

# Impact evaluation of the ERDF/EES/YEI funds

Final report restitution

Metz, 09/01/23

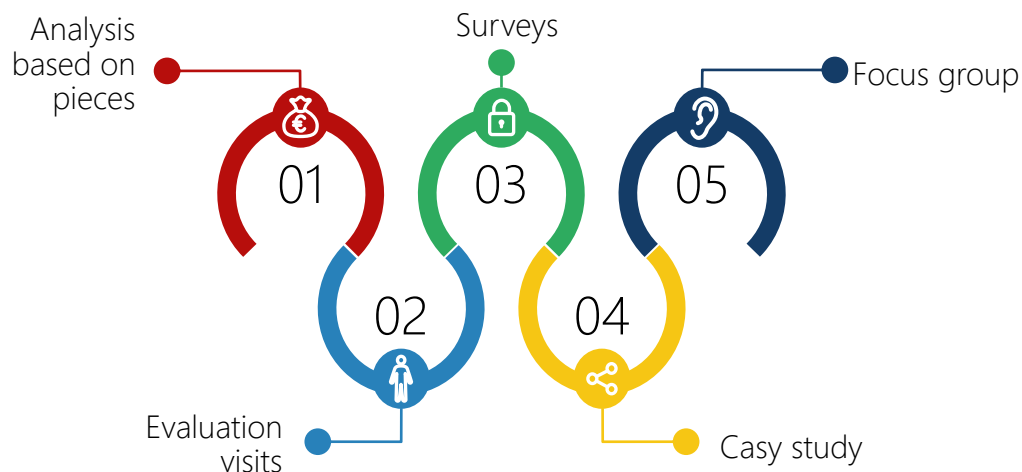


# Methodology



# Methodology

The impact methodology in the context of this impact evaluation relies on a mix between quantitative evaluation (whose data are derived from the indicators reported in the framework of the monitoring of the ERDF/EES/YEI funds provided by the Grand Est region, and from reliable data that can be easily consulted from sources deemed to be acceptable), and a qualitative evaluation that relies on the mobilisation of several tools:



## Step 1 : Analysis based on pieces

The goal is to have aggregated data allowing to identify trends and to have an overall view, which allows to compare data between projects. Here, we will base ourselves on the data from Synergy and on the documents available to the managing authority (previous reports, RAMO, etc.).

## Step 2 : Evaluation visits

It is about a detailed analysis of the implementation of a project, on site with the project leaders. The method presents the advantage of being able to interview the various stakeholders in a project and to cross-reference their views.

Facing the high number of projects and project leaders, the selection will however not be exhaustive.

## Step 3 : Surveys

In correlation with the pieces analysis, the surveys will allow to collect a lot of information from a large number of actors.

Within the scope of the impact evaluation ERDF-EES Grand Est, one survey as a minimum among all the project leaders will be conducted, in association to other specific surveys regarding certain specific goals or aspects of the programming implementation.

Obtaining an exhaustive and up-to-date list of contacts will however be complex for a fund that has been in operation for 7 years.

## Step 4 : Case study

Based on the variety of available documents, the elements of the previous steps will be put into perspective in order to cross-reference the objectives of the public policy, the projects and the impact of the co-financed achievements.

The case study is interesting in its targeting of a theme. However, it is important to remain cautious about the generalizability of the recommendations.

## Step 5 : Focus group

The exercise of focus group with project leaders but also with project beneficiary allows to confront the diversity of opinion and test hypothesis with a diversified panel of actors. However, the assessor will have to stay vigilant on the sincerity of expression in a period of fund renewal and the ability of project leaders to analyze their practices.

