

## **MID-TERM EVALUATION**

OF THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
FUND, THE COHESION FUND AND  
THE JUST TRANSITION FUND



**2021  
2027**

## **JUST TRANSITION FUND**



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## Just Transition Fund (JTF)

As part of the Green Deal (COM/2020/21 final, 2020), the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) was designed to provide support to territories facing serious socio-economic challenges from the transition towards climate neutrality.

The first pillar of the JTM is the JTF (Regulation (EU) 2021/1056) which. It was established in the framework of 2021-2027 cohesion policy, the main EU policy to reduce disparities and address structural change in Europe's regions. The JTF differs compared to the other cohesion policy funds and to the previous programming period. The JTF Regulation <sup>(1)</sup> foresees a dedicated review of the fund implementation, to which this fiche contributes, followed by a report produced by the European Commission by 30 June 2025.

The JTF mobilises EUR 19.7 billion from the 2021-2027 budget and NextGenerationEU. Including national co-financing, EUR 27 billion are available from JTF programmes though ERDF, CF and ESF+ continue to be the main source for supporting measures aimed at reducing regional disparities and important sources for supporting the transition.

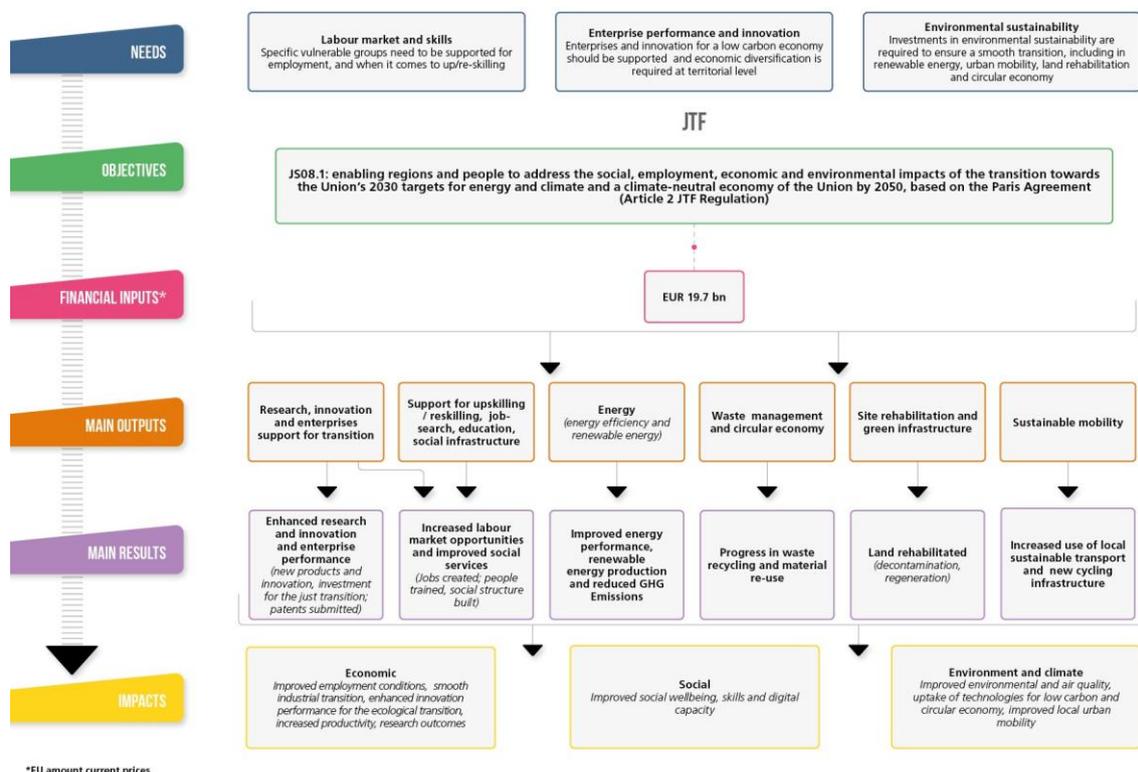
The other two pillars of the JTM are a dedicated InvestEU Just Transition Scheme to attract private investment and the Public Sector Loan Facility to leverage additional public funding. The three pillars combined are expected to mobilise up to EUR 55 billion.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1056. Article 14.

# 1. Part 1: Intervention logic

Figure 1 - JTF Intervention logic illustration



## 1.1. Needs

The European Union intends to fight climate change through ambitious policies, strategies and EU funds to balance GHG emissions and removals across the EU, achieving net zero by 2050. The European Green Deal sets out a roadmap to achieve climate neutrality in an effective and fair manner. While all Member States are affected by the EU climate and energy targets for 2030 and the transition towards EU climate neutrality by 2050, some regions need more help than others. Various socio-economic challenges arise from the transition, affecting EU territories and regions differently. Transformational change and new types of economic activity, including opportunities for innovation, investment and jobs, are crucial to reaching climate neutrality.

This requires changes in every aspect of life and demands realistic strategies and instruments supporting the process. Climate neutrality describes a state in which net GHG emissions arising from EU territory are zero ('net zero'). The remaining GHG emissions are thus in the same order of magnitude as natural sinks such as soils, forests, or wetlands. Since elimination of the last percentage points of residual emissions is most challenging, net zero emission solutions require deep decarbonisation in each sector separately as well as integrated measures across

sectors. Key sectors for reaching climate neutrality are power generation, transport, buildings, industry (including circular economy approaches), agriculture, forestry and land use (Duwe et al., 2021). Not all European territories will be affected in the same way by the transitions. Impacts and their magnitude depend on the (local) dependency on one or more of the key sectors described above, their socio-demographic situation and their degree of embeddedness in national and European infrastructure. Based on their sectoral employment shares and emissions per capita, 41 European regions are the most exposed (OECD, 2023 <sup>(2)</sup>).

Most of these regions are relatively weak on socio-economic indicators such as GDP per capita and wages up to 38% lower than the national average. Still, manufacturers in need of transition tend to provide many relatively well-paid jobs, which are important to these territories. If left unaccompanied, the green transition may expose workers to skills gaps, as well as job and income loss.

The particularities of each manufacturing sector, local demographic specificities and available infrastructures call for different solutions and approaches. Thus, there is a need to anticipate and manage these challenges and accompany the change in a place-based manner, ideally helping to transform the change and encourage development opportunities for these regions (OECD, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the JTM was set up to deliver on the ambition of leaving no region behind.

## 1.2. Objectives

The JTF is a new instrument meant to support territories most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality and boost their economic diversification and reconversion. As per Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1056, 'the JTF shall contribute to the single specific objective of enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union's 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement'.

The identification and targeting of most affected territories is based on each territory's dependence on declining and/or transforming economic sectors:

- Declining sectors, e.g. sectors linked to the extraction and use of fossil fuels (including coal, lignite, peat and oil shale), have high GHG emissions and GHG-intensive industrial processes.
- Transforming sectors include industries such as metals, chemicals, cement and fertilisers, where technological alternatives to carbon-intensive processes exist.

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<sup>(2)</sup> OECD (2023) Regional Industrial Transitions to Climate Neutrality. OECD (OECD Regional Development Studies

Several types of impacts linked to the transition process are also addressed by the JTF:

- **Social:** primarily employment, which impacts the livelihoods of households and families, social exclusion and has important gender implications. Social impacts may include incomes and their distribution, social inclusion, community cohesiveness, living conditions, energy poverty, access to public services and other social aspects.
- **Economic:** which may differ based on the sector dependency of a region, i.e. whether a region's dominant sector is in decline or transforming. A region's economy may be impacted when a major industry is ending (e.g. coal) or technology can help transform major local industries and their production patterns.
- **Environmental:** transitioning from carbon-intensive activities or fossil fuel production can lead to derelict land, contaminated soil and water, geophysical instability or other environmental hazards, including health risks.

In line with the JTF's specific objective, the instrument supports diversification and modernisation of the local economy, the mitigation of negative repercussions on employment, as well as other measures linked to the transition, allowing for an integrated approach to funding based on each region's specific needs. Providing the possibility to combine 'hard' and 'soft' investments in an integrated manner (at the level of priorities, as well as individual operations) is a distinctive feature of the JTF within cohesion policy. JTF support is provided in the form of grants and financial instruments, to a more limited extent. The scope of JTF support is defined under Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1056, and includes investments in:

- (a) SMEs<sup>3</sup>, including microenterprises and start-ups, leading to economic diversification, modernisation and reconversion;
- (b) the creation of new firms, including through business incubators and consulting services, leading to job creation;
- (c) research and innovation, including by universities and public research organisations, and fostering the transfer of advanced technologies;
- (d) the deployment of technology, systems and infrastructure for affordable clean energy, including energy storage, and GHG emission reduction;
- (e) renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council, including

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<sup>3</sup> JTF may also support, in areas designated as assisted areas under points (a) and (c) of Article 107(3) TFEU, productive investments in enterprises other than SMEs, provided that such investments have been approved as part of the territorial just transition plan

- sustainability criteria and energy efficiency, including reducing energy poverty;
- (f) smart and sustainable local mobility, including decarbonisation of local transport and its infrastructure;
  - (g) rehabilitating and upgrading district heating networks to improve energy efficiency in district heating systems and investments in heat production supplied exclusively by renewable energy;
  - (h) digitalisation, digital innovation and digital connectivity;
  - (i) regeneration and decontamination of brownfield sites, land restoration including green infrastructure and repurposing projects, taking into account the 'polluter pays' principle;
  - (j) enhancing the circular economy, including waste prevention, reduction, resource efficiency, reuse, repair and recycling;
  - (k) upskilling and reskilling workers and jobseekers;
  - (l) job-search assistance to jobseekers;
  - (m) active inclusion of jobseekers;
  - (n) technical assistance;
  - (o) other activities in education and social inclusion including investments in infrastructure for training centres, child- and elderly-care facilities.

