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Foreword

The European Union places considerable emphasis on cohesion policy, with the objective of bringing Europe's regions and cities closer together in economic, social and environmental spheres.

The *Eurostat regional yearbook* provides an overview of key statistics available for each of the domains that are covered by official European statistics. It is thus a helpful tool to understand the regional diversity that exists within Europe and also shows that considering national figures alone does not reveal the full picture of what is happening in the European Union; indeed, there are often significant differences between regions of the same country when one looks at smaller geographical areas. Thus, the *Eurostat regional yearbook* is a valuable supplement to *Europe in figures — Eurostat yearbook*, which concentrates on national statistics for the European Union and its Member States.

Regional statistics are based on a harmonised convention in the definition of regions which is contained in the classification of territorial units for statistics, known by the acronym NUTS. This classification has implications beyond the direct field of statistics. It is used more and more in other areas, and thus contributes to shaping the perception of EU citizens as regards how they identify with a certain regional structure. In this way NUTS has the potential to contribute towards the gradual creation of a common EU notion of regions.

While maintaining its focus on the most recent data available, the 2013 edition of the *Eurostat regional yearbook* emphasises comparisons of the regional situation over time. For economic issues, these comparisons generally focus on the situation from 2007 or 2008 onwards — in other words, from the onset of the global financial and economic crisis — while for other domains, such as population, health or education the analysis is more focused on changes over a lengthier period of 5 or 10 years — thereby analysing structural changes. Furthermore, the practice of previous editions to gradually enlarge the number of statistical maps has been continued; these have the advantage of revealing regional variations at a glance.

The content of this book is also available online in 'Statistics explained' on the Eurostat website. The latest data can also be downloaded from Eurostat's database, where more disaggregated data can often be found.

Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union. Working together with national statistical authorities in the European statistical system, our mission is to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe.

I wish you an enjoyable reading experience!

Walter Radermacher
Director-General, Eurostat
Chief Statistician of the European Union

Abstract

Statistical information is an important tool for understanding and quantifying the impact of political decisions in a specific territory or region. The *Eurostat regional yearbook 2013* gives a detailed picture relating to a broad range of statistical topics across the regions of the Member States of the European Union (EU), as well as the regions of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and candidate countries. Each chapter presents statistical information in maps, figures and tables, accompanied by a description of the main findings, data sources and policy context. These regional indicators are presented for the following 11 subjects: economy, population, health, education, the labour market, structural business statistics, tourism, the information society, agriculture, transport, and science, technology and innovation. In addition, four special focus chapters are included in this edition: these look at European cities, the definitions of city and metro regions, income and living conditions according to the degree of urbanisation, and rural development.

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Data extraction

Most data were extracted on 15 February 2013. Data relating to structural business statistics (Chapter 6) were extracted at the end of February 2013. Data relating to regional GDP and demographic data were extracted in the middle of March 2013 and have been included in several chapters: economy (Chapter 1), population (Chapter 2), agriculture (Chapter 9), science and technology (Chapter 11), and rural development (Chapter 15). Data relating to patents were also extracted in the middle of March 2013 and included in science and technology (Chapter 11).

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Contents

Foreword 3
Abstract 4
Acknowledgements 5

INTRODUCTION 11
EU statistics on regions and cities 12
The NUTS classification 12
Coverage and timeliness of statistics on regions and cities 13
More information about statistics on regions and cities 14
Eurobase — Eurostat's online database 14
Statistics explained 14
EU policies 15
Europe 2020 strategy 15
Regional policies 15
Future cohesion policy — alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy 16
Rural development policy 16
Future rural development policy — alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy and the reform of the CAP 17
Urban policies 17
Urban development — future cohesion policy 17

1. ECONOMY 19
Main statistical findings 20
Regional GDP per inhabitant 20
A more detailed regional analysis 21
Changes over time 21
Focus on longer-term changes in selected regions 24
Around a quarter of the EU's population lived in regions where GDP was less than 75 % of the EU-27 average 24
Major regional differences within countries 28
Data sources and availability 29
Comparisons between where people work and where they live 29
Purchasing power parities 29
Context 29
Measuring economic development 29
Economic policies 30

2. POPULATION 31
Main statistical findings 32
Population size and density 32
Population change 34
Decline in the fertility rate 38
Declining infant mortality 40
Life expectancy gaps between men and women 40
Demographic ageing 43
Data sources and availability 47
Context 50

