



CURRENT CHALLENGES OF COHESION POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract: This paper analyses the main challenges affecting European Union cohesion policy in the 2021–2027 programming period. The study highlights the impact of regional disparities, administrative constraints, regulatory complexity, and green and digital transitions on policy effectiveness. The analysis underlines the importance of governance quality, institutional capacity and strategic coordination for improving territorial cohesion and sustainable regional development.

• Introduction

- Cohesion policy is a key EU investment instrument
- Main objective: reducing regional disparities
- Current context shaped by:
 - COVID-19 crisis
 - geopolitical tensions
 - green and digital transitions
- New challenges affect policy effectiveness

• Material and method

- Qualitative and analytical approach
- Analysis of:
 - European Commission reports;
 - EU policy documents;
 - scientific literature
- Comparative and descriptive analysis used

• Results and discussions

Key challenges affecting EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027

CHALLENGE	IMPACT
Regional disparities	Uneven regional development
Administrative capacity	Lower fund absorption
Regulatory complexity	Increased bureaucracy
Green and digital transition	Adaptation gaps between regions
Crisis impact	Focus on short-term responses
Governance challenges	Reduced policy efficiency

• Conclusions

- Cohesion policy remains essential for EU convergence
- Multiple crises increased implementation pressure
- Simplification and stronger governance are needed
- Better territorial targeting can improve effectiveness