European Commission

[SPRING 2016 ▸ No. 56]

panorama inforegio

Coordinated efforts to safeguard funding

Boost for EU investment

- Quality of life in Europe's cities
- Management tool for knowledge exchange
- Overcoming cross-border barriers

Regional and Urban Policy

[SPRING 2016 ▸ No. 56]

panorama inforegio

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EDITORIAL

Corina Crețu
European Commissioner for Regional Policy

As migration continues to dominate headlines across Europe and beyond, and European leaders are urgently seeking a solution to the refugee crisis, the European Commission is providing more emergency funding. The proposed Emergency Assistance Instrument has been welcomed by Member States as a faster way to support countries facing this dilemma.

Cohesion Policy also plays a major part in migration issues, providing crucial funding for effective integration policies on education, employment, housing and non-discrimination. Last September, Member States were urged to review their Structural Funds programmes and modify them where possible to support migration-related measures. Italy, for example, has reprogrammed EUR 220 million in the scope of the 2007-2013 programmes addressing some emergency challenges (first accommodation, rescue, patrol vessels).

Spending wisely

To help Member States make the best possible use of the Cohesion Policy funding and to address problems with implementation, various types of support are provided by the European Commission.

You will find more information in this issue about the expert exchange system TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER (enabling administrations to share expertise and good practices across EU regions), the 'Integrity Pacts' initiative (aiming to increase transparency, accountability and good governance in public contracting), and the Task Force for Better Implementation (providing tailored support to eight Member States facing particular challenges linked to the implementation of Cohesion Policy funds).

A specific initiative dedicated to regions growing at a very slow pace has also been launched recently. The Commission is working with national and regional authorities by providing analyses, expertise and advice so as to identify the bottlenecks in these regions. Romania and Poland are the first countries where this initiative will be deployed.

The first set of conclusions and recommendations from the High Level Group monitoring simplification for beneficiaries of the ESI funds has also been published recently on the online platform (https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/simplify-esif).

Unlocking potential

Across the EU, the economic crisis has been instrumental in reducing investment in infrastructure, innovation and SMEs. The European Structural and Investment Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investment are part of a coordinated effort to address the investment gap and strengthen competitiveness. ESI Funds finance projects via grants and financial instruments while the EFSI provides risk financing instruments through the European Investment Bank. I invite your to take a look at the article which gives an overview of the possible combinations of EFSI and ESI Funds.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS IN BORDER REGIONS

623 CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY DG ONLINE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Citizens, businesses and public authorities were among those responding to a European Commission consultation exercise which sought to assess the remaining obstacles to cooperation in EU border regions. The online exercise gave people the opportunity to flag-up barriers they have encountered – and to put forward their own solutions.

The survey 'Overcoming obstacles in border regions' was carried out between September and December 2015. It was open to all internal EU border regions, as well as border areas between EU countries and EFTA/EEA countries. In total, 623 replies were received.

Respondents were asked, amongst other things, to define what obstacles were most relevant in their region – and to suggest how they could best be overcome. In order to provide an overview, the questionnaire first suggested a number of categories for people to reflect on: difficult physical access; language barriers; lack of trust; legal and administrative barriers; economic disparities; sociocultural differences and public authorities' interest in working together. The respondents could then select a maximum of three of these obstacles and elaborate on the impact they have on their daily life, and what would be required to solve them.

Border citizens: coping with complexity

As regards the results, one in two respondents said that legal and administrative barriers were relevant in their region. Employment legislation, tax, recognition of qualifications, social security and access to health care were key issues in this respect.

Language barriers and difficult physical access were the second and third most frequently mentioned types of obstacles. Tackling them can be seen as a basic precondition for greater collaboration between neighbours across borders – thus, the results underline the need to continue improving cross-border mobility initiatives and to encourage language learning.

However, apart from appearing in its own category, language barriers were also mentioned as a cross-cutting theme in the survey. Several respondents felt that many of the obstacles facing citizens and organisations simply stem from a lack of understanding of neighbouring languages, which makes it hard to access important information when making trips across a border. Language is also a significant barrier to generating social and cultural links between countries, which could be countered by continuing to promote initiatives such as student exchanges.

The findings also revealed that some barriers are complex and multidimensional in nature, bringing a number of factors into play. For example, the lack of a cross-border transport system is not necessarily due to physical inaccessibility – it can also be about the inadequate harmonisation of technical standards. This can create practical problems such as the need to change trains at borders because railway track gauges differ from country to country.

Working together to unleash the full potential of border regions

One bright and encouraging note is that lack of trust is not often cited as an obstacle, which indicates there is potential to develop further social, economic and cultural ties between neighbouring communities. Nevertheless, many respondents also believe that public authorities in border areas could make a greater effort to work together – the fact that they

do not collaborate more often was seen as an obstacle in itself. While these views may only be a perception, it does appear that municipalities and regions, for example, need to do more to raise awareness of the efforts they are making to develop cross-border ties.

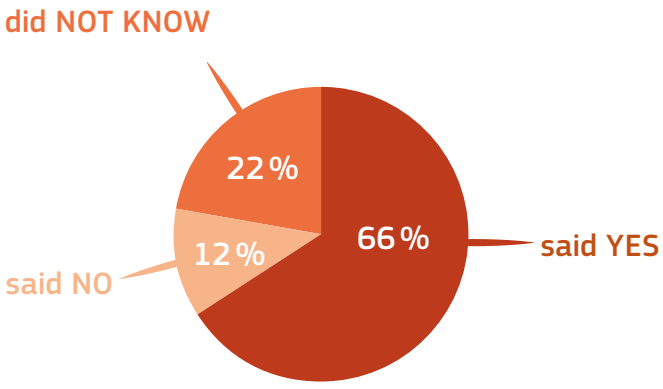
Finally, the results can be seen as a clear signal that the respondents actually want more – not less – cooperation across borders. The significant number of solutions suggested to overcome border obstacles also indicates that there is plenty of scope to overcome, or at least mitigate, most of the barriers that still exist.

Next steps

The consultation was carried out as part of a wider initiative known as the Cross-Border Review. The 'stem' of this review is an in-depth study into the legal and administrative barriers that continue to have an adverse impact on cross-border interactions, and apart from a general inventory of the obstacles, a series of case studies will be carried out to highlight these barriers. In addition, several stakeholder workshops have been, and will be held in Brussels to discuss the review's findings.

Making progress

Respondents were asked: Has cross-border cooperation improved in your region over the last decade?



TEAM EFFORT TO BEAT THE BARRIERS

Across the EU, people and organisations are working hard to overcome obstacles in order to improve cross-border integration and cooperation. One of the instruments supporting this is European Territorial Cooperation, or Interreg.

A team of experts examined the challenges people face when cross-border commuting for work between southern Denmark and northern Germany. The Pontifex Bridge Builder project, which received funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Syddanmark-Schleswig KERN operational programme 2007-2013, analysed obstacles to mobility, such as taxation, social security and residency rules. The project has been able to clarify several issues, including a decision that the Danish government is obliged to pay migrant workers full child benefits.

Another ERDF-backed project brought together public institutions and transport operators from five central European countries to develop a travel information system. Using funding from the Central Europe operational programme (2007-2013), partners from Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy and Slovakia cooperated to develop EDITS – the European Digital Traffic Infrastructure Network for Intelligent Transport Systems. This is the first time in Europe that operators from neighbouring countries have joined forces to exchange transport data as a means of providing travellers with accurate services and information across borders.

▸FIND OUT MORE

The Cross-border Review: http://europa.eu/!yB46tJ

Background on the consultation: http://europa.eu/!nM97GC

Pontifex Bridge Builder: http://europa.eu/!mH96DX

EDITS: (European Digital Traffic Infrastructure Network for Intelligent Transport Systems) http://europa.eu/!CG48Cm

A MAKE-OVER FOR TURIN'S URBAN SPACES

An eye-catching way to give old buildings a new look across the city

In Italy, the Urban Barriera urban regeneration programme aimed to stimulate redevelopment in the Barriera di Milano, an historical district in northern Turin. Ms Ilda Curti, Turin City Councillor for EU funds and Urban regeneration explains.

Barriera di Milano is in a part of the city which has always faced complex and problematic challenges in terms of its social and demographic make-up, the historical absence of green spaces, and the presence of abandoned industrial buildings characteristic of a 'Fordist' city of the 1900s.