# Synthesis by Thematic Objective (TO)



# TO 1 - Research Development and Innovation

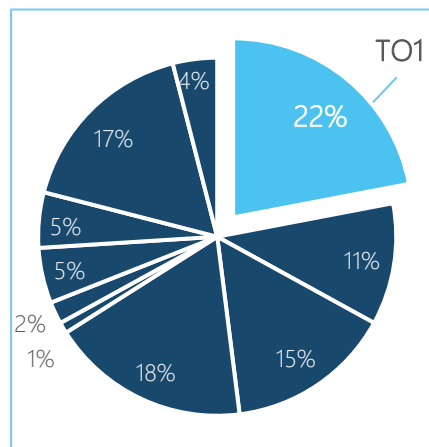
## Synthetic description of the TO

The Research and Development consists in one of the politic priorities in order to ensure the various transitions to be carried out over the next few years. Although France has the highest success rate of the EU regarding the Horizon 2020 programm, it has notably not yet achieved the 3% of GDP research expenditure target, which is also the case in the Grand-Est region. Recognized by the European Commission as region in industrial transition, the research, the developement and the innovation are at the heart of the region's stakes

## Main findings

Numerous projects requiring investment in physical resources have been financed, such as the development of universities, all of which fall under the intelligent specialization strategy (S3) of each former region. Collaborative projects or round tables were organized. The main project leaders of the agreement on this TO are the universities.

In order to promote the transfer of scientific research towards the economic world, innovative projects supported by companies were co-financed, as well as research projects carried out by universities then aiming at being exploited by companies. Some projects for the sensibilisation to scientific culture and for structuring branches were also financed.



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## Main recommendations

- Make the objectives set and the means deployed proportional to the territorial units selected: the objectives set in the next OP can be more precise in light of what has been achieved
- Align the programming with the temporality of the evolution of its ecosystem to not deprive ourselves to support emerging branches in the Regional Innovation Strategies.
- Implement a single counter, assembling the various sources of financing by thematics (europeans, nationals, regionals) to facilitate the construction of the financing plan by the project leaders.
- Exploit the experiences around projects of development of collaboration between private and public to use the good practices tested by each sector of the intelligent specialization strategy (S3).

## TO 2 – Technology of information and communication

### Synthetic description of the TO

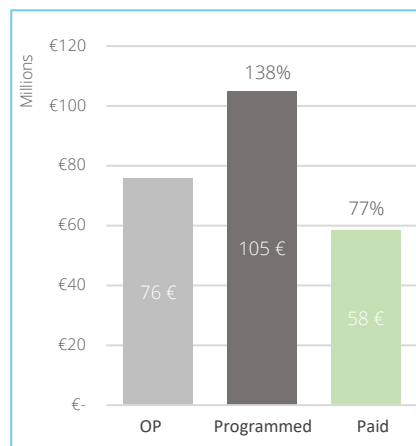
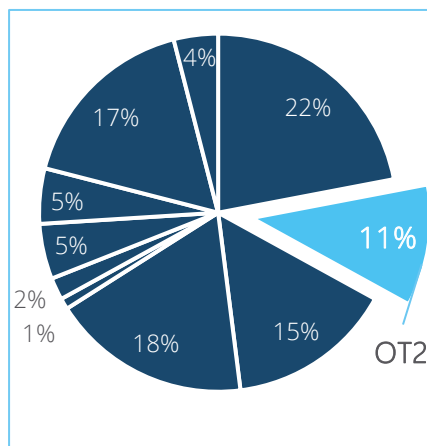
Erected as a regional priority, the development of TIC infrastructures meets the national priorities (France THD) and the European strategy « Europe 2020 ». Beyond this ambition of promoting the large band in a region where the population density is declining, the co-financing were destined to accompany the projects in favor of digital use. The portfolio of projects supported by the FEDER on the digital question splits into two dimensions. The first one – the layout of the territory and the infrastructures of the digital – responds to the development goals of the THD on the whole territory. The second one concerns the digital use (social, cultural, touristic, digital public services, etc...) and responds to the will to build a digital society in the region.

### Main findings

The indicators (4G coverage, FttH connecting rooms) are satisfactory ; the region has largely progressed, including in its battle for the disparition of white zones.

The ERDF has notably contributed top finance innovative project supported by SMBs.

