



PANORAMA

Focusing on European Regional and Urban Policy

AUTUMN 2019 / No. 70

Smart moves boost Danish business

REGIOSTARS:
TOP PRIZES FOR
OUTSTANDING
PROJECTS



EVALUATING
COHESION POLICY
ACROSS THE
REGIONS



Regional and
Urban Policy

PANORAMA

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EDITORIAL

I am glad to greet *Panorama* readers in this new issue of the magazine, further to President Juncker's request that I take care of the regional policy portfolio until the end of this Commission's mandate on 31 October 2019.

Preparations for the appointment of the new Commission for 2019-2024 are moving forward. Following the European Parliament's favourable vote on her candidature and political guidelines, President-Elect Ursula von der Leyen has been working on building her team and, on 10 September, announced her draft distribution of portfolios.

Regional policy is called upon to play a central role in the European Commission's endeavour for a greener, fairer and stronger Europe. First, in the framework of the **'European green deal'**, regional policy will continue to support regional transformation and the transition to the green economy and technological change. Over three-quarters of the regional policy budget is already earmarked for investments in the transition, in particular innovation and the shift to a climate-neutral economy – the new Just Transition Fund will strengthen this focus.

Then, regional policy will be a major driver of **'an economy that works for people'**, where our motto will continue to be 'no region, no person left behind'. In addition to large investments in the real economy (which currently amount

to almost EUR 50 billion for 2014-2020), regional policy will continue to build on its tools for specific territories, such as deprived urban areas, border regions or the outermost regions – not to mention the EU Solidarity Fund. The aim is to make sure that European citizens enjoy similar opportunities regardless of where they come from, live or work.



Regional policy will also be key in achieving **'a Europe fit for the digital age'**, with half of the ERDF investments for 2021-2027 devoted to 'A smarter Europe', including digitalisation, within the framework of hundreds of mature smart specialisation strategies.

Finally, I am honoured that regional policy will also largely support the Commission as it strives to **'bring people together'** and **'to leave national, regional and local actors to deliver where they are best placed to do so'**, by actively empowering them to deliver on our priorities for Europe. ■

A handwritten signature in orange ink, which reads "J. Hahn". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Johannes Hahn
European Commissioner for Regional Policy

RCI 2019: mapping the trends in regional competitiveness

The fourth Regional Competitiveness Index, which monitors the level of competitiveness across the EU regions, has just been published.

Over the past 10 years, the Regional Competitiveness Index (RCI) has been measuring the major competitiveness factors in 268 regions at NUTS-2 level across the European Union. Comprising 11 different components, it captures concepts that are relevant to sustainable development, productivity and well-being. This unique Index provides within-country insights which national indices of competitiveness cannot capture.

The latest edition of the RCI, launched on 7 October 2019 at the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels, Belgium, confirms a polycentric pattern with a wide-ranging variation characterising both countries and regions within the same country. Ten years after the global financial crisis and the north-west, south-east divide across the EU remains both clear and visible.

Capital regions tend to be the most competitive in their country, with the exceptions of the Netherlands, Italy and Germany. The top performer in this edition of the RCI is the region of Stockholm, followed by London with its wide commuting zone, and Utrecht, these two cities sharing second place.

As in all previous RCI editions, most of the top regions host either capitals or large metropolitan areas whose agglomeration and connectivity between economic activities and human capital make them engines of growth and competitiveness.

Timely observations

The four points in time now available – referenced by the four editions of the Index – enable the monitoring of trends and evolutions of regional competitiveness since it was first published in 2010. In general, rapid and wide movements are not common across the four RCI editions.

Within each country, regional performances tend to be quite stable over time, even though, in some cases, slight convergence between the best performer, usually the capital region, and the other regions in the country can be observed. For example, in Sweden, Stockholm, with a stable high score, has been slowly caught up by the other three top regions in the country. In contrast, the gap between the region of Bucharest and the rest of Romania has remained strikingly wide over the past decade even though the next three regions in terms of

competitiveness have steadily improved. New, interactive online tools have been added to the RCI webpage to compare levels of competitiveness in different regions across time and space.

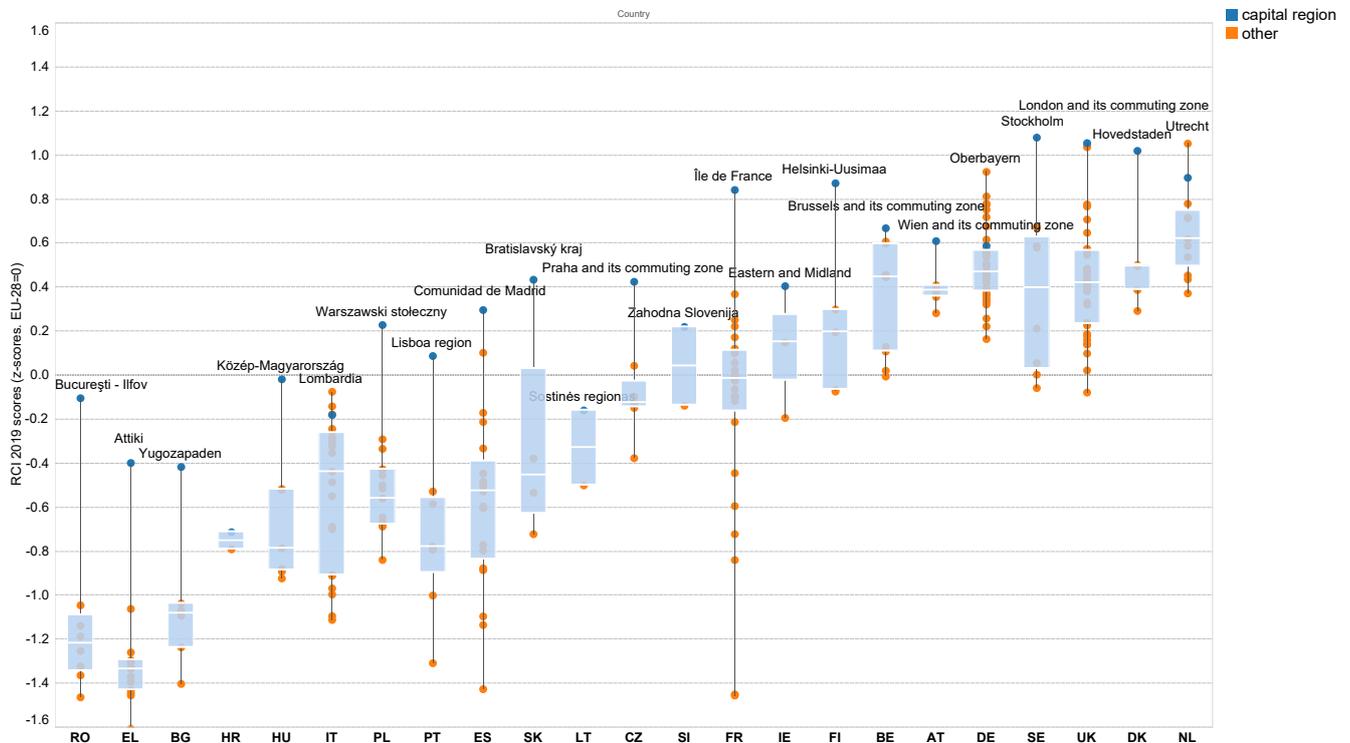
Since its first publication, a growing number of EU regions have used the RCI and its components to make comparisons with other regions in the

EU or with the EU average. The Index has also proved helpful for comparing one region with regions at a similar level of economic development. For example, a less-developed region may have an overall lower score but still outperform regions with a similar level of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. Conversely, a highly developed region may have a high score but still fall short of what is typical for comparably wealthy regions.

“Most of the top regions host either capitals or large metropolitan areas whose agglomeration and connectivity between economic activities and human capital make them engines of growth and competitiveness.”



Distribution of RCI 2019 scores within countries.



Only countries with more than one region are displayed in Figure above.

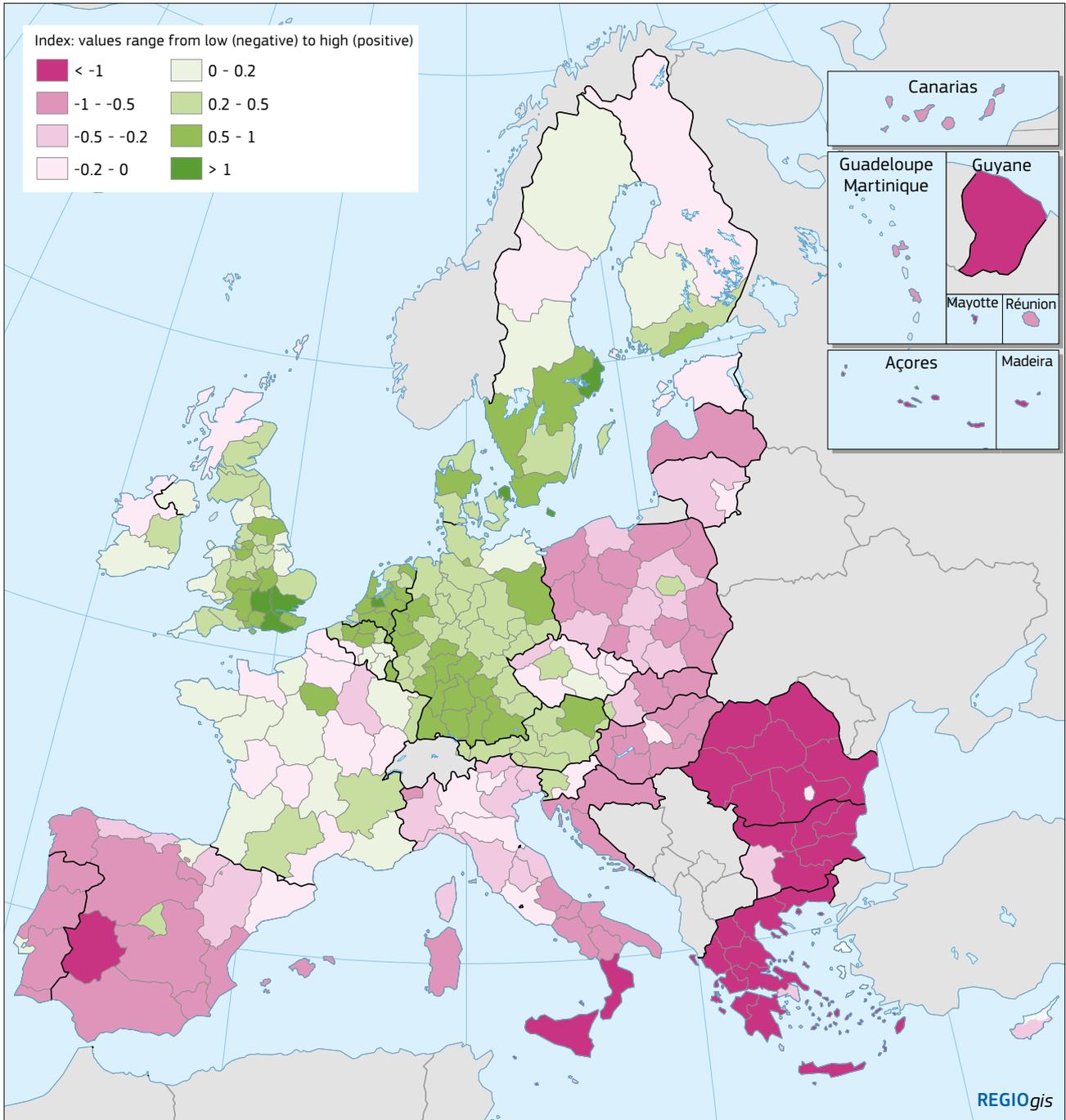
The name of the best region in the country is shown. Shaded boxes include 50% of the regions within each country

There are wide-ranging variations in both countries and regions within the same country. Capital regions tend to be the most competitive, with the exception of the Netherlands, Italy and Germany. In the Netherlands, Utrecht remains the best-performing region followed by Amsterdam. In Italy, Lombardia continues to be the best-performing region, while in Germany the best-performer is still Oberbayern (Munich region). In Italy, Spain and Belgium, regional competitiveness levels span a wide range but are almost evenly spread across all the regions in each country, as shown by the boxes which include 50% of the regions in each country.

Regional Competitiveness Index – RCI 2019

The north-west, south-east divide across the EU is still clear and visible even 10 years after the crisis. Results from the 2019 edition of the Regional Competitiveness Index confirm a polycentric pattern, with capital and metropolitan regions

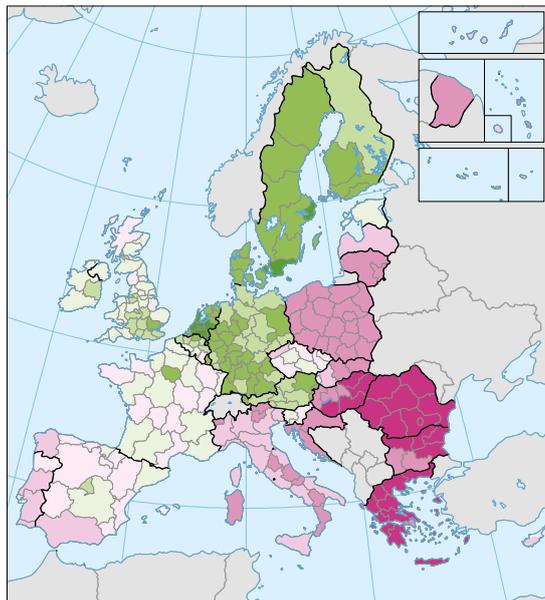
performing particularly strongly in many parts of the EU. The spatial distribution of competitiveness levels is consistent with previous RCI editions.