The regeneration programme was funded by the City of Turin, the Piedmont Region and the EU's European Regional Development Fund programme 2007-2013. It used an integrated approach to deal with the physical, economic and social aspects, encouraging cooperation and productive interaction between all active participants and beneficiaries of the renewal process (public administration sectors, municipal areas, associations, institutions, citizens, entrepreneurs, etc.).

Urban Barriera is the latest regeneration programme to be launched by Turin, and since the mid-1990s has profited from the rich and considerable experience gained during the implementation of other projects such as 'The Gate' at Porta Palazzo (1997-2001) and 'Urban II' at Mirafiori Nord (2001-2007).

Costing EUR 35 million, the Urban Barriera di Milano programme was drawn up by the City of Turin and allocated EUR 20 million from the Piedmont Region through the European Regional Operational Fund (ERDF 2007-2013). The rest came from municipal funds or additional agreements with the state and region for the implementation of specific interventions.

CITTA' DI TORINO

Pooling resources

Urban Barriera was officially launched in the first quarter of 2011 and has just ended. Thirty-four specific interventions were planned during the process which involved Turin's technical staff, institutional stakeholders and local associations as well as citizens who participated actively through various planning processes and social support.

The programme has performed at various levels: physical-environmental (renewal and definition of new functions for abandoned buildings, restructuring of public spaces and green areas, interventions relating to sustainable mobility, etc.); economic-employment (actions focused on supporting SMEs and local businesses, training for the unemployed and young unemployed, etc.); socio-cultural; and through a strong communication activity and social support.

Programme management was entrusted to the Barriera di Milano Urban Committee, promoted by the City of Turin and some of its institutional partners. The committee coordinated activities, implemented all types of participation and collaboration, and provided the information necessary to ensure that the whole area would benefit from the regeneration initiative and feel involved in the process.

▸ Big changes under way for Parco Spina 4

▸FIND OUT MORE

For an in-depth view of the whole Urban Barriera di Milano programme see:

http://europa.eu/!dg63bB

http://www.comune.torino.it/urbanbarriera/bm~doc/mappa-interventi-urban-def-copy.pdf

EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS AND THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

ENSURING COORDINATION, SYNERGIES AND COMPLEMENTARITY

Why are coordinated efforts needed at European level to reverse the downward trend of investments in Europe?

The global economic and financial crisis has brought about a sharp drop in investment across Europe, hampering essential investment in infrastructure, innovation and SME financing. Currently, investment in Europe is 15% below pre-crisis levels.

Investment needs are significant and liquidity is available, but many potential investments do not materialise due to a variety of financial and non-financial barriers. Investor confidence is low due to economic volatility, along with regulatory and other uncertainties.

Europe must address this investment gap in order to recover from the crisis and strengthen its global competitiveness. That is why collective efforts at European level are needed to put Europe on the path of economic recovery. In this context, the Commission decided to tackle the investment gap by launching the Investment Plan for Europe.

What is the European Fund for Strategic Investments?

The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) represents the first pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group launched the EFSI to help overcome the investment gap in the EU by mobilising private financing for strategic investments.

With EFSI support, the EIB Group provides financing for economically and technically viable projects, including projects with a higher risk profile than ordinary EIB activities. Emphasis is put on the following key sectors: (i) transport, energy and the digital economy; (ii) environment and resource efficiency; (iii) human capital, culture and health; (iv) research, development and innovation; and (v) support to SMEs and Mid-Caps.

The EFSI may finance Investment Platforms, to channel a financial contribution to a number of investment projects with a thematic or geographic focus, as well as operations with National Promotional Banks (NPBs).

What are European Structural and Investment Funds?

There are five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds):

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- the European Social Fund (ESF)
- the Cohesion Fund (CF)
- the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
- the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

These Funds share a common legal framework (Common Provisions Regulation) but are also subject to certain fund-specific regulations. ESI Funds are important contributors to the EU goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Over the 2014-2020 period, EUR 454 billion will be invested in 500 programmes and targeted at strategic, growth-generating areas, primarily in research, development and innovation, support to SMEs, the low-carbon economy, and information and communication technologies.

The ESI Funds are delivered through nationally co-financed multiannual programmes, approved by the Commission and implemented by Member States and their regions under shared management. Local authorities are responsible for selecting, implementing and monitoring projects supported by ESI Funds.

The reformed framework of ESI Funds for 2014-2020 includes an enlarged scope for the use of financial instruments rather than only grants.

What are the main differences between the ESI Funds and the EFSI?

The risk profile, criteria and delivery mode are different. The ESI Funds can finance projects via grants and financial instruments and are part of the programmes implemented by managing authorities in the Member States. The EFSI provides risk financing instruments (no grants) via the European Investment Bank with no geographical or sectorial quota but based on market demand for investment financing.

What is the advantage of complementary use of EFSI and ESI Funds?

ESI Funds and the EFSI can help in the collective and coordinated efforts to tackle the drop in investment across Europe or in a particular region.

ESI Funds and the EFSI can mobilise additional investments by complementing each other and by mobilising a maximum of private funds. These funds have been designed in a different way but are complementary in terms of rationale, design and legislative framework. They reinforce each other. They can be combined in a number of ways, depending on the investment in question. The combination of ESI Funds and EFSI may be particularly interesting in certain countries or sectors where the ESI Funds offer wide opportunities and where the EFSI on its own has not yet been fully mobilised.

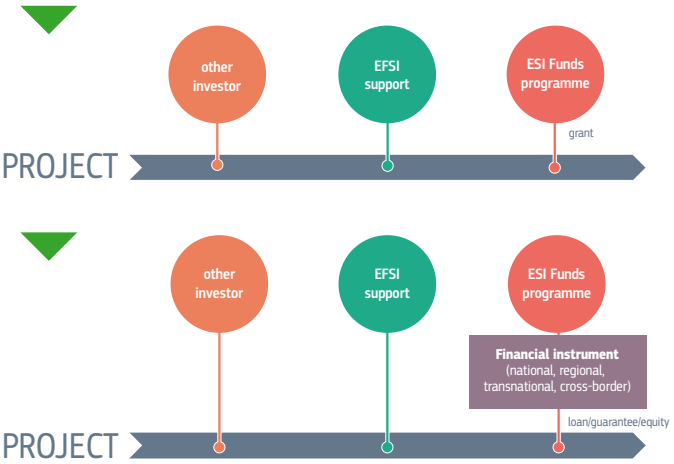
Any project that is economically and technically viable, has the potential to positively contribute to growth and jobs in the EU and is in line with EU policies may be eligible for funding from both the EFSI and the ESI Funds.

Regional authorities will be able to achieve additional impacts through EFSI co-investments (EFSI contribution and any other co-investors attracted by EFSI). The regional allocations not only safeguard ESIF investments but also give each region (under its regional programme) the possibility to attract EFSI investments to the region.

What are the different ways ESI Funds can be combined with the EFSI?

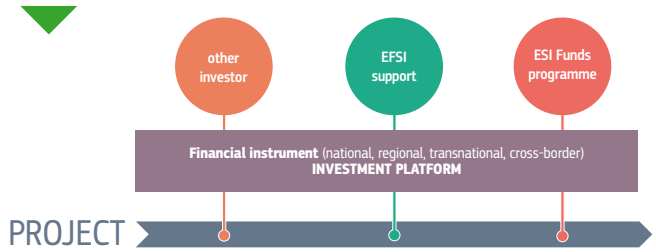
ESI Funds can be combined with the EFSI in different ways:

1. Combining ESI Funds with the EFSI directly at **project level**:



An eligible project receives funding from the ESIF programme (in the form of a grant or through a financial instrument), from EFSI and possibly also from other investors attracted by ESI Funds and EFSI.

2. Combining ESI Funds with the EFSI at **investment platform level**:

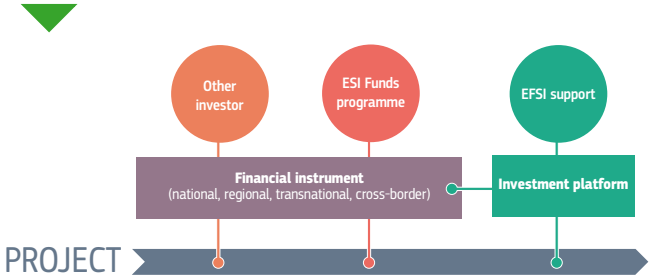


The managing authority may want to set up a new investment platform (considered as a financial instrument) in which EFSI and other investors would invest their resources, including in the form of a layered fund.