The projects that took part in the reinforcement of the applications TIC in the realms of administration, learning, integration, culture and health (telehealth) . Despite the lack of indicators of réalisations, msot projects have had the virtue of contributing to the sensibilisation goals to the use of TIC.



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### Main recommendations

- Reflect on the digital use to determine what is advisable to support in the futur – by working notably on the consistency and the synergies to draw.
- Take advantage of the recently implemented digital infrastructure to pass it on to service projects.
- Structure more the portfolio of projects linked to the digital use, all the more as the infrastructures are now more efficient, in order to gain synergies from it.
- Strengthen the support of (new) project leaders in the preparation of applications to allow a better understanding of the administrative dynamics of the FEDER.

## TO 3 – The competitiveness of the SMEs

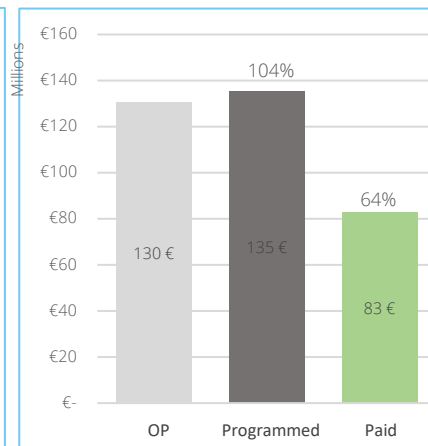
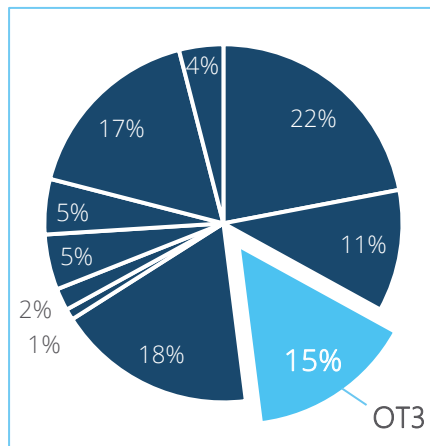
### Synthetic description of the TO

This TO emphasizes support for the consolidation and competitiveness of the economic structure, whose situation has deteriorated significantly in recent years, particularly due to the deindustrialization of the region. In addition, an entire axis has been dedicated to tourism in the Massif des Vosges, which is also a major economic issue in the region

### Main findings

The mobilization of financial instruments in the second part of the programming has allowed to revive a dynamic and meet the needs of SMEs and VSEs, particularly in terms of administrative management. This has also helped to boost activity in certain areas, with impacts in terms of job creation and increased visibility and credibility on the market.

This TO has also made it possible to support a number of investment projects that have optimized processes through better equipment, improved working conditions for employees, new production methods, and the integration of digitalization, all of which have had an impact on the reputation of companies.



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### Main recommendations

- Set up instruments to facilitate the administrative and financial management of entrepreneurs (rebound loan for instance).
- Ensure good complementarity of projects with other regional programs (e.g. "Plan Régionale d'Internationalisation des Entreprises") to increase their benefits.
- To play a role in helping companies engaged in any improvement process (technological, human resources, employment, environment, economy, energy, etc.) in the same way as national and regional funding
- Reinforce the support from the creation phase (as it has been done with the regional branches of France Active) and reinforce the support from the takeover of a company.
- Encourage the co-financing of the package aiming at supporting companies recently created (coaching, dashboards, consulting, search for financing solutions, technology transfer or export support...).

# TO 4 – Energy transition

## Synthetic description of the TO

In its Europe 2020 program, the EU has set the objective of achieving a renewable energy production representing 23% of its total production. The Grand Est is particularly energy-consuming due to its industrial and agricultural activities and a climate that leads to higher consumption than the national average for residential heating.

