# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South-East Regional Programme 2021-2027 represents a key instrument for regional development, aiming at improving improve the quality of life and increasing economic competitiveness through sustainable investments. Managed by the South-East Regional Development Agency, acting as Management Authority, the programme benefits of a total financial allocation of EUR 1.47 billion, of which 85% represents the EU contribution and 15% the national contribution, for the implementation of the seven priorities targeting the South-East region and the Danube Delta area.

**Priority 7 – Technical Assistance** under the South-East Regional Programme 2021–2027 aims at supporting the smooth functioning of the programme and at helping authorities and beneficiaries’ access and manage European funds efficiently. This priority finances activities such as staff training, development of strategic documents, studies, information campaigns and the digitalisation of administrative processes. The aim is for European funding to be implemented as efficiently and transparently as possible, thus contributing to the development of the region.

The total budget allocated for this priority is approximately EUR 62.7 million. Out of this amount, over EUR 38 million ERDF have been contracted through two major projects: one completed, carried out in 2022–2023, and one ongoing for the period 2024–2025. These projects support the work of the South-East Regional Development Agency, covering administrative expenses, information activities, training sessions for beneficiaries, as well as the development of studies and strategic documents necessary for the efficient implementation of the Regional Programme.

**The interim evaluation**, carried out between December 2024 and March 2025, analyzed the relevance, coherence, efficiency and implementation mechanisms of Priority 7, using qualitative and quantitative research methods (documentary analysis, surveys, interviews, focus groups, case studies).

**The conclusions show that the financed interventions had a positive impact, contributing to increasing administrative capacity both at the level of the Management Authority and among beneficiaries. The financing of key positions, the development of procedures, the digitalization of processes, training sessions and the functioning of the Help-desk supported the streamlining of coordination, monitoring and control activities.**

The evaluation confirmed that the support provided is well adapted to the needs of the Managing Authority and the beneficiaries. However, **the complexity of administrative procedures** and **the lack of specialized staff** , including evaluators, have affected the efficiency of key processes, such as project evaluation and contracting. These difficulties highlight **the need for clearer and better coordinated procedures** , which would contribute to improving the absorption capacity of the funds.

At the same time, a series of persistent difficulties reported by beneficiaries were identified, such as **bureaucracy perceived as excessive** by beneficiaries (e.g. requesting the same documents at different stages), **difficulties in using the MySMIS platform** (redundant uploads, lack of intuitive functionalities), **lack of predictability of calls** , **reduced administrative capacity** of some small and medium-sized ATUs, as well as **the rigidity of financial mechanisms** , especially regarding reimbursements.

**Among the key recommendations made** are: simplifying administrative procedures, optimizing the digital functionalities of the MySMIS platform, introducing more efficient methods of verifying expenditure adapted to risks, expanding personalized support for small and medium-sized ATUs, diversifying training sessions, creating flexible communication mechanisms between the Managing Authority, beneficiaries and consultants, as well as **shortening the evaluation and contracting period, including by mobilizing additional resources during busy periods and by creating own teams of evaluators** , with an emphasis on developing skills in areas where there is a deficit on the market and retaining the staff involved in the evaluation.

The implementation of these measures will contribute to reducing the administrative burden, improving institutional cooperation and increasing the efficiency of the program. The funds allocated for technical assistance thus support not only the efficient operation of the program, but also **the development of a functional partnership** between public institutions and beneficiaries to achieve regional objectives in the period 2021–2027.