



European  
Commission

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# panorama

inforegio

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EU funds support stability and cooperation

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Regional and  
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## ▶ EDITORIAL

### Johannes Hahn

*Member of the European Commission  
in charge of Regional Policy*

Since its inception the European Union and its predecessors have promoted an underlying strategy of using economic forces to bring about and sustain peace, prosperity and respect for democracy and human rights.

We were all delighted for the EU to receive the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of six decades of work building, after the devastation of World War II, an economic structure that would make future hostilities between the parties unthinkable. It showed how historic enemies can become partners.

It was refreshing that in a period of financial crisis and turmoil, the Nobel Committee was able to take a longer-term view of the EU's achievements. But this peace-building role of the EU should not be viewed as a purely historic starting point. As you will read in this issue, the EU has played a very positive role in helping bring stability and progress to a once strife-ridden part of the Union: Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

After the ceasefire announcements back in 1994, former European Commission President Jacques Delors was the first to declare that if support was needed 'Europe would not be found wanting' and proposed a fund to assist the peace process.

Indeed, over nearly 18 years some EUR 1.3 billion of EU funds have been invested alongside national funding in more than 20000 projects to bring about peace and reconciliation in this troubled corner of the EU. It was a pleasure for me to listen to two former adversaries speaking in friendship at our PEACE Programme conference in Brussels on 31 January, 'Bringing

Divided Communities Together'. They are now the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. They fully recognise the importance of the support received from Europe and its constructive approach to rebuilding their community and promoting long-term peace.

### Rebuilding the EU economy

Regional policy is playing an increasingly important role in helping Europe find a way out of the current economic crisis. It is the EU's primary investment policy and is being tightly focused on sectors and priorities that will help return growth and competitiveness.

Regional policy is motivating the regions to capitalise on their strengths and, with EU support, to embark on 'smart specialisation' strategies for growth to realise their full competitive potential.

Given the current EU-wide financial constraints, the negotiations surrounding the Union's future budget – the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) – have been particularly intense. Cuts have been required in many areas and the Regional Policy funds have not been immune from this.

The tightly focused strategy for the targeted and cost-effective use of these funds will ensure, however, that regional policy remains a key driving force for bringing about economic recovery and long term prosperity across the EU.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hahn'.

# ▶EU STRUCTURAL FUNDS PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS



Strategic funding from the EU's Structural Funds has over the past 20 years been an important element in returning Northern Ireland (UK) to normality after the years of conflict. This was the message from a special conference 'Bringing Divided Communities Together – sharing the experience of the EU PEACE programme', held in Brussels on 31 January, at the initiative of European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn.

'Some may be surprised to discover that the PEACE programme for Northern Ireland is covered by the Structural Funds, but they should not be. Today's regional policy is an instrument to deliver the EU's ambitions – contributing to the creation of jobs, growth, and yes, peace,' stated Commissioner Hahn in his opening address.

'The EU PEACE programmes have touched the lives of around a million people in Northern Ireland and Ireland's Border Region and helped to create the conditions in which peace and reconciliation could take root. EU regional funds have an important role to play in helping to lay the groundwork for a shared society in which every community benefits from the fruits of the peace,' he affirmed.



FROM RIGHT TO LEFT:  
Johannes Hahn, Peter Robinson  
and Martin McGuinness

Keynote speakers at the conference were leading political figures from Northern Ireland including First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, as well as the Irish Minister Brendan Howlin. The centrepiece of the conference was a series of innovative project testimonies from the PEACE programme giving a detailed insight into the work accomplished and the impact that this work continues to have on people's lives.

## ▶ THE 'PEACE BRIDGE'

In June 2011 Commissioner Hahn officially opened the 'PEACE Bridge' in Derry-Londonderry alongside the political leaders from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The PEACE Bridge is one of the more iconic projects supported under the PEACE III Programme with an ERDF contribution of EUR 11.2 million. Derry-Londonderry became an increasingly divided city during 'the Troubles' seeing thousands of Protestants moving away from the west bank. The PEACE Bridge has now physically united both sides of the riverbank and its design represents a symbolic handshake across the River Foyle. It is a powerful new symbol for the city, physically and metaphorically, linking communities on both sides and for whom the river had become a significant religious and sectarian divide.

## EUR 2 billion in support

Between 1995 and 2013 the Northern Ireland government has received almost EUR 2 billion through three consecutive PEACE programmes with EUR 1.3 billion coming from the EU and the rest from Members States.

The PEACE programme has been a long-standing partnership between the people and political leaders of Northern Ireland and the European Commission, supported by the governments of the UK and Ireland.

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) was set up with the responsibility of allocating the peace funds with a view to strengthening cohesion through practical projects and the development of a more inclusive society.

## Towards a stable society

The funding and support has over the years helped give space for local communities to come to terms with life after conflict and to engage practically and strategically in activity which ensures a future which is brighter and more prosperous.

The main aims of the current PEACE III programme, which has a budget of EUR 333 million, are to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by supporting operations and projects which help to bring communities together.

Peter Robinson, First Minister of Northern Ireland, said: *'We now enjoy relative peace and stability after a period which saw 3 000 people murdered and tens of thousands injured. The input of the EU has been crucial. It has supported thousands of projects across the province to build a better and shared future for our people.'*

*'Northern Ireland is a region transformed, but the journey isn't over yet,' he cautioned. 'The recent disorder is a wake-up call that there is still much work to be done.'*

Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness highlighted the symbolic importance of the Peace Bridge that was opened in Derry-Londonderry in June 2011. He said the bridge which cost EUR 14.6 million to build – over EUR 11 million of which was EU funding – *'has changed the face of Derry forever'*.

*'The bridge brings the two once divided parts of the city closer together and is a testament to the aims of the PEACE programme,' he explained. 'People from both the previously divided Protestant and Catholic communities can walk or cycle across it to a vacant military site that is now a shared space for our people. Since it was opened more than one million users have been recorded.'*

## Building skills and confidence

The PEACE programme, it was stressed, has been only one element of the peace process in Northern Ireland. But it has played an important part in maintaining the conditions in which other work could continue.

The programme has involved the development of projects in some very difficult and deprived areas. They aim to engage with young people to provide them with the skills and confidence to deal with and avoid sectarian violence. These projects are often accompanied by measures to provide the necessary skills to get a job. They also use sport, digital media and a variety of other tools to reach the young, to help build awareness of how to live in a diverse community, and reduce the risk of youngsters getting involved in dissident groups. ▶▶

## FOOTBALL FOR ALL

Football is being used as a hook to bring the divided communities together. Sport, and in particular soccer, has tremendous reach and with support from EU PEACE III, the Irish Football Association's *Football For All* project has one hundred staff who are working with 53 local football clubs to promote a message of mutual respect. The project is helping local clubs reconnect with the communities. Even a cross-community football team, Limestone United, has been set up to encourage youngsters from both sides to work together as a team.

## ALEXANDRA PARK – ‘BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS’

Alexandra Park, in north Belfast, has long been a ‘contested space’ and in 1994, when many were planning for a time without conflict, a new ‘Peace Wall’ was erected in the middle of the park to prevent nightly clashes. This one act, in a time of increasing peace, was a salutary reminder of how far the community had to travel.

The park, with its 20 year old 3 metre high barrier put up to calm violence between the catholic and protestant communities, is a symbol of what must change.

In 2009, a new engagement process, facilitated by the company Groundwork NI, set out to return the park to a state of eventual normality – underpinned by funding totalling £ 280 000 (approximately EUR 320 000) from the EU, Belfast City Council, the Department of Justice NI and Alpha Programme. A gate is now open in the midst of the ‘Peace Wall’ for a few hours each day at least, allowing residents from each side of the divide to enjoy the beautiful park environment in its entirety. Groundwork NI Director Sylvia Gordon said: *‘The Peace Wall has been opened allowing school children from the two communities to play together after two decades of separation.’*

As part of their approach a steering group was set up bringing together key figures in the local communities to agree on the approach and steps to be taken in both developing the facilities in Alexandra Park and opening the wall.

*‘We bring about local agreements before we do anything and help build lasting relationships,’* Gordon emphasises. *‘A series of events were organised in the park before the official opening to build up the feeling of normality. We are managing to transform this contested space and work towards integration at all levels.’*

*‘Across the province there are some 59 “peace walls” and removing them will be a long and difficult process,’* Gordon explained. *‘A further 14 peace walls will be tackled in interface areas in northern Belfast where there is an appetite for peace and where we can reconnect the communities.’*



Children from both communities are now able to play together in Alexandra Park for the first time in 20 years through the opening of the Peace Gate.

BELOW:  
Groundwork NI Chair Paul McErlean (left) opening the Alexandra Park Peace Gate with Minister for Justice David Ford and Groundwork NI Director Sylvia Gordon.



*‘The EU PEACE programme is a fine example of the Union’s commitment to peace and reconciliation,’* Commissioner Hahn stressed. *‘It is not about quick fixes. It is designed to promote long term cooperation. The PEACE programme has helped give the people a sense of ownership of the peace process. It is a bottom-up process with the people involved coming up with their own solutions.’*

The conference audience included a number of delegates from other divided regions looking for solutions – including the Balkans, Libya, Cyprus, Israel and the Palestinian territories.

In parallel to the conference was an exhibition of several other PEACE III funded projects undertaken with EU funds to facilitate the peace process and highlight how it could serve as an example to other conflict zones.

### The EU, the ‘honest broker’

Pat Colgan the chief executive of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) said that the EU contribution in Northern Ireland has been extraordinary not only in terms of funding but also in terms of the discipline it has brought to the whole exercise.

*‘The EU offered a certainty of a seven year funding window in which you can plan with some certainty,’* he explained. *‘Importantly, the EU provided a neutral space – neither in one camp or the other. The parties felt safe to engage. Over a period of time it helped build confidence with the communities involved.’*



The invisible legacy of the conflict takes a long time to heal, he said. *'Confidence, trust and respect is difficult to rebuild. We now have a post conflict generation. They continue to carry the seeds of division and legacy of conflict. It is essential to make them active members of society. The PEACE IV programme is now being prepared. It will focus on local partnership structures and seek to involve young people, particularly those in disadvantaged areas. The current peace is fragile. There is still considerable work that needs to be done.'*

## Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre

The people in Northern Ireland have amassed a wealth of experience in peace building that can be of use to others. To help transmit their knowledge, a new Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre is being built on the highly symbolic site of the former Maze/Long Kesh prison. The centre will help spread the lessons learned in Northern Ireland and ensure the memory of the peace process is recorded for future generations.

*'It is a tribute to those who have worked on the PEACE programmes that there has already been interest from all around the world in its achievements: from Russia, Palestine, the Balkans, Colombia, and South Korea. This is something to be proud of,'* added Commissioner Hahn.

*'If you want to see peace at work in the EU, go to any cross border region. There you will see how today, not only transport and trade, but jobs, the environment and health services are benefiting from cross border cooperation under EU regional*

### ► PEACE I (1995-1999)

15 000 PROJECTS

TOTAL FUNDING: EUR 667 000 000

EU FUNDING: EUR 500 000 000

Addressed the immediate problems emerging from the conflict: destroyed communities, rebuilding, regeneration, creating strong inclusive local community partnerships involving elected representatives, NGOs, etc, working with the victims and survivors, and reintegrating former paramilitaries.

### ► PEACE II (2000-2006)

7 000 PROJECTS

TOTAL FUNDING: EUR 995 000 000

EU FUNDING: EUR 609 000 000

Using the discipline of the Structural Funds with strong controls but tailored to the needs of a region emerging from conflict. Stimulating economic renewal with more involvement of local partnership structures and locally based action plans reaching into every part of the society and touching all of the 2.8 million population.

### ► PEACE III (2007-2013)

400 PROJECTS

TOTAL FUNDING: EUR 333 000 000

EU FUNDING: EUR 225 000 000

Concentrating on the hearts and minds of people, it is a strategic package designed to promote long-term partnerships in cross-community and cross-border cooperation with an emphasis on fewer yet larger and more strategic projects.