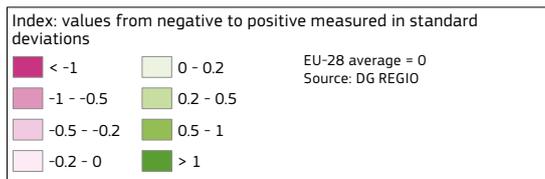
EU-28 = 0
Source: DG REGIO

© EuroGeographics Association for the administrative boundaries

Regional Competitiveness Index, 2019 – Group scores



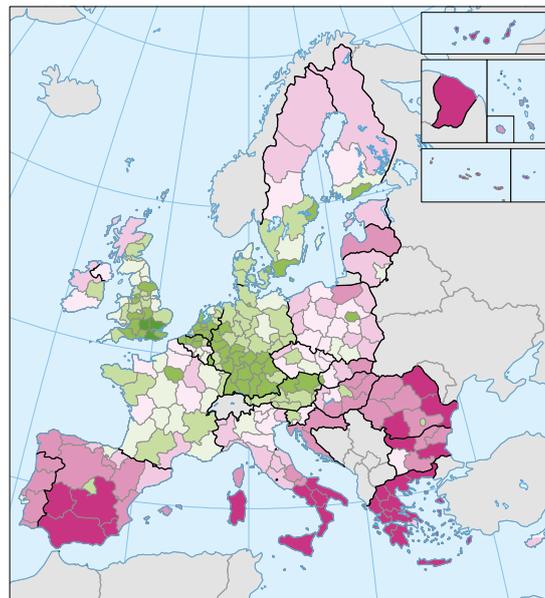
Basic pillars combined



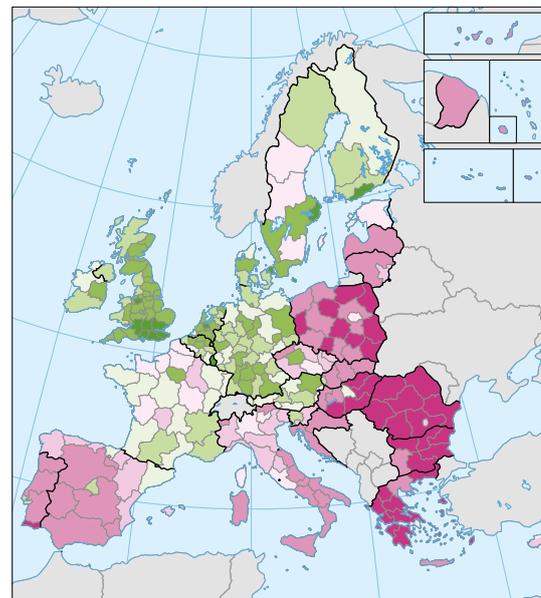
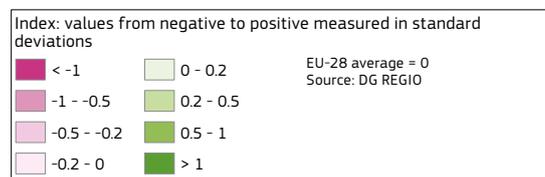
The RCI is composed of 11 pillars that describe the different aspects of competitiveness and are classified into three groups:

- The Basic group includes five pillars: Institutions; Macroeconomic Stability; Infrastructures; Health; and Basic Education.
- The Efficiency group includes: Higher Education, Training and Lifelong Learning; Labour Market Efficiency; and Market Size.
- The Innovation group includes: Technological Readiness; Business Sophistication; and Innovation.

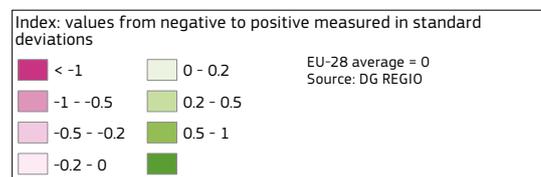
The three maps show the spatial distribution of the Basic, Efficiency and Innovation sub-indices. In line with past editions, the Basic group features the least within-country variability, while the Efficiency and, to a greater extent, the Innovation group vary more. There are two reasons for the relatively higher homogeneity of the Basic group: first, two of the five pillars in the Basic group are measured at national level only. Second, as the group includes basic enablers of competitiveness, such as infrastructure, health and basic education, a certain level of homogeneity across the EU is expected. Instead, the higher variability evident in the Innovation group suggests substantial differences in the innovative capacity of regional economies both across and within countries.



Efficiency pillars combined

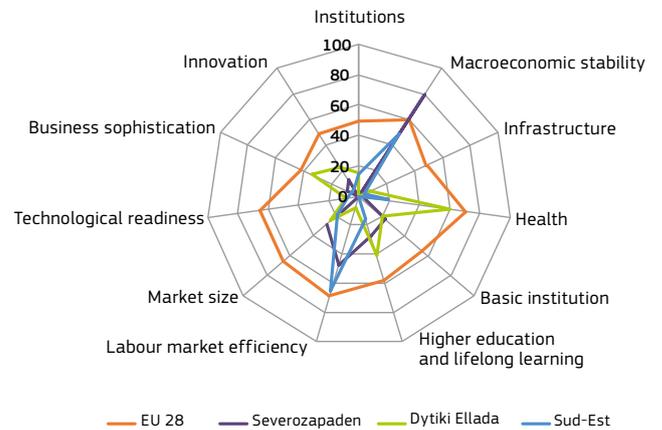
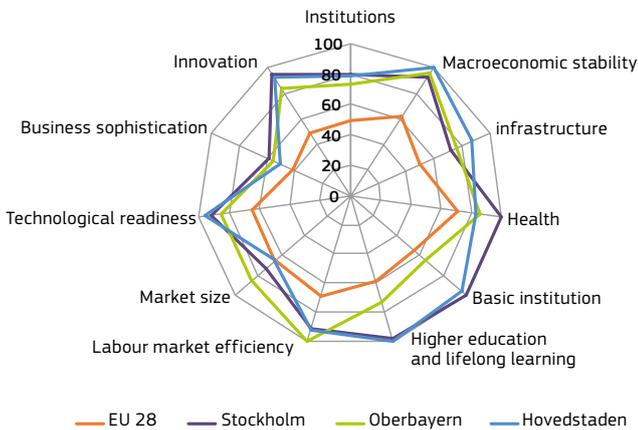


Innovation pillars combined



An even deeper perspective can be obtained by considering a region's performance across the 11 pillars of the RCI. For example, the figure below compares 3 out of the top 10 regions: Stockholm (SE), Oberbayern (DE) and Hovedstaden (DK) (left-hand spider graph), all with a GDP per capita index above 160 (EU-28=100), and three regions from the bottom

10: Severozapaden (BG), Dytiki Ellada (EL) and Sud-Est (RO) (right-hand spider graph), with GDP per capita not higher than 50% of the EU average. First, it is worth noting the regular, almost spherical shape of the spider graph showing the top performers in contrast to the highly irregular pattern of the graph showing the bottom performers.



ANNA KARENINA'S RECIPE FOR COMPETITIVENESS

Recent analyses of key factors of regional economic growth highlighted that simultaneous gains in several areas, rather than being excellent in just one or a few of them, is a good recipe for economic success. This reminds us of what can be called the Anna Karenina principle: 'All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Anna Karenina by L.N. Tolstoy). In other words, deficiency in any one factor leads to a broader weakness.

Comparing notes

Enhanced scorecards are now published on the RCI webpage to facilitate the comparison of each region with its peers. These scorecards are factsheets – one for each region – which present a region's scores and rankings in the RCI and all of its components. In addition, a region's performance is compared with that of a group of its economic peers, defined as the 15 regions closest to the one under analysis in terms of GDP per capita.

These scorecards, as well as interactive maps, spider-graphs, time-comparison analysis, methodological documents and data tables are all available on the RCI webpage.

The RCI builds on the approach of the Global Competitiveness Index, produced annually by the World Economic Forum, and adapts it to the regional level in the EU. It uses 11 dimensions

of competitiveness described, in the 2019 edition, by 74 regional indicators mainly spanning the period between 2015 and 2017, with some as recent as 2018. They cover a wide range of factors of competitiveness and sustainable development, including innovation, governance, transport and digital infrastructure, health and human capital.

The RCI also takes into account the economic development of a region by giving more weight to basic competitiveness factors in less-developed regions and to innovation factors in more-developed regions. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!VJ69cd>

Citizens have their say on EU regional policy



As part of a series of studies examining Europeans' awareness of and attitudes towards EU regional policy, DG Regio interviewed more than 27 000 EU citizens by phone over a 10-day period in June this year.

The resulting report is based on four previous surveys: the Flash Eurobarometer 452 (FL452) of June 2017; the Flash Eurobarometer 423 (FL423) of June 2015; the FL298 study of June 2010¹; and the FL384² study of September 2013.

The study begins by asking whether respondents have heard about any EU co-financed projects in their local area and, if so, whether they believe such projects have had a positive or negative impact. Respondents are then asked about their familiarity with the EU's two regional funds and whether they have benefited personally from an EU-funded project. It also provides details of the sources of information used by respondents to find out about the policy.

The survey then looks at priorities for EU regional policy from the citizen's perspective, asking respondents which geographical regions and areas of investment the EU should target and who should take decisions about regional investments.

It concludes by looking at public awareness of cross-border cooperation, including four EU macro-regional strategies in the Baltic Sea, along the Danube, the Adriatic and Ionian Sea regions and the Alpine region, Interreg and EU outermost regions.

Following the methodology used in Eurobarometer Flash surveys, between 3 and 13 June 2019, 27 144 EU respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed by telephone (mobile and fixed line) in their mother tongue on behalf of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

The main results from the 2019 Eurobarometer on regional policy are illustrated in the two infographics presented below.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!tr88kq>

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_298_en.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_384_en.pdf

The Europe we are building together

European regional policy

SHARE OF RESPONDENTS AWARE OF EU PROJECTS WHO SAY THEY **HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT**

Awareness

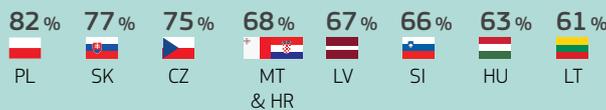
Europeans believe that **EU-projects have a positive impact on their lives**



More and more people are **aware of EU projects in their own regions...**



... Awareness of EU-funded projects is **above 60%** in 9 member states



Investments



Three in five Europeans agree that **EU funding should be available in ALL regions**



Most of them think the EU **should give priority** to regions...



... with **high unemployment**

69%



... **deprived urban areas**

54%



... **remote rural or mountain areas**

52%

Citizens want the EU to **invest in...**

... Education, health or social infrastructures

91%



... the environment

90%



This matches the funding priorities for the period 2021-2027.

Governance

Important decisions about EU regional funding are taken close to the citizens

Europeans support this decentralised governance

DECISIONS ABOUT EU REGIONAL POLICY SHOULD PRIMARILY BE TAKEN AT...



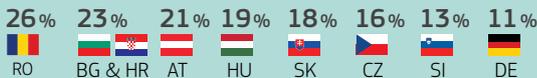
Regional cooperation

Level of awareness for the member states involved in each macro-region

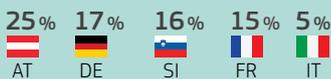
Cooperation around the **Baltic Sea**



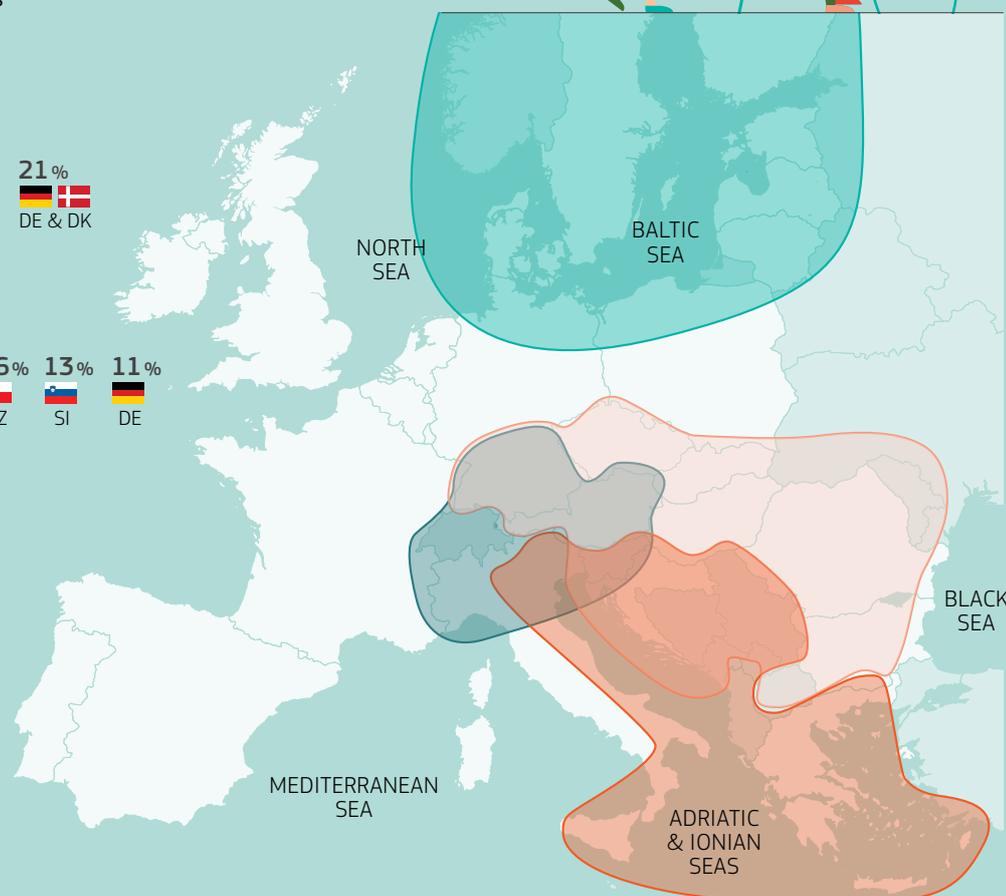
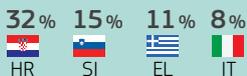
Cooperation around the **Danube**



Cooperation around the **Alpine Area**



Cooperation around the **Adriatic and Ionian Seas**



Outermost regions

The European Union beyond Europe: the most known outermost regions

Level of awareness



Canary Islands
10%



Martinique
6%



French Guiana
5%

Guadeloupe 5%

Réunion 5%

Madeira 4%

Azores 4%

Mayotte 1%

Saint-Martin 1%



REGIOSTARS

2 0 1 9

The **24 finalists in this year's REGIOSTARS Awards** were selected by a panel of independent jurors tasked with identifying Europe's most outstanding projects. The winner in each of the five main project categories, plus the public's choice, received their prizes during the European Week of Regions and Cities 2019 held in Brussels, Belgium from 7-10 October.