The JTF may, under specific conditions (as defined in Article 8 and 11 of the JTF regulation), also support investments to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from activities listed in Annex I to Directive 2003/87/EC

### 1.3. Planned activities in Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs)

To enable achieving its specific objective, the JTF was established with differences in intervention logic and inner framework compared to other cohesion policy funds. To access JTF resources, Member States were required to prepare TJTPs, which are part of cohesion policy programmes. The TJTPs are a ground-breaking model for the 'territorialisation' of policies for a just transition to climate neutrality, reinforcing the place-based approach to funding under cohesion policy by putting emphasis on:

- A strategic approach based on detailed analysis of challenges and needs. TJTPs must include, among other elements, a description of the transition towards a climate-neutral economy (including a timeline of the key transition

steps), an assessment of challenges faced by the identified territories (including the social, economic, and environmental impacts), as well as a description of types of operations supported and their contribution to alleviating negative impacts of the transition.

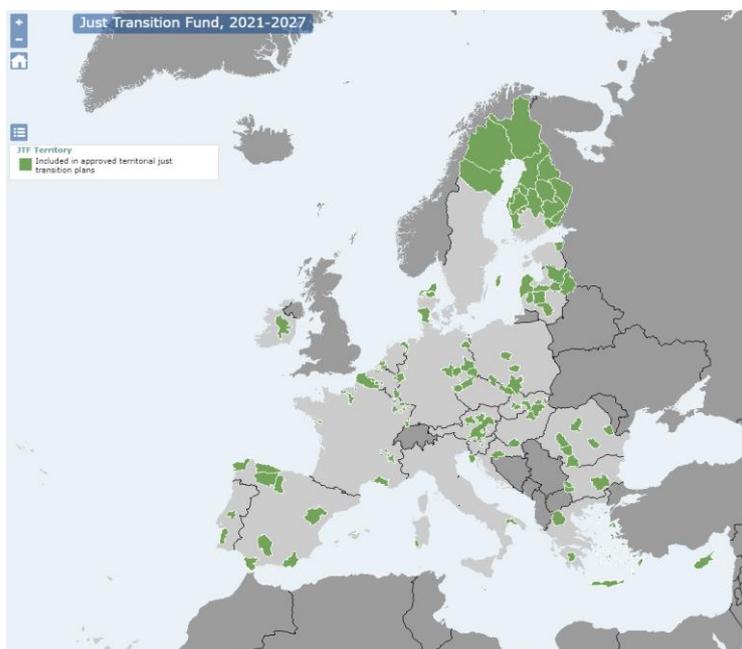
- A place-based approach focusing on the most vulnerable regions and groups. TJTPs must include an identification of territories most negatively affected by the transition with due justification, resulting in a more targeted territorial scope in comparison to other EU funding instruments.

Content-related requirements of TJTPs are laid down directly by the JTF regulation (namely by Art. 11 and Annex II), ensuring coherence across Member States.

Because of its narrow geographical scope, focusing only on regions most affected by the climate transition, JTF is seen as bringing cohesion policy back to its basics: putting Europe's most vulnerable regions in the spotlight. In addition, JTF focuses support on groups that would otherwise face the most difficulties during the transition, such as workers in fossil-fuel industries. In addition to workers directly concerned by the transition, the JTF also supports groups disproportionately suffering from negative effects of the transition (e.g. workers with disabilities, women, long-term unemployed, and other groups far from employment). JTF further supports social cohesion in territories by enabling financing for activities in education and social inclusion activities including infrastructure investments for training centres, as well as child- and elderly-care facilities (see Art.8(2.) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1056).

In total, 70 TJTPs covering 96 territories have been approved as featured in Figure 2.

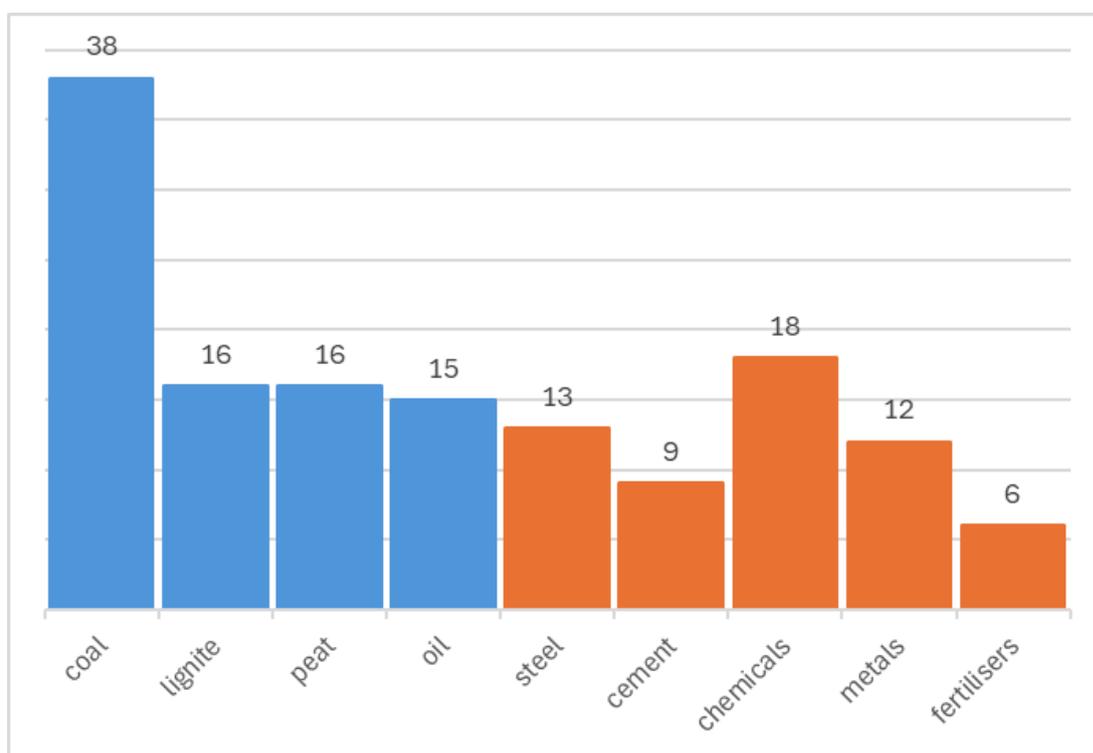
**Figure 2 – Overview of JTF regions**



Source: Cohesion data story 'A new fund in the Cohesion Policy family', 2024

As part of this study, the 70 TJTPs have been analysed to collect information on the types of sectors and industries which heavily impact local economies in the 96 TJTP regions.

**Figure 3 - Sectors heavily impacting local economies of TJTP regions**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data extracted from all the 70 TJTPs: blue are declining sectors, orange are transforming sectors. Several sectors may be relevant for a given TJTP region.

The declining coal and lignite industry plays a major role in local industry in regions in Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechia, but also in Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia. JTF and TJTPs have been instrumental in accelerating coal being phased-out in Europe, as they have encouraged Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia to introduce specific planning and timelines to phase-out coal (SWD(2023) 134 final). However, in Poland for instance, phase out dates were not set for all mines, an interviewee reports. Peat heavily impacts TJTP regions in Finland, Ireland and Latvia while oil is mostly relevant in France, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania.

For carbon-intensive regions, JTF was an opportunity to think concretely about how to minimise negative impacts of transformation for carbon-intensive industries (such as steel, cement and chemicals). For insular and archipelago-type regions, JTF provides a new opportunity for transition to decarbonise certain fossil-fuel activities. Among the transforming sectors, chemicals rank highly, particularly in France and the Netherlands, but also in Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Czechia and

Romania. In addition, dependency on gas was highlighted in regions of the Netherlands, Malta and Romania.

The following matrix presents further details at Member State level on the number of TJTP regions dependent on these sectors.