*policy. The PEACE programme, let us not forget, is also a cross border cooperation programme. This is why I wanted to bring their experience to Brussels. I want the widest possible audience for their achievements – firstly because they deserve our recognition and our thanks, but also because I believe other parts of the world may be able to learn from their work.'*

*'In Northern Ireland, projects aiming to change attitudes and help people to gain the necessary job skills contribute to social cohesion. Capital investment projects, such as community and business centres have a clear economic value. Through these investments in human and physical capital, the PEACE programme is helping to turn Northern Ireland away from conflict and towards the path of peace and prosperity, creating growth and jobs along the way,'* he emphasised.

#### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/activity/ireland/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/activity/ireland/index_en.cfm)

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/peace/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/peace/index_en.cfm)

# ▶ KEY ROLE OF COHESION POLICY IN RETURNING ECONOMIC GROWTH TO EUROPE



**Cohesion policy is becoming the primary investment policy of the European Union and is being tightly synchronised with the EU's Europe 2020 objectives to help return growth and competitiveness to EU Member States and to effectively reduce economic, social and territorial disparities.**

The strategic aim of cohesion policy will be to capitalise on regional strengths and to make a more effective, combined use of European national and regional public funds. It is widely recognised that strategic investment of this type is needed not only in the poorest EU regions, but in all regions of Europe so that they stay competitive.

The next generation of programmes must be adapted to the new economic realities. The overriding economic situation today is such that there is no credible alternative to reach

macro-economic stability other than sustained fiscal consolidation and structural reforms. To support this process, targeted growth-enhancing investments are needed that complement and are coherent with wider structural and regulatory reforms. The European Union is shaping its response to these challenges through closer economic coordination combining the Europe 2020 strategy and the 'European Semester' process. While Europe 2020 is relatively well known since its launch in 2010, how will cohesion policy be affected by and contribute to the European Semester?

▶ **The European Semester is a process of aligning an array of national and EU economic policies in one of the most difficult economic and social climates for 50 years.**

The European Semester cycle provides the framework for Member States to align their economic, budgetary and





Commissioner Johannes Hahn visiting Swansea waterfront in Wales, UK, with Alun Davies, Welsh Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and European Programmes. They discussed the state of play in implementation of cohesion policy in Wales and Commission proposals for the next programming period 2014-2020, as well as visiting several EU co-financed projects.

structural reform policies with the EU's Stability and Growth Pact and the Europe 2020 strategy. It is about building a common understanding of the priorities for action at national and EU level as the EU seeks to return to a path of sustainable growth and job creation.

The five main deadlines in each yearly cycle are:

- ▶ the European Commission adopts the Annual Growth Survey which launches the European semester cycle of economic policy coordination each year;
- ▶ Member States submit updated reform plans in April;
- ▶ the Commission makes its assessment and recommendations by the end of May;
- ▶ the European Council makes a formal decision in June;
- ▶ Member States follow up and adopt their national budgets.

The European Semester process, now in its third year, is first and foremost a process of aligning an array of national and

EU economic policies in one of the most difficult economic and social climates for 50 years. The economic policies in question start with ensuring macro-economic stability, ensuring sustainable fiscal policies, stabilising financial institutions, and regulatory and structural reforms that will create the conditions for growth and jobs. It is through these annual cycles of coordination that the European Union is also reporting, monitoring and framing recommendations on the progress towards the Europe 2020 growth strategy. This economic policy coordination process is relevant for regions for several interrelated reasons.

It is clear that amongst Europe's regions and cities there are world leaders in innovation and research, world leaders in sustainable development, and some of the most extensive and advanced systems of social care delivered locally. But no region can take such success for granted. Success now can quickly be eroded over time, especially given the economic context. Structural reforms and innovations are needed to retain competitiveness and create new opportunities.

▶ Given the very different territorial arrangements it is through the Member States that the cities and regions need to be heard.

Europe's regions and cities are affected very differently by the current financial and economic situation. The specific situation of regions in any two Member State has important differences. This is why the EU depends on the Member States to conduct the essential coordination of national economic policies in the light of their territorial and institutional structure. Given the very different territorial arrangements it is through the Member States policy making and coordination that the cities and regions need, first and foremost, to be heard. Since the launch of the Europe 2020 strategy the Commission has encouraged the Member States to mobilise the municipalities and regions.

▶ Delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive investments is the most effective way to reducing economic, social and territorial disparities.

The Commission recognises that these successes are not equally spread across the Union. Synchronised and focused investments coordinated with other economic policies can effectively support the Europe 2020 ten year growth strategy. Delivering these smart, sustainable and inclusive investments by way of national and regional programmes is also the most effective and pragmatic way to support the treaty objectives of reducing economic, social and territorial disparities. Cohesion Policy is here a major source of stable support to investment to address such disparities (see box p. 10). ▶▶

Effective public capital expenditure is an important prerequisite and indeed a driver for economic growth and jobs. That is why investment policies are an intrinsic part of the economic policy mix mentioned above. A stable macro-economic climate is needed to encourage private investment. A sustainable fiscal policy framework is necessary to finance long term public capital investment. Effective public investment requires that investments are coherent with internal market rules and regulatory initiatives. The Commission is convinced of the role of Europe's regions and cities in delivering economic policies and investment for

growth and jobs. During the last few years cohesion policy has also shown how investments should be adjusted in the light of important changes in the economy and demand (see box p.11).

► 2013 will be a critical year for cohesion policy.

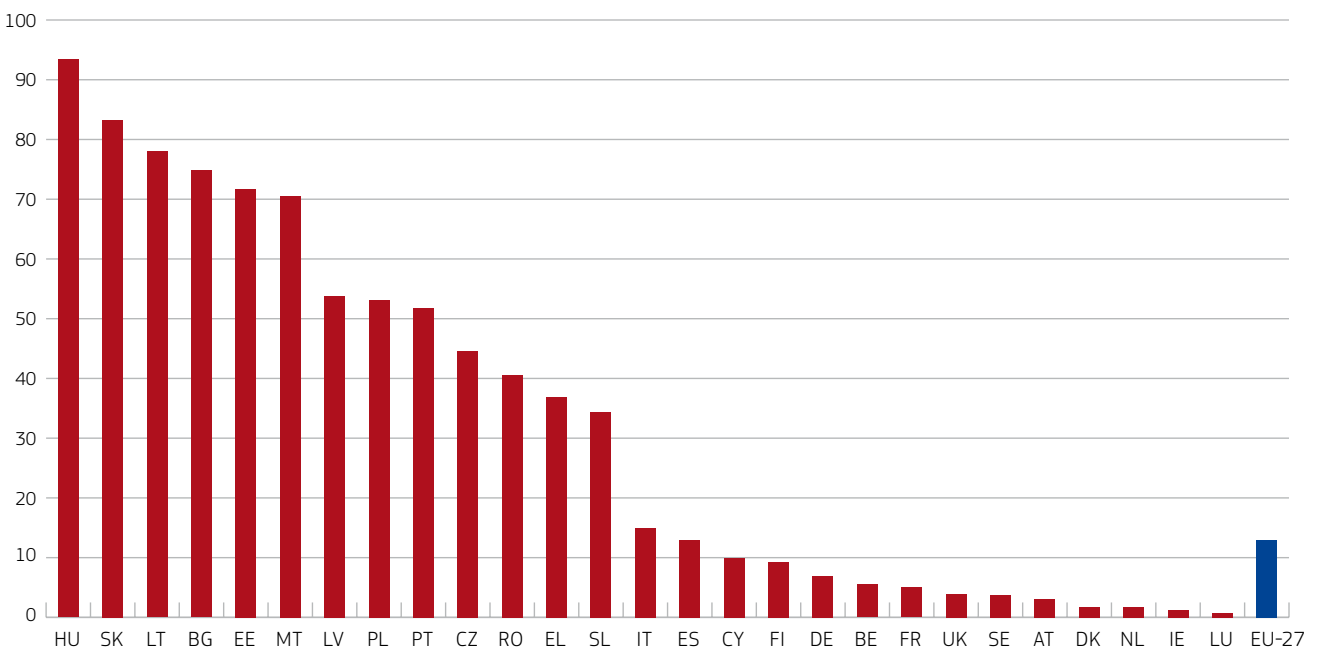
2013 will be a critical year for cohesion policy since Member States will present their strategic multi-annual investment plans in the form of Partnership Agreements for the period 2014-2020. In these agreements, Member States must

## SUCCESSFUL LEVERAGE EFFECT OF COHESION POLICY AS A PUBLIC INVESTMENT VEHICLE

Cohesion policy mobilises on average EUR 65 billion of investments each year (EU and national co-financing combined), which corresponds to more than 50% of total public investment in many Member States. This understandably has a sizeable impact on the EU economy. GDP in the 12 Member States which entered the Union in or after 2004, will increase by around 1.5% each year between 2007 and 2016 as the current cohesion programmes are implemented. Cohesion policy has both a short term impact during the implementation of programmes and a long term impact by improving the structure and performance of the European economy. As part of this process regions are required to set clear strategic priorities and to focus on local strengths, remove bottlenecks to innovation and harness the local innovation potential.

Recent data reported by the Member States demonstrates that 2011 was the year when cohesion policy in the current period began to show significant results. Nearly 190 000 gross jobs were reported created in 2011 in ERDF/Cohesion Fund programmes, bringing the total in current programmes to nearly 400 000. 27 000 start-ups were supported in 2011, bringing the programmes' totals to 53 000. Together with the co-financing provided by Member States, cohesion policy accounts for a very significant proportion of public investment in Europe – and more than half of all public investment in several Member States. At a time of necessary fiscal consolidation, cohesion policy is therefore making a major contribution to Europe's future prosperity and to the achievement of the Europe 2020 goals.

► Cohesion funding (EU and national) as a % of total public investment (average 2009-2011)



ensure that the strategic long-term investment priorities are fully consistent with their National Reform Programmes. They must also support the Europe 2020 targets and relevant Country Specific Recommendations which the European Commission will present this year.

The Commission has an important role in monitoring and analysing economic progress and identifying the main development gaps. In discussion with the Member States, it will help drive national economies towards more focused investment with a strong emphasis on growth. To correctly identify the challenges and potential local and regional knowledge is very important. In the next programming period Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes should follow a territorial intervention logic, where the challenges and potential of territories are the basis for priorities and investments.

The success of the Commission's proposals for a reformed cohesion policy will largely depend on how these proposals are translated into concrete actions on the ground. And here is where the role of partners is crucial: partners, in particular local and regional authorities, are best placed to ensure both ownership of the programmes and quality of the implementation. Not only because they know the needs of their territories, but also the means required to address these needs.

► **Local and regional authorities are best placed to ensure both ownership of the programmes and quality of the implementation.**

A key feature of the 2014-2020 cohesion policy will be the targeting of a smaller number of specific areas for investment. This approach will play an essential role in shifting investment towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In the process it will be supporting innovation and SMEs while tackling climate, energy and environmental issues, and creating jobs.

This 'thematic concentration' aims to maximise the added-value of investment for Europe as a whole via a thematic menu of global priorities but has the flexibility to adapt strategies to the individual needs and challenges of regions. Such financial concentration will deliver a clearer focus on results, provide a stronger rationale for public investments and permit more reliable reporting of outputs and results. It will also provide a performance framework and will reward and further support well-functioning programmes.

(1) [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/what/future/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm)

(2) [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-your-country/index_en.htm)

## THEMATIC REPROGRAMMING

The flexibility of cohesion policy is reflected in the ability of targets for funding to be changed or 'reprogrammed' in a dynamic way according to needs.

The largest thematic reprogramming exercises (in relative terms) have taken place in Ireland (42%), Malta (24%), Portugal (24%), Bulgaria (12.5%) Spain (12.2%), and Lithuania (11.3%).

The net effect of reprogramming has thus far led to strengthening of allocations to energy, innovation and RTD, labour market (including youth), generic enterprise support, road, and cultural and social infrastructures.

