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COUNTRY FICHE

SLOVAKIA [SK]

During the 2014-20 period, eight non-urban Integrated Territorial Investment strategies (Non-SUD ITI) were implemented at the NUTS3 level, alongside eight Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment (SUD ITI) strategies in the main cities. ITI was the mechanism used to support the implementation of Regional Integrated Territorial Strategies, considered the primary instrument for applying the integrated approach. These strategies comprised both SUD ITI and Non-SUD ITI components and were developed by partnerships led by the regional authorities. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development acted as the relevant Managing Authority responsible for urban and territorial strategies supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Additionally, 110 Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) strategies were deployed in rural areas, funded by the ERDF and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Together, these strategies effectively covered the entire territory of Slovakia.

POPULATION	STATE TYPE
5.43 million	Decentralised

NATIONAL ESIF BUDGET

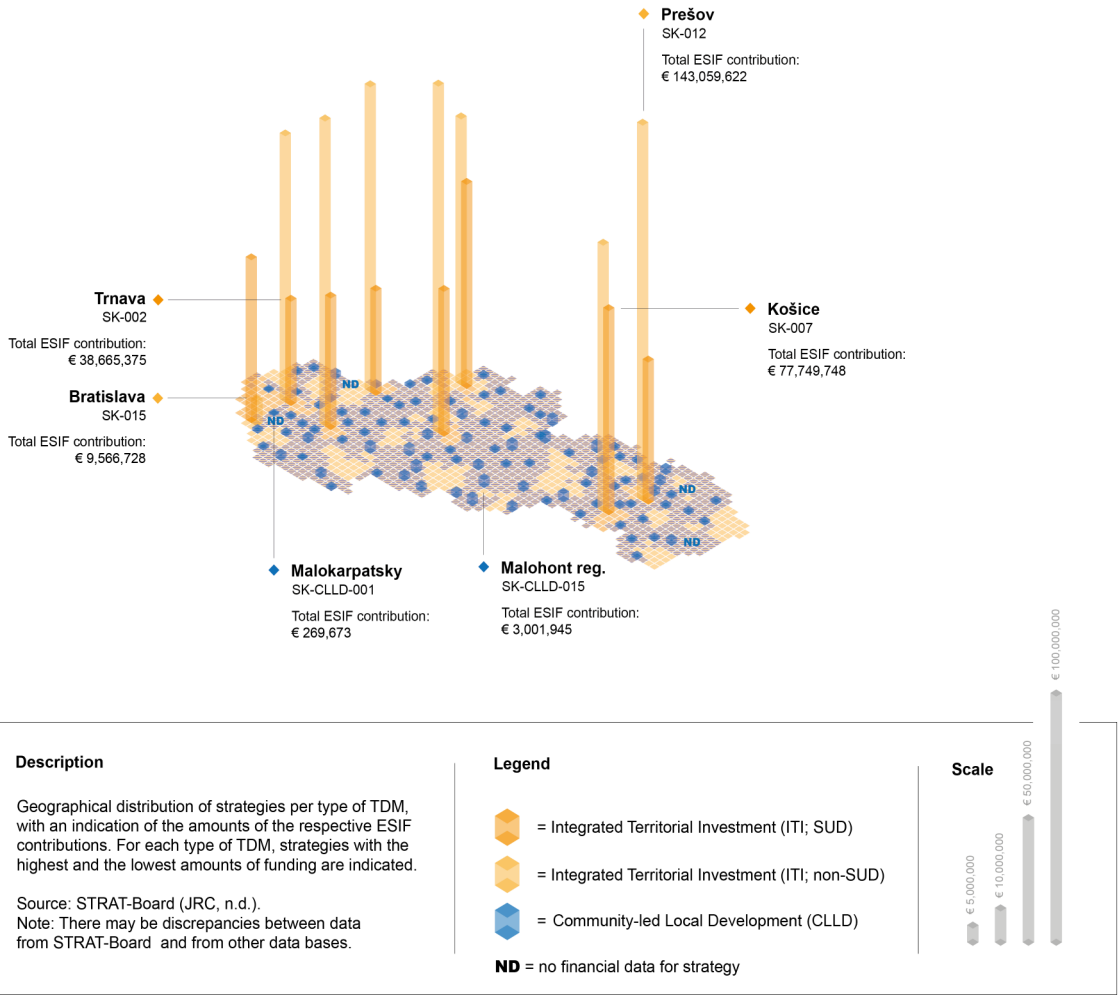
EU Contribution (EUR)	€ 16,572,189,599
National Contribution (EUR)	€ 3,951,682,749
Total Contribution (EUR)	€ 20,523,872,348

Note: including all ESIF - ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, YEI, EMFF
Source: Cohesion Open Data Platform (European Commission, n.d.)