3. HEALTH 51

Main statistical findings 52

Causes of death 52

Diseases of the circulatory system 52

Diseases of the respiratory system 53

Cancer (malignant neoplasms) 56

Hospital beds 60

Healthcare professionals 61

Data sources and availability 61

Causes of death 61

Healthcare 64

Context 64

4. EDUCATION 65

Main statistical findings 66

Participation of 4-year-olds in education 66

Students aged 17 in education 66

Early leavers from education and training 68

Students in tertiary education 71

Tertiary educational attainment 75

Data sources and availability 78

Context 80

Diversity of national education systems 80

Education and training 2020 80

5. LABOUR MARKET 83

Main statistical findings 84

Employment rates 84

Changes in employment rates from 2008 to 2011 84

Male and female employment rates 86

Employment rates for older workers 88

Unemployment rates 91

Changes in unemployment rates 93

Youth unemployment 96

Earnings at a regional level 100

Data sources and availability 100

Context 101

6. STRUCTURAL BUSINESS STATISTICS 105

Main statistical findings 106

Industrial and services specialisation 106

Detailed specialisation within the non-financial business economy 110

Range of specialisation 112

Business concentration 115

Data sources and availability 117

Context 117

7. TOURISM 119
Main statistical findings 120
Number of overnight stays 120
Recent trends in hotel tourism 122
Recent trends in camping tourism 123
Share of inbound tourism 123
Top 20 tourist regions in the EU-27 visited by foreign tourists 123
Most popular regions 128
Tourism intensity 130
Average length of stay 130
Accommodation capacity 130
Size of accommodation establishments 133
Data sources and availability 133
Context 136
Tourism diversity 136
Policies 137

8. INFORMATION SOCIETY 139
Main statistical findings 140
Access to information and communication technologies 140
Regular use of the Internet 143
E-commerce by individuals 143
Data sources and availability 147
Context 147

9. AGRICULTURE 149
Main statistical findings 150
Economic significance of agriculture 150
Agricultural labour productivity 152
Structure of agricultural holdings 153
Livestock and crops 156
Agri-environmental indicators 160
Data sources and availability 163
Context 166

10. TRANSPORT 167
Main statistical findings 168
Motorway networks 168
Stock of passenger cars, buses and coaches 168
Stock of road freight vehicles 170
Road safety 175
Air transport 175
Rail transport 178
Maritime transport 179
Data sources and availability 183
Context 184

11. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY 185
Main statistical findings 186
Research and development intensity 186
Researchers 188
Human resources in science and technology 190
Employment in high-tech sectors 193
Patents 194
Data sources and availability 196
Context 196

12. FOCUS ON EUROPEAN CITIES 199
Main statistical findings 200
Living in cities and urban areas 200
Age and old age 204
Transport 207
Tourism 211
Cultural facilities 211
Data sources and availability 215
Context 215
Europe 2020 215
Sustainable investment 215

13. FOCUS ON CITIES AND METRO REGIONS 217
Main statistical findings 218
Larger urban zones:
a city and its commuting zone 218
A typology of metro(politan) regions 219
Links between the definition of a city and its commuting zone and the degree of urbanisation typology 222
No link between metro regions and the urban–rural regional typology 222
Context 223

14. FOCUS ON INCOME AND LIVING CONDITIONS 225
Main statistical findings 226
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion 226
People at risk of poverty 227
Severe material deprivation rate 228
People living in households with very low work intensity 229
Overcrowded households 230
Overburden of housing costs 230
Severe housing deprivation 231
A comparison summarising indicators across the whole of the EU 232
A comparison summarising indicators across the Member States 233
Data sources and availability 234
Degree of urbanisation 234
Statistics on income and living conditions 234
Indicator definitions 234
Context 235

15. FOCUS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT 237
Main statistical findings 238
Focus on the population in predominantly rural regions 238
Focus on the labour market in predominantly rural regions 246
Focus on the economy in predominantly rural regions 251
Focus on agriculture and tourism in rural regions 252
Data sources and availability 260
Urban–rural typology 260
Context 260
Regional issues for rural areas 260
Policies 262
Employment in rural areas 262
Annex 1 — Classification of territorial units for statistics, 2010 version 263
European Union: NUTS level 2 regions 263
EFTA countries: statistical regions at level 2 266
Acceding and candidate countries: statistical regions at level 2 266
Annex 2 — Cities participating in the Urban Audit data collection 267
European Union: Urban Audit cities 267
EFTA countries: Urban Audit cities 275
Acceding and candidate countries: Urban Audit cities 275

Introduction

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union (EU), is responsible for collecting and disseminating national and regional data, primarily for the Member States of the EU, but also for European Free Trade Assoication (EFTA), acceding and candidate countries. The aim of this publication is to give a flavour of the statistics that Eurostat collects on regions and cities and to present the most recent figures for each statistical subject.