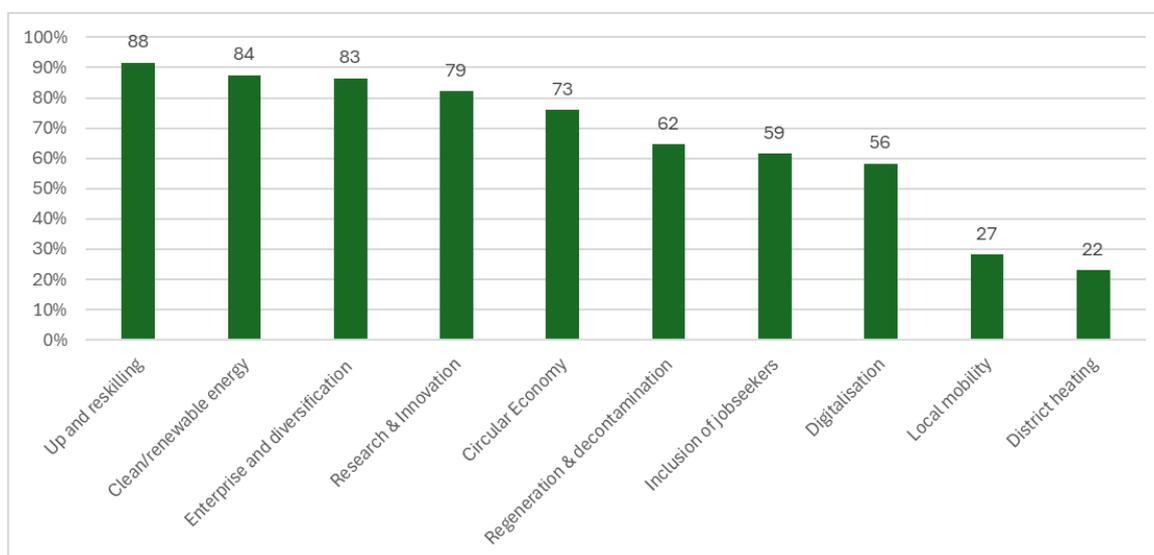
**Table 1- Number of TJTP regions dependent on sectors per Member State**

	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	HR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI
<b>Coal</b>		3	3		2				9	3	1	1	1		1		1				4	2	3	2	1	
<b>Lignite</b>		2			4			2									3				1		3	1		
<b>Peat</b>							1							1												14
<b>Oil</b>				1	1			1		4			1		2	1			1	2			1	1		
<b>Steel</b>	1		1							2		2								1	1			2		2
<b>Cement</b>	1		2	1						2	1				1											
<b>Chemicals</b>	1		1				1			6	1				1					4				3		
<b>Metals</b>	1		1							5		1									1					2
<b>Fertilisers</b>			1									1				1					2				1	

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data extracted from all 70 approved TJTPs

A review of the TJTPs also highlights types of activities possibly supported in JTF regions (4).

**Figure 4 – TJTPs per type of JTF supported activity**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from all 70 approved TJTPs. Note: the figure on top of each bar is the absolute number of TJTP regions supporting the activity

Figure 4 indicates that many activities and investments alleviate transition impacts in the most affected territories. The split is aligned with main JTF priorities to

(4) These types of activities mainly reflect the list of JTF supported investments (listed in the previous section as per Article 8 of the JTF Regulation), but some categories have been merged (e.g. (d) investments in the deployment of technology and (e) investments in renewable energy) by the project team.

diversify local economies and to reskill and upskill workers and job seekers. For the green transition, investments in clean and renewable energy are often indicated in the TJTPs, alongside enhancing the circular economy and regenerating contaminated sites. The two types of activities least reflected in the TJTPs are sustainable local mobility and the rehabilitation and upgrading of district heating networks <sup>(5)</sup>.

There are examples in Italy where Sud-Sardegna province (Sulcis Iglesiente) details activities to repurpose land polluted by mining and the province of Taranto, with measures to support retraining for steel production workers to find jobs linked to the green energy transition and the circular economy. In France (Region Nord Pas-de-Calais), supported economic activities focus on the transformation of product value chains for chemicals, metals and non-metallic mineral production towards a circular model. In Spain, the TJTP includes actions focused on technological innovation and clean energy to diversify the economy and facilitate the phase out of coal for energy production in regions such as Asturias, Andalusia and the island of Mallorca. In Romania, where funds are allocated to six counties, activities target worker reskilling and support for SMEs and large companies to create jobs and diversify the economy away from fossil fuel production and carbon-intensive industries. The TJTP for Lausitz region in eastern Germany plans on offering training, retraining and further education for employees, with a focus on people currently employed in the brown coal industry. The Austrian JTF programme provides financial support for new innovation hubs and start-up centres in industrial regions.

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<sup>(5)</sup> Investments in district heating systems are limited under the JTF to those based exclusively on renewable energy and in line with the Renewable Energy Directive. Investments in fossil fuel-based heat production or waste-to-energy in relation to district heating cannot receive JTF support.

### Box 1 – Examples the JTF supporting local needs of specific groups

- Poland: In Eastern Wielkopolska, the JTF is supporting a strategic project aimed at transforming employment in the region by addressing the re-skilling and up-skilling needs of former employees of mines and power plants affected by phasing out from lignite energy production. Participants are supported on their path towards new and sustainable employment by receiving personalised assistance. In the Wałbrzych subregion, the JTF is supporting projects focusing on improving the availability and quality of social services, reflecting the needs of groups at risk of social exclusion such as people with disabilities.
- Czechia: In the Karlovy Vary Region, the JTF is supporting a project aimed at improving the quality of secondary vocational education in traditional crafts (ceramics and glassmaking). By focusing on the development of skills of young people and on providing them with an adequate learning environment, the transitioning region intends to diversify its economy and boost competitiveness in the longer term.
- Netherlands: In Groningen-Emmen, the JTF is supporting a project that focuses on the elderly population and the link between healthcare and the labour market. A consortium of knowledge institutions and SMEs is developing a health tracker to observe health issues, such as chronic illness at the workplace, to research how an early drop out of the labour market can be prevented and how to improve occupational health. In IJmond, the JTF is supporting a project aiming to increase the employment of women in technical sectors by providing specialised trainings and liaising with enterprises.

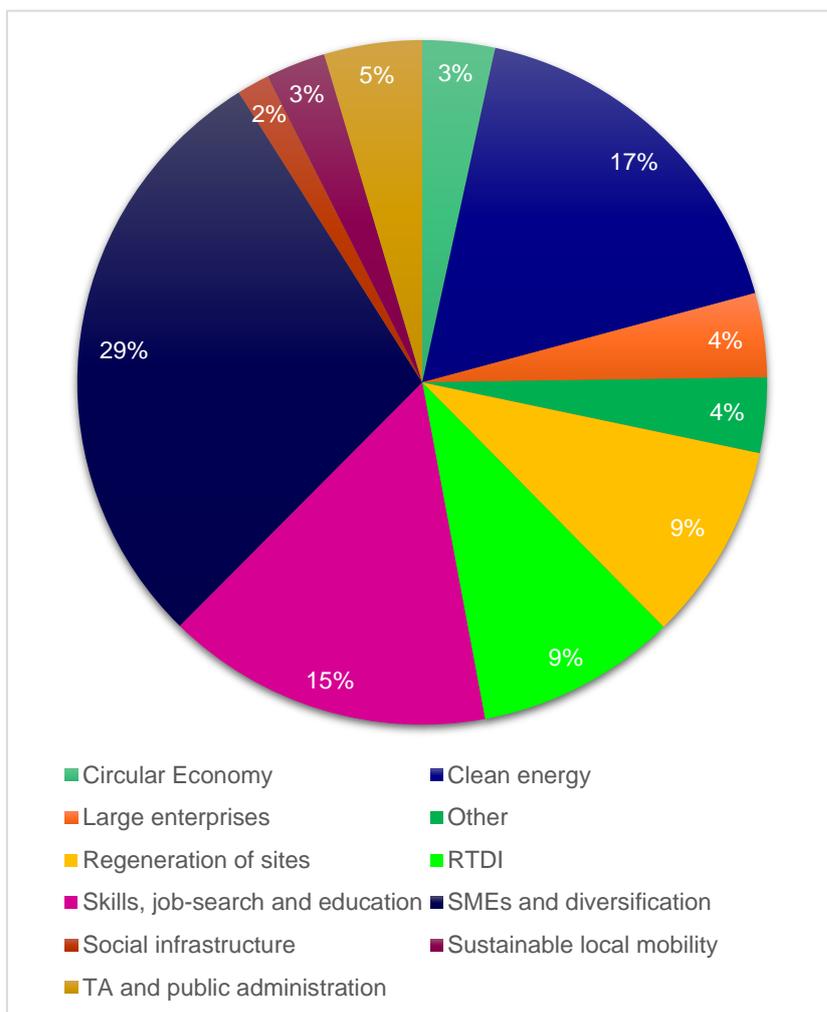
Source: DG REGIO, 2024. Note: the presented projects have been selected for JTF funding but not necessarily implemented.

## 1.4. Financial planned resources

Countries receiving the largest share of JTF funding (EUR 10 billion) are Poland (20%), Germany (12%), Romania (11%), Czechia (8%) and Greece (7%).

Figure 5 presents the planned expenditure allocated to the main JTF supported activities. These are SMEs and diversification, clean energy (including renewable energy) as well as skills, job searches and education. This is in line with JTF priorities to diversify local economies and to reskill and upskill workers and jobseekers. The least targeted activities concern social infrastructure and sustainable local mobility, with 2% and 3% of the planned expenditure. This reflects the findings from supported activities in the 70 examined TJTPs.

**Figure 5 - Total JTF planned funding allocation per type of supported activity**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: The monitoring system provides an aggregated view of JTF supported activities

Table 2 similarly breaks down JTF planned expenditure, differentiated by sub-theme based on intervention fields. The sub-themes receiving more than 3% of the planned expenditure are featured. Funding allocated to all other 53 sub-themes is, on an individual basis less than 3% of the planned expenditure, but cumulatively represents 46% of the JTF funding.