Territorial Delivery Mechanism type	No.	ESIF type	Share of ERDF /CF allocation	Share of decided allocations spent (end 2022)
SUD (Art. 7) Operational Programme	0	-	-	-
SUD (Art. 7) Priority Axis	0	-	-	-
Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI; SUD)	8	ERDF,ESF	6.5%	36%
Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI; non-SUD)	8	ERDF,ESF	10.8%	34%
Community-led Local Development (CLLD)	110	ERDF,ESF, EMFF, EAFRD	1.2%	29%
TOTAL	**126**		**18.5%**	**-**

Source: allocations and spending based on Cohesion Open Data Platform (European Commission, n.d.), remaining items on STRAT-Board (JRC, n.d.).
Note: STRAT-Board data is self-reported by strategy holders. There may be inconsistencies between the data reported in STRAT-Board and other databases, such as the Cohesion Open Data Platform.

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of Territorial Delivery Mechanism (TDM) strategies



GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

Slovakia's territorial governance operates within a unitary state framework. The country is divided into administrative units known as regions (kraje), each with its own regional government and assembly. Below the regional level are districts (okresy) and municipalities, responsible for local administration. The central government, based in Bratislava, oversees national affairs including defence, foreign policy, and finance. While some regional autonomy exists, significant authority remains with the central government. This unitary system aims to maintain governance consistency while addressing local needs within a unified national framework. Since 2018, Slovakia has implemented a national urban policy, overseen by the Ministry of Transport and Construction. The 'Urban Development Concept 2030' document provides strategic guidance for urban development, highlighting cities' pivotal role in regional development and outlining a roadmap for structural changes within urban areas.

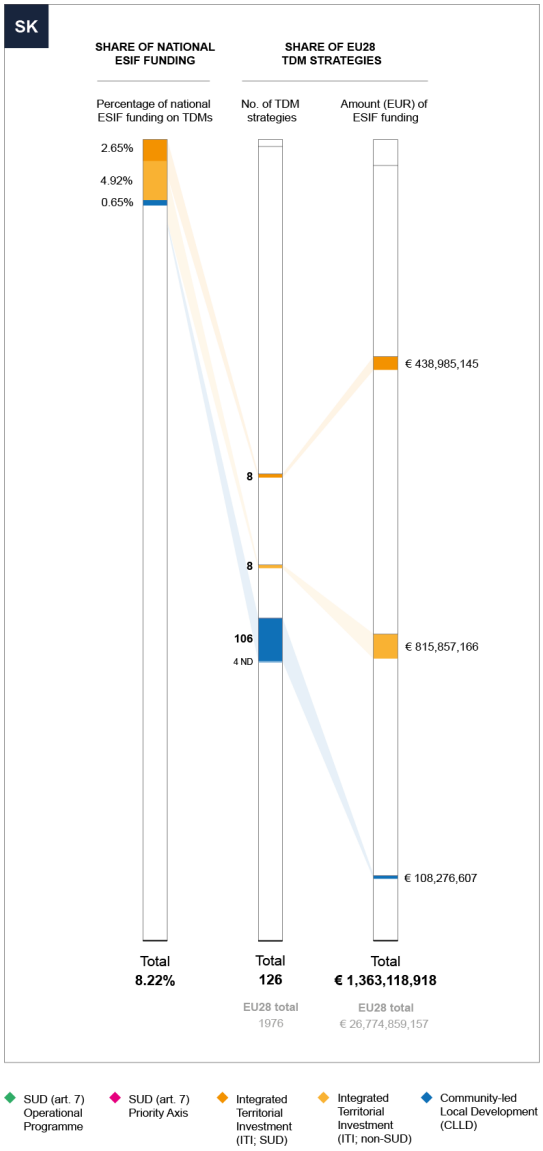
COHESION POLICY CONTEXT

In Slovakia, the management and implementation of EU Cohesion Policy has historically been highly centralised. During the 2014-20 programming period, the Central Coordinating Authority, situated within the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development, and Informatization, oversaw the overall implementation system of EU Cohesion Policy at the national level. The Ministry of Finance acted as the Certifying Authority and Audit Authority for all programmes financed by ERDF, ESF, and CF. Central Ministries managed all programmes, while regions and regional centres served as Intermediate Bodies for the Integrated Regional Operational Programme with limited competences.

Traditionally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development oversaw the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Slovakia, including rural development. The Ministry acted as the Managing Authority for the Rural Development Programme and as the manager for the LEADER/CLLD implementation during 2014-20. The multi-fund approach to LEADER/CLLD was applied for the first time, merging EAFRD (RD Programme) and ERDF (Integrated Regional OP) funding. However, the overall institutional and implementation setup for the LEADER/CLLD did not facilitate closer coordination between funding authorities. In practice, Local Action Groups (LAGs) had to operate under two separate and often inconsistent systems, resulting in implementation delays.