Another possibility is that the managing authority makes an ESI Funds programme contribution into an existing investment platform (considered as a financial instrument) which was set up with EFSI resources at national, regional, transnational or

cross-border level. The investment platform would then invest EFSI and distinct ESI Funds programme contributions in projects (other investors may participate)

3. Combining ESI Funds with the **EFSI support (channelled through an investment platform)** at the level of financial instrument or at project level:



In this scenario, the managing authority sets up a financial instrument in which the investment platform set up with EFSI support participates as an investor. Other investors may also participate. The financial instrument would then invest EFSI and distinct ESI Funds programme contributions in projects (other investors may participate).

Another option would be an intervention by an investment platform, set up with EFSI support, directly at project level on a deal-by-deal basis.

Can ESI Funds contribute to the EFSI?

ESI Funds programme resources cannot be transferred directly to the EFSI.

Can the EFSI be used as national co-financing in an ESI Funds programme?

Given its nature and structure, EFSI support to a project cannot count as national co-financing of an ESI Funds programme.

However, national co-financing of an ESI Funds programme could still be provided through another EIB/EIF financial product, either through a Structural Programme Loan or through intervention at project level.

It is also possible that, under certain circumstances, additional resources leveraged and triggered by the combined ESI Funds and EFSI interventions could be treated as national co-financing for the ESI Funds programme.

How do state aid rules apply when combining ESI Funds with the EFSI?

The EFSI does not constitute state aid and is not subject to EU state aid rules. ESI Funds provided to businesses, unless granted on market terms, may entail state aid, which is subject to EU state aid rules.

The Commission will assess ESI Funds entailing state aid on the basis of its modernised state aid framework. To facilitate the deployment of the EFSI, the Commission will assess the compliance of ESI Funds with state aid rules as a matter of priority and give it fast-track treatment (within six weeks from the moment it receives complete information).

Where can project promoters get help in shaping their proposals?

Project promoters should make full use of the European Investment Advisory Hub which is the gateway to technical and administrative investment advice and support. Designed jointly by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank, the Hub helps public authorities and project promoters identify, prioritise, prepare, structure and implement strategic projects and make more efficient use of EU funds by mobilising private capital. Part of this one-stop-shop is ‘fi-compass’, an advisory service on financial instruments for ESI Funds.

Furthermore, the European Investment Project Portal (EIPP) is a new web portal enabling EU-based project promoters – public or private – to reach potential investors worldwide. The portal is hosted by the European Commission and is designed in response to investors' desire to see more potential EU investment opportunities in a central platform.

FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!DT39vF

THE EUSALP IS AIMING HIGH

EU LAUNCHES THE STRATEGY FOR A MORE PROSPEROUS, GREENER AND BETTER CONNECTED ALPINE MACRO REGION

The EUSALP aims to stimulate an innovative and sustainable growth model in the Alpine Macro Region, thereby benefiting seven countries and over 70 million people living in the area.

Adopted in July 2015 and endorsed by the Council of the European Union in November 2015, the EUSALP is an EU 'macro-regional strategy': an integrated framework which can be supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), among others, to address common challenges faced by Member States and third countries located in the same geographical area. As a result, the region is set to benefit from strengthened cooperation contributing to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The Alpine Strategy concerns one of the largest economic and productive regions in Europe, involving five EU countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia), two non-EU countries (Switzerland and Lichtenstein) and a total of 48 regions. Overall, EUSALP will affect 70 million people who live and work in the Alpine Region: public administrations, universities, research centres, SMEs, civil society, private sector and international investors will all benefit from the Strategy. Moreover, the improved services and quality of life promoted by the EUSALP will also benefit millions of tourists who visit the area every year.

Why the EUSALP?

Citizens, businesses and local authorities from the seven countries all face similar challenges in the regions:

- **Economic globalisation** threatening the territory's competitiveness and innovation
- **Demographic trends** with an ageing population and new migration models
- **Climate change** with its negative effects on the environment, biodiversity and living conditions
- **Energy challenges** at European and global scale
- **Mobility**, given the specific geographical position as a European transit region as well as an area with unique geographical and natural features.

The main aim of the EUSALP is to promote the sustainable economic and social prosperity of the Alpine Region through growth and job creation by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. At the same time, the objective is to preserve the environment and ensure healthy and balanced ecosystems.

The main added value of the Strategy for the Alpine Region relies on a new relationship between metropolitan, peri-mountain and mountain areas.

How does it work?

The Alpine Strategy is based on the key principles applied to existing macro-regional strategies: no new EU funds, no additional EU formal structures and no EU legislation, while relying on a coordinated approach, synergistic effects and a more effective use of existing EU funds and other financial instruments.

It is up to the seven countries and 48 regions to ensure that the EUSALP delivers the expected results. As an independent facilitator, the European Commission is in charge of strategic coordination in areas where it can provide the macro-region with added value. For example, it can offer strategic support by identifying shortcomings that need to be addressed at the policy level or facilitate a cross-sector approach consistent with different EU policies.

However, as Commissioner Crețu has said, "this is a countries' Strategy" and it is only through their commitment, cooperation and joint efforts that the Alpine Region can become more prosperous, greener and better connected.

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE PROJECTS IN LINE WITH THE EUSALP

INCREASING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF STRATEGIC SECTORS

- **Alpine Transfer Centres**: this project involves setting up a network and toolkit for technology transfer centres to support collaboration between R&D organisations and enterprises – as 'one-stop shops' mainly for SMEs. Transfer centres can be regional hosts for shared projects on innovation and technology transfer.

- **Labelling Alpine Wood and Wooden Products**: the idea is to support the use of local wood from Alpine forests for buildings and wooden products across the entire value chain – either by mobilising resources and operations or for first or second transformations. A quality label for Alpine wood can help better manage both mountain forests and wooden products, ensuring a lower carbon footprint by reducing transport needs. It would also contribute to the professionalism of actors while helping to maintain and develop company networks.

- **AlpNet**: building on research results, the aim is to improve product innovation for companies working in Alpine tourism for year-round tourism. The project will enhance the exchange of knowledge and best practice between tourism regions. In an increasingly competitive global market, the goal is to strengthen the position of the Alpine region and make its tourism more sustainable.

IMPROVING THE ADEQUACY OF THE LABOUR MARKET, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

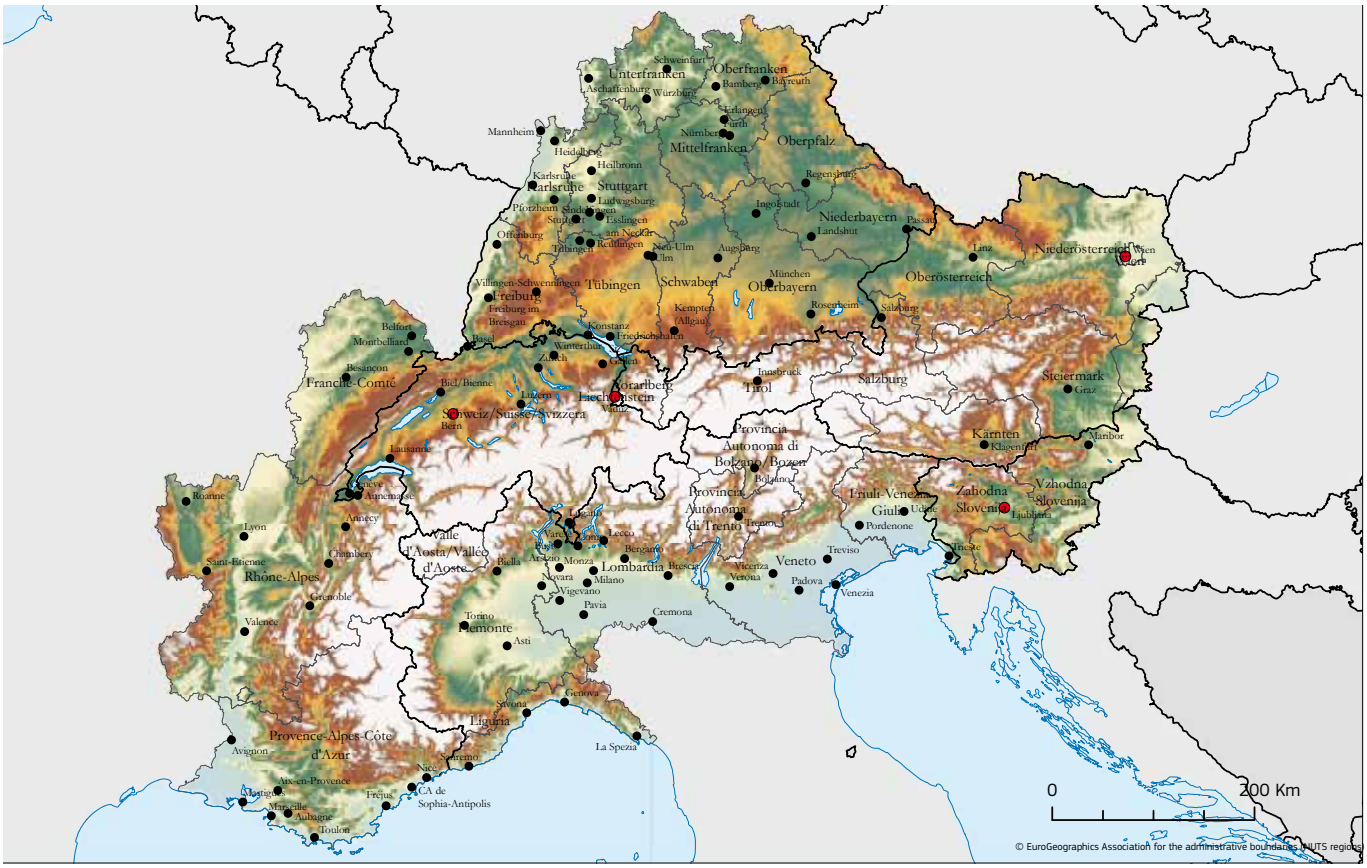
- **Youth Alpine Dialogue**: many Alpine regions are facing demographic challenges (e.g. ageing population, out-migration of skilled labour). For young people to commit to building a life in their home communities, they must be engaged in decision-making and shaping their living and work environments. This project will help young people to understand the needs and potential of their own villages and towns as well as those of the entire Alpine region, through transnational exchanges of young people and decision-makers across all Alpine countries.