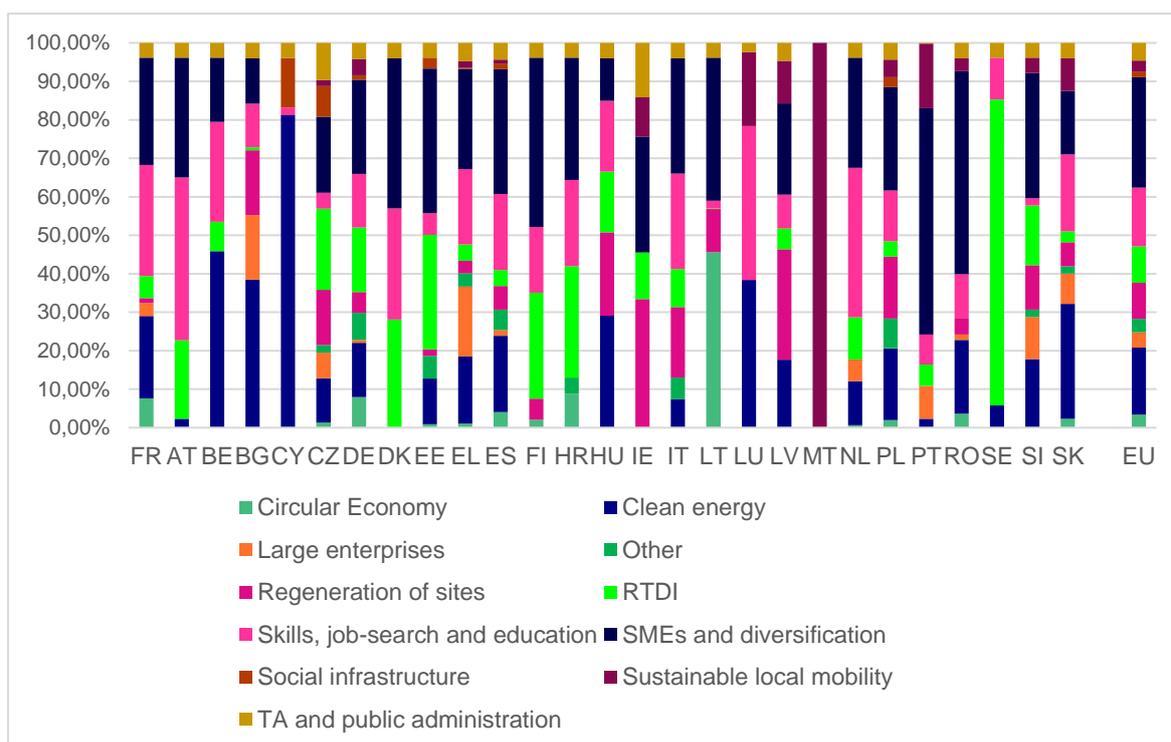
**Table 2 – JTF planned expenditure per main intervention field**

Main Intervention Fields	JTF funding	% of total JTF
Business development and generic support	3,398,236,650 €	17.81%
RE solar	955,146,873 €	5.01%
R&I research centres	881,898,968 €	4.62%
Skills for smart specialisation and transition	843,397,980 €	4.42%
Adaptation to change	775,610,268 €	4.07%
Circular economy	766,047,393 €	4.02%
Business infrastructure	719,983,830 €	3.77%
Access to employment	667,296,794 €	3.50%
R&I LCE and circular economy	591,558,107 €	3.10%
Innovation and cooperation	587,746,846 €	3.08%

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: Only intervention fields with the highest values are listed.

Figure 6 (below) highlights the allocation of planned JTF expenditure per Member State. It reflects the EU level split (Figure 5), highlighting several national specificities. SMEs and diversification are supported across all Member States, though Romania and Portugal clearly emphasise this type of support. Support for research, technology development and innovation (RTDI) is limited, however Sweden allocates almost 80% of its JTF budget to this. Similarly, Malta allocates all its JTF funding to sustainable local mobility, which receives little support in other Member States. Clean energy support is substantial in Cyprus and Belgium (with 81% and 46% of JTF expenditure respectively).

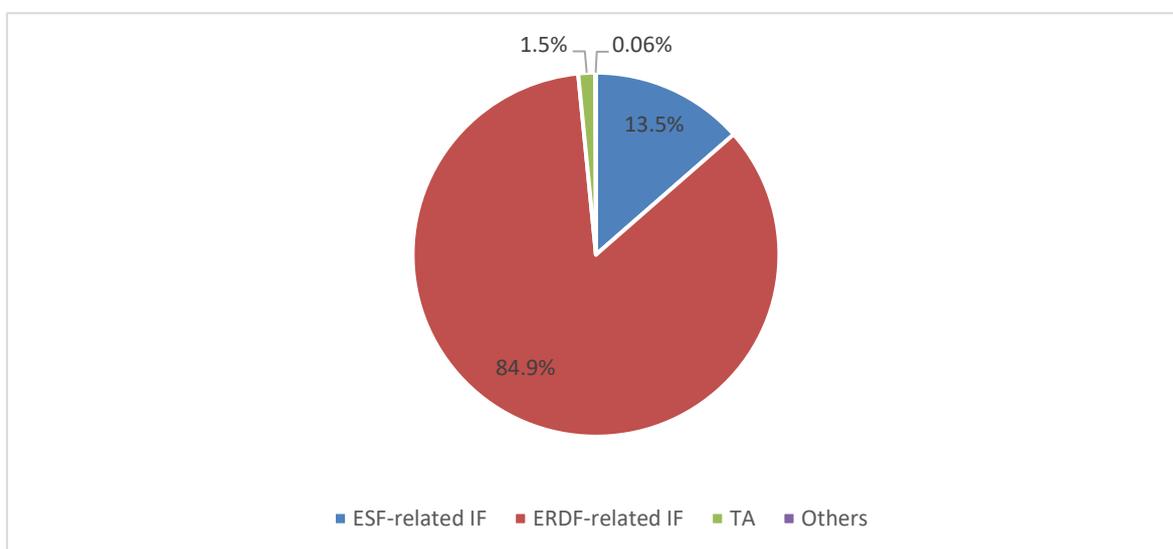
**Figure 6 - JTF supported activities per Member State**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

The unique features of the JTF mean ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ investments are supported (e.g. infrastructure, productive investments, skills and social measures), combining the logic of ERDF and ESF +. This is a good example of the more integrated approach of JTF funding. Member States can address economic, social and environmental development challenges and needs of the transformation process in the territory simultaneously and in an integrated manner <sup>(6)</sup>. Member States can split the JTF priority between ERDF-type and ESF+-type investments or divide JTF resources between ERDF and ESF+ programmes. Both types of interventions were included in TJTPs and related programmes, with most of the investment being linked to ERDF-type investments.

**Figure 7 - JTF intervention fields split between ERDF-type and ESF+-type investments**

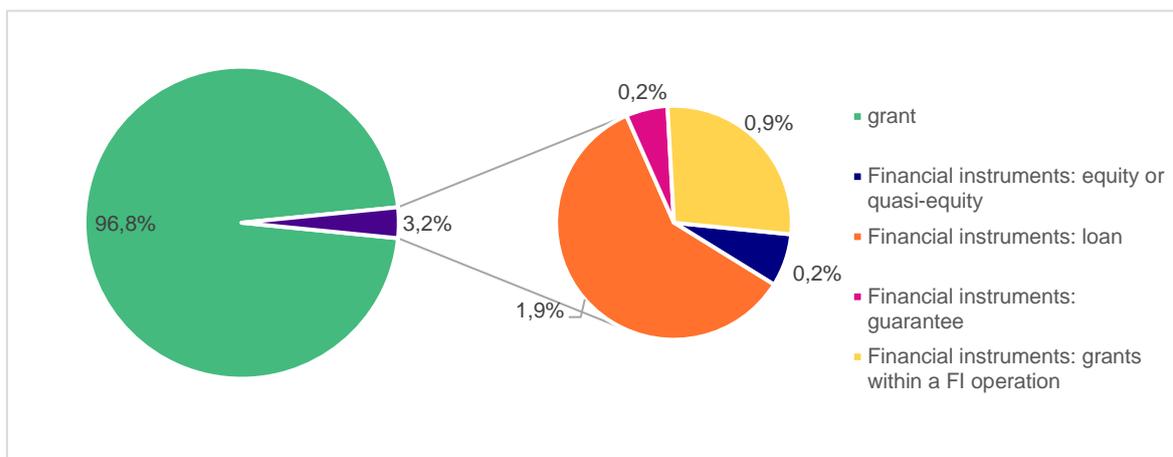


Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: ‘other’ corresponds to 0,06%

JTF resources may be mobilised through grants, currently for 97% of JTF resources, but also through financial instruments. The following figure details JTF funding through both.

<sup>(6)</sup> Commission Staff Working Document on the TJTP (SWD(2021) 275 final).

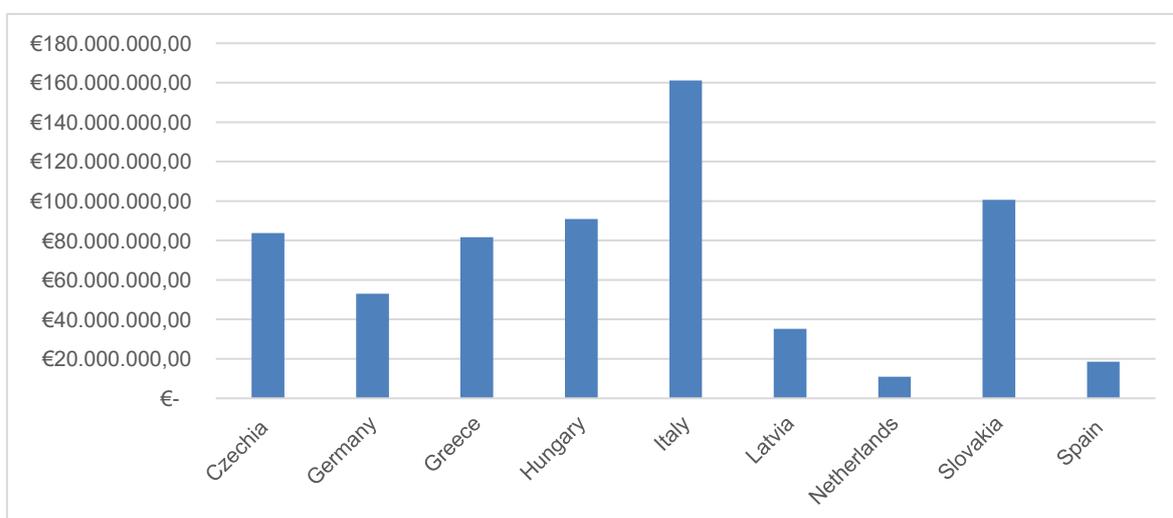
**Figure 8 - JTF Funding split between grants and FIs**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

Italy and Slovakia plan to use financial instruments the most, as illustrated in the following figure. Financial instruments under JTF are planned to provide SME incentives to improve energy performance and support for innovative ecological transition and natural resource protection projects.

