, administrative capacity and capacity building, smart specialisation and accountability, often leading multi-disciplinary, international research teams. Laura holds a degree in Political Science from LUISS University (cum laude) and a PhD in European Public Policy from the University of Strathclyde (PhD thesis awarded first prize in the European Committee of the Regions' annual doctoral thesis competition 2011). She has published numerous articles, research papers, book chapters, a monograph (co-authored with John Bachtler, Iain Begg and David Charles) and co-edited the Edward Elgar Handbook on Cohesion Policy in the EU.



Marcin Dabrowski is an assistant professor at the Chair of Spatial Planning and Strategy in the Department of Urbanism, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, where he conducts research and teaches in the fields of urban and regional planning as well as territorial governance. His research interest span across many topics related to governance of territory, from regional strategies for circular economy and energy transition, to governance of urban climate change adaptation policies and Europeanisation of spatial planning. He has also published extensively on various aspects of EU Cohesion Policy, from its governance to impacts on EU identification.