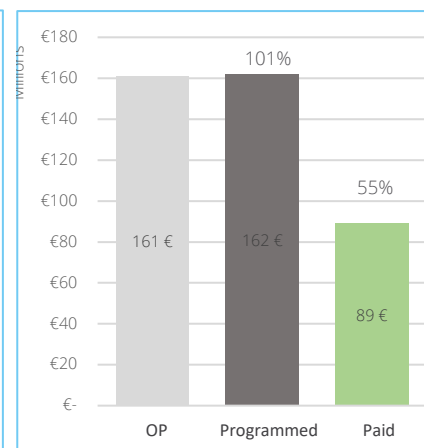
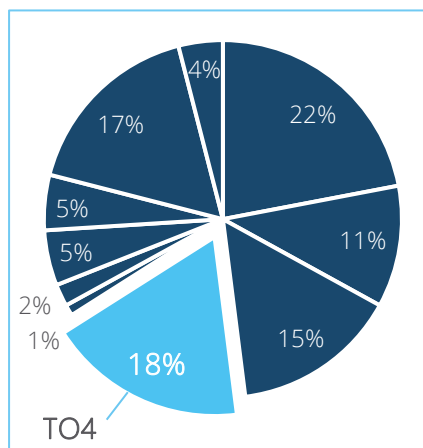
The objective in this area is to develop the production of renewable energies as well as to support energy efficiency and the use of low-carbon modes of transport.

## Main Findings

The purpose of this TO was to promote the production and distribution of energy from renewable sources. Thus, a significant number of projects for the deployment of methanizer, the creation of boiler rooms or heat networks were financed

The projects financed have allowed the financing of equipment or the deployment of new processes to improve energy efficiency.

Finally, some of the projects financed have supported energy efficiency, intelligent energy management and the use of renewable energy in public infrastructures, including public buildings and the housing sector. The actions financed mainly concern public infrastructures but still very little private housing, the dynamics of which is tending to be launched.



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## Main recommendations

- Finance heat networks in partnership with ADEME, climaxion, (this has not been the case in Champagne-Ardenne while it has worked well on the other OP).
- To make the eligible expenses of the projects more flexible, especially the operating costs.
- Integrate the single counter logic to every theme where it is possible. This theme has the particularity to have a plurality of financers that can complexify the readability of users. The ADEME and the region Grand-Est already have initiated a work on single counter allowing them to present only one spokesperson for its two sources of financing.
- Replicate the instruction method of energy efficiency projects in the companies of Alsace: the technical department which ensures the technical instruction of the projects with the support of the CCI adviser and a jury associating the Region, the CCI, the State and the ERDF which examines the requests for subsidy.



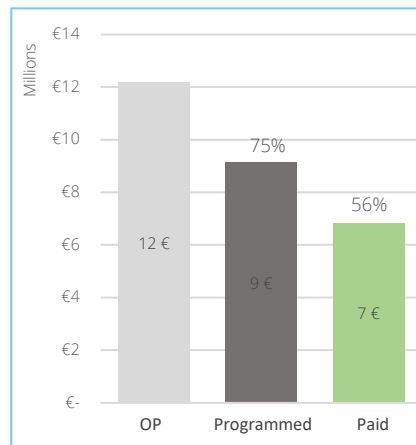
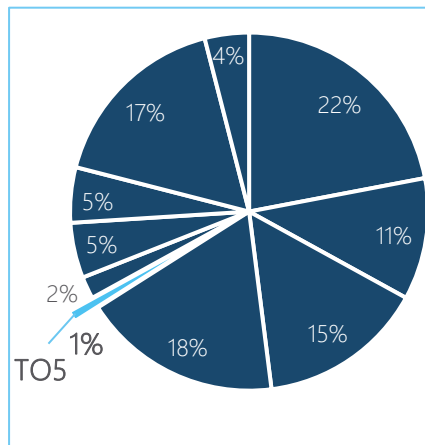
# TO 5 – Climate change

## Synthetic description of the TO

The Grand-Est region presents a territory very vulnerable to flood risks with 15 territories at risk of flooding and more than 1.4 million inhabitants living in flood-prone areas. The west of the Region also has 3 reservoir lakes that protect Paris against the risk of flooding. The co-financed projects could be studies or construction or renovation works of infrastructure allowing to protect living areas or to favour the flow of water during floods.