The Award categories for 2019 are:

- ★ PROMOTING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
- ★ CONNECTING GREEN, BLUE AND GREY
- ★ COMBATTING INEQUALITIES AND POVERTY
- ★ BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT CITIES
- ★ MODERNISING HEALTH SERVICES

PROMOTING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



Energy Cells GR – Saarbrücken, Germany (INTERREG V-A France, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg)

The project aims to integrate large shares of renewable energy in the Great Region's power systems. Each of the four energy cells is a virtual power plant balancing electricity production and consumption either by using the cells' storage capacities or by exchanging excess power with other interconnected cells via smart grids at the distribution grid level.

<http://www.izes.de/>

Digital Library Librarium – Extremadura, Spain (ERDF)

The Librarium digital library has been made freely available to all state-funded schools at pre-university levels by the Regional Government of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura's Department of Education. The aim of the digital lending platform and virtual reading clubs is to promote reading, media and information literacy, and is supplemented by the distribution of e-readers, tablets and computers across schools.

<http://librarium.educarex.es>



CONNECT innovation bai! – Irun, Spain (INTERREG V-A Spain, France, Andorra)

By helping companies to prepare for the 4th Industrial Revolution – including the Internet of Things, hyperconnectivity, big data, 3D printing, robotics, etc. – the project is aiming to create jobs and opportunities for local people, thereby boosting innovation, creativity and the digital economy.

<https://www.bidasoa-activa.com/index.php>

Open data in the Stockholm Region – City of Stockholm, Sweden (ERDF)

Twenty-six municipalities in the region are collaborating to make municipal data publically available, in particular to respond to the needs of SMEs to stimulate innovation and growth. They are developing common processes and tools, securing technical prerequisites and engaging with enterprises and other organisations to ensure that the results can be scaled up nationally to benefit all of Sweden's 290 municipalities.

<https://stockholm.se>





CONNECTING GREEN, BLUE AND GREY



CobBauge – Plymouth, United Kingdom (INTERREG France (Channel) England)

A new and innovative material has been developed for use in composite walls in energy-efficient, high-performance homes that are comfortable, healthier to live in and inexpensive to run. The product is based on an ancient method of building using earth and fibres which has been adapted to modern methods of construction, combining culture heritage with smart modern building design.

<http://www.cobbauge.eu/en/cobbauge-2/>

LOS_DAMA! – München, Germany (INTERREG Alpine Space Programme)

The project has used seven local pilots across the Alpine space and created an inter-regional park in the north of Vienna to raise awareness of the importance of green spaces. The enhanced green infrastructure can be applied to make cities greener in other metropolitan regions beyond the Alps.

https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/los_dama/en/home



Le réseau du chaleur Amiens Energies – Amiens, France (ERDF)

To drive energy transition in the region, the city of Amiens has developed a tool to improve daily life for its citizens and guarantee low carbon emissions. Supported by SEMOP, a public-private partnership, the 47-km heating network will heat the equivalent of 19000 homes from 5 renewable energy sources.

<http://www.amiens-energies.com>

CAPTURE – Flanders, Belgium (ERDF)

The CAPTURE initiative aims to gather together scientists from across the disciplines to work with local, regional and national governments and industries to make the planet more sustainable by capturing and reusing precious resources within the circular economy.

<https://capture-resources.be/>



ECOMARE – Aveiro, Portugal (ERDF)

Within Portugal's Centro Region, the Port of Aveiro is working alongside the Ria de Aveiro coastal lagoon to protect marine biological resources and nurture blue biotechnology and sustainable aquaculture. Seabirds, marine turtles, seals and dolphins are being rescued and returned to the wild while the blue economy is delivering new services and products inspired by the ocean.

<http://www.ua.pt/>



COMBATTING INEQUALITIES AND POVERTY



Good support – Koszalin, Poland (ESF)

The Good Support project is an innovative partnership aiming to enhance the accessibility of social services in Poland's West Pomeranian Voivodship. Based on a web application available on computers and integrated in a mobile phone application, the autonomous system connects local users, such as municipality care services or company-guardian-ward-family, without requiring an expensive telecentre.

<http://www.ndsfund.org>

EUMINT – Bolzano, Italy (INTERREG Italia, Österreich)

In an effort to strengthen institutional cross-border cooperation between Italy and Austria, EUMINT is tackling the social, economic, political and cultural challenges linked to migration. It is focusing on cross-border, civic and labour integration, three main issues related to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

www.eurac.edu/eumint



WISE project – Donegal, Ireland (ESF)

The Women's Integrated Skills & Employment project is helping women to return to work, education or self-employment. Employment advisers are providing support for CV building, cover letter and interview skills, job brokering, access to job and educational opportunities, self-employment guidance, confidence and motivational building, development opportunities, and funding for short-term accredited courses.

<https://www.people-1st.co.uk/programmes/wise-roi>

Jacob@cress – Jaca, Spain (INTERREG V-A Spain, France, Andorra)

The Pilgrim's Way to Santiago, one of the busiest pilgrim routes in the world, is made up of an extensive network of roads covering 80 000 km across 28 countries. Although it has received important international recognition since the 1980s, it remains impractical for use by people with disabilities or mobility issues. Jacob@cress is trying to make the road to Santiago more accessible to everyone.

<http://www.jaca.es>



Prevention of homelessness – Lahti, Finland (ESF)

The project is focusing on developing city service structures and taking advantage of the expertise of multi-actor networks to reorientate the work from remediation to the prevention of homelessness. Preventative strategies for homelessness will be based on the experience of experts and client participation to develop new operating methods within this field.

<https://www.ara.fi/en-US>

BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT CITIES



Climate Active Neighbourhoods – Frankfurt am Main, Germany (INTERREG North-West Europe)

Since 2016, the CAN project has been enhancing the capacity of municipalities to implement their climate action strategies more effectively using a neighbourhood approach to energy retrofits. Residents in deprived areas are empowered to take action on the climate at the local level thanks to energy improvements in their homes, a key way to reduce energy poverty and CO₂ emissions.

<https://www.climatealliance.org>



CityWalk – Dornava, Slovenia (INTERREG Danube Transnational Programme)

With a focus on the simplest form of urban mobility – walking – the CityWalk project is providing smart, innovative walkability concepts and solutions to address citizens' needs, tackle climate change, improve air quality and reduce noise pollution.

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/citywalk>



RANTA – Helsinki, Finland (ERDF)

The RANTA project has adopted the EU's Circular Economy Package and Finland's National Waste Plan in an effort to find and test innovative methods for reusing construction materials at their demolishing and disassembly phase. Test cases focused on public buildings and were carried out with participating cities and project partners.

<http://www.gnf.fi>

Living Labs Brussels Retrofit – Brussels, Belgium (ERDF)

The FEDER Living Lab Brussels Retrofit is promoting the renovation of housing in Brussels, Belgium by creating dedicated spaces for experimentation and innovation. The goal is to develop a volume market for eco-energetic renovations by developing know-how and improving cooperation within the construction sector.

<http://wtcb.be>



R-SOL-E – Belišće, Croatia (INTERREG IPA CBC Croatia-Serbia)

Three local authorities in Croatia and Serbia have joined forces to demonstrate that energy efficiency can be achieved by using renewable energy. The project partners installed six solar power plants, 100 solar public lighting poles and an electric car charging station, and set up Sustainable Energy Action Plans and new courses.

<https://www.belisce.hr>

MODERNISING HEALTH SERVICES



Orsi Academy – Melle, Belgium (ERDF)

The Academy is renowned as a training and expertise centre in new techniques in minimally invasive surgery and robotic surgery, in particular. Thanks to an ambitious investment project in Ghent, Belgium, Orsi has built a unique ecosystem in which doctors, scientists, engineers and industry have linked up to demonstrate and advance innovative medical technology, thereby enhancing the quality and safety of modern health care.

<http://www.orsi.be>

eMEN – Diemen, the Netherlands (INTERREG North-West Europe)

The current increase in mental illnesses is creating ever more demands on society and the economy. E-mental health has an important role to play in tackling this challenge, although integrating this disruptive technology into mental-health-care systems requires a multidisciplinary approach and cross-border cooperation.

<https://www.arq.org/en>



Cross Border Community Paramedic Project – Londonderry, United Kingdom (INTERREG V-A Programme)

Community paramedics are highly trained ambulance staff who have undergone further specialised training to enable them to treat patients within their own homes and communities rather than taking them to busy hospital emergency departments. The CAWT project is operating pilots in four remote/rural border areas in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

<http://www.cawt.com>

Oulu Sote Labs – Oulu, Finland (ERDF)

The project has created the OuluHealth Labs health technology and welfare service innovation, testing and development environment. The labs offer businesses a space to develop their products while enabling ideas generated by health and social care professionals to be put into practice.

<http://ppshp.fi>



EFFIC'ASTHME – Paris, France (ERDF)

The aim of this project is to better train parents of the 5.5 million children in Europe affected by asthma, thereby reducing severe attacks and hospital admissions. The Effic'Asthme mobile app uses different asthma-attack scenarios to help parents of pre-school children to identify the symptoms and provide the appropriate care.

<http://ilumens.fr/>

Regional development and Cohesion Policy after 2020

On 29 May 2018, the European Commission presented the legislative package proposals for the 2021-2027 programming period, including the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), the Interreg regulation, the European Cross-border Mechanism regulation and the fund-specific regulations for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund, and for the European Social Fund plus (ESF+).

The CPR develops a single common set of rules for seven funds under shared management – the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, ESF+, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), Internal Security Fund (ISF), and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI). One single rulebook will make life easier for programme managers and beneficiaries and will also facilitate synergies, both among these funds and other EU budget instruments.

The proposals for post-2020 Cohesion Policy aim to simplify, modernise and make the policy more flexible, while maintaining clear conditions for its implementation and ensuring a more operational link to the European Semester. This is reflected in the emphasis on priorities that will help Europe remain competitive and adjust to globalisation and technological changes while allowing greater room for manoeuvre at programming level.

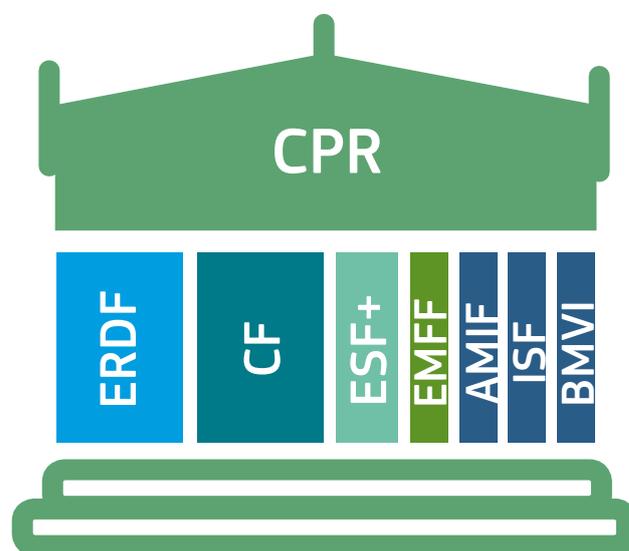
The regulatory proposals offer a shorter, modern menu of priorities to build a smart, green, low-carbon, more social and more connected Europe that is closer to its citizens. The current 11 thematic objectives have been reduced to 5 policy objectives, and developing and implementing integrated approaches is simpler.

Moreover, a raft of real simplification measures include eliminating the designation procedure, introducing the single audit principle, proposing radically simpler rules for VAT, adding more possibilities to use simplified cost options, simpler rules for financial instruments, as well as significantly lighter reporting, programming and implementation processes in general.

The key developments for Interreg include all the EU's external borders being covered by the Interreg regulation, rather than different regulations for different types of borders under the previous system. Other new elements include a more strategic approach to maritime cooperation, interregional innovative instruments and the European Cross-border Mechanism. Cross-border programmes will now be able to focus more on institutional cooperation, resolving border issues, and investing in joint services of public interest.

Furthermore, commitments to the Urban Agenda have been reinforced with the European Urban Initiative, bringing a new coherent approach to cities by merging separate tools into a single package.