**Figure 9 – JTF budget allocated to financial instruments (EUR)**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

## 1.5. Administrative and organisational aspects

Established in the framework of cohesion policy, JTF management is shared between the European Commission and Member State authorities, ensuring that national, regional and local authorities and stakeholders own the transition strategy. JTF management and administration differs by Member State, depending on governance choices in each country and the outcome of negotiations with the Commission.

The majority of JTF programmes (36 of 46) are embedded in a multifund programme (ERDF and/or ESF+). Most of the multifund programmes including a JTF programme also have an ERDF programme. Only three solely combine JTF and an ESF+ programme (in Austria, Germany and Luxembourg). The 'single' JTF programmes (i.e. which are not multi-fund) are national, normally with a thematic focus such as employment and skills in France, or green technology and skills in Denmark.

JTF programmes may be implemented at national or regional level, France has both, with one national and six regional JTF programmes. Poland and Germany each have five regional JTF programmes and none at national level while Portugal has three regional multi-funds programmes including JTF. Of the 46 JTF programmes, 19 are regional.

### **JTF collaboration and synergies with other cohesion policy programmes**

In line with the above-mentioned links, horizontal coordination between governance levels and funds is important to the implementation of cohesion policy funds. This coordination is relevant throughout the entire programming period, from the design of cohesion policy programmes to their implementation. As highlighted in the DG REGIO Complementarity study (2024), 35% of national JTF programmes collaborate (i.e. managing authorities explicitly exchange and cooperate via established structures or mechanisms) with regional ESF+ programmes, compared to 13% with national ERDF programmes. JTF managing authorities, through fund management and implementation, collaborate and communicate most with other cohesion policy funds and EU funds, instruments and programmes.

### **Box 2 - JTF Slovak programme experience on coordination**

For coordination, the first step in designing the JTF programme in Slovakia was to identify the needs and involve JTF regions in defining key areas where gaps might not be addressed by other EU programmes. Discussions were then organised with other ministries responsible for these programmes. Working groups combined personnel from various ministries and socio-economic partners and these groups continued to discuss how to establish the TJTPs. These discussions continue during JTF implementation, as individual calls for proposals are prepared, with everyone striving to be complementary, although each ministry operates slightly differently. Issues must be resolved individually and bilateral meetings are necessary. For each topic or challenge, the priority is to determine whether it is already being financed by another entity.

Source: DG REGIO, Complementary study 2024

Co-implementation within multi-fund programmes is also essential to ensure vertical coordination (across sectors and themes) and synergies between the funds and investments.

### **Box 3 - Examples of synergies between cohesion policy programmes and JTF programmes**

- Programme ERDF 2021-2027 West Netherlands: JTF supports projects relevant to both economic development (akin to ERDF objectives) and labour-market enhancement (similar to ESF+ goals). Strategic synergies are methodically planned within regional steering groups, to integrate and coordinate ERDF, ESF+, and JTF initiatives. JTF is focused on facilitating the industrial transition in selected industrial areas of West Netherlands. Concurrently, ERDF is geared towards supporting the broader transition of companies in the region. This synergy exemplifies a coordinated approach, where JTF's targeted industrial transition efforts are complemented by ERDF's broader company support, ensuring a comprehensive and cohesive regional development strategy.
- Peloponnese – ERDF/ESF+: With JTF there is notable synergy for sustainable transport, particularly electric charging points and the supply of electric vehicles. Such initiatives are promoted through pilot applications in JTF-designated intervention areas. Actions in the Peloponnese programme is set to include these actions in a manner that complement existing Community-Led Local Development projects. This synergy demonstrates how JTF's focus on green infrastructure can align with and enhance the region's broader development objectives under ERDF and ESF+.

Source: DG REGIO, Complementary study 2024

At programme level, well-functioning working committees such as fund monitoring committees and preparatory working groups are key to successful implementation. Such committees generally include a broad array of stakeholders, with social and economic partners. Very often, regional or national monitoring committees include representatives from various cohesion policy funds, and sometimes EAFRD and EMFAF representatives.

## Application of the partnership principle in JTF management

The involvement and consultation of stakeholders is linked to the management of JTF programmes being steered by the partnership principle, a key feature of cohesion policy. As per Article 8 of the CPR, Member States must organise a comprehensive partnership, including regional and local authorities, economic and social partners, civil society (such as environmental partners, non-governmental organisations) along with research institutions and universities. These stakeholders should also be involved in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of JTF programmes and TJTPs. Preparation of the TJTPs involved working with partners in a narrowly defined territory, and in a very intensive and thematically focused way <sup>(7)</sup>.

Interviews with JTF stakeholders as well as the review of TJTPs under this study highlight the stakeholder consultation process. Drafting the plans included the extensive participation of local partners and stakeholders. An interviewee from Estonia declared that ‘the place-based and granular approach to involvement in the instrument is impressive and facilitates the involvement of various stakeholders. The fund/the territorial plan has been very well received by the local community/stakeholders. An interviewee from Poland however indicated that while the TJTPs were prepared with the range of regional stakeholders and representatives of local, regional government, business, NGO, trade unions, educational institutions etc, this process did not include inhabitants of the regions themselves. Interviewees also raised interesting points to improve the culture of collaboration and involvement especially where regional governance is not very prominent and where national and local levels are not used to working together (e.g. Slovenia). Some interviewees indicated the consultation process was rushed during preparation of the TJTP. The bottom-up approach of JTF programming and implementation is however very positively received, as illustrated by the statement that ‘the strength of this programme is that the public (community leaders) identify with it; the value of the JTF is its flexibility. It is small enough (the Just Transition Plan) that it can be modified, together with the stakeholders.

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<sup>(7)</sup> SWD(2023) 134 final

#### **Box 4 – Stakeholder involvement and TJTP design in Romania**

- An interviewee recalls that the six Romanian TJTPs were principally drafted by a private firm, in collaboration with county councils in the JTF regions. Many stakeholders were consulted, ‘people had to the opportunity to contribute’. An online questionnaire resulted in a long list of possible project ideas.
- However, the consultation process faced obstacles. Key issues included a lack of capacity in local authorities and diverging political interests. The mining industry in Romanian TJTP regions, albeit in decline, remains strong and making the case for an ecological transition requires overcoming economic and political interest as well as societal preconceptions.
- The interviewee also highlighted that the choice of stakeholder consultation tools must take into consideration the context and specificities of the territories. For example, online questionnaires may not be accessible for some stakeholders. Widespread means of communication such as email may also not be the most effective way to reach out to stakeholders. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook may be more useful, according to the interviewee.
- The interviewee’s experience also shed light on the critical role of civil society organisations, especially local ones, often relying on volunteers. These work closely with people in TJTP regions. NGO contributions to drafting the TJTPs and mobilising stakeholders was essential. While the private sector is the main target of the Romanian TJTPs, these actors are not always prepared nor aware of the existence of the JTF. In addition, people need to learn how to write a business plan. NGOs help form a baseline for the uptake of JTF support (e.g. via stakeholder mobilisation, information and training), however, they lack resources and their work is too often taken for granted. Success of the JTF depends on a whole ecosystem, which must be considered and supported. Solely focussing on a specific group (e.g. entrepreneurs) may not be sufficient to fulfil the objectives of the TJTPs.

### **Box 5 – Stakeholder involvement experience and TJTP design in Spain**

- In Spain, the energy transition is at a highly advanced stage compared to other countries and the Spanish government started rolling out ambitious measures for a just transition in 2019 (following the closure of coal-fired power plants in 2018). The Institute for Just Transition, a body attached to the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO) designed the JTF Programme in close cooperation with the six Autonomous Communities with eligible territories. JTF measures therefore complement and extend existing work.
- To respond to socio-economic impacts in the affected areas, the Just Transition Institute launched Just Transition Agreements. These are a tool of co-governance, focussed on the area and/or region concerned linking public authorities at state, regional and local levels. There are currently 13 such agreements in place which are linked to coal closure in the JTF regions. The agreements also include a socio-economic diagnosis of the JTF regions with propositions and ideas for action in the region based also on public participation.
- Information and ideas were gathered from a broad array of stakeholders (companies, business sector organisations, trade unions, universities, educational institutions, environmental NGOs and associations, development agencies, Local Action Groups etc.). Specific attention was given to young people and women who were consulted through dedicated procedures.
- The Spanish framework of public participation continues through permanent representation in JTF regions. This enables continued dialogue throughout implementation of the programme. Regional JTF agents help match project ideas and propositions with the best suited support funding and financing (JTF but other sources as well), to optimise uptake. This has proved to be particularly helpful for SMEs and small municipalities.