## Key findings

The projects of studies and works related to the prevention of flood risks have reached their objectives with some delays in construction due to Covid. The European financing has a direct effect on the realization of public policy by participating in the reduction of flood risks with a significant leverage effect on the programming (35%)



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## Main recommendations

- Ensure continuity between programs, similar to the continuity present in the operational programs between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 to continue to support risk prevention efforts as well as to ensure the completion of work that will not have taken place in this late programming.
- Strengthen the mobilization and support for the preparation of projects for small and medium-sized intermunicipalities with needs on the flood axis in order to strengthen the programming from the beginning of the 21-27 framework.
- With a complete takeover of the GEMAPI set up from 2018, make sure that the possibilities of European funding on these themes are fully publicized for the communities.
- Without questioning the realization of the necessary studies and works on the territory, diversify the projects considering the importance of the flood risk on the whole region.
- Having a vision of the cost of the work as soon as the studies are carried out in the context of setting up "segmented" projects could provide the managing authority with better visibility of the financial needs and the remaining programming room for manoeuvre.
- With a view to continuing the program and considering the number of studies financed over the period, secure financing for the works as a priority in order to ensure the completion of the projects supported during this program.

# TO 6 - Environnement

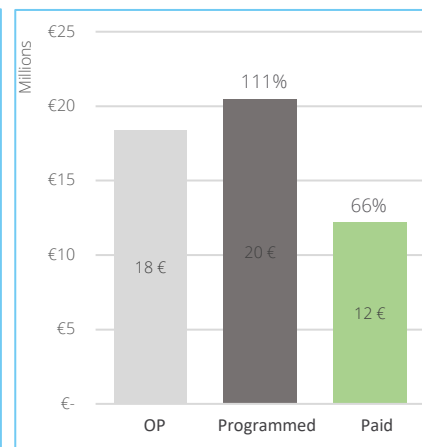
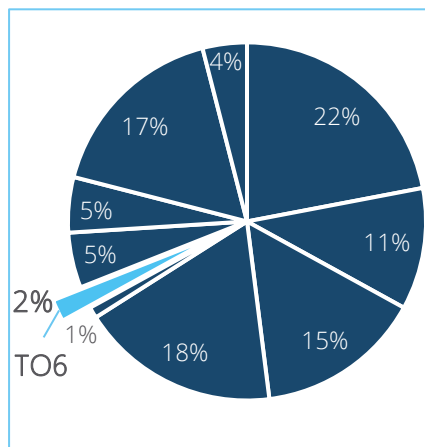
## Synthetic description of the TO

In order to face the risks of destruction of natural habitats and fragmentation of biodiversity in the territory, this TO aims at preserving, restoring and managing the natural heritage. In order to address the risks of destruction of natural habitats and fragmentation of biodiversity in the region, this TO aims to preserve, restore and manage the natural heritage, in particular through the management of the Natura 2000 network, which represents a significant part of the program. In addition, many operations to convert wastelands that allow for the reclamation of polluted wastelands and thus limit the consumption of land also contribute to the objectives of this TO.

## Main findings

The projects concern the preservation, restoration and management of the natural heritage, with particular attention to the management and animation of Natura 2000 sites. The projects have improved knowledge of the natural environment, raised the awareness of many partners and actors in the area and have had an exemplary effect by inspiring other initiatives.

The programmed projects are often integrated into larger urban development programs and are carried out by metropolises. Apart from some delays due to the shortage of raw materials, these projects have achieved their objectives.