Compared to the 2014-2020 programming period, the proposals include fewer and more tangible 'enabling conditions' to be fulfilled before projects are selected and throughout the programming period. Country-specific recommendations will also be taken into account at the beginning of programming and during the mid-term review. The thematic concentration of EU funding on key priorities will ensure that Cohesion Policy remains focused on matters crucial for competitiveness and for structural adjustments to globalisation challenges and technological change, whilst avoiding any fragmentation of resources.



Key features of next EU budget



More funding for
priority areas



A new mechanism
to protect the EU
budget from
financial risks linked
to the rule of law



A strong focus on
European added
value and on
performance



Less red tape for
beneficiaries



A more flexible and
agile budget with a
clearer and leaner
architecture

The whole programming process is orientated towards strong performance, with a mid-term review of all programmes in 2024 to fully use allocations for 2026 and 2027 based on programme performance and the challenges identified within the European Semester process and the socio-economic situation. This will ensure the right balance between the required flexibility in a nine-year programming exercise and the necessary stability of the investment framework.

State of play

At its meeting on 13-14 December 2018, the European Council agreed to work towards reaching an agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) within the European Council in autumn 2019. This implies that discussions with the Parliament on the MFF, including MFF-related aspects of sectoral proposals that will form part of the final version of the negotiating box, can only commence thereafter. From previous experience, this means that a final MFF agreement can only take place towards the middle of 2020 and sectoral proposals will only be finalised after that, at a significantly slower pace than initially advocated by the Commission.

The Presidency presented a revised draft negotiating box in June 2019, including, among others, elements of the CPR and the fund-specific regulations on which a Council position has yet to be established. These elements are financial allocations, macroeconomic conditionality, transfers among funds and to other Union instruments, pre-financing, co-financing, decommitment, and thematic concentration for the ERDF and the ESF+.

Since the adoption of the Cohesion Policy legislative package in May 2018, the co-legislators have made considerable progress in establishing their respective positions.

Between mid-February and early April 2019, during the first reading, the European Parliament established its position on all elements of the Cohesion Policy legislative package. The Council initially progressed more slowly but, by June 2019, had established its position on most of the legislative package and endorsed a partial negotiating mandate on all parts of the CPR (except MFF-related elements).

Nevertheless, due to the conclusion of the Parliament's mandate, only three trilogue meetings between representatives of the Parliament, the Council and the Commission were possible before the European elections in May 2019. Although they were unable to achieve a political agreement, there was a degree of provisional agreement on many articles related to programming in particular. The process will restart rapidly when the new Parliament is established in autumn 2019. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!xj38Db>

The background of the top section features a complex financial market visualization. It includes a candlestick chart on the left, a large grey arrow pointing upwards and to the right in the center, and a bar chart on the right. Various numerical values are scattered throughout, such as '23.22', '52.98', '1194.38', and 'Vol: 635.25 M'. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and data-driven, with a color palette of blues, greys, and oranges.

Financial instruments: What's new post-2020?

Financial instruments, used to deliver the underlying Cohesion Policy programme objectives, have two distinguishing features: a revolving character and a leverage effect.

Financial instruments can benefit a wide range of final recipients by supporting a raft of development objectives with the potential for European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) to lever in additional public and private contributions or to be reused for further investments.

Their broader economic rationale is to address funding gaps and suboptimal investment situations – i.e. when financially viable projects are not financed by the private sector or are only financed at unsuitable conditions. In this respect, financial instruments become relevant as a policy-delivery mechanism for revenue-generating and cost-saving activities, as well as ‘to do more with less’.

The financial products can include loans, guarantees or equity, or a combination thereof, depending on the type of activity and final recipient. Where part of the investment to be supported is not revenue generating or cost saving, it could be supported by a combination of grants and financial products under an ESIF financial instrument.

Ambitions for the 2021-2027 programming period

In the 2021-2027 programming period, where Cohesion Policy resources are expected to decrease, the overall importance of financial instruments should increase. This is based on the general aim to trigger investments on the ground while maximising private investment with minimum public support, taking into account the Cohesion Policy’s overarching objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion. Financial instruments may be used for all policy objectives.

In this context, the European Commission’s ambition should be to consolidate their importance as a delivery mode in Cohesion Policy as well as expanding them beyond support for SMEs or energy efficiency. During the current programming period, some promising examples of financial instruments supporting other sectors, as well as the use of equity products that can act as a catalyst on regional innovation ecosystems, have already emerged. Therefore, there is scope to expand the allocation of such instruments in the next period.

Main improvements planned

Financial instruments will be a key delivery mechanism for 2021-2027 investments generating revenue and costs savings. To that effect, the provisions related to them in the

Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), as proposed by the European Commission, have been streamlined and updated to ensure better and easier implementation and quicker set up. Broadly speaking:

- From the outset, financial instruments will be better integrated into the programming and implementation process and the *ex-ante* assessment will be streamlined accordingly.
- Managing authorities will have the same basic flexible implementation options – management under the responsibility of the managing authority or direct management by it – although the related conditions have been simplified.
- Combination at fund level with EU-level financial instruments will be possible under one set of rules, namely those of InvestEU, via a contribution to that programme.
- Greater flexibility is proposed for combining grants with financial instruments under the CPR. In particular, capital rebates following the financial instrument's rules will allow for a broader use of a combination in one operation.
- Eligibility rules have been clarified, and rules on management costs and fees simplified while keeping them performance-based to encourage efficient management.
- Rules on payments have been simplified considerably whilst maintaining the critical link between payments to financial instruments and the corresponding disbursements to final recipients.
- The coding of reflows and fund recycling has been simplified.
- There will be no additional separate reporting on financial instruments as this will be incorporated into the same reporting system as all other forms of finance.

Contribution to the InvestEU Member State compartment

The next programming period will also be characterised by the coexistence of shared management financial instruments and InvestEU with its Member State compartment. This additional

option for implementation is available to Member States in the form of repayable support to deliver the policy objectives of the contributing funds. To achieve the selected policy objectives, Member States can contribute to the Member State compartment either at the programming stage in the partnership agreement/programme level or during the implementation phase.

The main advantage for a Member State contributing to InvestEU is the possibility to mobilise a high volume of private finance for final recipients, while implementation is based on InvestEU's institutional and legal framework established under the Commission's responsibility. In addition, there is no need for national co-financing, although a contingent liability calibrated on the basis of risk must be put in place by the Member State.

Under the InvestEU programme, the InvestEU fund contains a Member State compartment for each policy window. Based on the Commission's proposal, Member States may contribute up to 5 % of the funds under shared management to the Member State compartment to benefit from the EU guarantee. This means that EUR 38 billion available under the EU compartment is supplemented by the budget of a Member State compartment, which increases the risk-bearing capacity for implementing partners.

Contribution to the Member State compartment, which is optional, would address country-specific market failures and investment gaps. The Commission signs a 'contribution agreement' – a document detailing financing and implementation – with the Member State concerned. Contributions are geographically ring-fenced at national or regional level for each policy window. With this voluntary contribution, Member States can benefit from the EU guarantee's high credit rating, giving national and regional investments more firepower while cutting red tape. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!uR88Bu>



Denmark: investing in an innovative future

Denmark's flat terrain, close proximity to water, rich soil and sometimes harsh climate has shaped its history and culture. Today, the country's high standard of living, socio-economic development, education and job skills, work-life balance, health status and environmental standards make it one of the most peaceful and happy societies in the world.

Officially the Kingdom of Denmark, this is the southernmost of the Scandinavian countries, comprising a peninsula, Jutland and an archipelago of 443 islands, 74 of which are inhabited. It also includes the Faroe Islands and Greenland, two autonomous territories in the North Atlantic Ocean with their own home governments and parliaments.

Many of the larger islands are connected by bridges, including the famous Øresund Bridge linking the largest island of Zealand to Sweden, while ferries and small aircraft serve the smaller ones. In a Nordic country with fewer than 6 million people, there are four cities with populations over 100,000, including the capital Copenhagen. Denmark shares a short border with Germany to the south and is surrounded by a tidal shoreline stretching 8,750 kilometres.

The main industries include wind turbines, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, machinery and transport equipment, food processing and construction.

Its economy is on the up with household consumption and investment the main drivers of growth. Real GDP growth has been estimated at 0.8% in 2018 and is forecast to rise to 1.6% in 2019 and 1.3% in 2020.

Labour market and pension reforms have helped to bring historically high levels of people into employment. However, there is a shortage of skilled workers and the government is falling behind on its 2025 targets to boost productivity and the supply of labour.

Better matching supply and demand in digital skills is called for, requiring investment in developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship combined with lifelong learning actions. Furthermore, increasing the number of graduates from vocational education and training programmes is crucial to ensure a sufficient supply of skilled workers.

Denmark continues to be among the EU countries with the highest education spending as a percentage of GDP. Nevertheless, early school-leaving rate rose to 8.8% in 2017, with the drop-out rate for boys almost double that of girls, creating one of the biggest gender gaps in the EU. Recent measures aim to improve the quality of early childhood education and care in an effort to reduce the dropout rate and gender gap.

< Tietgenkollegiet and the IT University in Copenhagen

In good health

The Danish health system performs well, although the lack of general practitioners is causing concern. There is a new proposal to boost numbers while improving patients' access to primary healthcare and promoting healthy activities.

As a front-runner in deploying e-health, the country has well-developed IT systems in hospitals and general practices and good digital communication between healthcare sectors. The new national digital health strategy 2018-2022 focuses on digitisation and the use of health data for prevention and care while complementing the 2013-2020 assisted living strategy.

Poverty and income inequality remain low and Denmark is making progress in some of the 10 social mobility goals defined in 2016. In 2018, there was a proposal to increase employment among people with disabilities. Recently, policy initiatives have been introduced to discourage new migrants from entering the country but improve integration for those already there.

Although the Danish economy is one of the most energy efficient in the EU, a significant part of its transition towards a low-carbon society by 2050 must take place before 2030. In a country particularly susceptible to climate-related events, investing in lower emissions and limiting the risk of damage from climate change is crucial.

In response to growing congestion on Denmark's high-quality road network, plans have been put forward to electrify the national railway network. Cycling has also become a primary form of transport, particularly in the larger cities which offer extensive cycle lane networks.

The country has also maintained its high coverage of fixed broadband and next-generation access networks and access outside of urban areas will be promoted by further enhancing network quality in rural areas. First results from initiatives in the Digital Strategy for 2016-2022 have strengthened Denmark's global lead in public service digitisation.

Getting smarter

Overall, Denmark is an innovation leader, although private R&D investment is increasingly concentrated in a small number of large businesses. With employment in fast-growing firms below the EU average, investments have been identified to enhance SME growth and competitiveness and increase the efficiency of the R&I system.

Since January 2019, there has been a major change in implementation of the European Regional Development Funds. A new Danish Executive Board for Business Development and Growth will coordinate decentralised business support, including the total Cohesion Policy allocations for 2021-2027 of EUR 643 million via the European Regional and Development and European Social Funds.

For the current programming period, ERDF strategy is focused on business development, with innovation, business support, energy and resource efficiency targeting business competitiveness to exploit their growth potential.

To date, Denmark has benefited from EUR 882 million from European Investment Bank funding, which is expected to trigger EUR 5.1 billion in total investments. The ESIF has also been instrumental in improving access to finance for SMEs.

Furthermore, the Juncker Plan is supporting project promoters and investors through initiatives such as the European Investment Advisory Hub, providing tailored advisory support to prepare and develop investment projects in the EU, and the European Investment Project Portal, offering a matchmaking service between quality projects in the EU and potential investors worldwide.



Reform simplifies and refocuses Denmark's business promotion system

After much preparation, Denmark launched a reform of its business promotion system earlier this year, a significant element of which comprises support from the EU Structural Funds. Deputy General Director Sigmund Lubanski from the Danish Business Authority tells Panorama about the reforms.



A central element in the new business promotion system is a broadly composed board, the Danish Executive Board for Business Development and Growth, tasked with putting in place a demand-driven, cohesive and locally anchored effort for growth and activity across Denmark, focused on the needs of business.

The aim was to satisfy a strong desire from trade and industry for a more cohesive, effective and demand-driven business promotion system. The previous system had become confusing with overlapping initiatives and offshoots and was too difficult for businesses to find their way around, while the quality of services was varied.

As part of the simplification, a new business board was established. The Danish Executive Board for Business Development and Growth has taken over the tasks from the previous regional growth forums in nominating how the funds from the EU's Regional and Social Fund are used.

What are the Board's tasks?

The Board has been assigned to strengthen the development of Danish trade and industry by promoting a cohesive, demand-driven and locally anchored business promotion and tourism initiative across Denmark. It has been put together with good support from businesses, municipalities and labour market parties, and I sense an unbelievably strong engagement to deliver a decentralized effort to promote business in favour of growth and employment across the country.

What structural changes have been made to the Danish system?

We have focused on a number of key areas to create a focused and futureproof business promotion effort. Among the key points: first, we want better quality and more accessibility in the business service. Therefore, cross-municipal business hubs have been set up along with a digital business promotion platform,

virksomhedsguiden.dk, providing information about starting and running a business.

Second, we are creating more cohesion in the decentralised promotion of businesses. Therefore, the Board has taken over responsibility for business promotion funds from the regional growth forums while, at the same time, a cohesive strategy has been drawn up to ensure we avoid overlaps.

The strategy has been shaped with input from trade and industry, businesses, the new business hubs and other regional and local stakeholders. Part of the effort involves the Board setting in motion consolidation of Denmark's tourism and business clusters to create fewer but stronger units.