EU statistics on regions and cities

The Member States within the EU are often compared with each other, but in reality it is very difficult to compare a small Member State like Malta, which has around 420 000 inhabitants, or Luxembourg, which has around 540 000 inhabitants, with Germany, the most populous EU Member State at close to 82 million inhabitants. Comparing regional data that are as detailed as possible is often more meaningful and it also highlights the disparities — or similarities — within the Member States themselves.

The NUTS classification

At the heart of regional statistics is the NUTS classification (the classification of territorial units for statistics). This is a regional classification for the Member States of the EU providing a harmonised hierarchy of regions: the NUTS classification subdivides each Member State into regions at three different levels, NUTS levels 1, 2 and 3, from larger to smaller areas. If available, administrative structures are used for the different NUTS levels. In Member States where there is no administrative layer corresponding to a particular level, artificial regions are created by aggregating smaller administrative regions.

The NUTS regulation — Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council — was adopted in May 2003 and entered into force in July 2003. It has since been amended twice and also supplemented twice with information pertaining to new Member States (10 new Member States in 2004 and two more in 2008). The second regular amendment (Commission Regulation (EU) No 31/2011) was adopted in January 2011 and entered into force on 1 January 2012 and is referred to as NUTS 2010: the data presented in this publication are based exclusively on NUTS 2010. The next round of revisions to the NUTS (which is expected to lead to NUTS 2013) was opened in 2012 and a list of proposals for amendments was established by February 2013.

The main principles of the NUTS classification

Principle 1: the NUTS regulation defines the following minimum and maximum population thresholds for the size of the NUTS regions.

Level	Minimum population	Maximum population
NUTS 1 regions	3 million	7 million
NUTS 2 regions	800 000	3 million
NUTS 3 regions	150 000	800 000

Principle 2: NUTS favours administrative divisions (normative criterion). For practical reasons the NUTS classification is based on the administrative divisions applied in the EU Member States. That generally comprises two main regional levels; the additional third level is created by aggregating administrative units.

Principle 3: NUTS favours general geographical units. These are normally more suitable for any given indicator than geographical units specific to certain fields of activity.

Regions have also been defined and agreed with the EFTA, acceding and candidate countries on a bilateral basis; these regions are called statistical regions and follow exactly the same rules as the NUTS regions in the EU, except that there is no legal base. There is no agreement with Serbia.

It should be noted that some EU Member States have a relatively small population and are therefore not divided into more than one NUTS level 2 region. Thus, for these Member States, data presented for NUTS level 2 regions are identical to national data. According to the 2010 version of the NUTS classification, this applies to six Member States: Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta. It also applies to the statistical regions at level 2 in the EFTA countries of Iceland and Liechtenstein and in the candidate countries of Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ([1]). In each of these cases, the whole country consists of one single level 2 NUTS or statistical region.

For more information about the NUTS classification, please refer to the dedicated NUTS section on the Eurostat website.

The use of NUTS in this publication

Most statistics in the *Eurostat regional yearbook* are based on NUTS level 2 regions, but some maps are based on NUTS level 3 regions (the most detailed NUTS level) and these are generally included when data at this level of detail are available. There are also a few maps where use is made of NUTS level 1 regions. Furthermore, there may be specific cases (on a map by map basis) where particular regions are presented

([1]) The name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is shown in tables and figures in this publication as FYR of Macedonia. This does not prejudge in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which is to be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place on this subject at the United Nations.

using a different NUTS level compared with the remainder of the regions in the same map — these changes are documented in the footnotes under each map and are generally made in order to improve the coverage of each map. In a few specific cases where little or no regional data exists for a particular country and indicator, use has been made of national data.