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## Main recommendations

- The protection of natural environments requires the implementation of numerous initiatives financed by different actors (State, Region, FEADER, ADEME, etc.). The actions supported by the ERDF must be complementary to other actions and take into account the nature of the land and the uses made of it. For this purpose, the networking of the various actors must become a priority.
- On brownfields rehabilitation projects, assisting communities to optimize their financing plan, with a crossed view on the contribution of regional and European credits
- Expand and strengthen awareness, communication, knowledge sharing and even training with the general public and authorities: school, conference, symposium, seminar, publication, social networks, partnership with associations.
- Strengthen the culture of writing (with annual reports for example) in order to better capitalize on the knowledge acquired and facilitate its diffusion.

# TO 8 – Sustainable employment

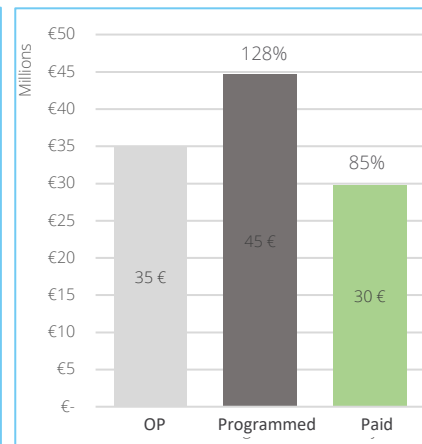
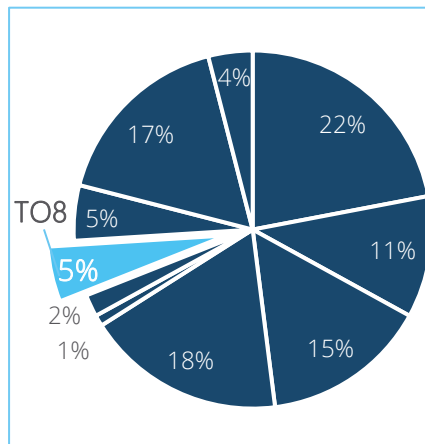
## Synthetic description of the TO

The Grand-Est Region has concentrated a large part of its EES programming on supporting people who are far from employment for socio-professional integration. The Region is facing particular employment difficulties with areas of particular difficulty for young people whose unemployment rate is higher than the national average in some areas. In this context, the programming set up is a continuation of the 2007-2013 programming with projects and holders in continuity.

## Main findings

The projects financed were intended to support the creation and takeover of businesses through training and support, but also through the professionalization of creation-takeover advisors. The EES has made it possible to finance apprenticeship support developers or, more generally, schools offering such support. Programs for all levels (no diplomas up to higher education) have been financed.

Other projects have supported the socio-professional integration of disadvantaged groups, with a particular focus on young NEETs, i.e. those who are not in employment, training or school. The projects financed are support programs for this target group wishing to develop an entrepreneurial project.



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## Main recommendations

- Strengthen the work of innovation to identify new opportunities for support in the image of the implementation since 2019 of "Digital academy" by Alméa formations Interpro.
- Pursue the development of projects with a large intervention perimeter and in particular with the support of carriers with this potential intervention area.
- Strengthen the regionalization of support in order to pursue the search for economies of scale, particularly in terms of administrative costs and project management
- Strengthen the search for co-financing and support from the private sector in the implementation of this type of project, in particular to support the development of apprenticeships or support for training
- Strengthen reflections on the economic models of certain projects in order to limit dependence on European funds and potentially free up amounts to work on more innovative programming.