### Reprogramming towards youth and SMEs

Since early 2012, at least twelve Member States have redirected significant resources within and among their ERDF and/or ESF operational programmes towards measures to enhance workers' employability, combat and prevent youth unemployment and reinforce support to SMEs.

In the eight Member States targeted by the 'Barroso Initiative', at least 625 000 young people (October 2012) are likely to benefit from the reallocation for youth related programmes. Also in response to the Youth action teams and bilateral meetings, many Member States have now developed comprehensive initiatives for youth employment and youth jobs plans, as well as education and training programmes.

In the period 2007-2013 cohesion policy is the largest source of EU support to SMEs. More than EUR 25 billion is dedicated under the ERDF to SMEs and the major share of a further EUR 27 billion in generic business support also benefits SMEs. In relation to SMEs, the action teams have led to multiple measures to reinforce or accelerate ERDF support to SMEs with around 56 000 additional SMEs expected to benefit.

The informal process of preparing the future programmes has begun based on informal Commission position papers<sup>(1)</sup> and also taking into account the 2012 Country Specific Recommendations and the analysis set out in the Staff Working Documents<sup>(2)</sup>. This process of coordination will intensify in 2013 to ensure that the next generation of programmes bring the most effective contribution yet to growth and jobs in our regions and Member States.

### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/what/europe2020/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/europe2020/index_en.cfm)



# ▶ REGIOSTARS 2013 AWARDS REVEALS MORE INNOVATIVE PROJECTS IN THE REGIONS

The RegioStars 2013 Awards ceremony took place in Brussels on 31 January and saw the announcement of the five winning projects selected by the jury in the categories: Smart Growth, Sustainable Growth, Inclusive Growth, CityStar and Information & Communication.

Over six years the RegioStars Awards have grown in momentum with this year seeing a record number of entries and an impressive display of innovation and creative thinking. The RegioStars Awards give recognition to the outstanding innovative projects that have received investment through EU Regional Policy since January 2000 and that are helping to create jobs for the future.

The Awards were presented by European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn, and the President of the RegioStars jury, Luc Van den Brande, the former President of the Committee of the Regions.

#### ▶ FIND OUT MORE

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# ▷ INSPIRING EUROPE'S REGIONS

LUC VAN DEN BRANDE,  
PRESIDENT OF THE  
REGIOSTARS JURY, LOOKS  
BACK AT SIX YEARS OF  
REGIOSTARS AWARDS



**The RegioStars Awards are now one of the most competitive and wide ranging sets of awards available for our regions to profile their achievements and benchmark themselves against other initiatives. The competition seeks to reward the efforts of people committed – each one at his own level – to the innovative development of their own region and of the European Union.**

## 500 projects over 6 years

In the past six years, some 500 projects have been nominated from across all Member States. 160 projects have been shortlisted and 31 have received the coveted trophy. The projects this year were once again of high quality, having an excellent innovative character in facing particular situations in given regions.

The projects have importantly involved the development of strong partnerships, working first with ERDF/ESF support and then with their own resources – standing on their own two feet and achieving concrete results on the ground.

The winning projects feature four key factors: innovation, impact, sustainability and partnership with an added effort regarding communication.

The projects are multidimensional in terms of their objectives. They are also multilevel, involving committed partners working in cooperation to propel their regions forward.

## International showcase of best practice

Six years ago RegioStars was created as a forum where good practice examples could be showcased and shared internationally. Often the successful local and regional initiatives co-financed by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund would remain known only locally.

Now they can be a source of inspiration for other regions who can take on board these best practices and customise them for their local environments.

**‘The RegioStars competition makes it happen for innovative projects and opens a window of opportunity for really great creativity at regional level all over Europe.’**

Luc van den Brande, President of the RegioStars jury

## Opportunity for creativity

The RegioStars competition makes it happen for innovative projects and opens a window of opportunity for really great creativity at regional level all over Europe. By their success they prove once again that cohesion policy contributes to the social and economic development of the European Union.



**SMART GROWTH**  
**CONNECTING UNIVERSITIES**  
**TO REGIONAL GROWTH**  
**FOSTERING KNOWLEDGE-BASED**  
**GROWTH IN PORTO**



The *UPTEC science and technology park* project in Porto brings together academia with business in a dynamic, innovation-centred environment and helps promote *knowledge and technology transfer*. The park in the Norte

Region of Portugal hosts 110 companies (95 of which are start-ups), employs around 800 specialists and is a key asset for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the region. With activities spanning diverse sectors from film and TV to energy efficiency and marine technology, UPTEC is making a valuable contribution to reducing the region's traditional dependence on low-tech industry.

►Find out more: [www.uptec.up.pt](http://www.uptec.up.pt)

**SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**  
**SUPPORTING RESOURCE**  
**EFFICIENCY IN SMEs**  
**SUPPLYING BUSINESSES WITH COST**  
**CUTTING KEY ADVICE ON GREEN ISSUES**

The *ENWORKS Resource Efficiency Support* project in the North-West of England provides professional environmental advice and support to businesses via a network of local

organisations which it has brought together. Through specialist on-site support, online tools and knowledge/skills



transfer, ENWORKS helps small businesses to increase resource efficiency, cut business costs and be more competitive while reducing their exposure to environmental risks such as resource price volatility. In its last two projects alone, ENWORKS has provided

intensive support to over 4000 SMEs, resulting in annual cost savings estimated at GBP 85 million. In terms of environmental benefits, 75 800 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, 646 000 m<sup>3</sup> of water and 10 700 tonnes of materials have been saved to date.

►Find out more: [www.enworks.com](http://www.enworks.com)

**INCLUSIVE GROWTH**  
**SOCIAL INNOVATION: CREATIVE RESPONSES**  
**TO SOCIETAL CHALLENGES**

**ENGAGING THE LONG-TERM**  
**UNEMPLOYED**

The *Individual Employment Paths* project set out to reduce the long-term unemployment among the over 45 year-olds in Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Poland. It adapted to the Polish context



a creative Finnish model to help those facing barriers to employment (such as health, age or disability) re-enter the



labour market. The approach includes a general evaluation of each individual as well as long-term issue-specific rehabilitation, coaching, psychological support and mediation with employers. The results have been very encouraging: of the 32 participants, 80% found jobs and 90% of these were still employed after 15 months. It will now be expanded to other areas by the Polish public employment services.

►Find out more: [www.erkon.elblag.com.pl](http://www.erkon.elblag.com.pl)

## CITYSTAR INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT REGENERATING DISADVANTAGED AREAS IN BERLIN



The *Neighbourhood Management Berlin* project is a strategy launched by the Berlin city authorities in 1999 with the aim of regenerating socially disadvantaged areas of the city. Facing issues such as neglected public and green spaces, poor ethnic integration and high

youth unemployment, the project engages neighbourhood actors and includes them in a democratic decision-making process. Neighbourhood Councils of local actors were set-up to encourage them to take responsibility for improving their own neighbourhoods and shaping their own destinies. Action included support to schools, the refurbishment of public venues and the promotion of a shared neighbourhood culture.

Activities have now expanded to encompass career support as well as social and ethnic integration – particularly in neighbourhoods with a high proportion of the population from a migrant background (up to 79% in some cases).

►Find out more: [www.quartiersmanagement-berlin.de](http://www.quartiersmanagement-berlin.de)

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION PROMOTING EU REGIONAL POLICY WITH SHORT VIDEOS CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

The *Towards Work* project in Lithuania has been helping get jobs for people with hearing disabilities. It has worked to combat stereotypes and challenge the traditional attitudes towards the deaf while highlighting the employment potential of people with hearing impairments. It implemented a video-led social campaign with a series of short videos for TV and the Internet to change attitudes. It has also engaged specially-trained recruitment agents working in a series of pilot job centres to help those with hearing impairments find suitable work opportunities and where necessary mediate with employers. Of the more than 600 people with hearing disabilities actively involved in the project, more than 400 were successfully employed.

►Find out more: [www.esparama.lt/regiostars](http://www.esparama.lt/regiostars)



# ▶ URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT DATABASE FOR POLICY LEARNING

**Cities play a crucial role in delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. They are engines of the economy, places of connectivity, creativity and innovation, and centres of services for their surrounding areas. But cities do have their grey side too, where problems such as unemployment, noise and air pollution, segregation and poverty are concentrated. The European Commission needs to work with cities to realise a shared vision of the European city of tomorrow: a place of advanced social progress with a high degree of social cohesion, a platform for democracy, cultural dialogue and diversity, engine of growth, and a place of green, ecological or environmental regeneration.**

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has long supported cities to tackle the multifaceted urban challenges with the core objectives of strengthening economic prosperity, promoting equality, improving the urban environment, and contributing to good urban governance in towns and cities. As the various dimensions of urban life are interwoven, success in urban development can only be achieved through an integrated approach which ensures synergy, coordination and complementarity between projects and minimises overlapping or sometimes conflicting results. Operations concerning physical urban renewal should be interlinked with measures promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection amongst others. In addition, a successful integrated approach also requires the development of strong partnerships between local citizens, civil society and various levels of government.

The European Commission has recently published a study on how cities make use of ERDF support to make their cities a better place to live and work. The study presents 50 projects supported by the ERDF in eight different themes. For each city, three types of document have been prepared: an executive summary with the most important information, a 6-8-page-long case study telling the story in an easily accessible style, and a long analytical fiche for professional readers containing detailed information on the project.

The objective of the study was to develop an extensive database of different urban practices in order to show the wide array of possible actions to promote urban development. The Commission hopes that this database is going to be a source of information and inspiration for cities, managing authorities and other institutions having a stake in urban development. It is just timely as the preparation for the 2014-2020 programming period, in which the European Commission wishes to reinforce the integrated approach to sustainable urban development by requiring each Member State to set aside at least 5% of its ERDF allocation for the purposes of urban development, has just started.

This study is not an evaluation of the urban dimension in cohesion policy, but a report on the state of the art on how selected cities dealt with local urban policies funded under the ERDF between 2007 and 2013. The selection of these cases does not mean that they necessarily represent the best cases in the Member States or at EU level. Like all practice, these case studies are only good in parts. These case studies reveal interesting ideas, problem-solving solutions, modes of cooperation and collaboration. These experiences thus have the potential to develop new thinking, and inspire institutional learning in other contexts and situations, by engaging public policy towards more fair and just socio-spatial development.

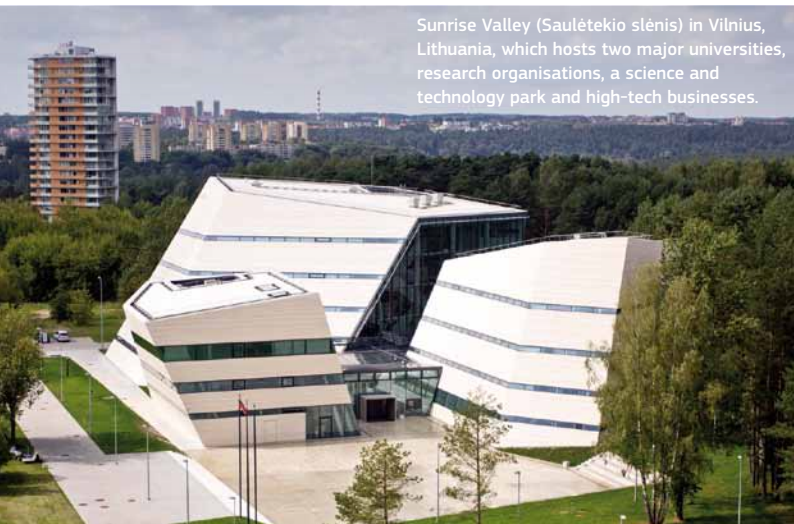
One of the most engaging results of the study is the variable geometry of strategies in place to achieve urban and territorial cohesion through the implementation of integrated approaches. The area-based type of intervention dominates many of the practices, especially those in deprived areas, because of social, economic and environmental factors. Physical regeneration is still a major driver in creating multi-stakeholder cooperation in the integration of policies. There are relatively few cases in which the place-based approach was combined with a people-based approach – and even fewer where ERDF and European Social Fund (ESF) cross-funding was developed. This approach







Regeneration of the ancient prison complex of Le Murate in the historical centre of Florence, Italy.