PROMOTING MOBILITY OF FREIGHT AND PASSENGER TRANSPORT

- Upgrading rail cross-border sections of TEN-T projects; electrification of railway lines, operation of 740-metre-long trains, and development of the European Railway Traffic Management System – ERTMS.

- Upgrading of local railways such as Turin-Aosta, Nice-Ventimiglia-Cuneo-Turin, Munich-Lindau-Bregenz-Zurich, Ulm-Friedrichshafen-Lindau, Trieste-Ljubljana, Brescia-Edolo, Durance Valley, Milano-Tirano, and the Dolomites valleys in Trentino.

- Building on existing cooperation projects to reduce the impact of transalpine traffic, and upgrading them at a macro-regional scale.



Turning words into actions

On 25 January, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu and Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc participated in the EUSALP launch conference in Brdo, Slovenia. The event, co-organised by the European Commission and Slovenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, marked the beginning of the implementation phase and offered participants the opportunity to express their views and ideas on the best working methods for and the most efficient management of the Strategy.

"The Alpine Region is among the most dynamic, innovative and competitive areas in Europe. However, socio-economic imbalances still need to be tackled. This is what the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region is for: to fully exploit the potential of the 48 regions involved – EU and non-EU countries alike – and to ensure that no locality, region or resident is left behind on the path to prosperity. It is now time to turn words into action," said Commissioner Crețu.

"With four of the nine European transport corridors passing through the Alps, the region is a node with a particularly fragile environment. While Europe depends on the connectivity of the Alpine region, it is critical to combine it with the highest level of sustainability. The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region provides the vision and leadership that is willing to take up this challenge," added Commissioner Bulc.

▸FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!tm36qb

TASK FORCE PROMOTES BETTER USE OF EU FUNDING

A team set up to help a number of Member States use EU funds more efficiently has completed its intensive work schedule, which included more than 100 technical meetings and seminars. In cooperation with eight countries, the Task Force for Better Implementation (TFBI) has eased bottlenecks and backlogs in the allocation and spending of EU Structural Funds.

The TFBI started work in November 2014 to assess why Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary were lagging behind in delivering funding through programmes and on to projects. In addition to identifying bottlenecks, the TFBI collaborated with national authorities to draw up action plans to get things moving.

The whole process benefited from strong political support in both the Commission and the Member States. The goal was to provide each of the countries involved with tailored and coordinated methods of improving implementation so that the 2007-2013 programming period could come to a successful close.

Driving change

The Task Force set about its work by systematically screening EU-supported programmes, priorities and even individual projects where necessary. Then, activities were identified which could speed up implementation and be rolled into the Member States' action plans – all of which were agreed in spring 2015. The action plans were drafted to include quantifiable milestones and targets, and progress was monitored on a bimonthly or quarterly basis.

The TFBI's work has led to adjustments in a number of programme and project timetables. Some projects have been phased over two programming periods which means they can now be implemented fully during 2014-2020. In addition, new major projects have been identified and submitted. Allocations for financial instruments have been increased and the Member States concerned can now apply greater flexibility when declaring additional expenditure.

The process also delivered a range of capacity-building exercises, including seminars, workshops and technical meetings with national authorities, where good practice was exchanged [see box below]. Although the TFBI finished its work at the end of 2015, the Commission will continue to provide assistance and organise similar events for Member States as they deliver programmes for the 2014-2020 funding period.

Learning curve

While many of the issues addressed by the TFBI were specific to individual Member States, there were some common causes for the delays, including:

- some programmes started slowly;
- insufficient preparation for complex infrastructure projects;
- long project cycles;
- overly lengthy national administrative procedures;
- a lack of administrative capacity at national and beneficiary level; and
- errors in public procurement procedures.

There was also some suggestion that programme implementation has been a steep learning curve for all Member States, especially those undertaking their first full programming period. For 2014-2020, the recommendation is that all national authorities should start their programme implementation measures as soon as possible.

To ensure success, the TFBI believes national authorities must find efficient ways to support project beneficiaries as they begin to spend funds. Regular capacity-building activities are proposed as one way forward, both for those bodies allocating the funding and the organisations spending it down the line.

▸ Task Force meeting in Croatia in December 2015

TFBI achievements – **in numbers**

- Thanks to the Task Force's intervention, Slovakia, Romania and Croatia are no longer at risk of losing EU funding worth EUR 1.3 billion.
- More than 40 EU-funded programmes across the eight Member States receiving help have been modified, along with 120 major projects.
- The TFBI held more than hundred technical meetings as part of its 12-month work schedule.

In addition, the Task Force would like to see some of the Commission's own capacity-building actions used more frequently. These include the TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER process (see page 16), which is designed to share expertise between bodies that manage funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund. Integrity Pacts (see page 18), which provide ways to achieve corruption-free, transparent procurement processes could also be deployed.

Good practice

MORE REPORTING AND A STRONGER FOLLOW-UP: most countries assisted by the TFBI improved their follow-up procedures and reported more frequently on their action plans. In particular, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary organised a series of technical meetings to examine in detail the state of play in various programmes – often on a priority-by-priority and project-by-project basis.

IMPROVING PROJECT SCHEDULES AND PAYMENTS: by exploiting Commission guidance on programme closure, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia have rigorously and systematically revised their project timetabling. They also asked the Commission for more help on a variety of technical and administrative issues. Hungary and Slovakia have reviewed their methods for declaring expenditure in revenue-generating projects and are considering alternative accounting practices to improve the way they allocate funding.

▸FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!VQ76YC

HAVE YOU FOUND THE EXPERTISE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER: A FLEXIBLE, EFFICIENT TOOL FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AMONG EUROPE'S REGIONS

In March 2015, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy launched a new tool to enable administrations managing the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund to share expertise and good practice around Europe with the aim of further improving how EU investments are spent.

A year on, the TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER tool is proving its value, providing an efficient and easy-to-use online system to bring together experts and beneficiaries through dozens of workshops, study visits and expert exchanges.

PEER 2 PEER builds on the existing Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument, which has been tested and constantly improved for over 20 years, having been set up initially to support the accession negotiations for the then EU-13 Member States.

PEER 2 PEER enables administrations to access and offer assistance, responding to the demands of public bodies managing the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, 90 % of whom expressed an interest in peer-to-peer learning and 50 % acknowledged they had concrete capacity-building needs.

More broadly, the tool forms part of European Commission efforts to fully utilise the potential of regional policy to create jobs and ensure sustainable growth, in line with the goals set by the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU's EUR 315-billion Investment Plan.

Across the EU, 24 000 officials from national and local administrations are involved in managing the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. PEER 2 PEER aims to capitalise on their know-how and deliver better results by sharing their expertise and good practice.