One difficulty with regional statistics is that the volume of data inevitably gets very large (there are as many as 1 294 NUTS level 3 regions for the EU-27) and there has to be some kind of selection or sorting principle to make the data comprehensible. Statistical maps are an excellent means of presenting large amounts of statistical data in a user-friendly way. That is why this year's *Eurostat regional yearbook*, like previous editions, contains many thematic maps in which the data are categorised into different statistical classes represented by colour shades on a map (choropleth maps). Some chapters also make use of figures and tables to present the data, selected and sorted according to principles designed to make the results more accessible.

The paper version of the *Eurostat regional yearbook* contains a folding map inside the back cover. It shows all NUTS level 2 regions in the Member States of the EU and the corresponding level 2 statistical regions in the EFTA, acceding and candidate countries; it also has a full list of codes and names of these regions. The map is intended to help readers to locate the name and NUTS code of a specific region on the other statistical maps in the publication. For more information about the NUTS classification, please refer to the dedicated NUTS section on the Eurostat website.

Coverage and timeliness of statistics on regions and cities

The *Eurostat regional yearbook 2013* contains statistics on the Member States of the EU and, where available, data are also shown for the EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) and the acceding and candidate countries (Montenegro, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey).

Following the ratification of the accession treaty, Croatia became the 28th EU Member State on 1 July 2013; at the time of writing Croatia was an acceding country and so analysis of Croatian regional data is presented alongside that of the candidate countries. Since 27 July 2010, Iceland has been both an EFTA country and a candidate country; in this publication it is grouped together with the other EFTA countries. Where available, national data are presented for Serbia as there is currently no agreement on regional boundaries, especially concerning Kosovo ([2]) — the latter is not covered in this publication.

Please note that the latest available reference year varies; each chapter aims to show the latest data available for its subject area. In the light of the recent financial and economic crisis, which had severe implications for some of the subjects covered, it is important to keep in mind the reference year with respect to overall economic and social developments. The following table gives an overview of the latest available reference year that is generally presented for each chapter.

Chapter number	Subject	Latest available reference year	NUTS version
1	Economy	2010	2010
2	Population	2011 or 1 January 2012	2010
3	Health	2010	2010
4	Education	2011	2010
5	Labour market	2011 for labour force; 2010 for earnings	2010
6	Structural business statistics	2010	2010
7	Tourism	2011	2010
8	Information society	2011	2010
9	Agriculture	2010 for regional accounts; 2010 for farm structure data; 2011 for livestock, arable farming and vineyards	2010
10	Transport	2011 (2010 for motorisation rate)	2010
11	Science and technology	2010 for R & D and researchers; 2011 for human resources; 2009 for patents	2010
12	Focus on European cities	2011 for Urban Audit (2008 for transport data); 2012 for perception surveys	2010
13	Focus on cities and metro regions	Not relevant	2010
14	Focus on income and living conditions	2011	2010
15	Focus on rural development	2011 or 1 January 2012 for population; 2010 for labour market; 2010 for regional accounts; 2010 for agriculture; 2011 for tourism	2010

([2]) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Eurostat may have more recent data than the information that is shown in this publication. Data can be found directly on Eurostat's website: the online data codes below all maps, tables and figures in the publication help to locate each data source (see below for more information pertaining to Eurostat online data codes). The regional datasets on Eurostat's website generally include national data alongside the regional analysis of information. As such, both regional and national data may be accessed through the online data code cited below each map, table or figure. In some exceptional cases, use has been made of national datasets on Eurostat's website in order to fill gaps in the regional data sets.

More information about statistics on regions and cities

Regional statistics are found on Eurostat's website under the heading 'Regions and cities' which is a subset of the domain for 'General and regional statistics'. Databases with more dimensions and longer time series than those presented in this publication are available.

It is also possible to download a set of MS Excel files that contain the specific data used to produce the maps and other illustrations for each chapter in this publication. These are also available on Eurostat's website on the *Eurostat regional yearbook* product page.

More information about rural development statistics

Information about Eurostat's rural development statistics is provided in a chapter that focuses on rural development. More information is available in Eurostat's dedicated 'Rural development' section which describes the methodology used to define urban and rural regions and provides links to rural development policy. Databases with statistics related to demography, the economy and the labour market are available for urban and rural regions.