Similarly, there is a clear division of labour between the municipal level and the cross-municipal business hubs, on the one side, and the highly specialized government schemes on the other.

In the third key point, we are looking to simplify government business promotion. We have strengthened the effort for knowledge-based entrepreneurship and simplified the system so that there is only one access point for loans and equity funds in the Growth Fund, and one for grant funding for innovation, development and demonstration in the Innovation Fund.

How are the Structural Funds used in Denmark? What overall principles does the Board work with to implement its efforts? What is important and where is the focus?

Danish business is doing well. Denmark is among the most productive countries in the world, and economic progress has increased employment across the entire country. Historically, greater productivity has been the primary driver for growth, although growth in productivity has been low over the last 20 years. Therefore, productivity must be strengthened by raising the competency level of the workforce, more effective utilisation of existing resources, as well as innovation and technological progress.

There are five basic principles in the Danish Executive Board for Business Development and Growth's current implementation plan:

- To set the needs of businesses at the centre
- To create cohesion throughout
- To increase productivity and create good opportunities across the entire country
- To make the effort user-friendly and transparent
- To ensure the efforts are digital and data driven.

The four first principles come from the Act on business promotion, while the fifth has been added by the Board.

Board members have also chosen six priorities in the decentralised promotion of business: Digitisation and automation; qualified workforce and social inclusion; green conversion and circular economy; entrepreneurship; internationalisation; and innovation.

This approach is in line with the targets in the EU's Structural Funds programmes. The EU's ERDF investment areas in this programming period include stronger innovation in SMEs, more growth businesses, and energy and resource-efficient SMEs. In the area covered by the ESF, the investment areas are entrepreneurship and job creation, social inclusion, and business training and continuing education.

In Denmark, business promotion efforts are demand-driven. Why is this important, what does it mean in practice, and what advantage does it give businesses?

The Danish Executive Board for Business Development and Growth has invited all interested parties to have their say in preparing a new strategy – first, via a series of workshops across the country, and most recently in a strategy conference with 300 participants. At the same time, there is far-reaching dialogue with business hubs, business organisations and other interested parties which appreciate business needs for investment and initiatives, offered by the decentralised Board.

We are also measuring the effect of our efforts – in both the short and long term. We not only conduct regular evaluations of hundreds of Structural Fund projects over their lifetime, but we also measure again several years after project end, when the important and long-lasting results of Structural Fund projects are generally seen. We use an

advanced measurement set-up to compare developments in participating businesses with a control group that have not participated in Structural Fund projects.

How has combining broad, countrywide efforts with the desire to keep an eye on regional and local strengths and differences worked?

We have made good headway in establishing the businesses' needs, and I am already sensing really good local and business-anchored cooperation around the reform.

Businesses have different needs and challenges, some of which are defined and affected by local factors – and the resources to satisfy these needs also vary across the country. Therefore, we focus on local strengths, culture, competencies and business structures which help define business needs and wishes.

That isn't the only reason we seek country-wide partnerships – country-wide efforts go hand in hand with local and regional anchoring. Specifically, applicants must demonstrate how they will take local conditions into consideration when they bid for a country-wide initiative.

It is exactly this relationship between country-wide initiatives and local anchoring that is important when executing ongoing projects.



Denmark

The Kingdom of Denmark occupies around 43 000 square kilometres which includes the Jutland peninsula, an archipelago of 443 islands, and two autonomous territories in the North Atlantic Ocean: the Faroe Islands and Greenland. It shares a border of 68 kilometres with Germany and is surrounded by 8 750 km of tidal shoreline.

Population

5 806 081 as of 1 January 2019, increasing in recent years with more births than deaths and immigration higher than emigration.

Labour market

In the last 30 years, the unemployment rate for women has generally been higher than men. Employment figures reached 76.9 % in 2017, above the EU average of 72.1%. In 2018, the unemployment rate for men was 5.0% and 5.2% for women. Youth unemployment (15-24 years) reached 11 % in 2017, the 7th lowest in the EU.

The population's general educational level has increased significantly, rising from 19 % for 25-64-year-olds in 1991 to almost 39% in 2017. Early childhood education and care currently covers 98.1% of children aged 4+.

Economy

GDP increased by 1.2% in 2018 (adjusted for price development). This is the lowest growth rate since 2013, driven in particular by household consumption and increasing investments. In 2018, GDP per capita stood at 382 (DKK thousands) with GDP real growth per capita at 0.7%. Since 2000, economic development has been stagnant compared to average growth

in the EU: during this period, the economy grew by 22% while the EU average was around 30%. Social protection is the largest public expenditure at approximately 44% in 2017, while health care reached 16% in 2017.

Trade

Since 1987, Denmark's total exports have exceeded total imports resulting in a surplus on the balance of goods and services throughout this period. Since 2008, developments in imports and exports of goods and services have resulted in large surpluses, hitting DKK 119 billion on external trade in 2018. Pharmaceuticals, windmill parts, oil, mink, fur and food are among the largest trade groups for the export of goods, while pharmaceuticals, oil, cars and electronics are the largest importing sectors.

Other key sectors

Danish agriculture has been undergoing significant structural changes for many years, moving towards fewer and larger farms. Pork production is the most significant and highly specialised economic activity in agricultural production, while milk production is the second largest economic activity, with organic farming producing 12 % of all milk delivered to dairy plants. From 2000 to 2008, employment in the manufacturing sector fell by 27 %, although turnover in this sector, excluding mining and quarrying, increased by 66%. In 2018, turnover from the manufacture of pharmaceuticals was three times higher than in 2000. In 2002, Denmark signed up to EU objectives to reach investments of at least 3% of GDP in R&D. In the public sector, universities accounted for 71 % of R&D. Fixed broadband and next-generation access networks are available to 95 % of homes; around 71 % of the population has at least basic digital skills, well above the EU average of 57 %.



Learning to prepare for a brighter future

A four-year project, with funding of EUR 865 000 from the European Social Fund, set out to better prepare young people for education and the skills needed for the job market. The 'College as a short cut to education' initiative, which took place on Vrå Folkehøjskole in northern Jutland, developed a course with a special emphasis on personal motivation and clarification to support youth needing help in the education system. It also focused on jobs in a region where there is a lack of skilled workers in the building/construction and health sectors.



The target group was young people aged 17 to 29 who have experienced challenges in their regular schooling and lack both knowledge and ambition. Many of them have been diagnosed with social anxiety, depression, autism, ADHD and Aspergers, and some are former drug or alcohol addicts. With primary school as their highest educational achievement, they do not receive any public support and are not covered by the Municipal Service Law or the Employment Act.

During the project, 158 participants completed the course, and 110 have started or completed an education course since the project ended. Another eight participants have also found employment.

FIND OUT MORE:

<https://vraahojkskole.dk/>

Building the circular economy

A project supported by the European Regional Development Fund is focusing on the green transition and circular economy through value chain collaboration and design to ensure the optimal use of resources.

During the three-year project cycle, 37 companies have gained knowledge about the circular economy and been helped to develop new green business models and to optimise the value chain.

One of the participating companies is Komproment ApS in Aalborg which sells building materials and develops roof and facade systems for the Danish market and export. With a contribution of EUR 502 000 from the ERDF, the project helped the company to devise a concrete and workable green business model which has received significantly more attention and orders from engineers, architects and the construction industry in general.

In 2018, Komproment received both the prestigious European SME Star Award and the Construction Environment Prize.

FIND OUT MORE:

<https://www.komproment.dk/home>





A model of energy and resource efficiency

The ERDF contributed EUR 1.78 million to the ‘Sustainable Bottom Line’ (Bæredygtig Bundlinje) project in the Capital Region of Greater Copenhagen aiming to make companies more energy and resource efficient. In the longer term, it has contributed to Denmark’s green transition and improving firms’ competitiveness which is created through cost savings or decisive business development based on ‘green principles’.

The project was based on the assumption that SMEs do not appreciate the potential of energy and resource-efficiency improvements, although many know they should explore such opportunities.

During the initiative, which finished in April 2019, 101 companies developed green business models which resulted in significantly lower energy and material consumption as well as lower CO₂ emissions.

Working on both short- and long-term effects, the project has proved successful in raising awareness in the companies that customers will demand more sustainability from their suppliers in the future. The project has been so successful and the demand so great that the experience is now rooted in a new initiative Sustainable Bottom Line 2.0. This is being implemented by Gate 21, a partnership between regions, municipalities, companies and knowledge institutions in Greater Copenhagen, working to accelerate green change and growth.

FIND OUT MORE:

<https://bit.ly/30T30So>

Working on social inclusion

'Spacious however' (Rummelig Imidt) is a social inclusion and employment project in central Jutland which is testing and developing new methods for creating jobs for people on the edge of or outside the labour market, thereby ensuring a significant supply of labour in the region.

The project involves municipalities, social partners and companies in social inclusion from an employment-oriented perspective. By combining competencies, resources and knowledge across sectors, job openings have been created for the target group.

It is also working with civil targeted activities, company networks and social economy companies and advisors. Within these areas, 14 activities have been initiated to develop new initiatives for different target groups.

The European Social Fund has provided over EUR 3691 million for the project which has established 9 business networks with more than 100 companies to create a more inclusive labour market. In addition, the project has launched a social economy plan, providing useful knowledge and inspiration, especially for the benefit of the municipalities. Finally, the project has worked with the region's social economy advisors on competence development.

In July 2019, 800 participants were expected during the project period; 520 have initiated progress until now, and 269 participants have completed their progress. Of these, 89 have subsequently found employment and 6 are employed in a social economy business. ■

FIND OUT MORE:

<https://www.rummeligimidt.dk/>





Strengthening smart specialisation in Portugal

During 2019 and 2020, Member States will update their Smart Specialisation Strategies as part of the negotiations on the European Regional Development Fund operational programmes post 2020. With this in mind, John Edwards, from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, explains how Portugal is reflecting on S3 implementation and improving its strategy.

At this time last year, the Centro region of Portugal was celebrating yet another REGIOSTARS award. The Business and Shared Services Centre at Fundão, on the edge of the Sierra da Estrela national park, has helped to dynamise the local area. In previously empty buildings provided by the municipality, the European Regional and Development Fund has funded shared research and staff facilities, co-working office space, a business incubator, digital FabLab and a training centre, among other exciting initiatives. The Centre now hosts 14 businesses, including four multinationals, creating more than 500 qualified jobs.

However, the focus of this award-winning project on information and communication technologies is no accident. It is one of the priorities of the Centro region's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3). Moreover, some of the related sub-projects are linked to other S3 priorities, such as forestry, tourism and health.

Developing new ideas and cross-cutting projects is the common objective of the region's four innovation platforms established in 2015. Such 'entrepreneurial discovery' is the cornerstone of smart specialisation and in Portugal it has happened by means of the regions being proactive and reaching out to entrepreneurs.

Energising strategies

It is not only Fundão that shows what can be achieved through a strategic approach. For example, it was during a working group on the renewable energy priority in the Algarve that the Culatra 2030 project was born. With a vision to develop a decentralised system of electricity production, it has recently been selected as a pilot by the Clean Energy for EU Islands Initiative.

Another example is Madeira, where S3 is trying to find new opportunities within an existing dominant industry, namely tourism. These include a project on designing the industrial kitchen of the future, which involves the island's university and an international, Madeira-based hotel chain.

Discovering and sharing S3

Smart specialisation has given Portugal's regions the chance to develop and subsequently improve their own innovation strategies. This has been an important learning process

“ *Smart specialisation has given Portugal's regions the chance to develop and subsequently improve their own innovation strategies.* ”

since Portugal has not had formal regional innovation strategies before. This was the reason for a gathering of all seven Portuguese regions in Faro in May 2019. Hosted by the Algarve, the participatory workshop allowed the people managing S3 to share experiences, ideas and plans, as well as to examine the European Commission's proposals on smart specialisation post 2020.

The following day, the results of the workshop were shared with representatives of the Portuguese government as well as an international audience. Participants were pleased to hear the views of their Spanish counterparts on cross-border cooperation and from the Italian Agency for Cohesion about monitoring S3.



In Faro, Professor Dominique Foray, who has done much to develop and disseminate the concept of smart specialisation, shared his thoughts on how it can be improved. Most of all, regions need a continual process of discovery, once the priorities have been established rather than just before, the aim being to build a critical mass of related projects.

Everyone present welcomed the emphasis on S3 governance in the proposed regulations. From the lively discussions and enthusiastic presentations, it is clear that there is great potential for innovation in the Portuguese regions. Enhancing the governance structures and the opportunities for entrepreneurs, researchers and many others who have a stake in where they live is the best way to make good on this promise. ■

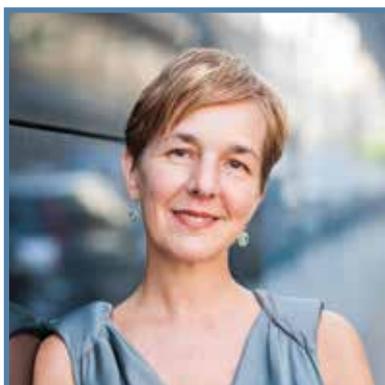


RIS3 managers from the seven Portuguese regions, Northern Netherlands and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (Greece), with experts for the JRC projects on Targeted Support to RIS3 Implementation.



Charting a course forward for urban Europe

Today, the power of cities as game changers is more evident than ever before. It is clear that the future of Europe depends on how it engages with its cities, says **Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General of EURO CITIES.**



Why the Urban Agenda matters

The Bucharest Declaration acknowledges the growing importance of urban areas as the level of governance closest to citizens. The ministers also recognise the need to capitalise on the evidence base gathered by and on cities, for example from Urban Agenda partnerships, by putting greater emphasis on the urban dimension in EU policy, and to keep it in mind in other 'agendas' such as the new Leipzig Charter.

