

Cohesion Policy and Bulgaria

In 2014-2020, Bulgaria will manage **seven operational programmes** under EU Cohesion Policy. Of these, two programmes (Transport, Environment) will be funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund, two (Innovation & Competitiveness, Regional Development) will be funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), two programmes (Human Resources Development, Good Governance) will receive funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) including the Youth Employment Initiative and one programme (Science & Education) will be funded by both ESF and ERDF.



Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF) eligibility 2014-2020

- Less developed regions
(GDP/head < 75 % of EU-27 average)
- Transition regions
(GDP/head between $\geq 75\%$ and $< 90\%$ of EU-27 average)
- More developed regions
(GDP/head $\geq 90\%$ of EU-27 average)

How much will be invested in Bulgaria in 2014-2020?

For 2014-2020, Bulgaria has been allocated around **€7.6 billion** (current prices) in total Cohesion Policy funding:

- **€5.09 billion** for less developed regions (all), of which ERDF € 3.57 billion, ESF € 1.52 billion.
- **€2.28 billion** under the Cohesion Fund
- **€165.6 million** for European Territorial Cooperation
- **€55.2 million** for the Youth Employment Initiative.

What are the main investment priorities for Bulgaria?

The investment priorities for 2014-2020 have been set out in a Partnership Agreement with the European Commission. The priorities include:

- Raising competitiveness and sustainability of the economy.
- Creating a high quality research and innovation system that will allow reaching the EU2020 target of 1.5 % GDP expenditure on R&I.
- Developing sustainable and environmental friendly modes of transport along Trans-European Networks (TEN-T).
- Stimulating integrated urban development in priority areas within selected cities in Bulgaria.
- Improving management of water and other natural resources, including biodiversity and Natura 2000, closing the gap with the acquis and increasing the efficiency of water and waste management.
- Raising the employment population aged 20-64 to 76%; reducing the level of unemployed youths aged 15-29 to 7%; achieving an employment rate among older persons (aged 55-64) of 53%.
- Reducing the share of students dropping out of the educational system to 11%; raising the share of persons aged 30-34 with completed higher or equivalent education to 36%.
- Strengthening the capacity of public administration and the judiciary and promoting good governance.

What results have been achieved so far?

The total allocation from Cohesion Policy funding for the 2007-2013 period was € 6.9 billion.

Bulgaria has been a Member State of the European Union since 2007. The country has needed time to adapt to implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy investments. Nonetheless, Cohesion Policy funding has been an important driver for reforms in Bulgaria, a role which will further increase in 2014-2020.

Since the beginning of the 2007-2013 funding period, EU Cohesion Policy funding has helped Bulgaria to:

- create more than 1,300 jobs;
- serve over 280,000 more people by waste water projects;
- enable more than 137,000 persons to acquire or upgrade their vocational qualification and over 178,000 persons to acquire key competencies;
- realise many transport infrastructure projects, such as the extension of the Sofia metro, Trakiya Motorway, the Sofia Airport;
- improve urban transport for some 1,289,744 citizens, mainly in the 6 biggest cities of Bulgaria, namely Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Pleven, Stara Zagora;
- improve educational infrastructure for over 30,000 students and pupils;
- enable more than 398,000 m² of renovated parks, green areas, pedestrian areas, bicycle lanes, playgrounds;
- provide scholarships to some 172,000 students;
- provide social services in a family environment for more than 51,000 persons;
- modernise 20 cultural facilities;
- invest in energy saving measures in public buildings and schools.

Cohesion policy success stories 2007-2013

ERDF projects

● Revitalising urban transport in Varna

The city of Varna in Bulgaria is the largest city on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast and the eleventh largest city in the Balkans. With a growing economy and an important tourist sector the city wants to reduce the number of polluting vehicles, reduce its dependence on imported oil, as well as utilise unused electricity generated in the country. The project addresses the need for a [fast, effective, and accessible urban transport system](#) for all citizens of Varna through renovation of the central bus station, purchase of rolling stock, and the construction of a rapid bus transit line connecting the most distant and densely populated areas with the city centre.

Total cost: €58.5 million (ERDF contribution: €39.5 million)

- **New fit-for-purpose home for children with disabilities**

Bulgaria has put in place a national action plan to dismantle 130 large scale children's homes and move all children [in those institutions into alternative, specially adapted and suitable accommodation](#). Tailored support services are made available. Its overall aim is to bring about a shift in the way children with disabilities are being cared for facilitating their social inclusion in society. The project is supported by the ERDF, ESF and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF).

Total cost: € 120 million (EU contribution: € 102 million including ESF contribution: € 48.5 million, ERDF contribution: € 46.5 million, EAFRD contribution: € 7 million)

- **New waste treatment facilities in Sofia**

[This major project](#) will deliver a modern integrated municipal waste management system to meet the requirements of EU waste legislation. The 1.25 million people living in Sofia will benefit from the project.

Total cost: € 177 million (ERDF contribution: € 126 million)

- **Network of resource centres to train women in ICT and entrepreneurship**

Bulgaria has been participating in a transnational project designed to help women gain the skills and know-how they need to find jobs, particularly in traditionally male-dominated areas such as ICT/technology and entrepreneurship. Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, are involved in [the WINNET 8 project](#), a network of resource centres across Europe designed to provide women with skills and advice to secure jobs in ICT and entrepreneurship.

Total cost: € 2.4 million (ERDF contribution: € 1.8 million)

ESF projects

- **Making school more attractive for young people**

574 158 students from 3 300 Bulgarian schools have participated in extra-curriculum activities within the operation 'Making school more attractive for young people', which started in 2008. It aims to reduce the number of early school leavers, improve employment opportunities and help social integration among the young people by encouraging participation in extra-curricular activities. Many of the students are from the Roma community.

Total cost: € 60.4 million (ESF contribution: € 571.4 million)

Find out more about EU cohesion policy projects in Bulgaria

For more project examples, as well as links to the complete list of beneficiaries of EU cohesion policy funding, see the following websites:

- [European Commission Regional Policy website](#)
- [European Social Fund website](#)