# TO 9 – Social Inclusion

## Synthetic description of the TO

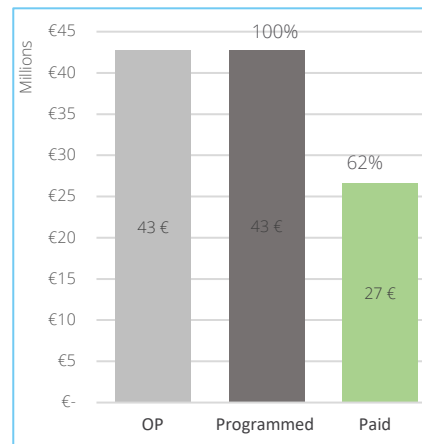
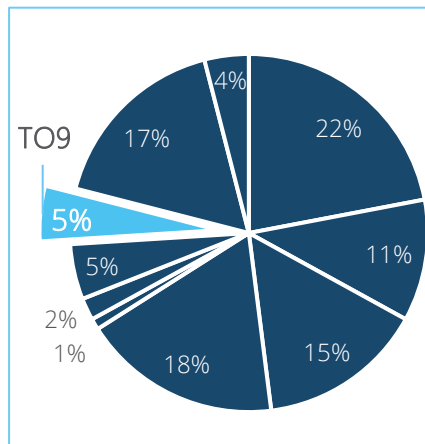
The social and solidarity economy is a significant sector of the economy of the Grand Est with a strong potential for development to offset the changes in the regional economy in recent years (deindustrialization and border competition).

In this context, the former Alsace region has chosen to integrate the SSE in its programming with support for the development of innovative micro-projects and the structuring and development of the solidarity sector as a whole.

## Main findings

The main actions supported were the promotion of the SSE in the territory, a support system for innovative micro-projects provided by the CRESS, and development projects for already established SSE structures. The program presents good results both in terms of the number of projects co-financed and in the support for employment of disadvantaged people

Following the COVID health crisis, the former regions have set up another funding priority in order to respond to the urgency of the crisis and to be able to provide protective equipment to a number of carriers and administrations (CFA, public transport, etc.)



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## Main recommendations

- Update the 2021-2027 OP following the validation of the new SRDEII in 2023 to ensure continued consistency between European funding and the objectives set in the context of regional consultation on the economic and social development of the territory as a whole.
- Study the use of an intermediary structure for micro-projects to reinforce the simplification of management with a subsidy system for the project leaders in addition to the support already in place
- Deploy innovation projects in the SSE like micro-projects but with a regional vision in order to strengthen the coordination of actors and an impact on a territory of scale and not only localized projects with little impact in terms of scale;
- To continue to support project leaders in the ideation and realization of their projects to ensure the consumption of funding and the implementation of innovations on the territory

# TO 10 – Education and training

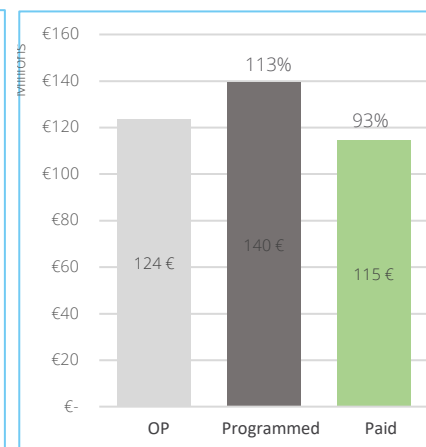
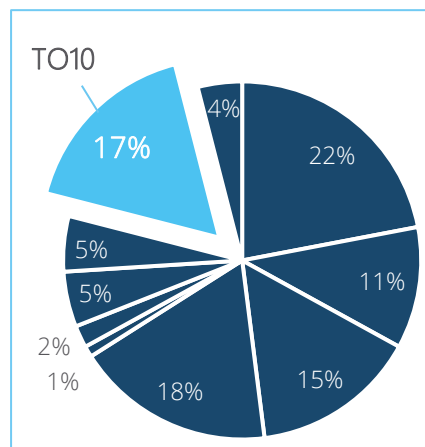
## Synthetic description of the TO

The Grand-Est Region, composed of the three former regions of Alsace, Champagne-Ardenne and Lorraine, has placed vocational training at the heart of its regional ambitions. Through its regional training plans, it is committed to better inform, guide and train for tomorrow's jobs based on the needs of companies and to develop employment and economic attractiveness through vocational training. Thematic objective 10 of the EES 2014-2020 operational programs for the three former regions reinforces these commitments by "investing in education, training and vocational training for the acquisition of skills and lifelong learning".