Hands-on applications

In the past year, the tool has already been used in its pilot phase to organise almost 30 events benefiting applicants from 14 Member States. Events range in size and scope from small three-person study visits and expert-exchange missions to 15-person multi-country meetings and 60-participant workshops, while the topics covered vary from investment management and public procurement to transport and the environment.

So far, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Croatia and Lithuania have been the most active beneficiaries, and the majority of all applications for assistance have been approved.

▸ Fabienne Ruault from the European Commission presenting the online tool
▸ TAIEX-REGIO multi-country workshop on the management of environmental investments, December 2015, Lithuania

> *This PEER 2 PEER initiative is an important step: it is flexible, easy to use and addresses the specific needs of our regions*

▸ CORINA CREȚU – EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR REGIONAL POLICY

In December, for example, 16 experts from eight Member States travelled to Vilnius to participate in a multi-country workshop on management practices for environmental investments. It provided essential expertise to the Environmental Projects Management Agency of Lithuania's Ministry of Environment on how best to invest resources from the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund.

On a smaller scale, three experts from the Northern Netherlands Provinces Alliance travelled to Romania in September for a three-day study visit to help the North-East Regional Development Agency build know-how about smart specialisation. They focused on combining industrial, educational and innovation policies to identify priority areas for knowledge-based investments.

Meanwhile, in June 2015, PEER 2 PEER helped organise a workshop on successful models for management and control of financial instruments in Bulgaria, which was attended by 60 experts from Germany, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Positive outcomes

To date, the biggest areas of interest in peer exchanges have been financial instruments, financial management and control, public procurement, state aid, monitoring and reporting, and sustainable urban development.

Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu says feedback from the exchanges has so far been very positive from applicants for assistance, while officials attending events as peer experts have also found the interchanges beneficial.

The system offers convenience, helping short-term expert exchanges to be organised quickly and efficiently while keeping the administrative burden to a minimum – as well as flexibility, demonstrated by the different types of exchanges organised through the system. The platform also provides quality assurance through several inbuilt mechanisms for quality control and assessment of experts and exchanges.

Crucially, the tool is helping to ensure that local and national administrations managing regional policy funds in all areas of Europe are robust and efficient, enabling projects to translate into real benefits for people living in Europe's regions.

"This PEER 2 PEER initiative is an important step: it is flexible, easy to use and addresses the specific needs of our regions," Commissioner Crețu says.

The Commission will be launching an evaluation of TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER later this year, on the basis of which a decision will be taken on the next steps in the tool's future implementation and development.

▸FIND OUT MORE
PEER 2 PEER and the application procedure, visit a dedicated webpage at:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/p2p or contact REGIO-PEER2PEER@ec.europa.eu

INTEGRITY PACTS REINFORCE THE FIGHT AGAINST FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

SAFEGUARDING EU-FUNDED PROJECTS

Corruption seriously harms the economy and society as a whole, undermining democracy, hampering economic development and damaging social justice and the rule of law. The European Commission and Transparency International are working together to safeguard EU funds against fraud and corruption and improve the quality of public procurement.

It is estimated that EUR 120 billion are lost each year due to corruption in European countries – almost the entire 2014 annual budget of the European Union (EU).(1) Corruption in public procurement harms the public interest, undermines public trust and has a negative impact on people's lives. However, tackling corrupt and fraudulent activities effectively requires a complex approach.

(1) EU Anti-Corruption Report, 3.2.2014 COM(2014) 38 final

▸ Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu and Transparency International Deputy Managing Director Miklos Marschall launch the initiative in March 2015

As an effective anti-corruption player, civil society can play a valuable role in promoting transparency, accountability and prevention. The European Commission and Transparency International have joined forces and stepped up their fruitful cooperation to identify new innovative ways of fighting corruption and improving efficiency in projects co-funded by EU funds.

In March 2015, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu and Transparency International Deputy Managing Director Miklos Marschall launched the initiative 'Integrity Pacts – Civil Control Mechanism for Safeguarding EU Funds against Fraud and Corruption'. The second phase of this joint project, which began on 1 January 2016 and will run for four years, aims to pilot so-called Integrity Pacts (IPs) for several EU co-funded projects in a number of EU countries.

Transparency

An IP is an agreement between a contracting authority, all bidders for a public-sector contract and an independent monitor who oversees implementation of the pact and ensures all parties uphold their commitments within it. It sets out rights and obligations to the effect that neither side will pay, offer, demand or accept bribes; nor will bidders collude with competitors to obtain the contract, or bribe representatives of the authority while carrying it out.

To ensure transparency, the pacts include a commitment by all parties to provide access to information, ensure regular public reporting on the results of the monitoring, and promote the use of open data as well as the disclosure of information related to the procurement process.

An independent monitor, who oversees its implementation, ensures that all parties uphold their commitments under the IP. The mechanism also clarifies the rules for bidders, establishing a level playing field by enabling firms to abstain from bribery by providing assurance that their competitors will do likewise, and that government procurement authorities will commit to preventing corruption and following transparent procedures. These pacts are legally binding contracts which, if breached, could trigger sanctions.

In addition to legal transparency, the IPs refer to efficiency, with experience showing that such a pact can reduce project costs by up to 30%. They can also encourage institutional changes and promote good governance.

Following a call for expression of interest published on 22 May 2015(2), 17 projects co-financed by the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds were selected for this pilot phase. They were submitted by managing authorities and beneficiaries, while the selected civil society organisations applied to act as Integrity Pact monitors.

Significant interest from both sides resulted in the selection of an excellent mix of projects from 11 different sectors (transport, institutional building, culture, monitoring, environment, energy, education, research and development, integrated territorial investment, administrative capacity and health care) and 11 Member States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Portugal, Romania, Italy and Poland). The lessons learnt from these pilots will be disseminated and can be applied to many other EU co-financed projects in the future.

The Commission's funded projects' activities will include:

- training and capacity building of selected civil society organisations to implement the project at country level;
- development and signature of the IPs;
- training and enhancement of knowledge of the relevant stakeholders, such as contracting authorities, managing authorities, economic operators, on anti-corruption and transparency measures in the context of the IP approach;
- independent monitoring of the IPs, performed and/or coordinated by civil society organisations;
- ensuring transparency and access to information related to the IP process and results for citizens in the participating EU Member States;
- periodic sharing and capturing of impact, lessons learnt and best practices for project partners as well as the wider public.

The Transparency International Secretariat will ensure overall coordination of the project. It will coordinate 16 civil society organisations (CSOs) which will monitor the IP and carry out quality assurance of project implementation at all levels, promotion and dissemination of the project results, necessary training and capacity building, capturing and dissemination of impact, lessons learnt and best practices.

IPs are designed to promote cost efficiency as well as good governance. They will also encourage institutional changes, such as the increased use of e-procurement systems, simplified administrative procedures, and improvements within the regulatory environment.

▸FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!Qq83pP

(2) The calls were published on the Inforegio website at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/integrity-pacts/

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

VIEWS FROM STAKEHOLDERS ON COHESION POLICY 2014-2020

Panorama welcomes your contributions!

In Your Own Words is the section of *Panorama* where stakeholders at local, regional, national and European level give their views and outline their plans for the 2014-2020 period.

Panorama welcomes your contributions in your language, which we may feature in future editions. Please contact us for further information about deadlines and guidelines for your contribution.

regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu

GREECE

FROM INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT TO DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Attica's Regional Operational Programme faces many challenges, as does the historical region it serves.

The Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 for Attica – which encompasses the city of Athens – was approved in December 2014, just a few months after the region's administration changed hands. The new programme includes many challenges, although the needs of the Attica Region are even more numerous: change of the interventions policy, the existence of a multitude of ex-ante conditionalities and self-suspensions, and the need to achieve specific objectives at a financial and actual level form the jigsaw pieces of the new programming period for the ROP Attica Managing Authority.

The Attica ROP has EUR 1.1 billion of public expenditure at its disposal from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), allocated between 13 priority axes and 10 thematic objectives. The allocation of funds from the Cohesion Fund and the Rural Development Programme has increased the region's financial capacity in the new Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework, while creating significant obligations and high expectations.

Basic priorities for Attica and its Managing Authority include establishing partnerships at a regional, national and European level, strengthening the capacity of final beneficiaries, and using the available European Commission tools, such as Integrated Territorial Investments, Financial Instruments, Integrity Pacts, support from the JASPERS group, etc. They are also a prerequisite for the successful use of both community and national resources.