More information about statistics on cities

Eurostat's statistics on cities, based on the Urban Audit data collection, provide a different focus to complement regional statistics. The main goal of the Urban Audit data collection is to provide information to assess the quality of life in European towns and cities. Eurostat collects and publishes data on several hundred indicators relating to the quality of urban life and living standards, including data on: demography, housing, health, crime, the labour market, economic activity, income disparities, local administration, civic involvement, educational qualifications, cultural infrastructure and tourism.

More information about Eurostat's statistics on cities is provided in a chapter that focuses on European cities. For more information about the Urban Audit data collection in general, please refer to the dedicated 'Regions and cities' section.

Information about statistics on metropolitan regions

Information about Eurostat's statistics on metropolitan regions is available in the dedicated 'Regions and cities' section. Databases with statistics related to demography, the economy, the labour market and patents are available for metropolitan regions.

Eurobase — Eurostat's online database

Under each table, figure or map in all Eurostat publications you will find hyperlinks with Eurostat online data codes, allowing easy access to the most recent data in Eurobase, Eurostat's online database. A data code leads to either a two- or three-dimensional table in the TGM (table, graph, map) interface or to an open dataset which generally contains more dimensions and longer time series using the Data Explorer interface ([3]). In the *Eurostat regional yearbook*, these online data codes are given as part of the source below each table, figure and map.

In the PDF version of this publication, the reader is led directly to the freshest data when clicking on the hyperlinks for Eurostat online data codes. Readers of the printed version can access the freshest data by typing a standardised hyperlink into a web browser, for example:

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/product?code=<data_code>&mode=view, where <data_code> is to be replaced by the online data code in question.

Statistics explained

All the chapters in the *Eurostat regional yearbook* are also included as articles in 'Statistics explained', Eurostat's user-friendly guide to European statistics, which is available on Eurostat's website. 'Statistics explained' is a wiki-based system, with an approach somewhat similar to Wikipedia, which presents statistical topics in an easy-to-understand way. Together, the articles make up an encyclopaedia of European statistics, which is completed by a statistical glossary clarifying the terms used. In addition, numerous links are provided to the latest data and metadata, as well as further information, making 'Statistics explained' a portal for regular and occasional users alike.

([3]) There are two types of online data codes: (1) tables (accessed using the TGM interface) have eight-character codes, which consist of three or five letters — the first of which is 't' — followed by five or three digits, for example tps00001 and tsdph220; (2) databases (accessed using the Data Explorer interface) have codes that use an underscore '_' within the syntax of the code, for example nama_gdp_c.

In March 2013, 'Statistics explained' contained more than 530 statistical articles and more than 1 500 glossary items, and its content is regularly expanded, while ongoing efforts are being made to increase its user-friendliness (for example, extending the portal to cover additional languages). 'Statistics explained' is used as a tool to publish new content for the *Eurostat regional yearbook* as each chapter is finalised. This means that the latest text on each topic will be available in 'Statistics explained' earlier than in the printed version and, in this way, the most recent results are made available to users without the inevitable delays that are part and parcel of the process of producing printed publications. Since the 2011 edition, the German and French versions of the *Eurostat regional yearbook* are only available on 'Statistics explained', rather than as printed publications. Furthermore, since the 2012 edition, a small number of articles (on the economy, population and education) are available on 'Statistics explained' in a further 18 European languages. 'Statistics explained' can be accessed via a link on the right-hand side of Eurostat's website or directly at: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained.

EU policies

Europe 2020 strategy

The Europe 2020 strategy, designed as the successor to the Lisbon strategy, was adopted by the European Council on 17 June 2010. It is the EU's common agenda for the next decade — and places an emphasis on the need for a new growth pact that can lead to a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, a path that can overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe's economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity, and underpin a sustainable social market economy.

The key areas of the strategy are limited to five headline targets for the EU as a whole, which are translated into national targets for each EU Member State, reflecting the specific situation of each economy. The aim is to reach a set of objectives on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy by the year 2020. Eurostat provides statistical support for measuring the progress being made towards these strategic objectives. The European Commission adopted seven flagship initiatives in addition to the headline targets, in order to drive progress towards the Europe 2020 goals. The Europe 2020 targets and initiatives are mentioned explicitly in many of the chapters within the *Eurostat regional yearbook*. More information about the strategy is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm.

Data for the Europe 2020 headline indicators are available on Eurostat's website at: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/europe_2020_indicators/headline_indicators.