Our efforts to promote equal and inclusive societies, with access to quality jobs for all, are fundamental for a Europe in which no one is left behind. Our ability to manage the digital transformation and optimise the use of new technologies is vital for a more inclusive, efficient and fair Europe. Our capacity to tackle climate change is critical for turning international commitments into reality. And, most importantly, our continued engagement with citizens is the opportunity to bridge the ongoing gap between EU decision-makers and the public.

Three years after the creation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, which marked a milestone for Europe and cities, and following the recent Bucharest Declaration by ministers in charge of urban matters, which assessed the state of play of the Urban Agenda, it is a good time to look at the future of EU-urban cooperation.

The partnership approach, which is embedded in the functioning of the Urban Agenda, has created a framework for co-creating solutions involving multiple levels of government and stakeholders that would not otherwise have happened. EURO CITIES actively participates in all the partnerships, bringing expertise on urban development from a Europe-wide perspective, as well as on challenges related to EU rules and financial tools. To date, these partnerships have generated many notable results, including:

- A recommendation on direct access to EU funding for cities for the integration of migrants and refugees, better matching allocated resources with local responsibilities;

- City circular indicators to monitor transition and strengthen implementation of locally developed road maps;
- An innovation accelerator for digital solutions to boost co-creation and replication in cities across Europe.

In any future iteration of the Urban Agenda, it will be paramount to ensure these results and recommendations are initially taken on-board.

Urban impact assessments have proven to be another successful way for city experts to contribute evidence directly to EU policymaking. They offer cities a direct channel to flag up potential concerns about policy developments to EU decision-makers. As such, they recognise the role of cities as implementers of a broad range of EU legislation and the importance of including them in governance procedures. This innovative approach to collaboration on policy across the different levels of government should help achieve better outcomes in shaping the EU's global outlook.

Strong cities

While developments in the EU regarding the Urban Agenda have been mainly positive, there is still room for adjusting and improving certain aspects of it. Strengthening the impact of, and engagement in, the partnerships would be a good start. Although DG Regio's commitment to the partnerships should be fully recognised, the other DGs need to become just as active, especially when a partnership is linked to a DG's thematic focus. More broadly, it would make sense if there were common agreements across the Commission regarding the role of its representatives in each partnership.

The future success of EU-urban cooperation would further benefit from the Secretariat General taking the lead role in overseeing the Commission's engagement in the Agenda. This would better reflect the cross-sectoral approach to policymaking adopted by city administrations.

We want stronger leadership on urban matters at EU level. This is why we have proposed the nomination of a vice president at the Commission in charge of urban matters to ensure ongoing dialogue with city leaders, strategic direction and stronger coordination of EU policies for cities.

An annual EU urban leadership summit, gathering European, national and city leaders to define a common agenda, responsibilities and actions, would also help mainstream urban matters, building on the informal Council summits defined in the Pact of Amsterdam (such as the one which resulted in the Bucharest Declaration).

The urban century

Since European and local challenges are strongly connected, the local, 'urban' dimension should be well understood and reflected in European decision-making. Using the Urban Agenda's tools to involve cities in finding solutions to shared challenges will help create a stronger EU, especially if the outcomes are fed into longer-term EU policy developments.

We need to further strengthen the drive and ownership of the Urban Agenda, sending 'urban matters' to top-flight politics where they belong. This means

ensuring that it continues to develop into a coherent strategic framework, in tandem with developing the new Leipzig Charter, supporting the role of cities in the EU.

Cities are home to most Europeans, so let's ensure that 'urban' has its place in decision-making at all levels. But, let's also take the valuable learning of these forays into multilevel governance and make sure we remember the core reason for policymaking. Working with cities means working with people. ■

EUROCITIES is the political platform for major European cities. We network the local governments of over 140 of Europe's largest cities and more than 40 partner cities that between them govern some 130 million citizens across 39 countries.

FIND OUT MORE

www.eurocities.eu

YOUTH4REGIONS MEDIA PROGRAMME

The Youth4Regions media programme supports the development of the next generation of journalists specialised in regional policy. It encourages these young Europeans to communicate on EU-funded projects.



Here we present two more articles submitted by young journalists who participated in the YOUTH4REGIONS blogging competition.

Milan is sprouting

Francesca is currently studying for a Bachelor of Economics and Social Sciences at Bocconi University in Italy where, thanks to her experience on a local newspaper during her first year, she is now specialising in economic and investigative journalism.



Less than half a century before the birth of Christ, the Roman poet Virgil expressed his sorrow for the loss of his fields through the melancholic words of Meliboeus, an elder countryman experiencing forced exile to the city of Rome. At the time, agriculture was the main source of income for the people of Europe and Asia, who mainly resided in the countryside, while metropolitan areas were a hot spot for intellectuals and political figures.

Since then, the situation has changed radically: the working population has acquired industrial skills and crowded into urban centres while cultivated lands have been confined in areas where agriculture is practised on a large scale. In-between these two extremes, a sterile and

slow-moving area typology has appeared: the so-called peri-urban areas where urban and agricultural features intertwine, sometimes with unfortunate results.

Such an arrangement is inevitably going to reach a dead end: a new environmental conscience is taking over, demanding low-priced 0-kilometre products which, in a world where the countryside is very distant from metropolitan areas, are hard to find. Moreover, municipal areas are lacking the homogeneity of human capital: the percentage of NEETs has risen dramatically in recent years; the integration of migrants in cities is still in progress; and many European countries such as Italy are experiencing a brain drain among high-level researchers.

What if the development of peri-urban areas turns out to be the solution for both situations? Virgil's poems would be echoed in modern times – fast-moving metropolitan areas would be asked to take a step back and recall their bucolic times.

This is where 'OpenAgri' comes into the picture: the ERDF-financed project, the Italian projection of Urban Innovative Actions, aims to counteract the above-mentioned difficulties raised by the modern relationship between city and countryside. It focuses on Greater Milan, a perfect example of an expansionary and highly demanding metropolis surrounded

by infertile and semi-abandoned territories which currently do not serve as either inhabited facilities or crop fields.

With the slogan 'New skills for new jobs in peri-urban agriculture', OpenAgri aims to create synergy between land resources in peri-urban centres and human capital and technological advancement.

The project was conceived in 2016 by Rossana Torri, professor at Italy's Politecnico University, strongly supported by the Municipality of Milan which found in OpenAgri both a legacy of the city's food-attentive policy and strong incentives for start-ups, innovative SMEs and social inclusion.

To understand how OpenAgri works, we need to introduce the new project hub, Cascina Nosedo, a rural building on the 'urban fringe' of greater Milan. This highly technological and innovative lab plans to host the mission's most advanced research activities, including OffiCucina, Aquaponics Greenhouse and the Development Centre.

The Development Centre is by far the most fertile and ground-breaking element of OpenAgri, aiming to play a pioneering role among European peri-urban agri-food activities. It focuses on 18 selected activities distinguished by their state-of-the-art ideas on environmental, technological or social solutions.

For instance, a break-through innovation for optimising water consumption is expected from 'SMAF – Smart Agriculture for Flowers', which aims to implement a 'multifunctional and precision agriculture project involving the cultivation of alimurgiche, edible and aromatic flowers, using smart agriculture solutions'.

Another noteworthy activity is being carried out by IO P-ORTO, a cooperative proposing a 'path of job placement of migrant people based on a set of activities such as: the world garden, the urban gardens, the pick-your-own model managed by migrants, and others'.

In conclusion, with substantial help from the EU, the city of Milan is embarking on a holistic and progressive mission to increase the level of its food sustainability while creating new high-level working opportunities and enhancing social cohesion by regenerating forgotten peri-urban areas.

The bucolic atmosphere created by Virgil's romantic lines has now been adapted to the needs of 21st-century urban life. City and countryside are no longer distinct and incompatible realities but are being transitioned homogeneously combining technological progress typical of metropolitan areas with the environmental sustainability of rural spaces.

*“ We are leaving the sweet fields and the frontiers of our country:
We are fleeing our country: you, Tityrus, idling in the shade,
Teach the woods to echo 'lovely Amaryllis'. ”*

Virgil, Eclogue I



Social inclusion for a better future: music to our ears

Take children off the street and place them in a social environment of learning, discipline and respect. This is the objective of Orquestra Geração, a project supported by the European Union that has been bearing fruit since 2007.

It all began at Miguel Torga Elementary School, in Amadora, Portugal, but today 22 schools are participating in this initiative. Orquestra Geração, or Generation Orchestra, is a social action project being run in schools located in problematic areas. The idea is to offer pupils music education free of charge, alongside their regular schooling from the first to third cycle of elementary education.

The music education project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund with more than EUR 350 000, has its roots in a philosophy that does not originate from Europe, but from Venezuela. In 1973, José António Abreu forged ahead with El Sistema, or The System, a model that has since been adopted worldwide.

A successful music student and pianist, José António was able to create a tool to empower children living in disadvantaged environments in his country. From this, along with more than 900 000 students and 10 000 teachers, he founded the Venezuelan National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras.

The model has also been successfully replicated in Portugal. Orquestra Geração is managed by the National Conservatory of Music and the Youth Symphony Orchestras Association of the Portuguese Youth System. With around 80 teachers allocated to this project, the growing demand is starting to be met. Pupils can choose any symphony orchestra instrument, percussion or even choir instrument. This diversity means everyone fulfils an essential role in the group and strengthens the idea of working together in pursuit of a common interest.

Inclusion is the keyword. Helena Lima, Orquestra Geração's educational coordinator, emphasises the importance of the creation of this youth orchestra network for ensuring a full





Maria Inês hopes to finish her degree in communication/journalism at Portugal's University of Porto next year. With a keen interest in international issues, she is currently making the most of being an amateur journalist by contributing to various university newspapers and magazines.



society and foster their development and self-esteem. 'Teamwork', 'collaboration, commitment and respect' are, in Helena's words, the core values of this Geração.

In future, the orchestra hopes to expand its activities and promote the project across borders, especially in Portuguese-speaking African countries. For the time being, the initiative is meeting its objectives and many young people see it as a great opportunity to spend their free time studying a score or practising a scale that is not yet perfect. Social integration projects such as these are key to achieving full development in society and taking on the fight against inequality. And knowing this can only be music to our ears. ■

educational experience for all, particularly for 'children and adolescents who are socially and educationally vulnerable'. In fact, the project has a strong social element associated with education, helping to improve some of the shortcomings identified in teaching in schools regarded as problematic.

Helena believes that participation in an orchestra can help to reverse the 'difficulties' some students have and the 'high dropout rate' in these schools. Through the intense orchestra practice and music classes that now take up students' extra-curricular time, it is possible to integrate young people into

DATA POINT

Tracking investment progress under Cohesion Policy

In September 2019, the Commission published the latest data highlighting progress in investments under the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy programmes. From June 2018 to June 2019, the overall volume of investment allocated to projects in the real economy increased by around EUR 90 billion. The share of the Cohesion Policy budget for 2014-2020 committed to projects stands at 81 % of the total EUR 485 billion available. At the same time, payments to projects have reached 29.4 % of the total budget, or EUR 143 billion.

1. Aside from the big numbers in the headlines, what does the data tell us?

The detailed data provides 'information maps' on investment progress by fund, county, theme and individual programmes. For instance, we can see different rates of progress under each Cohesion Policy fund.

Progress in investment also varies widely by country: Hungary, the Netherlands Luxembourg and Cyprus have the highest rates of Cohesion Policy investment allocated to projects (decided). The Netherlands, Finland, Cyprus and Sweden are the best performers in terms of spending.

2. Why do some countries seem to be persistently ahead or behind the EU average track over time?

There are important variations in the rates of decided projects and expenditure around the average rates. Variations in 'decided rates' are partly explained by national practices in the selection of more or less mature projects or delays in the selection procedure. Delays in spending may relate to factors such as slow selection, a high presence of multiannual infrastructure projects or the selection of less-mature projects.

To find out more, explore this data story <https://t.co/AMPlOGsUAb> which explains how to read the most recent chart – the 'flying flags' scatterplot – and understand some of the potential reasons for the varying rates of progress.

Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 investment progress by fund at end June 2019 (EUR billion)

	Total planned investment 2014-2020	Total investment decided at 06/2019	% decided	Total spending at 06/2019	% Spending
CF	74.8	67.9	91 %	23.3	31 %
ERDF	278.9	225.4	81 %	75.2	27 %
ESF	120.7	91.1	75 %	38.7	32 %
YEI	10.3	9.2	89 %	5.2	51 %
Grand total	484.8	393.6	81 %	142.5	29 %

Source: ESIF OPEN DATA <https://t.co/SisUVGjm6x>
Interactive chart with nominal EUR values: <https://t.co/SIVHNbsN78>

Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 investment progress by country at end June 2019



Source: ESIF OPEN DATA <https://t.co/SisUVGjm6x>
Interactive chart with nominal EUR values: <https://t.co/kJHDLSeVmg>

3. Who will be interested in the dataset?

The dataset will be of interest to a range of Cohesion Policy stakeholders and researchers. By August 2019, more than 29 000 users had viewed the dataset and nearly 6 000 had downloaded it!

This data facilitates monitoring the use of planned investments. Given the rich programming and thematic detail and the fact that it has annual snapshots, it is a key source of reference information on investment progress.