Resolving Attica's chronic environmental issues (sewerage and wastewater treatment in East Attica, environmentally friendly solid-waste management), tackling poverty and social exclusion, utilising and promoting certain urban areas of the wider Athens area through integrated and multi-thematic interventions, and pairing academic and research capabilities with business needs to promote innovation, are all realistic objectives which can be achieved by the end of the 2014-2020 programme period.

The progress made by the Attica ROP will be judged not only as regards its absorption, but mainly in terms of effectiveness, performance and the best use of community resources. Members of the Managing Authority staff and the Attica Region are working systematically towards this end.

DIMITRIS DROSIS – *Head of the Special Managing Authority, Attica Regional Operational Programme*

FRANCE

ZERO-EMISSION HYDROGEN TRANSPORT ECONOMY HITS THE ROAD

'The set up [of the stations at Grenoble and Lyon] demonstrates that zero-emission hydrogen transport is a reality here in Rhône-Alpes! And we will go even further: in its second phase, the HyWay project provides for local hydrogen production from renewable electricity generated in the area, thus aiming for completely carbon-free transport.'

As part of its European Regional Development Fund/European Social Fund Regional Operational Programme, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region is encouraging renewable energy production and spending nearly EUR 100 million of the allocated EUR 509 million on energy transition for the period 2014-2020.

The aim of this nationwide innovative project is to introduce the French hydrogen energy sector into industry and make this technology more competitive. It is estimated that around 100 jobs will be created by the end of the three-year project.

The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region brings together 80% of actors in the French hydrogen energy sector. Launched in October 2014, the Hydrogen Wide Acceptance Year programme is deploying hydrogen/battery hybrid utility vehicles around several charging stations in Grenoble and Lyon.

HyWay is implementing a unique and innovative model deploying fleets of utility vehicles equipped with hydrogen kits and used to double their range around two charging stations. The first users are pioneers of hydrogen-based sustainable transport. Hydrogen energy contributes to the conservation of the environment, in particular by rising to the challenge of carbon-free transport: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution in urban areas.

The Tenerrdis competitiveness cluster is working with no fewer than eight industrial partners alongside the French Atomic Energy and Alternative Energy Commission (CEA) to successfully complete this pre-industrial demonstration project.

HyWay took a major step forward in June 2015 with the delivery of 21 vehicles and three hydrogen filling stations in Grenoble. The electric utility vehicles are equipped with hydrogen battery life extender kits based on CEA technology, and can travel 300km a day in urban driving conditions.

In February 2016, a new hydrogen filling station was set up in Lyon which can refill a vehicle in less than seven minutes, at a pressure of 350 bar, and can handle around 15 vehicles each day – a capacity four times more than the initial demonstration station.

This fleet of 50 hydrogen vehicles is currently the largest to be deployed in Europe. During their first four months in use, some vehicles travelled over 60 000km and refilled in stations more than 280 times.

The second phase of the project plans to expand local hydrogen production from renewable electricity generated in the area, thereby demonstrating the potential of the complete hydrogen chain, from the renewable resource to zero-emission transport.

CHANTAL MOREAU – *Directrice of European Programmes, Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes*

UNITED KINGDOM

PEACE FUNDING IS BRINGING DIVIDED COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

An historic sectarian conflict zone in the heart of North Belfast has been completely transformed thanks to EU PEACE funding.

With the creation of the Girdwood community hub, a derelict space which was once the backdrop to violent clashes between neighbouring Protestant and Catholic communities will now facilitate positive cross-community contact through sport and other social activities.

The transformation would not have happened without the support of the EU's PEACE III Programme which has contributed to peace and stability across Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland over the past two decades. Unique across all 28 Member States, this Programme has been in operation since 1995 and has supported the region with around EUR 2 billion.

The PEACE IV Programme 2014-2020, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), was recently adopted with an allocation of EUR 270 million (EUR 229 million from the ERDF).

Given the success of the many shared space initiatives, such as the Girdwood hub, across the PEACE III Programme's eligible area, this funding will continue in PEACE IV. The Programme will support the creation of many more new shared space developments and locally based initiatives designed to make public spaces in cities, towns and villages more inclusive.

To ensure a lasting impact in the region, the PEACE IV Programme will target children and young people inside and outside the school environment. Both Ireland and Northern Ireland have a large youth population: over one-third of Northern Ireland's population is under 25 and thus has had no direct experience of past violent conflicts. Despite this, the underlying issues of segregation and exclusion remain very prevalent among this age group.

Consequently, a significant sum within PEACE IV will assist marginalised and disadvantaged young people, on both sides of the border, who are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or dissident activity. The Programme aims to give them a sense of belonging and encourage them to become involved in cross-community relationship building and citizenship development.

In Northern Ireland, 92.6% of children attend schools that are predominantly associated with one community. In Ireland, over 90% of schools are owned and maintained by the Catholic Church. This severely limits their opportunities to associate with and learn from others from different backgrounds. PEACE IV will fund shared education initiatives to create direct and sustained curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds.

Given the success of the many shared space initiatives across the Programme's eligible area, significant assistance will be provided for similar initiatives. PEACE IV will support many more new shared space developments as well as locally based initiatives to make public spaces in cities, towns and villages more inclusive.

Due to the history of division in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, some sections of society have yet to deal with diversity and difference. Thus, a large part of the Programme will focus on promoting positive relations at a regional-wide level and through local authority-led partnerships.

A regional-wide approach developed to support those who have suffered from the trauma of conflict will be coordinated by the Victims and Survivors Service in Northern Ireland.

For more details, see: www.seupb.eu

JOHN McCANDLESS – *Communications Manager, Special EU Programmes Body, PEACE IV Programme*

GERMANY

FLOOD PROTECTION IN THURINGIA

The disastrous flooding that hit the Thuringia region in summer 2013 has given added impetus to implementation of the Federal plan for flood protection.

The Free State of Thuringia is situated in the central uplands of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is a flood-prone area with 1867 km of waters at risk of flooding, 1 273 km of which come under the regional government's jurisdiction and 594 km fall within the municipality's remit.

Flood risk maps, flood hazard maps and flood risk management plans were created for all the at-risk bodies of water. The approach used and detailed planning can be found in the Federal Programme for Flood Protection for the initial cycle of the directive on flood risk management (2016-2021).

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is an ideal funding instrument for initiatives aimed at implementing flood defence schemes. Effective, preventive flood protection includes flood prevention, land-use management, and technical flood protection measures that complement each other.

Flood prevention involves communication of precise information to encourage those affected to take their own precautionary steps (in terms of behaviour, structural provisions and insurance) and to provide the emergency services with essential details.

Precautionary land-use measures include the designation of flood zones to limit construction on the land, while decentralised flood protection measures, such as adapted land use and earth banks, can minimise run-off where it is generated.

Technical flood protection employs structural measures to ensure that bodies of water have the capacity to absorb a defined volume of flood water without causing substantial damage.

In Thuringia, flood protection has been drawn up for all bodies of water at risk of flooding which the region and the municipalities are obliged to maintain. Damage is not caused by flood waters alone but by settlements built within potential flood zones, plus inadequate investment to counter flood risk.

Thus, Thuringia will construct flood protection systems as far away from the bodies of water as possible. Expanded flood drainage areas allow for synergies (e.g. a more natural development of the water body, integration into the urban infrastructure of a space to relax and experience nature, as well as the option for walking and cycling routes).

Since the space required to achieve this will lead to more buildings being purchased and pulled down, and fields flood more often, a new planning approach will be required.

This strategy for a wider drainage cross-section could create major issues for residents and delays should conflicts arise. To avoid this, Thuringia will focus on exploring and analysing all flood protection options and will communicate its findings transparently to all residents concerned. All technical information will be presented in an accessible way (see Annual ERDF 2015 Event homepage: Mr Pehlke; video, virtual project tour and exhibition). Hopefully, such efforts will minimise the time wasted during project implementation.

KARSTEN PEHLKE – *Planning Director and* **VOLKER KURZ** – *Senior Adviser, Thuringer Ministry of Economy, Science and Digital Society*

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu

SURVEY PAINTS POSITIVE PICTURE OF EUROPEAN URBAN LIFE

IN ALL BUT SIX OF THE SURVEYED CITIES, AT LEAST 80% OF EUROPE'S CITIZENS ARE SATISFIED

Europeans are generally very satisfied with their city, although levels of satisfaction with services reveal large variations between urban areas. These are some of the key findings from a recently published survey on perceptions of quality of life in European cities in 2015. In addition, a number of cities have recorded large positive evolutions since the last survey in 2012.