Achieving the Europe 2020 goals will require active involvement across all regions of the EU: the Committee of the Regions has set up a monitoring platform to help mobilise and involve regional and local authorities. This aims to facilitate the exchange of information and good practices between local and regional policymakers, and to help the EU and its Member States address challenges and obstacles, mainly by means of monitoring exercises at the territorial levels.

Regional policies

EU regional policy is designed to further economic, social and territorial cohesion, by reducing the gap in development between regions and among Member States of the EU. Regional policy helps finance specific projects for regions and cities, supporting job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development; as such, it is in line with the priorities set by the Europe 2020 strategy (see above). During the current programming period which covers 2007 to 2013, economic and social cohesion policy across the regions will benefit from EUR 347 410 million. The three main objectives are:

- convergence, under which the poorest Member States and regions (gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant less than 75 % of the EU average) are eligible, accounting for around 82 % of the funds for 2007 to 2013;
- regional competitiveness and employment, accounting for around 16 % of the funds; all regions which are not covered by the convergence objective or transitional assistance are eligible for funding;
- European territorial cooperation, accounting for around 2.5 % of the funds available.

Regional statistics are employed for a range of policy-related purposes, including the allocation of Structural Funds. NUTS is used as an objective base to demarcate regional boundaries and determine geographic eligibility for funds, including:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which operates in all EU Member States and co-finances physical investments and, to a limited extent, training; the fund can intervene in the three objectives of regional policy;
- the European Social Fund (ESF), which aims to make the EU's workforce and companies better equipped to face global challenges through the promotion of better skills and job prospects;
- the Cohesion Fund, which co-finances mainly transport and environmental projects.

The ERDF supports regions covered by all three objectives. In relation to convergence, it focuses intervention on modernising and diversifying economic structures, as well as safeguarding or creating sustainable jobs. As regards regional competitiveness and employment, its priorities relate to innovation and the knowledge-based economy, environment and risk prevention, and access to transport and telecommunications services of general economic interest. Finally, in terms of its contribution to European territorial cooperation, the ERDF aims to develop economic and social cross-border

activities, the establishment and development of transnational cooperation, and to increase the efficiency of regional policy through interregional promotion and cooperation, as well as the networking and exchange of experiences between regional and local authorities.

The ESF aims to improve employment and job opportunities through interventions that are made within the framework of convergence and regional competitiveness and employment objectives. The ESF supports actions in six fields: improving human capital; improving access to employment and sustainability; increasing the adaptability of workers and enterprises (lifelong learning, designing and spreading innovative working organisations); reinforcing social inclusion by combating discrimination and facilitating access to labour markets among disadvantaged people; strengthening institutional capacity at national, regional and local levels; and promoting partnerships for reform in the fields of employment and inclusion.

The Cohesion Fund supports actions within the framework of the convergence objective; it finances activities including trans-European transport network and environmental projects, as well as energy or transport projects, as long as these demonstrate environmental benefits (such as energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy, developing rail transport systems, or improving public transport); this fund concerns Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia; while Spain is eligible to a phase-out fund.

Future cohesion policy — alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy

In January 2011 the European Commission published a communication on 'Regional policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020' (COM(2011) 17). This encourages EU Member States to reinforce their regional development expenditure on education, research and innovation and to develop smart specialisation strategies for guiding their future investment.

Preparations for cohesion policy after 2013 (the end of the current funding period) are taking place within the broader discussions of the overall EU budget and the Europe 2020 strategy. In October 2011 the European Commission adopted proposals relating to cohesion policy for the period 2014–20 and it is anticipated that the related legislation will enter into force in 2014. The package includes several proposals:

- a set of common rules;
- regulations for the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund;
- regulations for the European territorial cooperation goal and for the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC);
- regulations on the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) and the programme for social change and innovation;
- a communication on the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF).

These initiatives are designed to boost growth and jobs across Europe. The proposals focus on fewer priorities in line with these objectives and these will be at the heart of the partnership agreements between EU Member States and the European Commission. It is foreseen that the funds will be rendered more coherent and their impact strengthened by simplifying and harmonising the rules of different funds.

The proposals also cover 'social investment', to help people face challenges in the labour market, through the Globalisation Adjustment Fund, a new programme for social change and innovation and a reinforced European Social Fund.