Sunrise Valley (Saulėtekio slėnis) in Vilnius, Lithuania, which hosts two major universities, research organisations, a science and technology park and high-tech businesses.



The Robinsbalje 'learning neighbourhood' in Bremen, Germany.

### ► SMART GROWTH

Many cities try to reposition themselves by providing physical workspace with cultural, technology and R&D facilities. It should be avoided that all cities try to develop the same cluster and thereby waste resources. Smart growth projects can create artificial incentives for buildings, technologies and activities that do not reflect the real demand high-tech space in their localities. Smart growth projects should involve smart specialisation – combining a place-based logic of differentiating an area from its competitors with the creation of an innovation system. Therefore, the regional smart specialisation strategies should be aligned with the smart growth strategy of their main urban centres.

### ► SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Sustainable growth strategies are about changing the development path towards a model that uses fewer resources to achieve higher levels of growth. Cities engage typically in brownfield development or in strategies to assist the transition to a carbon-free energy system. Brownfield development is very important in helping to keep cities compact and in showing that land is a finite resource that should be recycled or reused. A zero carbon city, the mainstreaming of energy-efficient housing, business and living solutions, not only requires political

commitment, but also need to generate traction through awareness-raising and capacity building. Sustainable growth projects also illustrate the importance of multi-level governance. Complex or multiple actions tend to generate and depend on sophisticated patterns of cooperation between stakeholders.

### ► INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Any growth, if it to be economically and socially sustainable, needs to be inclusive in order to reach all parts of society. A fundamental prerequisite to achieve inclusive growth is the launching of actions against poverty and social exclusion, to reduce disparities within Member States and the EU. ERDF and ESF should work hand-in-hand to modernise education and training systems, reduce early school leaving, invest in community infrastructure and educational, social and health infrastructure. The final goal is to strengthen communities and improve access to services. The principal target groups for inclusive growth are in many cases people who can be characterised as hard-to-reach and having special needs. Their living conditions may lead to disengagement from societal life. For people belonging to minorities such as migrants, Roma or people with disabilities, the barriers to active participation in community life are even more complex.

▶SMART GROWTH IN VIENNA

### An incubator for start-up and growth SMEs

Smart does not mean big! The 'Mingo' project is based in Vienna and has a budget of over EUR 3 million – half of it coming from the ERDF. The project demonstrates how small and micro-companies can make a contribution to smart growth in Europe. Helping young businesses to become successful, and supporting established businesses to stay innovative, are both questions addressed by the project. The project offers integrated start-up support for company founders, coaching for existing small businesses, networking events and business awards, multi-lingual services for ethnic firms and a neighbourhood scheme which helps to market local shopping streets and bring local consumer markets up to standard. And, of course, Mingo still offers office space for all those who need a home for their business.

▶FIND OUT MORE

[www.mingo.at](http://www.mingo.at)



▶GREEN GROWTH IN GHENT

### Reducing energy consumption in homes and buildings in the city

The city of Ghent has a tradition of environmental activism, so it is not surprising that it should be the first Belgian city to introduce its own Local Climate Plan. The Ghent Environment Service has launched a remarkable initiative to reduce energy consumption in homes and buildings in the city. Inspired by a mounting number of requests for advice on low energy renovation from home owners and tenants, a programme has been developed to match household demand with an adapted offer from the construction sector. Design professionals, contractors and the business community in general are stimulated to develop technical, material and affordable solutions to improve energy performance in the home. The project has a very strong inclusive element, as the city channels these efforts to support households in most need, by providing a concerted package of guidance, assistance and accompaniment towards a more sustainable living pattern.

▶FIND OUT MORE

[www.milieuadvieswinkel.be/](http://www.milieuadvieswinkel.be/)

▶INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN TERRASSA

### Working on migrant integration and community cohesion in one urban district

The plan for District 2 of the city of Terrassa has boosted social inclusion in a neighbourhood which faced a high risk of conflict given the rapid influx of immigrants it had experienced, which jeopardised civic order. The Neighbourhood Law of the regional government (Generalitat de Catalunya) was the framework and the instrument for neighbourhood regeneration. The plan, supported by the regional urban regeneration programme, integrated social actions and urban renewal in a single transformation process, reducing the district's segregation from the rest of the city and improving its reputation for tension and conflict. The plan was carried out with high level of citizen participation and adopted a transversal approach among different municipal services.



▶FIND OUT MORE

[www.terrassa.cat](http://www.terrassa.cat)



### ► INCLUSIVE GROWTH WITH INTEGRATED APPROACH TO URBAN DEVELOPMENT

## Renovation of a disadvantaged area of Budapest using housing as the main investment

The Magdolna neighbourhood project is the first truly integrated socially sensitive regeneration project in Hungary. Taking place in one of the most deprived areas in Budapest, it aimed not only to improve housing and living conditions but to strengthen local residents' feeling of community. The hard infrastructure investments were complemented by many soft projects which aimed to tackle the severe social problems of the marginalised groups in the neighbourhood. The improvement of the physical quality of housing therefore went hand in hand with support for the active involvement of residents.



Two phases have been implemented so far. The first was carried out in 2005-2008 funded by the district and city municipalities, while the second in 2008-2011 was supported by the ERDF. However these two phases are only the start of a longer development strategy for the neighbourhood, which is likely to take 15 years.

#### ► FIND OUT MORE

[www.rev8.hu/eng.php](http://www.rev8.hu/eng.php)



should be more widely used in the future, as investment in urban infrastructure without investing in the people will hardly yield sustainable results.

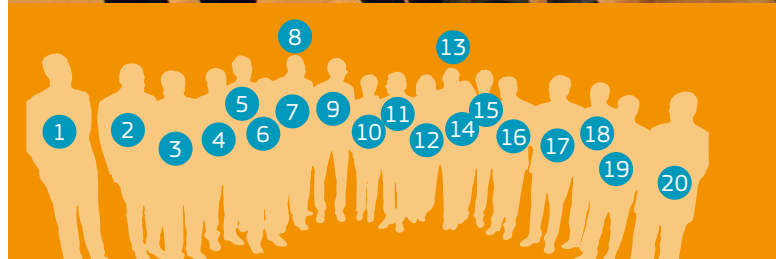
Cities have demonstrated that they can achieve big changes with social innovations. Yet cities do not have the competences to solve all the problems which are visible on the ground. The decentralisation of responsibilities to cities, increased participation of citizens and enlightened policy makers may not be enough to fight growing disparities, or unemployment. Regional and national authorities need to be brought into the picture as active players which are responsible for policy integration at their respective levels. Cities need to be supported in the vertical dimension by regional and national administrations according to their respective responsibilities. Fully developed integrated approaches can impact more efficiently on the future of cities where and when issues of local deprivation are related to political, economic, social and environmental dynamics at higher governance levels. This reveals the great importance of existing national policies and programmes on urban development.

The importance of building capacity to innovate and implement new ideas at local level was evidenced in many projects. This know-how has often grown up as a result of exchange programmes like URBACT, collaborative work and incremental learning. The acquisition of new policies by cities through transnational exchange and learning programmes does not function as a simple commodity transaction. It is not possible to 'copy and paste' policy solutions and there are no blueprints. Instead the policy-maker needs to understand how to go about doing integrated urban development. This process requires critical and contextual knowledge because the institutional and governance framework is different in each place. The 50 cases are an important tool to help spread the urban know-how among cities.

#### ► FIND OUT MORE

Cities of tomorrow:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/citiesoftomorrow/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/citiesoftomorrow/index_en.cfm)

Consult the cases and the final report on the Inforegio website:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/information/brochures/index\\_en.cfm#1](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information/brochures/index_en.cfm#1)  
<http://www.aeidl.eu/en/projects/territorial-development/urban-development.html>



# ▶ MOBILISING EU CAPITAL CITIES

COMMISSIONER HAHN URGES MAYORS TO LEAD EUROPE OUT OF CRISIS

On 28 February EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn, hosted the first in what could become a regular series of direct talks between the European Commission and the EU's capital cities. Commissioner Hahn called on the 20 mayors attending to show leadership in the push for recovery and growth. He has argued for a more central role for capital cities as Europe's economic and social powerhouses. He is also pushing for a more prominent urban dimension in cohesion policy and across all EU policies.

Commissioner Janez Potočnik for Environment also participated in the meeting. The mayors of EU capitals Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Bratislava, Brussels, Bucharest, Lisbon, Ljubljana, Luxembourg, Madrid, Nicosia, Rome, Sofia, Stockholm, Tallinn, Valetta, Vienna, Vilnius and Warsaw, as well as Zagreb (in view of Croatia's accession to the EU in July 2013), all signed a joint statement on the role of cities and their central role as motors for sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. This statement was also supported by a number of those mayors not able to attend.



Launch of the dialogue between the European Commission and the mayors of the EU's capitals for growth.

1. Arturas Zuokas (Vilnius), 2. Klaus Wowereit (Berlin), 3. Michael Häupl (Vienna), 4. Zoran Janković (Ljubljana), 5. Eberhard van der Laan (Amsterdam), 6. Alexiei Dingli (Valetta), 7. António Luís dos Santos da Costa (Lisboa),

8. Sten Nordin (Stockholm), 9. Commissioner Potočnik, 10. Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz (Warsaw), 11. Commissioner Hahn, 12. Yordanka Fandakova (Sofia), 13. Sorin Mircea Oprescu (Bucharest), 14. Ana Botella (Madrid), 15. Milan Ftáčnik (Bratislava), 16. Milan Bandić (Zagreb), 17. Konstantinos Georkatzis (Nicosia), 18. Xavier Bettel (Luxembourg), 19. Yiorgos Kaminis (Athens), 20. Edgar Savisaar (Tallinn).

The statement notes that *'Capital cities are the laboratories where solutions to the EU's social and economic problems must be found.'* And that *'Capital cities are drivers of innovation and smart growth, and often provide the core for education and scientific networks.'* Furthermore, *'We believe that the Commission's proposals for greater delegation of management to cities, including the management of EU Structural Funds, are vital to ensure urban challenges are well understood and implementation matches real needs.'*

Before the meeting Commissioner Hahn said, *'Without Europe's capital cities we cannot make the Europe 2020 growth agenda a reality. That's why I am calling on the mayors to lead the way in lifting Europe out of crisis.'*

At the meeting Commissioner Potočnik underlined an efficient management of natural resources in urban areas is crucial for health and quality of life of all citizens in an ever more restricted global environment. Cities will play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Seventh Environmental Action Plan recently adopted by the Commission.

The European Commission has made a number of proposals to improve the delivery of investments in urban areas, in the reform of cohesion policy currently under discussion. These proposals stress an integrated approach to policy making. The Commission has proposed a greater delegation of powers to cities themselves, and the opportunity for cities to test out new approaches to keep up with new economic, environmental and social challenges.

#### ► FIND OUT MORE

'Cities of Tomorrow' Report:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow\\_final.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow_final.pdf)

Sustainable Urban Development through EU Regional Policy:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/activity/urban/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/activity/urban/index_en.cfm)

Flagship Urban projects:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/mayors/2013/projects\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/mayors/2013/projects_en.cfm)

# ▶ FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

## IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROGRAMMES 2014-2020

**Financial instruments have expanded and gained importance in the current Structural Funds period 2007-2013, and they are expected to further gain both in volume and importance in the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020.**

The Operational Programmes for the new MFF 2014-2020 are expected to be more result oriented and to focus on a small number of core thematic objectives, based on the Europe 2020 objectives. This is to be achieved *inter alia* through the appropriate use of financial instruments. An updated and complete set of provisions and rules relating to financial instruments has been prepared, both in the new regulations for the Structural Instruments of the EU and in the new Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the EU.