*Source:* Consortium elaboration

In the spirit of stakeholder consultation and engagement as well as knowledge sharing, the Just Transition Platform (JTP) helps Member States and TJTP regions unlock support available through the JTM. It includes a database of experts and exchange programmes, information about technical assistance and funding opportunities as well as useful knowledge and resources. Since 2020, the JTP has organised two conferences a year, as well as JTP Working Groups to exchange good practices, build a JTF community and work together on solutions for a just transition. Since 2023, through JTP Groundwork, regions in TJTPs can receive tailored advisory support for project development, governance, administrative capacity, local community-building and targeted JTF communication.

## 1.6. Outputs

This section provides information on targets (for 2029) and milestones (2024) of selected output indicators. It highlights expected direct deliverables of the JTF interventions.

The following table shows targets and milestones for the most widely used output indicators. The ERDF indicators are used by over 30% of JTF programmes, whereas the ESF+ indicators (in blue in the table below) are used by more than 20% of the JTF programmes.

**Table 3 – Milestones and targets, output indicators in JTF programmes**

	Measurement unit	2029 target	2024 milestone
EECO01 Total Number of Participants	People	168 125	23 593
EECO02 Participant's labour market status - unemployed, including long-term unemployed	People	122 287	42 264
EECO05 Participant's labour market status - employed, including self-employed	People	185 994	29 831
RCO01 Enterprises supported	enterprises	39 095	6 702
RCO02 Enterprises supported by grants	enterprises	28 311	5 302
RCO10 RTDI: Firms cooperating with research organisations	enterprises	5 219	978
RCO22 Additional production capacity for renewable energy (of which: electricity, thermal)	MW	11 914	117
RCO38 Env: Surface area of rehabilitated land supported	hectares	48 010	4 498
RCO57 Rolling stock for public transport	passengers	2 094 786	401 450
RCO67 Classroom capacity of education facilities	persons	160 553	30 535

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

Considering 2029 targets by Member State, Greece should contribute most to RCO01 and RCO02 with 15% and 17% respectively of firms supported through the JTF. Romania follows closely with an expected 15% (RCO01) and 16% (RCO02) of the firms supported. Polish programmes contribute 99% of the target for RCO57 and Portuguese programmes 75% of the target for RCO22.

## 1.7. Results

This section presents JTF expected results, through an analysis of result indicators. JTF notably targets job creation, e.g. in renewable energy compensating for the loss of fossil-fuel dependant jobs, reduced GHG emissions, land rehabilitation, increased renewable energy capacity and waste recycling.

The following table shows targets for the most widely used results indicators. The ERDF indicators are used by over 30% of JTF programmes, whereas the ESF+ indicators (in blue in the table below) are used by more than 20% of the JTF programmes.

**Table 4 - Milestones and targets, result indicators in JTF programmes**

	Unit	2029 net target
EECR03: Gaining a qualification	People	178 398.00
EECR04: Employed upon leaving	People	32 209.00
RCR01 Jobs created in supported entities	annual FTEs	62 938.25
RCR02 Firms: Private investments	euro	5 266 147 079.42
RCR03 RTDI: SMEs introducing product or process innovation	enterprises	3 770.00
RCR29 Climate: Estimated GHG emissions	tonnes CO2 eq./year	-1 982 175.39
RCR29a JTF: Est. GHG emissions in enterprises (Dir. 2003/87/EC)	tonnes CO2 eq./year	-6 723 142
RCR31 Energy: Total renewable energy produced	MWh/year	2 858 507.11
RCR52 Env: Rehabilitated land	hectares	7 964.29
RCR62 Urban Trans: Annual users of public transport	users/year	21 445 990.00
RCR71 Education: Annual users of education facilities	users/year	201 176.00

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

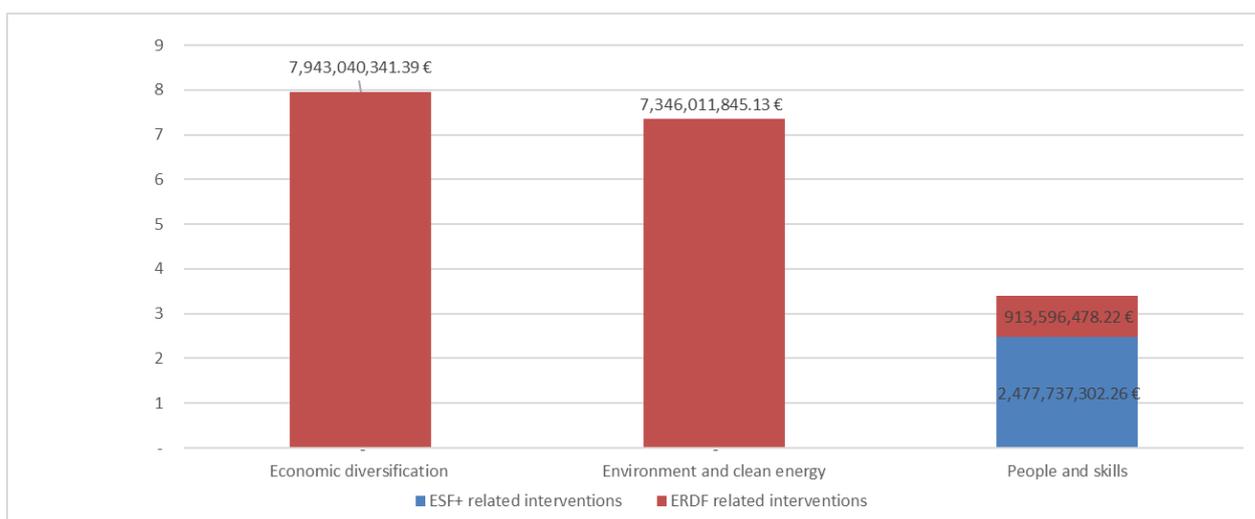
For 2029 targets by Member State, Poland is expected to contribute to 37% of the RCR52 target and to 77% of RCR62 (by far the highest contributions). For RCR03, 38% of the target is linked to German JTF programmes. Spain contributes to 21% of RCR29's target.

## 1.8. Impacts

Given the early implementation stages, this study only examines potential JTF contributions to the specific objective of enabling regions and people to address social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union’s 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement through:

1. Identifying 3 main thematic groups of investment of the JTF based on the different types of negative impacts linked to the transition that need to be addressed, showcasing to which extent (via planned volume of investments and division between ERDF / ESF+ types of investment) the JTF is expected to contribute to addressing them.
2. Linking types of planned JTF investments to the main thematic groups based on thematic focus, showcasing how the JTF is expected to contribute to addressing negative impacts linked to the transition.
3. Linking expected impacts of the different types of planned JTF investments, showcasing to which extent (via target values of output/result indicators) the JTF is expected to contribute to addressing negative impacts linked to the transition.

**Figure 10 - Main thematic groups of JTF investment and planned volume of investment (EUR bn)**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

### Thematic group 1: Economic diversification (EUR 7.9 billion)

The JTF’s contribution to addressing negative economic (and employment) impacts of the transition is linked to the following types of planned investments and outputs (O) and results (R):

Productive investments in SMEs (and to a lesser extent large enterprises)		
Jobs created in supported entities	R	62 938
Private investments matching public support (billion EUR)	R	5.3
Investments in the creation of new firms (including through business incubators and consulting services)		
New enterprises surviving in the market	R	1 800
SMEs using incubator services after incubator creation (yearly)	R	1 383
Investments in research, technology development and innovation		
Enterprises cooperating with research organisations	O	5 219
SMEs introducing product or process innovation	R	3 770

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: The list of indicators is not exhaustive

## Thematic group 2: Environment and clean energy (EUR 7.3 billion)

The JTF's contribution to addressing negative environmental impacts of the transition and to facilitating the transition by supporting sustainable alternatives is linked to the following types of planned investments and outputs (O) and results (R):

Investments in the deployment of clean energy technology, systems and infrastructures (renewable energy, energy storage, energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emission reduction)		
Additional production capacity for renewable energy (MW)	O	11 914
Public buildings with improved energy performance (m2)	O	836 695
Dwellings with improved energy performance (number)	O	27 294
Estimated decrease of greenhouse-gas emissions (tonnes CO2 eq./year)	R	8 705 317
Investments in regeneration and decontamination of brownfield sites and land restoration (incl. green infrastructure and repurposing projects)		
Rehabilitated land used for green areas, social housing, economic or other uses (hectares)	R	7 964
Investments in enhancing circular economy		
Waste used as raw materials (tonnes/year)	R	2 905 971
Investments in sustainable mobility		
Capacity of environmentally friendly rolling stock for collective public transport (passengers)	O	2 094 786
Investments in rehabilitation and upgrade of district heating networks		
District heating and cooling network lines newly constructed and improved (km)	O	162

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: The list of indicators is not exhaustive

### Thematic group 3: People and skills (EUR 3.4 billion)

The JTF's contribution to addressing negative social (and employment) impacts is linked to the following types of planned investments and outputs (O) and results (R):

Investments in upskilling and reskilling of workers and jobseekers		
Participants (of JTF supported projects) gaining a qualification	R	178 398
Participants (of JTF supported projects) employed upon leaving	R	32 209
SMEs staff completing training for skills for smart specialisation, for industrial transition and entrepreneurship	R	46 616
Investments in job assistance and active inclusion of jobseekers		
Participants (of JTF supported projects) engaged in job searching	R	8 692
Annual users of new or modernised facilities for employment services	R	15 118
Investments in education and social inclusion		
Annual users of new or modernised education facilities	R	201 176
Annual users of new or modernised social care facilities	R	3 593