The survey, which was carried out between May and June 2015, asked 30 questions to over 40000 citizens in 83 European cities. Interviewees came from the 28 Member States of the European Union as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey. While the data should be analysed within the specific context of each city, the responses do provide a unique snapshot of public opinion. Furthermore, the survey is unique in that it addresses people's perception of services in their city as well as their views on urban safety, the presence and integration of foreigners and whether they think that most people can be trusted.

High levels of satisfaction – generally speaking

Overall, there is a high level of overall satisfaction with regard to the cities in which respondents live. In all except six cities, at least 80% are satisfied. Oslo, Zurich (both 99%), Aalborg, Vilnius and Belfast (all 98%) record the highest levels of satisfaction. In 52 cities out of 83, a majority of respondents feel safe, and the more respondents agree they feel safe, the more they are satisfied with living in their city. Several significant increases in satisfaction were recorded, the highest being in Athina (67%, +15) and Greater Athens (71%, +15).

Trust in fellow citizens is high in more than three-quarters of cities. In 35 cities, at least 70% of respondents agree that most people in their city can be trusted, and in 66 cities at least 50% of respondents agree.

Satisfaction with green spaces is also generally high: in 64 cities, the level of satisfaction is at least 70%.

However, the survey also recorded contrasting views between cities on a number of statements regarding infrastructure and facilities, such as public transport; health- care services; sport and educational facilities; the condition of streets and buildings; and public spaces.

In many cities, job availability and access to affordable housing are matters of serious concern, and there are significant differences between cities in the level of satisfaction cited regarding public transport. Furthermore, the number of citizens who use public transport on a daily basis ranges from 80% in Paris to 5% in Lefkosia. In many cities, people have a low opinion of the efficiency of their administrative services, and the survey also recorded highly divergent views on the standard of cleanliness between cities.

Focus on 28 capitals of the EU

The survey also reveals that capital cities are facing specific opportunities and challenges. On a positive note, among the top 15 cities using public transport, 10 are EU capitals. However, respondents living in capital cities are significantly less likely to be satisfied with the noise level in their city compared with those living in the other cities, and in many capital cities, access to affordable housing is also an issue. In addition, satisfaction with schools and educational establishments is low in many capitals.

SATISFACTION WITH THE NOISE LEVEL IN EU CAPITAL CITIES

	Total 'Satisfied'
Dublin	82%
Helsinki	81%
Luxembourg	79%
Wien	78%
Stockholm	77%
Riga	77%
Vilnius	76%
London	75%
Ljubljana	74%
Kobenhavn	71%
Amsterdam	69%
Tallinn	69%
Zagreb	69%
Lefkosia	64%
Berlin	58%
Bratislava	57%
Praha	54%
Brussel/Bruxelles	54%
Budapest	50%
Paris	47%
Warszawa	46%
Madrid	45%
Roma	45%
Lisboa	45%
Valletta	45%
Sofia	36%
Athina	34%
Bucuresti	31%

SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES IN EU CAPITAL CITIES

	Total 'Satisfied'
Dublin	83%
Helsinki	79%
Lefkosia	79%
Ljubljana	79%
Luxembourg	78%
Praha	75%
Amsterdam	75%
Paris	71%
Zagreb	71%
Wien	71%
Stockholm	67%
Lisboa	66%
London	66%
Brussel/Bruxelles	65%
Valletta	65%
Kobenhavn	64%
Riga	62%
Tallinn	61%
Warszawa	61%
Bratislava	55%
Berlin	53%
Vilnius	52%
Budapest	51%
Athina	50%
Roma	50%
Madrid	50%
Bucuresti	48%
Sofia	47%

I hope the findings will inspire all actors and stakeholders involved in urban development to implement a holistic approach to social, economic, cultural and environmental challenges.

▸ CORINA CREȚU – EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR REGIONAL POLICY

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

SATISFACTION WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORT SUCH AS BUS, TRAM OR METRO

	Miskolc	Budapest	Burgas	Krakow	Geneva	Lille	Oviedo	Lefkosia	Kosice	Riga
2015	65%	67%	86%	82%	82%	77%	66%	41%	45%	67%
Comparison with 2012	**+25**	**+22**	**+19**	**+19**	**+19**	**-9**	**-9**	**-9**	**-12**	**-14**

Overall, the survey suggests that while European urbanites are by and large satisfied with their situation – at least nine out of ten respondents say they are satisfied with the lives they lead while a majority are satisfied with the place where they live – assessments of infrastructure and services vary considerably. This can be seen in the vastly divergent opinions expressed about public transport, health care and the environment. The findings underline the need to implement a holistic approach to social, economic, cultural and environmental urban challenges.

Divergence over public transport

Satisfaction with public transport varies significantly between cities, ranging from 97 % in Zurich to 14 % in Palermo. In 40 of the 83 cities, at least three-quarters of respondents say that they are satisfied with their city's public transport. In several cities, a significant proportion of respondents could not express an opinion about public of transport – for example Reykjavik (30 %), Valetta (29 %) and Lefkosia (24 %) – which can be partially explained by the fact that a significant proportion of the population living in these cities do not use public transport.

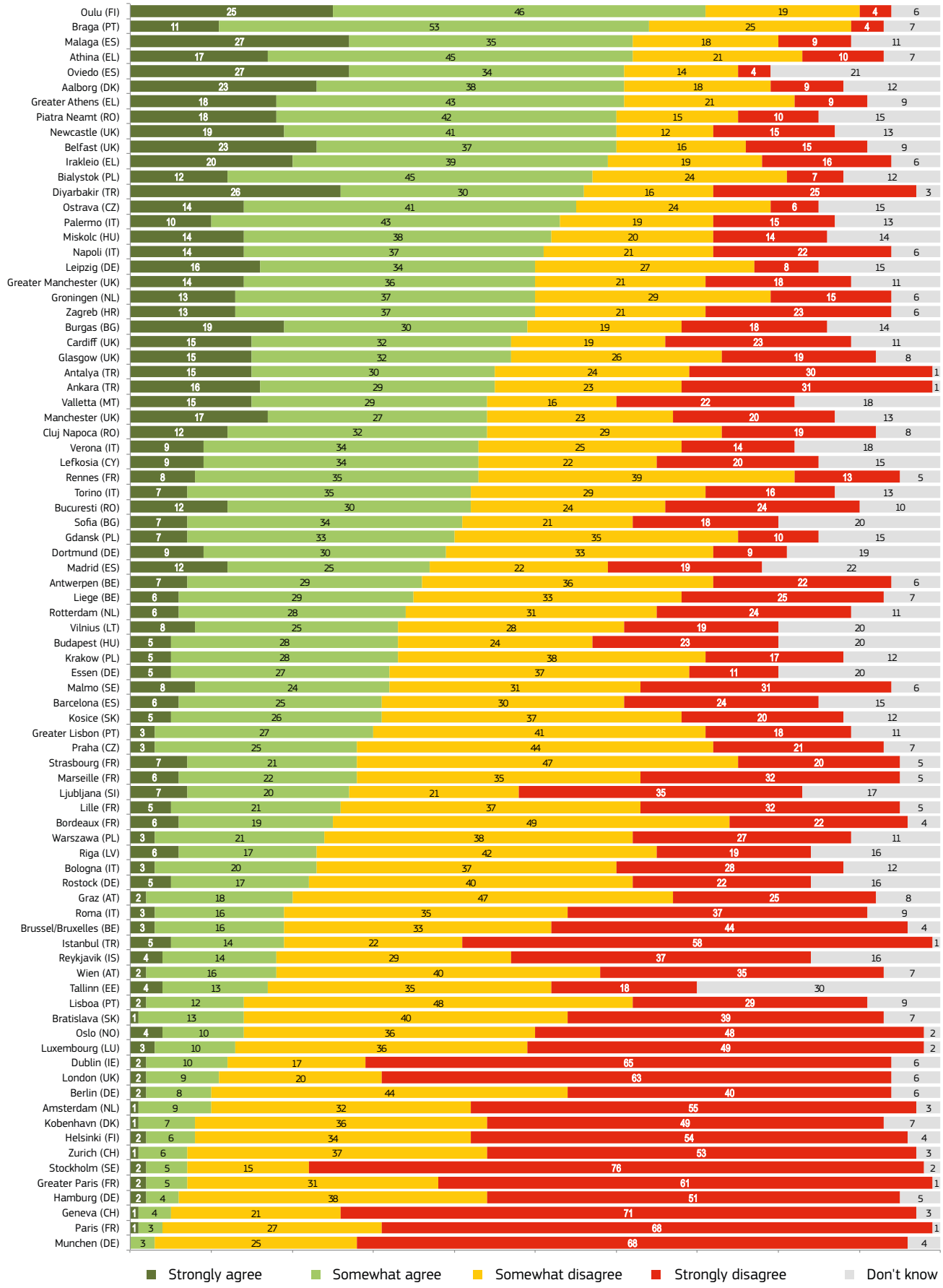
KEY CHALLENGES FOR MY CITY

From a list of ten issues, three – health services, unemployment and education and training – are perceived as the most important for their city. These three aspects are ranked above safety, public transport, road infrastructure, air pollution, housing, social services and noise.