An overview of the tasks of managing authorities when designing and implementing financial instruments in the next generation of programmes is presented below.

### **Ex-ante assessment and programming**

Contributions from operational programmes to financial instruments should be based on *ex-ante* assessments for each financial instrument. Assessments should establish the presence of market failures or sub-optimal investment situations, the estimated level and scope of the public investment needed for the period 2014-2020, and the types of financial instruments needed.

Assessments may be performed in stages, and in all cases they must have been completed before managing authorities decide to pay any contribution to financial instruments.

*Ex-ante* assessments must be submitted to the monitoring committee of the relevant operational programme(s) for information. The summary findings and conclusions of

*ex-ante* assessments must be published within three months of their finalisation, under the responsibility of managing authorities.

Managing authorities have the option to include in programmes a separate priority axis for contributions to financial instruments at EU level, managed by the European Commission under direct or indirect management (a co-financing rate up to 100% may be applied to such a priority axis). They also have the option to include in programmes a separate priority axis for financial instruments managed at national or regional level under shared management (the co-financing rate would then be increased by 10%).

When managing authorities envisage dedicating an individual priority axis to financial instruments, a first stage of the appropriate *ex-ante* assessment should be carried out beforehand with a view to providing an appropriate estimate of the total amount of the priority axis under question.

### **Implementation, management and control of financial instruments**

When implementing financial instruments, managing authorities have two main options:

- either to contribute to financial instruments set up at EU level and managed directly or indirectly by the Commission, such as the COSME initiative for SMEs, the HORIZON 2020 programme for research and innovation, the Connecting Europe Facility for infrastructure, the Guarantee Facility for the Cultural and Creative Sectors, etc.;
- or to contribute to instruments set up at national, regional, transnational or cross border level, managed either directly by the managing authority itself in the case of loans or guarantees, or under its responsibility.

Where financial instruments are managed under the responsibility of managing authorities, the latter or its duly

mandated representatives must sign funding agreements with selected financial intermediaries. Such intermediaries may be existing or new legal entities, the EIB, other international financial institutions, or other appropriate bodies.

Compliance with applicable EU and national legislation, including public procurement and state aid law, must be ensured in all phases of implementation of financial instruments, under the responsibility of managing authorities.

### Contributions from programmes to financial instruments – interim payments

Payments from operational programmes to financial instruments must be phased. Amounts included in each application for interim payment submitted to the Commission cannot exceed 25% of the total amount committed to the financial instrument under the relevant funding agreement.

Each application for interim payment will be possible only when a specified percentage of amounts previously contributed to financial instruments have been paid to or committed for guarantees to final recipients.

### Reporting by managing authorities

Managing authorities must report to the Commission annually regarding the implementation of each financial instrument, including payments or guarantees offered to final recipients, any revenue generated, the achieved leverage, etc. Such reports on financial instruments must be annexed to annual implementation reports regarding the relevant operational programmes.

The Commission, starting from 2016, must provide on an annual basis a summary of annual reports on the implementation of financial instruments, submitted by managing authorities.

### Closure of operational programmes and reuse of resources attributable to support from EU Structural Instruments

Managing authorities must present in the final report the eligible expenditure under financial instruments at closure. Eligible expenditure at closure will include amounts effectively paid up to final recipients, or committed to honour



### CDFI (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTIONS) LOANS FOR SMES AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER, UK

CDFI uses an ERDF grant to provide small loans between £ 1 000 and £ 50 000 (EUR 1 180 – EUR 59 000) to SMEs and social enterprises that are unable to access mainstream funding sources. To date loans worth around £4 million (EUR 4.7 m) of ERDF have been provided to 166 businesses, and 159 jobs have been created or safeguarded. One beneficiary is Doncaster Refurnish – a social enterprise that refurbishes donated furniture and other domestic items for resale locally.

guarantees, interest rate subsidies and guarantee fee subsidies, and eligible management costs or fees.

Interest and other revenue earned by contributions from operational programmes to financial instruments, as well resources paid back to them until the end of the eligibility period, must be reinvested in the same or other financial instruments, in accordance with the objectives of the operational programme. The same rule would be applicable also to revenues and capital reimbursements to financial instruments, eight years after the end of the eligibility period. Member States and managing authorities must adopt all the necessary measures to ensure the correct implementation of these rules.

#### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/financial\\_instruments\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/financial_instruments_en.pdf)

# ▶ NEWS

## [IN BRIEF]



## ROMA PILOT PROJECT

On 15 March a conference co-organised by DG Regional Policy, the UN Development Programme BRC and the World Bank called 'From pilots to outcomes: Evidence-Based Lessons on the Socio-Economic Inclusion of Roma Communities', took place simultaneously in Moldava nad Bodvou, Slovakia and in Brussels, Belgium.

The conference presented the results of the three-year pilot project funded by the European Parliament targeting Roma socio-economic inclusion and implemented in the fields of early-childhood education and care, self-employment through microcredits, information and awareness raising, data collection and monitoring and evaluation tools in five EU Member States and Macedonia. Recommendations in the fields of education, employment, housing, health, civil society, migration and gender equality were debated with representatives of the main EU institutions, international organisations, researchers and experts, Roma representatives and the inhabitants of a Roma settlement at Moldava nad Bodvou. A final session was dedicated to the role of the Structural Funds in the implementation of the national Roma integration strategies, based on the experience derived from the Structural Funds programming period 2007-2013.

### ▶ FIND OUT MORE

EC-UNDP Roma Pilot – Tools and methods for monitoring and data collection website:

<http://www.akvo.org/rsr/project/638/>

EC Roma Inclusion Pilot Project website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/activity/roma/events\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/activity/roma/events_en.cfm)



## 'EUROPE IN MY REGION' PHOTO COMPETITION 2013

Following the great success of the inaugural 2012 edition, the 'Europe in My Region' photo Competition 2013 will take place this summer. As before, the competition will be run via the European Commission's Facebook page, and entries can be posted from early June until mid-August. The winners will receive their prizes during OPEN DAYS 2013 in October.





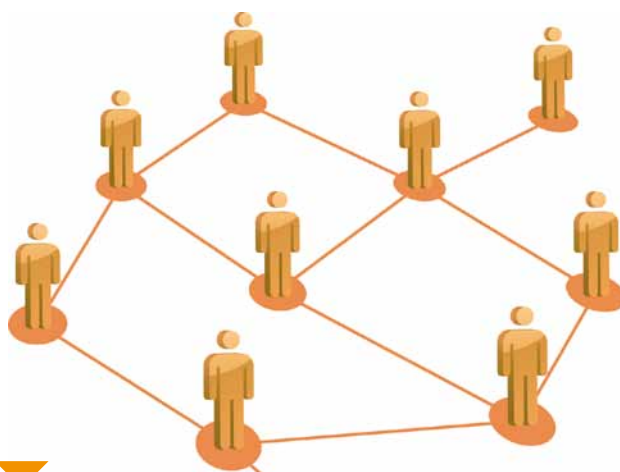


## ▶ OPEN DAYS 2013

OPEN DAYS 2013 will take place in Brussels from 7-10 October under the slogan 'Europe's regions and cities taking off for 2020'. There will be approximately 90-100 workshops and an exhibition on '100 EUrban solutions'.

▶ **FIND OUT MORE**

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/od2013/index.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2013/index.cfm)



## ▼ INIO-INFORM CONFERENCE 2012

The networks of communication officers of the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, INFORM, and of the European Social Fund (INIO) held their first joint conference in December 2012 (3-4) in La Plaine Saint Denis in Paris.

Over two hundred communicators from across Europe met to explore the scope for closer co-operation across the funds and for joint communication activities in the area of cohesion policy. The two-day conference showed there was widespread agreement among participants regarding the added value of co-ordinating communication activities between the funds, and where possible, carrying out joint information campaigns.

In December 2013, a large communication conference, 'Telling the story 2.0', will underline the importance of communicating the achievements of EU cohesion policy and showcase good communication practices.

▶ **FIND OUT MORE**

Full information, including presentations, is available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/informing/events/201212/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/informing/events/201212/index_en.cfm)



## ▼ PORTUGUESE AND ITALIAN WEBSITES HIGHLIGHT EU-FUNDED PROJECTS

A new Portuguese portal has been launched, which features a selection of major projects part-funded by the European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and European Territorial Cooperation during the 2007-2013 period.

▶ **FIND OUT MORE**

Projects can be browsed by region or programme: <http://www.qren.pt/np4/projetos>  
A similar site exists describing the use of funds in Italy: <http://www.opencoesione.gov.it/>

# ▶ IN YOUR OWN WORDS

## NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON COHESION POLICY

Panorama  
welcomes your  
contributions!

'In Your Own Words' is the section of *Panorama* where the key 'consumers' of cohesion policy at the national and regional level are invited to make their voices heard and give their feedback on European policy in action at the local level, whether with a focus on current achievements and successes, or an insight into preparations for the next programming period.

With more than 270 regions across the 27 EU Member States, each with its own specific economic and cultural history and needs, it is important that policy makers, administrators and officials at all levels are aware of the real impact that cohesion policy is having at the grass roots level.

In this edition, *Panorama* presents the views from four Member States and regions who are looking ahead to their plans for the implementation of Structural Funds in the next programming period from 2014 to 2020. Austria presents a national-level partnership approach to future implementation, whilst England outlines its plans for delivery through local partnership. Midi-Pyrénées aims to focus efforts on smart specialisation and Tuscany highlights its series of specific themes.

*Panorama* welcomes your contributions which we may feature in future editions:

▶ [regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu)

### ▶ FRANCE

## ▶ MIDI-PYRÉNÉES – SMART SPECIALISATION LIES AT THE HEART OF POLITICAL PRIORITIES

**In an area that is at the forefront of innovation and which dedicates 4.2% of GDP to research and development, it is hardly surprising that Midi-Pyrénées places innovation and competitiveness at the heart of its economic development policies. The goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy are steering the 2014-2020 Programmes in a proactive manner, ensuring that the response to these challenges is a strong cross-cutting priority.**

Midi-Pyrénées has had a Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS) in place since 2009. This strategy is jointly coordinated by the region and the government and provides a governance system which is clearly recognised by the region's stakeholders. It has enabled a knowledge-based economy of innovation to grow throughout the area. Over the 2007-2011

period, a total of EUR 640 000 000 of public aid in the form of incentives was spent on this objective.

A new integration milestone has just been reached with the proposal for 'smart specialisation' for the area. This looks at focusing directly on strengths and opportunities for development which were identified as part of a regional analysis and in an RIS interim report which were carried out in the autumn of 2012 involving a wide public consultation. It focuses on smart industrial systems, improving the quality of our surroundings and production methods, energy sustainability, advanced materials, cancer, addiction, cell engineering and regenerative medicine.

As well as strategic projects, support for businesses and concerted public action in order to strengthen the regional



Micro and nanotechnology platform at LAAS-CNRS  
University Paul Sabatier in Toulouse.

potential for innovation and promote the knowledge-based economy within the context of globalisation, Midi-Pyrénées is also committed to undertaking an on-going evaluation of experiences in other regions.

As part of this benchmarking exercise, Midi-Pyrénées has approached its partners in the Pyrenees Mediterranean Euroregion, of which it is currently chair, to propose implementing a 'Euro-Regional Innovation Strategy'. This would be a ground-breaking European initiative which would focus the

process of integrated development in the area, involving cooperation between Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, on three priority sectors (water, e-Health, and food and agriculture).

**Department for European Affairs  
and Decentralised Cooperation**  
*Région Midi-Pyrénées*

► **FIND OUT MORE**  
[www.midipyrenees.fr](http://www.midipyrenees.fr)

► **AUSTRIA**

## ► IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

### PREPARATIONS IN AUSTRIA FOR THE 2014-2020 PERIOD

**The preparations for the 2014-2020 period in Austria are well underway in terms of operational programmes and partnership agreements, both of which are strategic elements in interaction at EU and national level.**

The partnership agreement for the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) 2014-2020 in Austria is being drawn up under the title 'SRAT.AT 2020' within the framework of the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK). It will act as a common platform for federal and state governments, city and local councils and economic and social partners. To this end, a separate process



The STRAT.AT.2020 process pursues a broad partnership approach.

was launched, designed to ensure the participation of all relevant stakeholders and interest groups. The final document contains the result of complementary ('umbrella processes') and integrated processes (fund-specific programming/ 'sub-processes').