4. How is the data compiled?

The Cohesion Policy programmes collect financial data from decided (selected) projects and report it to the Commission three times a year, with cut-off dates of 31 December,

30 June and 30 September. The Commission then compares the financial data to the programme financial plans. The dataset is updated regularly to reflect any corrections made by the programmes.

Explore the data on the ESIF Open Data Platform:

On the ESIF ODP you will also find pre-formatted 'finances implemented' charts providing insights into the data on the overview, theme, fund, country and programme pages: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/overview>

This data story explains how to read the animated scatterplot charts based on this financial data: <https://t.co/AMPloGsUAb> ■

Do you have an issue you would like discussed in future *Panorama* DATA POINT features?

Is there a dataset you would like us to put on the ESIF Open Data Platform?

If so, please e-mail: REGIO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu

Follow the discussion on TWITTER [#ESIFopendata](https://twitter.com/ESIFopendata)

or subscribe to our newsletter: <https://europa.eu/!UM69Hx>



#CohesionEval2019 Investing in our Shared Future

On 20-21 June 2019, Bucharest hosted the 8th Conference on the Evaluation of EU Cohesion Policy organised by the Commission under the auspices of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The conference title ‘Investing in our Shared Future’ is a reminder of the principle of solidarity underlying Cohesion Policy, and that for this policy, implemented under shared management, collaboration with the Member States is essential.

Opening the conference, Commissioner Crețu emphasised that the policy supports investments to improve EU citizens’ quality of life. In the context of the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the Commissioner listed the main challenges for future Cohesion Policy, including using evidence of what works to constantly improve the strong performance orientation in preparing future programmes and strengthening links with the European Semester.

The Vice Prime Minister of Romania, Mr Suci, welcomed participants and highlighted the ability of Cohesion Policy to constantly adapt so that it remains relevant despite changing circumstances. An intervention by the Minister of European Funds of Romania, Ms Mînzatu, highlighted the importance

of the evaluation of Cohesion Policy to disseminate concrete results among citizens to prevent unfounded criticism. Mr Schneider, member of the European Committee of the Regions, stressed that evaluation has been a core tool to illustrate how this policy has contributed to changing EU regions for the better.

Working on its role

During the two-day debate, in eight thematic workshops experts reflected on the role and function of monitoring and evaluation in various scenarios, such as in integrated territorial strategies and smart specialisation strategies. Big data management, their availability and reliability, and evaluation systems at national, EU and international level were among the main topics discussed in parallel workshops. ‘What works and what does not work in Cohesion Policy’ was the provocative title of the fifth workshop which focused on the contribution of the *ex-post* evaluation of 2007-2013 to the simplification and flexibility of the Commission’s proposal for the future programming period.

The audience was then challenged by this question: ‘What is the most important role for evaluation?’ Accountability, policy learning and communication were highlighted as the core elements for which evaluation is useful and were subsequently debated in the final plenary session.

Evaluation as a game changer

Ms Ivanova, Dean of Chamber II 'Investment for cohesion, growth and inclusion' in the European Court of Auditors, underlined that *ex-ante*, mid-term and *ex-post* evaluations are all essential and complementary: some are necessary in the policy design while others are central to illustrate the results and to strengthen accountability for citizens.

Evaluation can be a real game changer, according to Ms Hristcheva, Head of Evaluation and European Semester Unit in DG Regio. It can indicate whether investments have been well designed, well placed and can promote added value, thereby playing a part in improving policy design and implementation in the future.

The precondition to conduct solid and evidenced-base evaluations relies on data availability and reliability. However, as Ms Gaffey, Chair of the Commission's Regulatory Scrutiny Board, stressed, big numbers should not be used as a shield to hide failures in public policies: politicians should aim to build a strong narrative to enable citizens to understand the achievements and explain why some programmes may not achieve their planned objectives.

Cohesion interventions deal *inter alia* with innovative and cutting-edge ideas which, by their very nature, entail risks. Thus, according to Mr McCann, professor at Sheffield University Management School, this policy should allow for failure and politicians should learn to accept that experimentation does not always lead to success. Evaluation is not about giving judgements and ratings; it is about providing feedback to improve a policy.

Spreading the word

Trustful relationships and good communication plans for spreading the evaluation results can avoid situations whereby critics exaggerate certain negative outcomes to attack the policy, while its positive achievements may take more time to materialise but may produce some longer-lasting effects and impacts. Furthermore, politicians and experts should communicate results and failures using dif-

ferent approaches depending on the audience, while avoiding falling into the trap of simplification and pursuing a 'marketing exercise'.

Ms Toader, Secretary of State in the Ministry of European Funds of Romania, closed the conference by emphasising the ever-green importance of structured evaluations: programmers need evaluation to understand where they can improve; citizens and taxpayers need it to see how their money has been spent; and politicians need it to enforce their actions when designing future policies.

Besides discussing evaluation and further improvements, the conference also provided a great networking opportunity for stakeholders ranging from academia to practitioners and policymakers and shapers from the Member States.

The substantial work undertaken in the field of Cohesion Policy, and the Commission's role as a strong promoter and facilitator of evaluation were broadly acknowledged. As DG Regio's Director for Policy, Erik von Breska emphasised, evaluation is a cornerstone in the policy cycle, where both the evaluation process and its results are used to support the implementation of programmes and to develop the policy's future. The main priority will be to set realistic and ambitious objectives in order to design clear and feasible cohesion interventions to tackle the challenges ahead. ■



FIND OUT MORE

Conference website, including Member States' evaluation presentations, videos and posters:

<https://europa.eu/!up98Ct>

Open Data Portal on ESI Funds:

<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>

The Evaluation Network: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/network/



The EU Solidarity Fund 2002-2017: ready for every event

The EU Solidarity Fund is a policy instrument created in 2002 to support EU interventions in large disasters in EU Member States and accession countries, such as floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, drought and other natural catastrophes. The Fund can be mobilised following an application from the country concerned provided that the disaster event justifies intervention at the European level.

In 2014, the regulatory framework of the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was revised: EUSF operations are now regulated by Council Regulation (EC) No 2002/2012 as amended by Regulation (EU) No 661/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The reform introduced a number of changes in the Fund's activities, such as clarification of the admissibility criteria for applications for regional disasters, extension of the regulatory deadline for applications, extension of the implementation period, and the introduction of advance payments.

Between 2002 and 2017, the EUSF mobilised EUR 5.24 billion for interventions in 84 disaster events in 23 Member States and 1 accession country. Around 90% of these resources were allocated to disasters generating significant damage at national level, primarily for assistance with earthquakes, floods and storms.

Nevertheless, the Fund also intervenes in more localised disasters, such as regional and neighbouring country events. The figure illustrates the distribution of all EUSF interventions by year of disaster, category of disaster (major, regional, neighbourhood), type of disaster (floods, storms, earthquakes, forest fires) and amount of EU support (indicated by the size of the bubble).

As illustrated, one feature of the environment in which the Fund operates is the high unpredictability of the occurrence and magnitude of disaster events per year. For instance, in terms of frequency, peak years with many disaster events were recorded in 2010 and 2014 (with at least 10 events annually), whilst the calmest years for EUSF were in 2004, 2006 and 2011.

Significant improvements

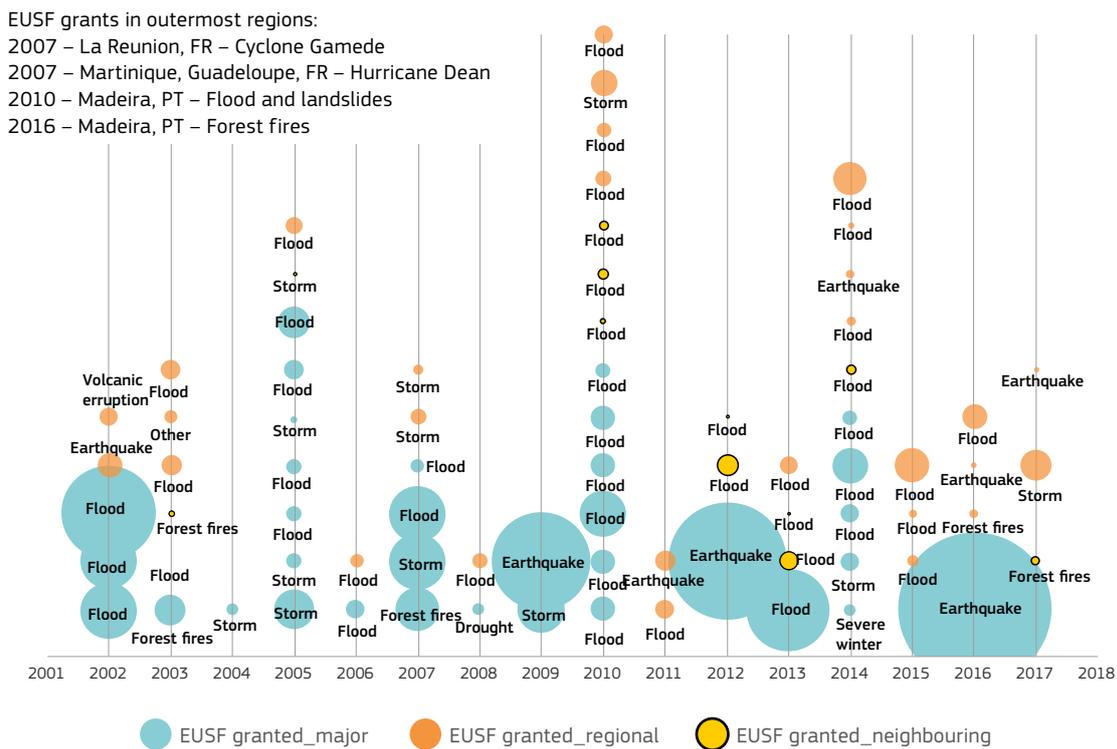
For this reason, resources for the Fund are not pre-committed annually in the EU budget. Rather, they are based on an annual budgetary ceiling which, since 2014, has been EUR 500 million in 2011 prices, with the possibility to carry over to the following year the resources not used in the current year.

Covering the Fund's operations since its introduction in 2002 until 2017, the evaluation of the EUSF analysed its implementation and performance in terms of the effectiveness and time efficiency of the approval, implementation and closure of its interventions; the role of the Fund's revision in 2014; the synergies between EUSF and other EU policy instruments for disaster risk management; and the stakeholders' perceptions of the EU added value of this policy instrument and its role in inspiring further policy developments in national systems for disaster risk management.

Carried out between September 2018 and March 2019, the evaluation followed the Commission's better regulation principles, providing evidence for the five evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value. In addition, it also considered the instrument-specific evaluation criterion of EU solidarity.

The evaluation found that, in particular due to the reform in 2014, implementation of the Fund has improved significantly, especially in the application approval rate for regional disasters and the time of deployment of the Fund on the ground.

EU Solidarity Fund 2002-2017 (by year, category and type of disaster, and size of grant)



^ The figure shows 84 EUSF cases approved for funding for disasters which occurred between 2002 and 2017.
 Source: European Commission, monitoring data 2002-2017

After the 2014 reform, the likelihood of successful applications for EUSF support for regional disaster increased from 31% to 85% with the removal of uncertainty regarding the admissibility of applications. As regards the speed of deployment, the time from application to payment of full EUSF support was cut by 12%, although it still remains at about one year. Nevertheless, initial financial constraints in Member States confronted with significant natural disasters can also be addressed by requesting advance EUSF payments within a short time from the application.

The analysis in the evaluation also identified avenues for further developments, such as better alignment of the Fund's eligibility conditions with the principle of disaster risk management 'build back better' according to which the post-disaster recovery phase is critical for building resilient infrastructure.

Further scope for improvement refers, for example, to promoting good practices and development of robust methodologies for damage estimation in the Member States to ensure optimal use of EUSF support. Communication efforts for EUSF interventions will also be strengthened to increase the visibility of the EU's solidarity efforts in the Member States.

To summarise, the evaluation concludes that the Fund is an adaptable and flexible instrument for EU interventions in

disaster situations, bringing EU added value to the post-disaster response in Member States and accession countries.

In the future, the Commission proposes to amend the legislative basis of the EUSF so that it can also be used to help Member States mitigate the impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU on the most affected areas and sectors, especially on those small and medium-sized companies with significant exposure to the UK and public administrations. Moreover, the Commission proposes to increase advance payments from the Fund from 10% to 25% (or maximum EUR 100 million) of the total financial support anticipated to help accelerate its deployment to those Member States requesting support. ■

FIND OUT MORE

Commission's proposal amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2012/2002:
<https://europa.eu/!Kp48yu>
<https://europa.eu/!Hx63Jd>

The Road Trip Project hits the road again

In the second season of DG Regio's Road Trip Project, two teams of four young people are simultaneously visiting 17 EU countries in what they hope will be an adventure of a lifetime. Each group comprises a video maker, copywriter, photographer and presenter who are tasked with recording their many experiences as they visit and learn more about EU-funded projects across Europe's diverse regions.

Team Travelbugs' route starts in the Åland Islands in Finland and finishes in the Canary Islands in Spain.

Dayana, a 22-year-old actress, is originally from Bulgaria but lives in England now. A people-person, she enjoys spending time outside and making new friends. In her free time, she plays sports, and reads and writes poetry, which is one of her biggest passions.

Rareș is a 27-year-old Romanian who has been living in Italy for 12 years. His background is in intercultural mediation, but he has given this up to pursue his passion: photography. He likes to create new things but chills out by playing PC games, watching movies, TV series and YouTube. His favourite quote: *'Creativity is the new literacy!'*

Elliot, a 19-year-old from Sweden, has just graduated from high school with a dream of freelancing as a photo- and videographer. He is a self-taught YouTube and film amateur with a fascination for indie documentaries – especially those showing how beautiful our world is. When he needs a break, he likes to go for long walks, drink coffee and listen to music. Perhaps on this trip he'll get to make his own documentary!