## Main findings

Most of the projects programmed have been integrated into regional training programs (PRF) that encompass several axes of intervention. Thanks to the majority financial contribution of the EES, these projects have made it possible to specify a precise training system for several specific types of public, as opposed to the simpler generic paths proposed by other programs.

Other projects concerned the improvement of apprenticeship training via "progress contracts". The Professional Future Act has led to a change in strategy (no longer targeting the EES on apprenticeship), which has led some OFs to prioritize certain training courses over others according to the enrollment rate in order to guarantee a financial balance and to increase the use of self-financing.



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## Main recommendations

- Think about the evolution of target values for vocational training, with indicators harmonized across the three former regions and allowing for detailed monitoring of achievements. This includes new data fields in the monitoring tools.
- Continue to strengthen the use of "territorial diagnostics" upstream of projects to better frame their intervention logic.
- Ensure that project leaders have a good knowledge of local regulations / public policy orientations to enable a better anchoring of projects.
- Conceptualize/propose hybrid or distance learning to broaden the target audience and increase the inclusiveness of projects.
- Better think about the normalization/quantification of the links established with the world of work through the project.

# TO 13 – REACT EU

## Synthetic description of the TO

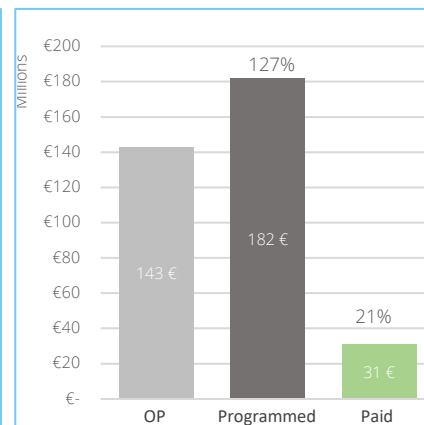
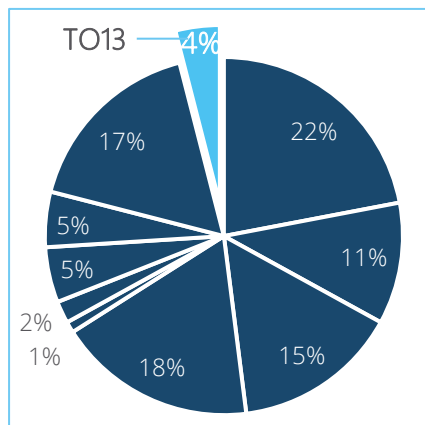
As part of the European recovery plan, specific financial resources have been released between 2021 and 2022 to promote economic recovery, resilient, sustainable and digital on the territories of the European Union. The Grand Est Region has thus received a total allocation of €186 million. For the ERDF, projects had to focus on the health of the public impacted by the crisis, the pursuit of economic development and innovation, encouragement towards an energy and digital transition. For the EES, projects had to focus on socio-professional support for people furthest from employment, integration, pathway engineering, SSE and coordination of actors.

## Main findings

Many of the projects funded through REACT EU are still in progress.

They have already allowed to :

- ❖ to rapidly and/or sustainably improve the region's hospital structures
- ❖ maintain and relaunch a local, sustainable economic activity oriented towards the ecological and digital transition of the territory
- ❖ supporting those most affected by the crisis by continuing major actions and meeting additional needs



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## Main recommendations

- Mobilize intermediary actors to quickly carry out a systemic analysis of carriers with comparable needs in order to pool projects and make it possible to address needs by drawing on both the needs expressed and the best practices devised by others.
- Promote the dual challenge of helping to manage the COVID emergency and supporting the region's economic recovery, should a situation arise that would lead to the activation of a device like REACT EU in the future.
- Make the projects proceed, as often as possible, from a systemic analysis, either on the scale of the holder, or of a public policy theme
- Duplicate the "Industry of the Future" method in other fields to support and develop the maturity of potential carriers