The STRAT.AT 2020 process pursues a broad partnership approach and is structured in such a way that it will be jointly developed (and supported) by the strategic partners. The official launch took place with the first public STRAT.AT 2020 forum held in April 2012, attended by over 250 stakeholders. Forums are open to all actors interested in cohesion policy and policies for rural development (programme implementation partners, economic and social partners, city and local councils, intermediary service providers, NGOs, experts/ academics, etc.). The second forum was dedicated to the 11 thematic objectives of the ESI Funds. Two more forums are scheduled to take place during the process.

A broad, functional and transparent participation by all stakeholders is a fundamental premise in Austria. The use of 'focus groups' will allow for targeting of the most specific issues at the interface between the relevant ESI Funds. Between November 2012 and February 2013, a total of 15 focus groups were held on topics such as development, urban dimensions, social services, biodiversity/conservation and cooperation/ETC (European Territorial Cooperation). Their results have been incorporated into the creation of SRAT.AT 2020 and have also provided useful input for the respective programming processes. Among the issues raised was the approach to horizontal objectives and statements were also made on the importance of European territorial cooperation (a full list of all focus groups together with documentation of results can be viewed at [www.stratat2020.at](http://www.stratat2020.at), the official German-only STRAT.AT 2020 website).

In terms of content, the connection to the individual programming processes and the combining of the top-down considerations and bottom-up aggregations are of central importance. In addition to coordination between the ESI funds, the integration of ESI (co-funded) policies in the different policy areas at national and regional level is to be outlined. These are always viewed in the context of a more comprehensive strategy or funding spectrum. This is the case in Austria, especially with regard to the Structural Funds, where, due to limited programme sizes, the principle of proportionality is a prerequisite for the most efficient implementation of these measures in Austrian regions.

The draft partnership agreement is expected to be the subject of an online public consultation procedure in June/July 2013. This procedure will be the second public consultation following the initial one in the summer of 2012. The submission of STRAT.AT 2020 is still scheduled for 2013, together with all operational programmes, if possible.

The whole process can be followed at [www.stratat2020.at](http://www.stratat2020.at) (official German-only STRAT.AT 2020 website) or [www.oerok.gv.at](http://www.oerok.gv.at) (official German-only ÖROK website).

**Dr. Diane C. Tiefenbacher**  
*Office of the Austrian Conference  
 on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)/  
 Coordination EU Structural Funds  
 & STRAT.AT 2020*

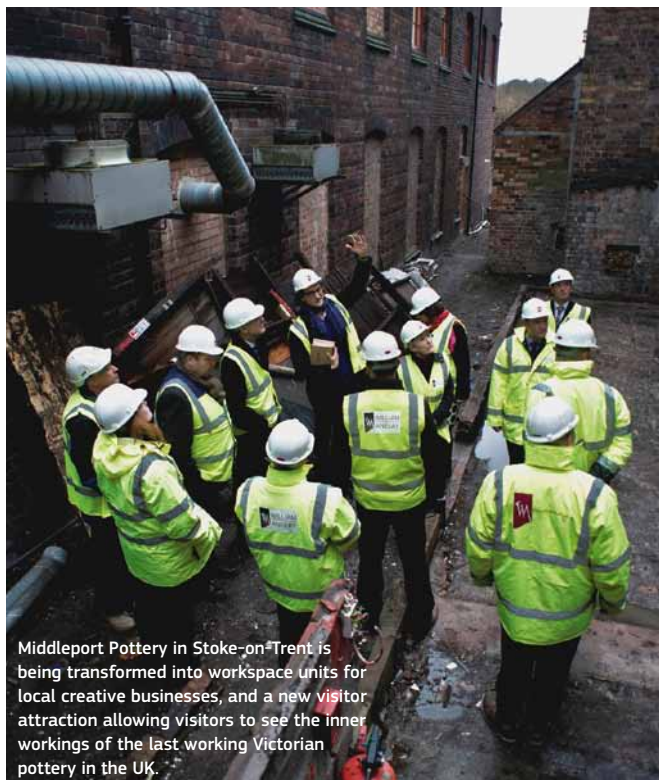
▶ FIND OUT MORE  
[www.oerok.gv.at](http://www.oerok.gv.at)

▶ UNITED KINGDOM

## ▶ LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS KEY TO FUNDING DELIVERY IN ENGLAND

2014-2020 will be a period of significant change in the delivery of ERDF in England. In place of regional ERDF boundaries and programmes and demarcation structures that have worked to discourage complementary investment from separate Common Strategic Funds (CSFs), there will be a new, flexible national CSF England Growth programme. What is driving these changes and what implications does it have for cohesion policy and practice?

The administrative landscape in England has undergone significant change during the last two years. Driving this has been a recognition that if growth and jobs are to be realised in a way that responds to how local economies actually function in our cities, towns and villages, then institutional arrangements need to follow this principle. So in place of regional boundaries and institutions, 39 business-led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been set up on the basis of locally-determined economic geographies. These Partnerships aim to bring business and civic leaders together to drive sustainable economic growth and private sector job growth. It is these 39 LEPs that will be the building blocks of CSF delivery in England during 2014-2020.



Middleport Pottery in Stoke-on-Trent is being transformed into workspace units for local creative businesses, and a new visitor attraction allowing visitors to see the inner workings of the last working Victorian pottery in the UK.



ERDF support helped Xeros Ltd, a University of Leeds spin-out, to establish a laundry process using polymer beads. The firm now employs twenty scientists, engineers and support staff in Sheffield.

In addition we plan to have a national EU growth programme encompassing 100% of ERDF, ESF and a proportion of EAFRD to be distributed through England's 39 LEPs on the basis of strategies drawn up by local partners. Streamlined administration in central government will enable LEPs and local partners to maximise the new flexibilities made available in the 2014-2020 period, aligning ERDF, ESF and EAFRD in single investment packages based on fund allocations to their areas. CSF investments will be integrated with national and local policies and initiatives, to ensure that economic outcomes and public/private interests and finance are most effectively leveraged.

Employing the CSFs holistically will be key, bringing Europe 2020 and National Reform Plan targets together in a local context. This, combined with freedom to deliver thematic/sector-based projects across any geographic range, promises an ambitious and innovative CSF model in England during 2014-2020.

### David Morrall

Head of ERDF 2014-2020 Policy Unit  
Department for Communities and  
Local Government (DCLG)

### ▶ FIND OUT MORE

[www.gov.uk/browse/business/funding-debt/european-regional-development-funding](http://www.gov.uk/browse/business/funding-debt/european-regional-development-funding)

▶ ITALY

# ▶ TUSCANY'S APPROACH TO THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

The new stage of EU financial planning comes at a crucial period in our history. The state of Italy's public finances suggests that, over the coming years, EU funding will play a fundamental role in investment and, consequently, in boosting competitiveness.

The Europe 2020 Strategy clearly indicates the way forward. For Tuscany, this means aiming for *intelligent* growth, achieved through investment in education, research and innovation; *sustainable* growth, by concentrating on environmental and land use matters, and on energy, and *inclusive* growth, namely by focusing on creating jobs and reducing poverty.

It will therefore no longer be sufficient to spend EU resources quickly and conveniently. Tuscany is performing better than most areas in the country. Its infrastructure problems and issues relating to widespread economic growth are, however, plain to see. We will need to choose priority measures which have a significant effect, taking on the responsibility of focusing EU funds in terms of feasible results that can be measured and evaluated.

To this end, Tuscany intends to focus cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period around three cross-cutting themes:

- **Youth** with the integrated *Giovanisì* (Young people – yes!) project – a range of opportunities for young people funded from regional, national and EU resources which includes, for example, support for traineeships, for business start-ups and help for first-time buyers;
- **City networks** (for boosting competitiveness and social innovation and experimentation);
- **Internal areas** (based on tourism, agricultural and forestry activities and the green economy).

In implementing these main areas, Tuscany will focus on the following priorities:

- investing in research and technology transfer to boost the role of the manufacturing industry;
- ensuring the whole of Tuscany has access to broadband and facilitating online communication with public administration;
- encouraging access to credit, including microfinance;
- developing the competitiveness of the agro-food supply chain to encourage the next generation to take its place, and to foster environmental sustainability;



President of the Tuscany Region, Enrico Rossi, with the banner for the *Giovanisì* youth support project.

- achieving sustainable energy by developing specialised technology sectors;
- regenerating run-down areas, preventing hydrogeological instability, adapting to climate change, protecting the traditional landscape and biodiversity;
- providing increased and accessible mobility;
- encouraging the demand for qualified workers and greater productivity amongst SMEs;
- supporting social inclusion measures;
- tackling early school leaving;
- investing in a platform for the 'renaissance of Tuscany's cultural traditions'.

In order to ensure that the next programming period, covering 2014-2020, has the best possible start, the Tuscany region has also reviewed its internal working practices and has created a 'control room' (or 'coordination and steering group') which brings together all the Structural Funds managing authorities to ensure a uniform approach in programming and in identifying priorities in both the design and implementation stages.

**Enrico Rossi**  
President of the Tuscany Region

▶ FIND OUT MORE  
[www.regione.toscana.it](http://www.regione.toscana.it)

▶MALTA

# ▶NEW FERRY TERMINAL

## WILL BOOST INTER-ISLAND TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

**Total cost:**  
EUR 10 868 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 8 800 000

**A modern ferry terminal has been built at Malta's Ċirkewwa harbour with the support of EU Cohesion funds. The new terminal on the northern tip of the island will improve service for commuters, especially residents of the island of Gozo, tourism and cargo traffic, and help the economy.**

The ferry terminal at Ċirkewwa forms part of Malta's trans-European network for transport. The key objective of the project is to reduce the congestion at the Ċirkewwa terminal and improve the transportation network within the Maltese islands. Regular Ro-PAX ferries operate from the Ċirkewwa ferry terminal to the port of Mġarr on Gozo handling approximately two million vehicles and four million passengers per annum. In the summer, boat trips to the island of Comino also operate from the port of Ċirkewwa, as well as organised diving excursions.

At the new ferry terminal the existing quays are being upgraded with the addition of a third berth at the North quay alongside buildings, roadworks and other general enhancements. The new facilities include a passenger-handling building together with elevated foot passenger gangways and flexible linkspans connecting to the ships. Also built are vehicular marshalling areas, car parks, and a coach and public transport terminus. To reduce congestion access has been improved through circulation and access roadways linked to the main arterial road network.

### Streamlining traffic

The new infrastructure will result in improved efficiency and protection from adverse weather. It will offer high levels of safety and comfort, and provide an improved service for all

passenger and cargo traffic that will pass through Ċirkewwa. While streamlining passenger and vehicular traffic, the terminal with its increased capacity is expected to reduce journey times and increase the throughput of traffic.

### Economic benefits

Some EUR 12 million is being invested in the construction of the new terminal, which will enhance the travel experience and improve the accessibility to, and reduce the insularity of, Gozo. The development is expected to further facilitate the transfer of tourists to Gozo, who are so important to its economy. It will also facilitate the unlocking of business potential within this region and improve the quality of life for both the inhabitants of Gozo and visitors.

### Energy efficiency

The new terminal building hosts one of the largest photovoltaic arrays in Malta. Another first will be the installation of a wind turbine at the south side of the port. Through these installations, plus other energy saving measures, the terminal will make substantial use of green energy to provide for its operation and thus reduce its carbon footprint. *'These facilities have been designed to improve access to all and to provide a positive travel experience for travellers between Malta and Gozo,'* commented Christopher Farrugia of Transport Malta. *'An improved inter-island transport network service with greater efficiency, safety and comfort will be an economic benefit to the whole community.'*

#### ▶FIND OUT MORE

<https://investinginyourfuture.gov.mt/project/public-infrastructure/cirkewwa-ferry-terminal-33947651>

▶TALLINN, ESTONIA

# ▶SOLAR POWER SUCCESS FOR BUSINESS START-UP



**Total cost:**  
EUR 2 143 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 1 500 000

Flexible CZTS photovoltaic film for integration into building elements.