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: The list of indicators is not exhaustive

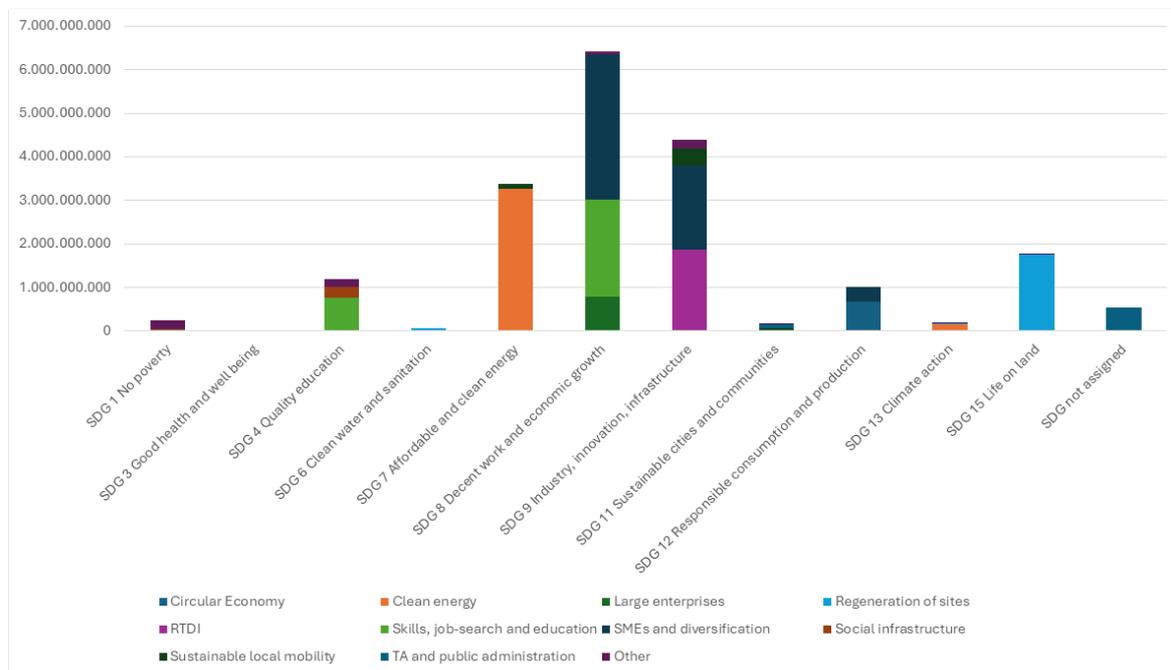
The planned contribution of JTF support to the SDGs is also analysed and considered as a proxy for expected impacts of JTF on the wider economy and society.

Figure 11 indicates that JTF funding principally contributes to three SDGs:

- SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth (approx. EUR 6.4 billion– 33%)
- SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure (approx. EUR 4.4 billion– 22%)
- SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy (approx. EUR 3.4 billion - 18%)

For the potential JTF contribution to these SDGs per Member State, 'Cohesion policy 2021-2027 support to the UN Sustainable Development Goals' provides the following insights. Romania is allocating the highest share (21%) of its JTF funding to activities linked SDG 8, followed by Poland with 18%. For SDG 9, Germany (20%), Poland (18%) and Czechia (13%) are expected to be the main contributors. Finally, for SDG 7, Poland (21%), Bulgaria (13%) and Romania (12%) plan to allocate the highest shares of their JTF budgets to activities supporting this goal.

**Figure 11 - Planned contribution of JTF-supported activities to the SDGs (EUR bn)**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

Interviews with JTF stakeholders offer information on the contribution as well as expected and likely impacts of JTF to achieving the specific objective of enabling regions and people to address social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union’s 2030 and 2050 targets.

A distinctive characteristic of the JTF is its targeted territorial focus. It is only available to some regions as agreed in the programming negotiations. This negotiation was linked to the preparation, on top of a cohesion policy programme, of a TJTP for one or more specific territories, which were demonstrated to be negatively affected by the transition. As result of the negotiation between Member State and the Commission, the final shape of JTF geographic scope was mutually agreed based on the commitment to implementing the transition process on specific territories covered by a TJTP.

Targeted budgets and plans per region allow transition measures to better fit the region. Unlike a generic national approach, JTF has very targeted scope for sectors and geography. This allows the JTF to accelerate the transition especially in heavily affected industrial areas with greater impact than if the same funding was used more broadly. The impact of the JTF can notably be observed through the climate crisis awareness it fosters. Projects can support, for example, company investments in energy- and climate-friendly production and material efficiency which contribute to the transition.

Moreover, the JTF helped speed up the coal phase-out in Europe. Several Member States (e.g., Czechia, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia) did not have a coal phase-out date before the JTF, but do now. Others included more ambitious and detailed milestones in their TJTPs compared to the former National Energy and Climate

Plans (e.g. Estonia). For carbon-intensive regions, the JTF was an opportunity to think about how to minimise negative impacts on people and places from the transformation of carbon-intensive industries (such as steel, cement or chemicals).

Responsibility is widely embedded in the projects. SMEs in the production chains of large companies are well aware of responsibility issues. Consumer demands for responsibility have also increased and companies have reacted to this including highlighting their responsibility and climate action in marketing. Consideration of climate issues is generally built into the projects. One interviewee added that the JTF is very stimulating, helping entrepreneurs change their perception of opportunities and approach to energy. Beyond this, the JTF has already influenced public awareness: 'thanks to the JTF, public awareness has changed, the JTF has already done a great job through the whole preparation process.'

## 2. Part 2: Key evaluation findings from implementation and lessons learnt

### 2.1. Financial progress

Progress of JTF spent values is very limited (as of 30 June 2024). Most Member States have selected project (in the pipeline) as decided values range from 0.3% to 94.3% in 23 Member States. This data analysis only provides partial information on fund implementation (since elements such as issuing calls and other activities of JTF managing authorities are not accounted for).

As of 30 June 2024, almost 22% of JTF funding (EUR 5.8 billion) had been decided and EUR 0.1 billion spent, 0.46% of the total JTF funding. The following figure provides further details on JTF financial progress per Member State.

**Figure 12 – JTF financial progress (as of June 2024)**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

Countries with finalised and paid out JTF operations (spent value) include France, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden. However, the spent shares for these countries still only range from 0.1% (Germany) to 5.7% (Malta). The decided share (projects in the pipeline) is very high (more than 70%) in Malta and Luxembourg, and high (more than 50%) in Czechia, Estonia, Finland, and the Netherlands.

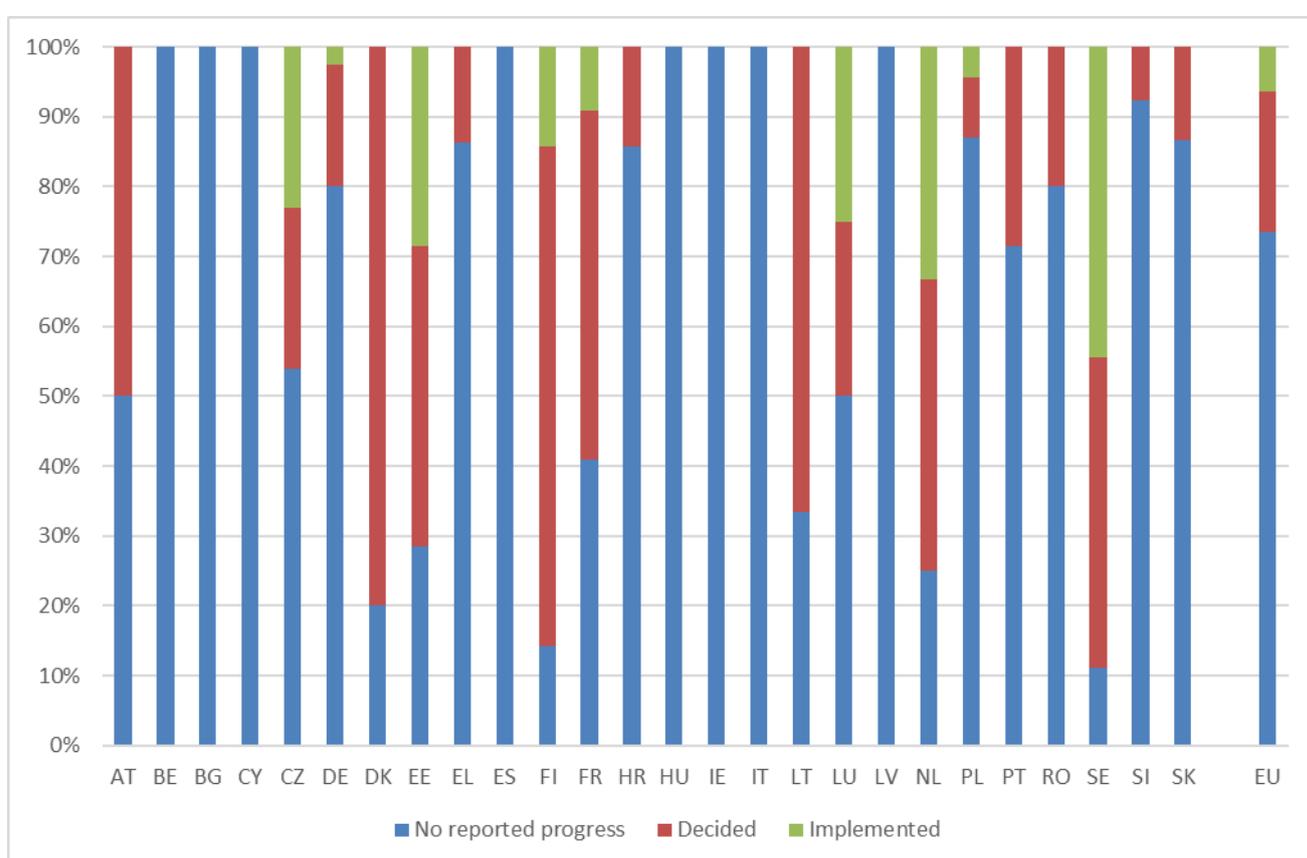
The spent share of the four countries receiving the most JTF funding (Poland, Romania, Czechia and Greece) do not exceed 0.8%. Countries lagging, both in terms of decided and spent funds, include Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Spain, Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Romania.