In December 2011 the European Commission published 'The urban and regional dimension of Europe 2020 — seventh progress report on economic, social and territorial cohesion', which looks at the growth potential and hurdles faced by regions and cities; this identifies the gap for each region between the current situation and national 2020 targets and is intended to assist the design, monitoring and evaluation of regional development strategies — it is not intended that all regions should reach the national 2020 targets. The report proposes that programmes should select investment priorities bearing in mind the current situation and so concentrate on actions where investment will make the biggest contribution to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

More information is available from the website of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm.

Rural development policy

Many rural areas face significant challenges, for example to improve competitiveness in agriculture and forestry. More generally, average income per head is lower in rural regions than in urban areas, while the skills base is narrower and the service sector is less developed. However, rural areas provide raw materials, opportunities for rest and recreation, and have a role to play in actions against climate change. The declared aim of the EU's rural development policy is to meet the challenges faced by rural areas and unlock their potential.

Rural development policy is part of the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP). The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) underlies rural development policy for the period 2007–13. It is focused on three themes:

- improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry;
- improving the environment and the countryside;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas and the management of economy activity in rural areas.

While funding of the rural development policy is centred on the EAFRD, it is complemented by the ERDF and the ESF. The following are the main areas in which the ERDF is active that are related to rural development:

- creation of jobs outside of agriculture;
- development of access and connections between cities and rural areas, especially in the context of the information society;
- support for small and medium-sized enterprises in agriculture (support for innovation and the development of new products), agro-food activities and forestry;
- risk control in agriculture and forestry;
- the development of basic village infrastructures, particularly in those Member States that joined the EU in 2004 or 2007.

More information on rural development policy is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm.

More information on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is available at: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/general_framework/l60032_en.htm.

Future rural development policy — alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy and the reform of the CAP

In October 2011, as part of a wider set of proposals for the reform of the CAP, the European Commission presented a proposal for a regulation on support for rural development (COM(2011) 627 final/3). In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, six EU-wide priorities were outlined:

- fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas;
- enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability;
- promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture;
- restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry;
- promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry;
- promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

It is anticipated that this reformed support framework will be in place by January 2014.

Urban policies

One particular focus of economic and social cohesion policy has been urban development. Europe's cities are centres of economic activity, attracting innovation and employment. Upwards of 70 % of the EU's population live in urban areas. In addition, a considerable proportion face problems such as crime, poverty, unemployment, housing, traffic or environmental pressures.

The URBAN I and URBAN II EU initiatives ran from 1994 to 2006. As of 2007, the EU has reinforced the urban dimension of regional policy and fully integrated this into cohesion policy, with particular attention given to promoting social cohesion and environmental sustainability. The EU contributes to the sustainable development of urban areas through a range of policies and initiatives which cover many areas. The EU strategic guidelines on cohesion specify that programmes with a focus on urban areas can take different forms.

- There are actions to promote cities as motors of regional development: these aim to improve competitiveness, promote entrepreneurship, innovation and the development of services and boost the attractiveness of cities.
- Other actions aim to promote internal cohesion within urban areas: by improving the situation of deprived neighbourhoods, notably through rehabilitating the physical environment, redeveloping brownfield sites, and preserving and developing their historical and cultural heritage.
- Other actions aim to promote a more balanced, polycentric development of the EU by developing urban networks at a national and EU level: to achieve this objective, these actions aim to put in place networks linking cities in both physical (infrastructure, information technologies, etc.) and human (promotion of cooperation, etc.) terms, while paying specific attention to urban–rural interfaces.

Urban development — future cohesion policy

Among other issues, the European Commission's proposals for cohesion policy in the period 2014–20 put an increased emphasis on investing in urban environments and in urban transport. For example, they proposed that: at least 5 % of resources from the ERDF should be focused on sustainable urban development; innovative actions for sustainable urban development should be supported; and an urban development platform should be established to develop networks between cities and to introduce exchanges on urban policy.

One element of this policy is the European Commission's intention to seek direct, long-term interaction with mayors, aiming to identify future urban challenges and how they can be tackled successfully. The Urban Forum has been designed as an opportunity to discuss new proposals for policy developments with mayors, with a particular focus on the role of cities in promoting sustainable growth. The first forum was held on 16 February 2012 and focused on:

- the challenge of coordinating thematic investments in cities and promoting integrated urban development;
- innovative actions for sustainable urban development;
- integrated territorial investment: how may it work for fostering the urban dimension of the cohesion policy?