**Regional policy support has helped an Austrian-Estonian startup, Crystalsol Ltd, to develop groundbreaking solar panel technology in Estonia, being the first company in the world making use of popular low-cost materials.**

Established as a spin-off company of the Technical University Tallinn in 2008, Crystalsol benefitted from ERDF support through the Estonian ‘Development of Economic Environment’ Operational Programme and from Enterprise Estonia, which promotes entrepreneurship in Estonia.

The project ‘Development of a cost efficient solar panel’ helped advance an entirely new type of flexible photovoltaic module using semiconductor material, eliminating the need to use expensive rare metals in the production of solar panels. This new technology also costs 30-50% less compared to the current industry average.

The technology makes it possible to integrate solar panels in various structural elements, for example the glass facade or roofing material, already in the building phase. That in turn decreases the cost of renewable energy and improves the energy balance of the building. The purpose is to turn energy-consuming buildings into energy producers.

The company has created 24 new jobs, thanks to the EU funding, as well as using further capital from Finland, Norway and Austria, and has concluded agreements with various

universities and institutions both in Europe and further afield such as in Singapore. Even though the technology which is supported by a further EUR 8 million investment is still under development, an agreement has already been concluded to sell it to EDP, a Portuguese group of energy companies.

Crystalsol has shown remarkable progress since its foundation, with the profit of the company in 2012 attaining nearly EUR 1 million, obtained from the sale of research and development services, and its main patented innovation, the semiconductor powder. The company is also in receipt of a further ERDF grant to help increase the efficiency of the semiconductor material.

The market of solar panels is growing rapidly as solar technology becomes one of the most promising alternatives for electricity generation, decreasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and increasing the sustainability of energy production. This is demonstrated by the global turnover of the industry of EUR 23 billion in 2012, and annual production capacity increasing by 41% in the past two years.

With its globally groundbreaking new solar technology, Crystalsol is well on its way to achieving its aim of becoming the market leader in integrated solar panels.

▶FIND OUT MORE  
[www.crystalsol.com](http://www.crystalsol.com)



▶ RIGA, LATVIA

# ▶ USING NANOTECHNOLOGY

## FOR ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL COATING PROCESSES

**The first industrial coating centre in Latvia using nano-technology opened its doors in summer 2012. With development supported by EU financing, its patented process offers more cost-effective high performance coatings for use in the automotive, aerospace and microchip industries.**

The Latvian company Naco Technologies has developed a leading-edge nano-coating process which offers greater speed, flexibility and cost-effectiveness in adding special coatings to precision products used in a variety of advanced technology industries, many of which require high performance coatings to add specific physical properties such as protection, durability, chemical resistance, and performance.

### Patented technology

The Riga-based SME has developed an advanced coating technology based on high-speed ion-plasma magnetron sputtering (HIPMS) which is undertaken in a vacuum chamber. This patented nano-coating process is capable of creating sophisticated multilayered and multi-component coatings – according to requirements – which can be as thin as 0.01-150 microns and can greatly increase the usable life of the coated parts and improve functionality.

### Advantages

With the new technology, coating products can be manufactured 10 times faster than with existing coating technologies. The equipment is extremely energy-efficient and replaces the traditional environmentally-damaging chemical coating methods. Alongside high coating quality, fast production speed and environmental friendliness, the new process offers high levels of flexibility for customisation. The same coating machine can provide a wide variety of technical solutions for different industries.

Over the past three years, 140 different components and assemblies have been coated with the technology and tested according to ISO test standards.

### EU finance

The successful establishment of Naco Technologies was made possible through the financial support of the country's first specialist technology seed and start-up investor, *Imprimatur Capital*.

This early-stage venture fund was created under the JEREMIE initiative which enables EU Member States and regions to put money from the Structural funds and also national resources into holding funds that can encourage the development of innovative, high-growth technology start-ups. The company attracted additional equity capital for the purchase and installation of new equipment from the Imprimatur Capital Technology Venture Fund and ZGI Capital, both in Latvia, complemented by grant support from EU Structural Funds.

**Total cost:**  
EUR 591 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 149 000



*'Our technology is the leading method among nano-coating techniques due to its high productivity, quality, and versatility,' commented Alexander Parfinovics, CEO and co-founder of Naco Technologies. 'The long-term goal of our innovative company is to develop a nanotechnology engineering centre of excellence in Latvia and to have a successful high-growth international business focused on the manufacturing, automotive and aerospace industries.'*

▶ **FIND OUT MORE**  
[www.nacotechnologies.com/](http://www.nacotechnologies.com/)



**Total cost:**  
EUR 10 500 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 2 500 000

▶LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON, FRANCE

# ▶ REALIS

CREATING THE TOOLS FOR GROWTH AND JOBS IN THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

**In the Languedoc-Roussillon region of south west France social innovation is recognised as a key to economic development on a European scale. In October 2013, the EU funded REALIS business incubator will be opened to encourage and support the growth of social enterprises and boost local employment and prosperity.**

The social economy in Languedoc-Roussillon already employs more than 14% of the local population<sup>(1)</sup>. It is seen as a ‘smart specialisation’ for the region and therefore an essential factor of its long term economic development.

The region has been active since 2005 in expanding the social economy by working with local actors and networks to build the necessary tools and support infrastructure. These interrelated projects are brought together under the umbrella of REALIS (*Réseau Actif pour l’Innovation Sociale/ Active Network for Social Innovation*), which now represents a close partnership and a structured network of mutually supporting organisations involved in job-creating projects supporting social cohesion and human wealth.

*Alter’Incub* has been set up to support emerging and innovative projects while the *École de l’Entrepreneuriat* helps develop the skills of the social entrepreneurs. The Coventis network supports business development, while REPLIC promotes the replication of projects. A ‘nursery’ (la Pépinière ESS)

has also been created to support the ‘young shoots’ of the social economy.

*Alter’Incub* has already studied 130 business plans of which 45 are in pre-incubation and 33 at the incubation stage. So far it has helped create 14 businesses and anticipates on average 5-6 new businesses per year which could generate up to 75 jobs by June 2013.

In October 2013 the REALIS business incubator will be opened and will become a key structure linking all these elements. Located in Parc 2000 in Celleneuve, near Montpellier, the support centre will provide office and production facilities, advice and will work closely with the region’s business support network. The social enterprises will be partnered and supported for some three years on average.

*‘The REALIS approach and the network it has created is the first tool of its kind in France and is a model that can be replicated across Europe,’* commented Myriam Ludwig, Head of the social economy sector, Languedoc-Roussillon Region. *‘It will help promote economic growth and employment in our region through the development of successful and sustainable socially oriented businesses.’*

(1) Languedoc-Roussillon is placed fourth nationally in terms of the social economy, employing approximately 95 000 people, 75% of whom work in associations.

▶FIND OUT MORE

[http://www.info-entrepriseslr.fr/themes/creer\\_reprendre/economie\\_sociale\\_et\\_solidaire/realis\\_un\\_reseau\\_innovant\\_pour\\_les\\_porte\\_par\\_une\\_marque](http://www.info-entrepriseslr.fr/themes/creer_reprendre/economie_sociale_et_solidaire/realis_un_reseau_innovant_pour_les_porte_par_une_marque)

## ▶ EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

▶ **REGIONS WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP WOMEN INTO EMPLOYMENT**

**A network of resource centres has been established across Europe designed to provide women with the skills and advice to secure jobs, particularly in areas such as ICT and entrepreneurship.**

The two-year WINNET 8 project was launched in 2010 to support regional growth by boosting women's participation in the labour market and transforming gender relations, particularly in traditionally male-dominated areas. The project also set out to shape regional, national and EU-level policies that relate to women's status in the labour market and ensure these approaches are integrated into mainstream policies.

The project funded by the EU Interreg IVC programme set out to capitalise on previous experience and consolidate these efforts internationally through the involvement of local, regional and national actors in eight EU Member States: Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and UK.

### Women Resource Centres

A key element of the work has been to spread the Women Resource Centres (WRC) model developed in Sweden throughout Europe. This model constitutes a tool for achieving gender equality in regional development policy in both rural and urban areas. The main target group of the WRCs is women who want to realise their ideas for new businesses, innovations, employment, projects etc. The WRCs provide these women with business counselling, project development and finance, mentoring and joint action networks. The WRCs are supported by a European association, WINNET Europe, which since 2006 has supported the participation of women in regional development. A Winnet Centre of Excellence (WCE) was established in Sweden in 2011 to analyse and disseminate the experiences from WRCs across Europe.



**Total cost:**  
EUR 2 357 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 1 836 000

### Policymakers

Policymakers and civil servants constitute an important target group for WRC activities and to help add a gender perspective to policy development regional Multi Actor Groups (MAGs) have been created at local level to be a forum for co-operation between Managing Authorities, local and regional authorities, businesses, research institutions, WRCs, NGOs etc. This has resulted in the development of nine regional Actions Plans in the Member States concerned.

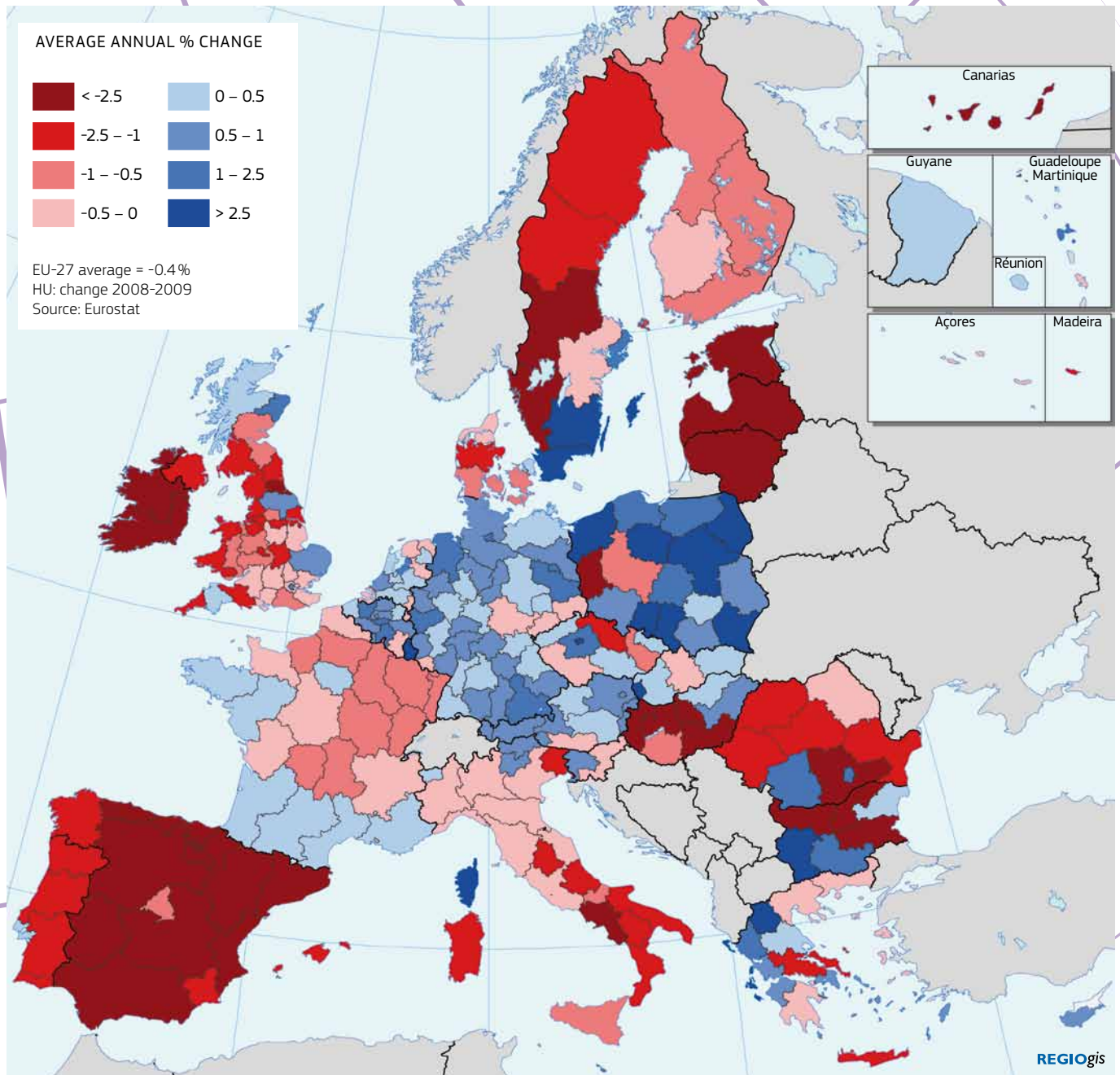
### Exchange of best practice

A guide book *Women Resource Centres, Innovation & Practices for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth* featuring a series of selected good practice examples from Member States has also been published alongside a range of other best practice publications. A policy recommendation book *Innovation & Policies, for Smart, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth* has been produced and disseminated both at regional, national and European levels.