## 2.2. Physical progress

### 2.2.1. Output indicators

The following figure presents the share of output indicators showing progress (in terms of decided and implemented values) for each Member State (as of June 2024). Progress is notable in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden.

**Figure 13 – Share of output indicators showing progress**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024

While there is no progress in Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, and Spain (i.e. no values have been reported), implementation has progressed notably in Sweden, the Netherlands and Estonia.

The following presents further details on JTF implementation outputs, through analysis of some output indicators. The table below shows the physical progress of the JTF (achievements for the most widely used output indicators). The selected ERDF indicators are used by over 30% of JTF programmes, whereas the ESF+ indicators, by over 20% of the JTF programmes. Data for these indicators provides a more aggregated indication of achievements. Decided

values refer to expected contributions by the project. Implemented values refer to the contribution of finalised operations financed by the JTF programmes. The difference is that decided values refer to outputs if projects are implemented as expected while implemented values refer to the actual outputs/results based on closed projects. The period spans from the beginning of implementation to 30 June 2024.

**Table 5 – Output indicators reported progress**

	Unit	Decided value	Implemented value	Decided (% of the milestone by 2024)	Implemented (% of the milestone by 2024)
EECO01 Total Number of Participants	Number of persons	Data gap	176	Data gap	0.75%
EECO02 Participant's labour market status - unemployed, including long-term unemployed	Number of persons	Data gap	9 648	Data gap	22.83%
EECO05 Participant's labour market status - employed, including self-employed	Number of persons	Data gap	1 082	Data gap	3.63%
RCO01 Enterprises supported	enterprises	4 256	171	63.50%	4.02%
RCO02 Enterprises supported by grants	enterprises	1 883	23	35.51%	0.43%
RCO10 RTDI: Firms cooperating with research organisations	Enterprises	1 648	34	168.51%	3.48%
RCO22 Additional production capacity for renewable energy (of which: electricity, thermal)	MW	176	0	150.90%	0.00%
RCO38 Env: Surface area of rehabilitated land supported	hectares	1 960	0	43.58%	0.00%
RCO57 Rolling stock for public transport	passengers	165	0	0.04%	0.00%
RCO67 Classroom capacity of education facilities	users	10 230	70	33.50%	0.23%

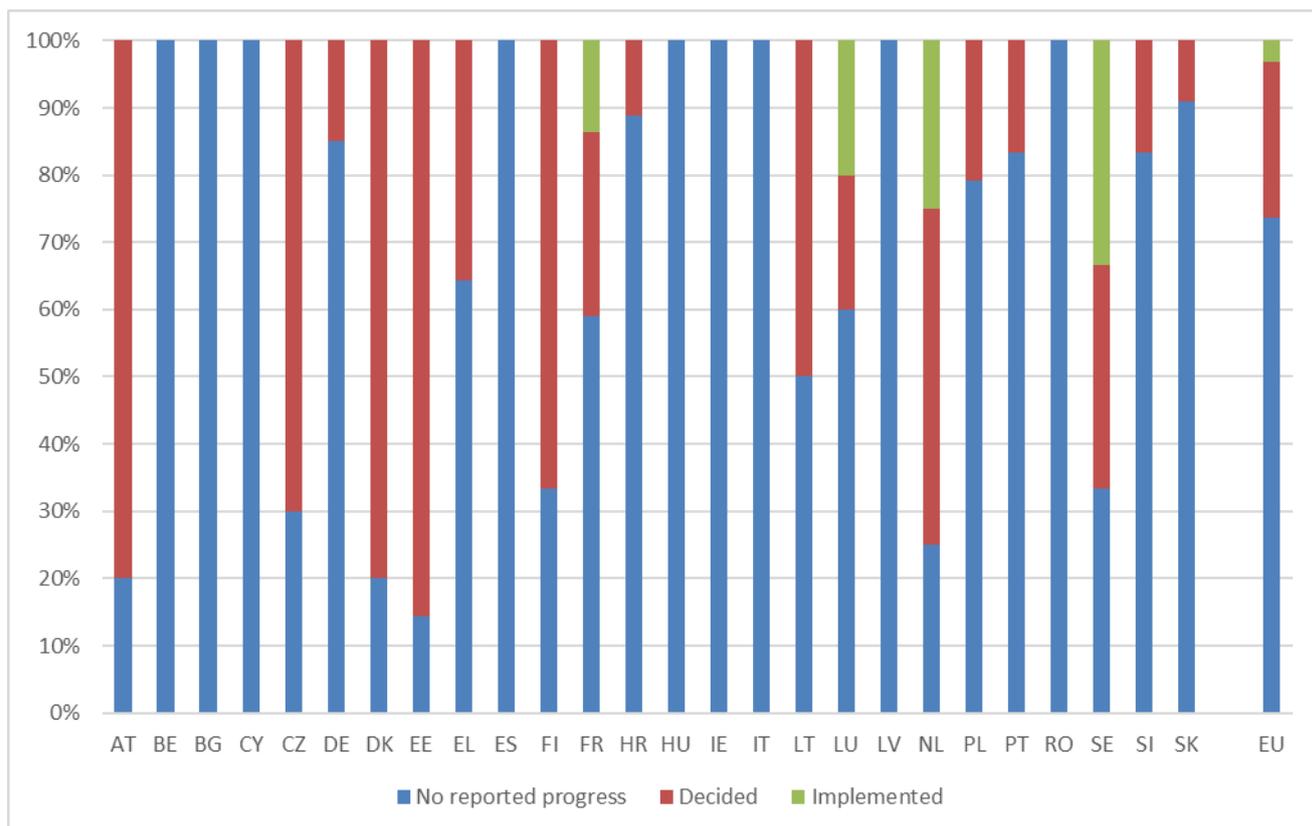
Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: ESF+ indicators show inconsistencies in reporting decided values, this is marked as a data gap.

The decided shares (i.e. forecast outputs based on projects in the pipeline) must be carefully considered as progress varies considerably across Member States.

## 2.2.2. Result indicators

Similar to the output indicators, the following figure presents the share of result indicators showing progress (in terms of reported decided and implemented values) for each Member State as of June 2024. Progress (in terms of decided resources) is notable in Austria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands.

**Figure 14 – Share of result indicators showing progress**



Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO 2024

Reporting on implemented values for result indicators is seen in very few countries: Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and France.

The following presents further details of JTF implementation results, through analysis of some result indicators. The table below shows the physical progress of the JTF achievements for the most widely used output indicators. The selected ERDF indicators are used by over 30% of JTF programmes, whereas the ESF+ indicators, by over 20% of the JTF programmes.

Decided values refer to expected contributions by the project. Implemented values refer to the contribution of finalised operations. The difference is that decided values refer to outputs if projects are implemented as expected while implemented values refer to the actual outputs/results based on closed projects. The period spans from the beginning of implementation to 30 June 2024.

**Table 6 – Result indicators, reported progress**

	Unit	Decide value	Implemented value	share Decided (2024)	Implemented share (2024)
EECR03: Gaining a qualification <sup>(8)</sup>	number of persons	Data gap	346	Data gap	0.19%
EECR04: Employed upon leaving <sup>(9)</sup>	number of persons	Data gap	1 252	Data gap	3.89%
RCR01 Jobs created in supported entities	annual FTEs	8 102	4	12.87%	0.01%
RCR02 Firms: Private investments	Euro	1 034 814 809	1 908 909	19.65%	0.04%
RCR03 RTDI: SMEs introducing product or process innovation	enterprises	1 248	3	33.10%	0.08%
RCR29 Climate: Estimated GHG emissions	tonnes CO2 eq./year	115 276	0	5.82%	0.00%
RCR31 Energy: Total renewable energy produced	MWh/year	9 1489	0	3.20%	0.00%
RCR52 Env: Rehabilitated land	hectares	95	0	1.20%	0.00%
RCR62 Urban Trans: Annual users of public transport	users/year	50 000	0	0.23%	0.00%
RCR71 Education: Annual users of education facilities	users/year	88 068	0	44%	0.00%

Source: Consortium elaboration, based on data from DG REGIO, 2024. Note: ESF+ indicators show inconsistencies in reporting decided values, this is marked as a data gap.

<sup>(8)</sup> Persons who have received ESF+ support and who gained a qualification upon leaving the ESF+ operation.

<sup>(9)</sup> Unemployed or inactive persons who have received ESF+ support, and who are in employment, including self-employment, immediately upon leaving the ESF+ operation



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