FEATURES OF THE TERRITORIAL DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Figure 2: Types of Territorial Delivery Mechanisms (TDMs) used, amount of strategies and the corresponding shares of ESIF* contributions



Source: STRAT-Board (JRC, n.d.). Notes: On the first vertical bar from the left, the percentage of all ESIF funding for that country allocated to TDM strategies is indicated with colour. The whole bar represents all ESIF funding for that country. On the second bar (middle), the number of each type of TDM strategy implemented in this country is indicated with the corresponding colour, with the whole bar representing all TDM strategies implemented across the EU28 (1976 strategies, as indicated in grey below the bar). On the bar on the right side, the amounts of ESIF funding for the TDM strategies are indicated with the corresponding colour. The bar represents the total allocation of ESIF for TDMs in the EU28. Please note that there may be inconsistencies between the data reported in STRAT-Board and Cohesion Open Data Platform.

Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment

ERDF was the sole fund supporting SUD ITI strategies in Slovakia. Eight SUD strategies targeted regional capitals and their functional urban areas, forming an integral part of the Regional Integrated Territorial Strategies. Sustainable urban development strategies were developed for eight regional centres: Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín, Banská Bystrica, Žilina, Košice, and Prešov. Initially, urban and territorial strategies were developed separately in each region, later consolidated into a single document called RIUS. The eight local authorities in regional capitals involved in SUD strategies were designated as Intermediate Bodies (IB) and responsible for their implementation and monitoring. Self-governing regional authorities oversaw the implementation and monitoring of territorial RIUS. The Integrated Regional Operational Programme was the primary source of ERDF funding, determining the thematic focus of strategies based on the priority axes of this programme.

Non-Sustainable Urban Development Integrated Territorial Investment

The non-SUD ITI was supported by the integrated territorial strategies developed at NUTS3 level across 8 in regions, supported by ERDF only. Their design was based on the pre-existing development strategies of regions, local authorities and sectoral strategies. They were primarily funded by the Integrated Regional Operational Programme and, therefore, focused on support to transport infrastructure, creative industry, energy efficiency and entrepreneurship, which were the main thematic areas of this programme.

Community-led Local Development (CLLD)

The 110 multi-fund CLLD strategies were implemented throughout Slovakia to support comprehensive development efforts in rural areas, adhering to the requirements for receiving assistance from EAFRD and ERDF. LAGs were eligible for support from these two EU funds to aid in the implementation of activities and operational costs aligned with programme objectives they contributed to (RD Programme or Integrated Regional Operational Programme). Separate systems were established for implementing activities under each fund. The establishment of these CLLD strategies based on existing LEADER LAGs facilitated implementation and monitoring. However, the delivery of CLLD strategies was hampered by lengthy processes at the national level, and the application of different rules for ERDF and EAFRD, along with capacity limitations, impeded fund integration at the project level. Nevertheless, the CLLD strategies provided value by mobilising non-public territorial stakeholders and facilitating EU fund access for under-represented groups.

* In order to reflect the contribution of various funds to TDMs, this graph includes all ESIF funds (ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EMFF).

A common strategic framework for ITI strategies

SUD ITI and non-SUD ITI strategies in Slovakia were formulated and executed within the common framework for ITI during the 2014-20 period - the Regional Integrated Territorial Strategies (RITS). The collaborative development of these strategies at the regional level served as a platform for engaging national, regional, and local stakeholders, enhancing intervention coordination. Partnership Councils were established for each RITS, comprising relevant actors tasked with implementing the strategy. Furthermore, self-governing regions (overseeing non-SUD ITI) and regional centres (managing SUD ITI) served as Intermediate Bodies for the Integrated Regional Operational Programme, possessing specific implementation competencies.

IN SUM

Territorial Delivery Mechanisms were extensively employed in Slovakia, covering virtually the entire national territory, although only ITI and CLLD strategies were implemented, with the latter having relatively modest budgets. Despite the decentralisation of territorial administration in the country, the implementation of Cohesion Policy remains centralised. The design of ITI strategies was nationally coordinated, limiting the autonomy of sub-national authorities in addressing territorial needs in a locally tailored manner. This limitation was particularly notable for SUD ITIs, although non-SUD ITIs did contribute to achieving objectives outlined in existing regional and local strategies, fostering greater potential for a place-based approach. Despite a somewhat centralised approach, the process of developing and implementing ITI strategies fostered improved cooperation across government levels and more coordinated interventions on the ground. While CLLD strategies had relatively small financial resources, they enhanced local governance by encouraging the involvement of non-state stakeholders.

References

European Commission. (n.d.). Cohesion Open Data Platform. DG Regio. https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/

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