*'The experience gained in Sweden in improving the employability of women is proving very valuable for other countries across Europe,'* commented Carin Nises of the Municipality of Älvdalen (Lead Partner). *'The WINNET 8 project is making a positive contribution to the cohesion policy 2014-2020 priorities of improving gender equality in the labour market.'*

▶ **FIND OUT MORE**  
[www.winnnet8.eu](http://www.winnnet8.eu)

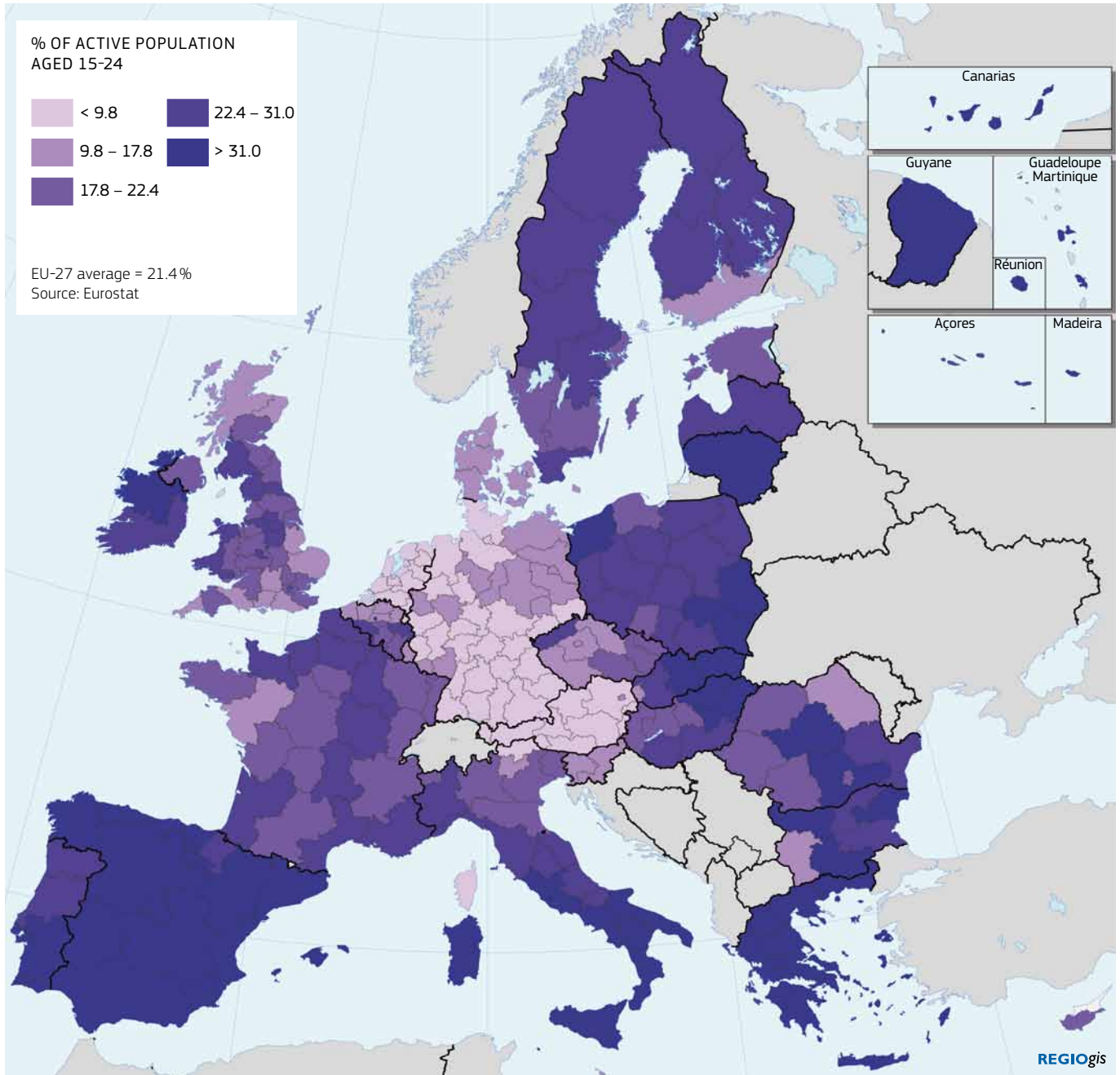
# ▶ TOTAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, 2007-2009



Between 2007 and 2009, employment shrank in over half the EU regions. Reductions were particularly high in regions in Spain, Ireland and the Baltic States with changes of between -6% and -3% a year. In Greece, employment only shrank in four out of twelve regions in 2009, but since then Greece's employment losses have grown. Also in Bulgaria

employment losses accelerated after 2009. At the other extreme, twenty regions experienced employment growth of 2% or more. Most regions in Poland, Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands experienced employment growth over this period.

# ▶ YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2011



**In 2011, youth unemployment reached critical levels.** In one out of four regions, it was between 30% and 65%. Most of the regions in Portugal, Spain, Southern Italy and Greece, and some of the eastern regions in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary suffered from high youth unemployment. Only the Netherlands, Germany and Austria had a youth

unemployment rate below 10% in almost all their regions. In Austria, Belgium, Germany and the UK, the capital region had one of the highest rates, while in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, the capital region had one of the lowest rates.

# ▶ JASPERS EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**An evaluation of the Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions initiative – known as JASPERS – commissioned by the DG for Regional and Urban Policy, has now reported its main findings and recommendations<sup>(1)</sup>. AECOM (Ireland) carried out the evaluation in 2012, using a mix of database analysis, case studies, in-country workshops and interviews with Member States, the European Commission's DG for Regional and Urban Policy and JASPERS staff. The evaluation covered the 6 years from JASPERS' inception until 2011.**

JASPERS was created to increase the capacity of beneficiary countries to make the best use of EU funding<sup>(2)</sup>. By providing technical assistance to improve the quantity and quality of major projects, it was expected that there would be significant benefits in the regions concerned and in the European Union as a whole. At the time of joining the EU, there was a relative lack of experience and capacity in the new Member States to handle very large investment projects. In addition, there was an increase in the amount of resources for major infrastructure projects and an increase in the scope of projects which could be supported under cohesion funding.

JASPERS is a partnership between the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and KfW Bankengruppe.

(1) The evaluation Terms of Reference, Final Report and supporting documents can be found on the Inforegio website here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/eval2007/jaspers\\_evaluation/final\\_report\\_131212.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/eval2007/jaspers_evaluation/final_report_131212.pdf)

(2) The EU 12 countries – beneficiary Member States of the JASPERS initiative – are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

(3) A major project is defined as costing more than EUR 50 million. JASPERS uses this definition for infrastructure projects, and uses a cost of EUR 25 million or more for defining major environmental projects.

It has regional offices in Luxembourg, Vienna, Bucharest, Sofia and Warsaw. JASPERS support is for projects in sectors including ports, airports, railways, roads, urban infrastructure and services, energy and solid waste, water supply and wastewater and the knowledge economy.

The purpose of the Evaluation was to establish the impact of JASPERS on the quality and timeliness of the preparation, submission, approval and implementation of major projects in the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007<sup>(3)</sup>.

## Key findings from the evaluation

▶1. The JASPERS initiative has proved to be of substantial value to Member States in the development of projects and applications for funding and there continues to be strong demand for its services. There is sound statistical evidence confirming that JASPERS support significantly reduces the duration of the Commission's approval process, as well as the time taken to develop projects by the Member States.

▶2. The greatest potential to improve project quality is when JASPERS is involved at the strategic stage, and where JASPERS support helps Member States to develop their project planning capacity.

## Key recommendations contained in the evaluation

### ▶1. A strategic approach

JASPERS should have an explicit objective to develop the project planning capacity of Member States and there should be an increased focus in its work on this objective. A three year work plan, agreed between JASPERS and each Member State, is proposed. The work plans would be tailored to the needs and strengths of each Member State.



The Copernicus Science Centre, Warsaw, Poland, received Jaspers assistance. It opened in November 2010.

## ▶2. Impacting on the design stage of projects

JASPERS intervention should come as early as possible in the project design process, providing technical or specialist advice from the earliest stages of planning. This may include giving a recommendation not to pursue projects which are not priorities, or which have fundamental flaws. One effective use of resources would be for JASPERS to routinely advise on the terms of reference for project feasibility studies and on the assessment of these studies prior to their finalisation.

## ▶3. More formalised working arrangements

Working arrangements between JASPERS, the Commission and the Member States should be more formalised. This should clarify roles and responsibilities between the Commission, Member States, and JASPERS.

## ▶4. Sectoral strategy development

JASPERS advice should be routinely available to Member States for the development of sectoral strategies. JASPERS involvement would be advisory in nature, and take place at the invitation of Member States.

## ▶5. Developing the technical and project planning capacities of Member States

A more strategic approach is required to improve the capacity of Member States to select and develop high quality

projects. Based on an analysis of individual Member States' project planning capacities, JASPERS could focus on specific activities that would have the greatest impact on project planning and project quality.

## ▶6. Improving Knowledge Transfer from JASPERS Assignments

The evidence from the evaluation confirms the need for and the importance of improving knowledge transfer. JASPERS should put in place a system to highlight technical issues that have been addressed and resolved in individual projects where they are considered to be of more general relevance. Action by Member States is also required – for example by considering what structures are in place, and what actions are needed, to ensure that knowledge transfer happens effectively.

### ▶FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/the\\_funds/instruments/jaspers\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/the_funds/instruments/jaspers_en.cfm)

## AGENDA

**24-25 APRIL 2013**

\_Warsaw (PL)

RURBAN Conference –  
Sustainable Urban Rural  
Partnerships

**21 SEPTEMBER 2013**

\_Europe-wide

European Cooperation Day

**7-10 OCTOBER 2013**

\_Brussels (BE)

OPEN DAYS 2013

**28-29 OCTOBER 2013**

\_Bucharest (RO)

2nd Annual Forum of  
the EU Strategy for  
the Danube Region

**9-10 DECEMBER 2013**

\_Brussels (BE)

Conference  
'Telling the story'

More information on these events can be found  
in the Agenda section of the Inforegio website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/  
agenda/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/agenda/index_en.cfm)

# MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

We would like to hear about cohesion  
policy's achievements in your region,  
highlighting results and tangible benefits  
for citizens, and your views on preparations  
for the next programming period.

Selected contributions will be featured  
in the next edition of *Panorama* magazine.  
Please send your submissions (maximum length  
of 1 500 characters without spaces) to:

**[regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu)**



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