Vanessa is a 24-year-old South African living and doing her master's degree in Hungary. She has always dreamed of travelling across Europe so when the opportunity presented

itself, she did not hesitate. In her spare time, Vanessa likes reading self-help books and produces content for her blog on food and nutrition.

Team Calma's route starts in Dublin, Ireland and finishes in Nicosia, Cyprus.

Panos is a 23-year-old vlogger from Cyprus who has lived in Greece, Australia and Cyprus over the last four years. He has travelled with his camera through Asia and as been part of a travel project for 100 days, connecting the world through friendship. He loves sleeping, making fun of himself, looking on the bright side of life and making people laugh (which he does pretty well)!



Selina is 22-year-old from Germany who has lived in four different cities over the past year. She has just finished her bachelor's degree in journalism and her passion is to report on societal and environmental issues. In her free time, Selina loves going to music festivals, being in nature and exploring new things.

Wijnand is a 26-year-old filmmaker from the Netherlands. He used to love meat but has become a vegetarian for ethical reasons. On the road, he looks forward to meeting people and hearing their stories during these adventures: how did they grow up, what motivates them and how do they see the future?

Olga is a 19-year-old student from Poland who is taking a gap year to seek an adventure of a lifetime. She is an art lover and a science enthusiast. On the Road Trip Project, she hopes to make memories she will remember for years to come! ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://roadtripproject.eu/>



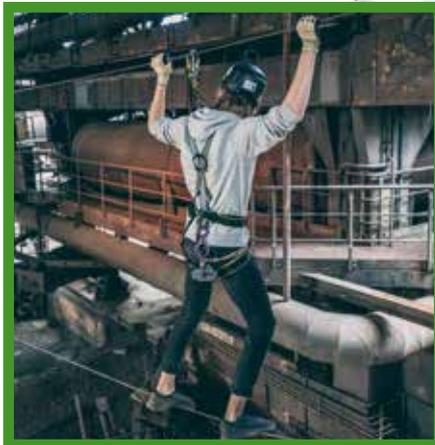
Canoeing in Hungary's Tokaj-Bodrogzug Protected Landscape area



Digging down into European industrial heritage in the deep coal mine and museum in Silesia, Poland



Team photo in Luxembourg with Charles Elsen, one of the signatories of the Schengen Agreement



Reaching a high point in Germany for an aerial view of the Landscape Park in Duisberg



IN YOUR OWN WORDS

PANORAMA
welcomes your
contributions!

In Your Own Words is the section in *Panorama* where stakeholders at local, regional, national and European level outline their achievements for the 2014-2020 period and share their views on the ongoing and crucial discussions

on Cohesion Policy post-2020. *Panorama* welcomes contributions in your own language, which we may feature in future editions. Please contact us at regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu for further information on guidelines and deadlines.

Lower Saxony Social Innovation Directive – managing social change

Our society is facing increasingly rapid structural change, due in part to demographic changes and digitalisation. This cannot be countered with technical innovation alone. For a number of years, Lower Saxony has therefore been testing social innovations aimed at changing social structures.

Under the current EU funding period, for the first time, ESF funds can be used to support social innovations. The Lower Saxony guideline 'Social Innovations' promotes 'innovative approaches that contribute to solving social challenges and meeting local and regional needs'.

The broad scope of the funding provides project sponsors with as much leeway as possible. Lower Saxony has chosen a new funding approach in order to develop tailor-made projects that can also be transferred to other parts of the state.

Through the cooperation of local actors, the projects are intended to form permanent structures. Three Social Innovation Offices support the applicants



Birgit Honé
*Minister for Federal and European Affairs
and Regional Development in the German
state of Lower Saxony*

with project development, whilst also providing the opportunity to organise transnational cooperation or a Europe-wide exchange of experience.

On the one hand, funding is provided for projects that assist with adapting to changes in the world of work, and on the other, for those that improve access to social and health services.

The 40 projects funded to date range from health care, mobility and telemedicine to overcoming language barriers and refugee-related projects. A further 15 to 20 projects will be launched in 2020.

Lower Saxony has launched an experiment with the Social Innovation Directive. There is no shortage of ideas for solving local challenges in the regions. However, the right framework is required to enable more flexible, simpler funding that will result in projects employing new approaches.

The directive has been met with great interest on the ground and many new approaches have been tested, resulting in the emergence of new networks and collaborative efforts.

Social innovations have been awarded a higher priority within the ESF+ which is planned for the 2021-2027 funding period. Even if a specific format has yet to be finalised, it can be assumed from looking at previous regulatory proposals that Lower Saxony will continue to have the opportunity to develop and promote social innovation projects within participatory processes. ■

NEWS [IN BRIEF]



Data shows Cohesion Policy fights climate change

To reach the EU's agreed climate and energy targets by 2020, the European Commission has committed to support climate action with a target of at least 20% of the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework. Such a political commitment is part of a wider effort to mainstream climate actions and contribute to efforts to mitigate climate change and adapt our natural and human-built environment and economy to its expected impact. By their very nature and the scope of their objectives, the ERDF and Cohesion Fund are important contributors to the overall EU tracking target. A total of EUR 54.8 billion from these funds is being invested in the period 2014-2020. You can now track planned investments and progress in implementing them using open data.

Check out this blog post opening a window into the detailed data: <https://bit.ly/33jRQYv>

Key achievements of Cohesion Policy 2014-2020

A new presentation of the <https://europa.eu/lxX99ku> is available online. Selected investment targets and progress made to date in achieving them are organised under three headings:

- > A Smart Europe: research and innovation, digital economy, SMEs;
- > A Sustainable Europe: low-carbon economy, environmental and climate action, network infrastructures;
- > An Inclusive Europe: labour market, social inclusion and human capital.

The text draws mainly on target values at the end of 2017 (unless otherwise stated), while the achievement targets are set in the wider context; the charts (powered by [#ESIFOpenData](#)) will be updated in December 2019.

Integrity Pacts win excellence award for open administration

The initiative <https://europa.eu/!YY79fU>, promoted by the Commission's DG Regional and Urban Policy in cooperation with Transparency International, has won the European Ombudsman's Award for Good Administration 2019 in the category 'Excellence in open administration'.

The award recognised the 'innovative use of the partnerships with NGOs, public authorities and private companies, helping to increase public trust through tackling corruption'. This is an acknowledgment of the efforts of all actors in the 17 projects and 11 different Member States involved.

DG REGIO launched the initiative in 2015 by selecting the projects and civil society organisations following a call for expression of interest. An **Integrity Pact** is a contract between a contracting authority and economic operators bidding for public contracts that they will abstain from corrupt practices and will conduct a transparent procurement process. To ensure accountability and legitimacy, the Pact includes a separate contract with a civil society organisation monitoring the compliance of all parties with their commitments.

The Award for Good Administration recognises actions by EU public administrations that have a visible and direct positive impact on citizens' lives. The Ombudsman introduced the award in 2017 to promote excellence in EU public service and the sharing of good ideas and practice.

PROJECTS

ALTERNATIVE FINANCING FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN ITALY AND SPAIN

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 899 070**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 854 115**

Thanks to EU funding, a partnership of Italian and Spanish regions has designed finance models to boost their social economy.

Today, there is a lack of funding in Europe for entrepreneurial organisations responding to the challenges facing society, such as unemployment, youth engagement, exclusion and environmental loss. Known collectively as ‘social enterprises’, they represent only 10% of European businesses and 7% of employment in Europe.

One of the main reasons for such low investment is that banks traditionally invest in enterprises based on their balance sheets and business models, while the environmental and cultural returns are often undervalued. Put simply, larger companies are seen as a safer investment.

The Innovative Financial Instruments in support of the Social Economy (IFISE) project – a partnership between two Italian and two Spanish regions – has developed new methods of financing to demonstrate how charities, cooperatives and other social businesses could receive capital. In order to define the current state-of-the-art financial instruments, IFISE analysed 57 cases across Europe.

The project focused on impact investing, which values both financial returns and social returns (described as the ‘double bottom line’ approach), and crowdfunding, which raises smaller amounts of funding from a larger number of people.

To understand which type of finance best suited the IFISE regions, the project developed feasibility studies for all four. In Lombardy, the study prioritised the feasibility of social impact bonds, whereas for Andalusia, Piedmont and

Valencia the viability of establishing social impact funds was investigated. Both models were shown to be compatible with regional operational funding such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Investing in society

The IFISE findings were summarised in a handbook that can be downloaded from the project’s website. The guide is intended for managing authorities but will help anyone looking to implement state-of-the-art financing instruments to tackle social or environmental issues.

With the support of international financial institutions and academia, IFISE also provided training in its partner regions on the technical and legal aspects of social impact investing. It has published these useful tips and guidelines as a replicable training scheme.

In the long-term, it is hoped that IFISE’s financial models will transfer to other European regions. According to the project’s coordinators, this will be made easier if the laws governing social enterprises across the EU can be standardised. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.finpiemonte.it/lfise-project>

PROJECTS

'GAMING' APP BRINGS NEW DIMENSION TO JOB HUNTING

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 500 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 350 000**

A project from Italy's Lazio region has brought employers and jobseekers together on an innovative digital platform. Using a mobile app, Employerland provides tailored games and quizzes that people play to land a job. SMEs and big companies from across Italy have signed up to the platform to attract talented candidates.

'Employerland' harnesses the latest digital technologies to provide human resources teams with a new way to recruit staff. It moves beyond the traditional approaches of publishing vacancies online or in newspapers then reading through CVs. The app is aimed in particular at young people who are more familiar with using digital technologies in their daily lives.

Since its launch in 2014, around 1 000 highly qualified people have secured jobs through the Employerland app, which has been downloaded by more than 100 000 users. In addition, over 800 companies have registered on the platform, including top employers such as Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane, Oracle, Pirelli, Lamborghini, Luxottica, Bosch, Salini Impregilo, PwC and Nestlé.

The Employerland team has also held more than 50 corporate events and a number of recruiting days that have attracted over 15 000 young people.

People looking for a job can download the app to their smart phone or tablet. They then register their profile on the platform and start looking for tailored games and employers. Users take part in virtual challenges, answering questions about a specific company to earn points and showcase their skills. By winning a game, the player gains access to the company's HR team and has a good chance of securing a job.

Moreover, people who achieve the best performance when participating in some of the games are provided with a special 'Skillpass' which leads to an interview during the events in which the companies participate.

Businesses can use the platform to raise their profile in the jobs market by advertising posts – directly through the app or via Employerland events. The process enables employers to tailor their recruitment requirements through a game or competition that is customised to their specific needs. In addition, they can implement branding campaigns via the app to attract talented people.

Talent spotting

The tailored approach enabled by Employerland helps companies reduce their recruitment costs and make their selection processes more efficient. This is because talented candidates will only take the tests if they are motivated to work for the business in question. There is also a space on the platform where employers can use the tests and quizzes to engage with and train their existing staff.

Employerland can claim to be the first mobile app to provide recruitment resources based on engaging people in social games. The project was developed as a start-up company after receiving support from the European Regional Development Fund, the Lazio Region and a private business angel. Its success to date has led to the creation of nine jobs at Employerland. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.employerland.it>

PROJECTS

MUSEUMS IN CENTRAL EUROPE WELCOME A WIDER PUBLIC

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 2 579 255**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 2 091 160**

Cultural heritage in Central Europe has become more accessible thanks to inclusive approaches to access and learning materials funded by the Interreg programme.

With so many cultural attractions across the EU, there are no shortage of places to learn about Europe's rich heritage and history. Unfortunately, it is not always so easy for people with disabilities to enjoy these museums and art galleries.

Providing lifts and access ramps for visitors with impaired mobility is only part of the solution. Many other types of disabilities – cognitive, sensitive and temporary conditions – require a better understanding of the barriers to accessibility.

The COME-IN! project, which is financed by the Interreg Central Europe programme, is helping small and medium-sized museums in the EU open their doors to a broader public. By improving access and the quality of learning materials, more people are now able to experience and enjoy cultural heritage.

The project has developed useful guidelines and training for museums and has launched an innovative new label which is awarded to those museums complying with the improved accessibility standards.

The COME-IN! coalition of 14 organisations includes museums from Austria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Poland and Slovenia. Its network of academics, training institutions and policy-makers were eager to include disabled people to better understand what barriers currently limit their enjoyment of

cultural heritage. Consequently, disability associations and public institutions were consulted before the project's pilot schemes were put into place across participating regions.

Open-door policy

COME-IN! developed a set of common guidelines which heritage sites can use to guarantee accessibility to all their visitors. A training handbook can be downloaded from the COME-IN! website to help museum operators implement these high standards.

Using the experience gained by partners during the project, the COME-IN! label was launched to recognise those museums that have complied with the guidelines. While similar labels exist locally and at the national level, this is the first time an award scheme will take all disabilities into account. The label will be promoted at the transnational level so that museums in countries outside of central Europe can also apply.

Although originally intended for museums, the label's scope has been expanded to include applications from any cultural attraction or event that has put accessibility at the top of its agenda. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/2LX7NOX>

AGENDA

14-15 NOVEMBER

Brussels (BE)

SMART REGIONS Conference 3.0: Transformation through Smart Specialisation

28-29 NOVEMBER

Milan (IT)

3rd Annual Forum of the European Strategy for the Alpine Region

30-31 JANUARY 2020

Porto (PT)

Cities Forum 2020

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