- Health services – in 63 out of 83 cities, health services are cited as one of the three main issues, and ranked first in 27 cities;
- Unemployment is cited as one of the three predominant issues in 52 cities and is ranked first in 23 cities;
- Education and training is one of the top three issues in 59 out of 83 cities and takes first place in 18;
- Housing is considered the most important issue in seven cities and one of the top three issues in another ten;
- Air pollution features among three main issues in 14 cities;
- Road infrastructure is one of the top three most important issues in another 18 cities;
- Safety is seen as one of the three most important issues in 16 cities;
- Public transport comes in the top three issues in ten cities;
- Social services is ranked among the three main issues in four cities;
- Noise does not appear in the top three issues in any of the cities surveyed.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

IT IS EASY TO FIND GOOD HOUSING AT A REASONABLE PRICE IN (CITY NAME)



Finding good housing at a reasonable price is perceived as a challenge by most respondents in more than half of the cities surveyed, and this difficulty is seen as particularly serious in capitals. Housing is among the three most important issues in 12 cities and ranks highest in six cities.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

IT IS EASY TO FIND A JOB IN (CITY NAME)

	Agree	Disagree
Praha	72	24
Cluj Napoca	67	22
Munchen	62	20
Bratislava	62	31
Oslo	59	29
Stockholm	58	33
Sofia	58	34
Antwerpen	56	34
Warszawa	54	38
Hamburg	52	27
Zurich	52	31
Kobenhavn	51	32
Vilnius	51	33
Antalya	51	45
London	50	36
Palermo	3	96
Napoli	5	93
Torino	9	85
Greater Athens	10	85
Malaga	11	85
Athina	11	84
Oviedo	9	83
Roma	12	83
Bialystok	12	82
Madrid	12	81
Miskolc	12	80
Lisboa	17	77
Braga	17	77
Barcelona	17	75
Ostrava	19	75

There are only 14 cities where a majority of respondents say that it is easy to find a job. **Unemployment** is cited as one of the top three most important issues (out of ten suggested) in 52 cities and occupies the top position in 23 of them.

AIR QUALITY

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE AIR QUALITY IN YOUR CITY?

	Agree	Disagree
Rostock	94	5
Groningen	92	6
Bialystok	92	7
Zurich	91	8
Newcastle	90	7
Aalborg	89	7
Dublin	88	11
Helsinki	88	11
Oulu	88	11
Wien	88	12
Belfast	86	10
Cardiff	86	12
Piatra Neamt	86	13
Leipzig	85	13
Krakow	16	83
Ostrava	23	76
Bucuresti	22	75
Paris	25	73
Athina	27	72
Sofia	28	69
Burgas	30	68
Greater Paris	30	68
Roma	32	68
Madrid	31	66
Barcelona	33	66
Palermo	34	65
Napoli	34	65
Torino	35	63
Valletta	35	62
Greater Athens	39	59
Graz	46	53
Budapest	48	51

Air quality is the aspect upon which respondents' views diverge most. Nonetheless, **air pollution** is among the three most important issues in 13 cities and ranks highest in five.

MY CITY'S COMMITMENT TO FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE

	Krakow	Zagreb	Graz	Wien	Malaga	Helsinki	Vilnius	Bialystok	Budapest	Praha	Lille	Lisboa	Ankara	Brussel/Bruxell	Istanbul
2015	60%	51%	67%	75%	58%	62%	62%	62%	55%	40%	64%	48%	52%	49%	41%
Comparison with 2012	**+21**	**+15**	**+13**	**+12**	**+11**	**+10**	**+10**	**+10**	**+10**	**+10**	**-9**	**-9**	**-10**	**-10**	**-17**

Around two-thirds of cities surveyed (57 out of 83) agree that their city is committed to fighting climate change. Since 2012, in a large number of European cities there has been a significant increase in the number of people who agree. The largest increases are recorded in Krakow (60%, +21), Zagreb (51%, +15), Graz (67 %, +13), Wien (75%, +12) and Malaga (58%, +11).

Reasons Why People Love Living in European Cities

41,000 people have been interviewed in 79 European cities. All capital cities have been surveyed.

Source: Quality of Life in Cities 2016, European Commission.

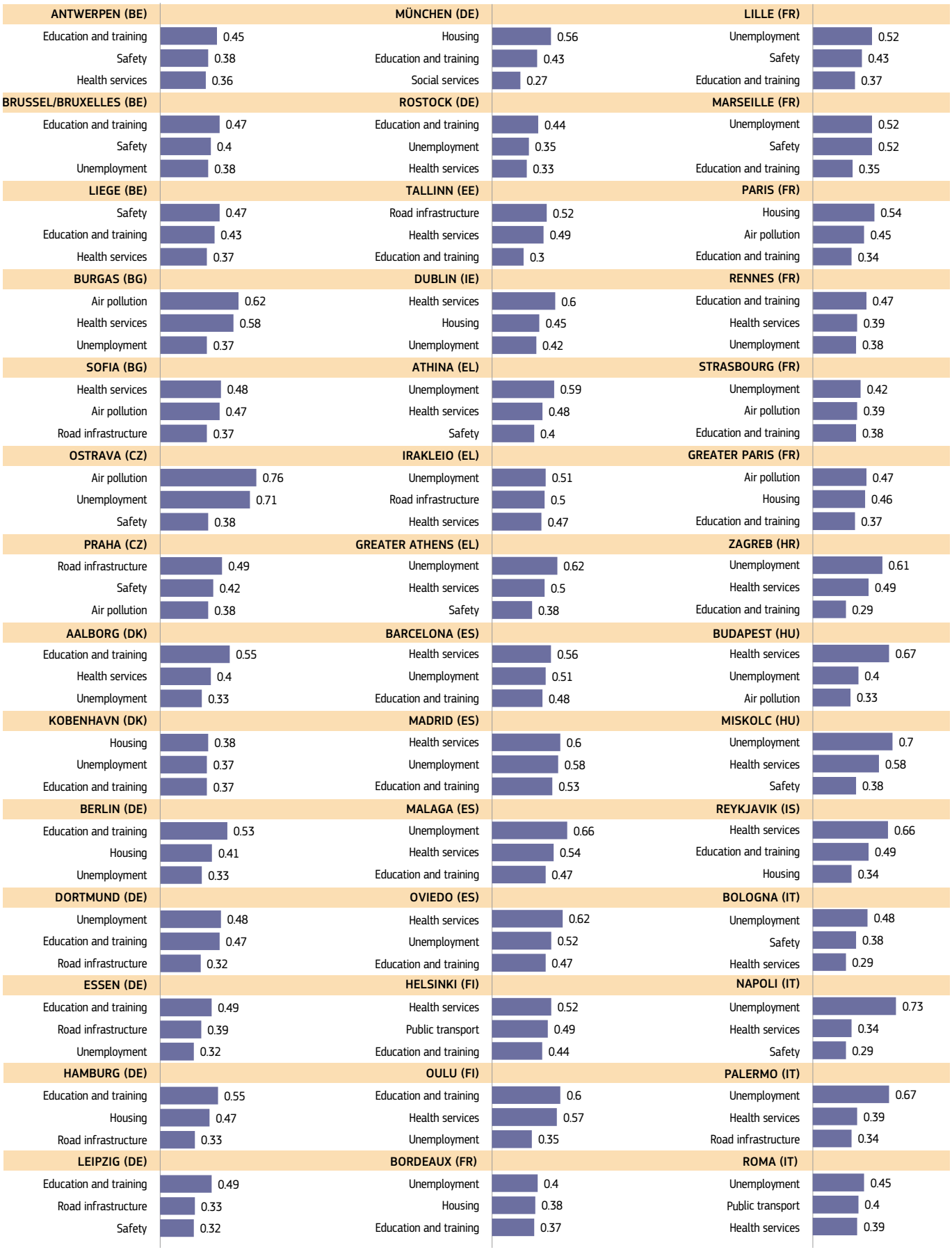
▸FIND OUT MORE

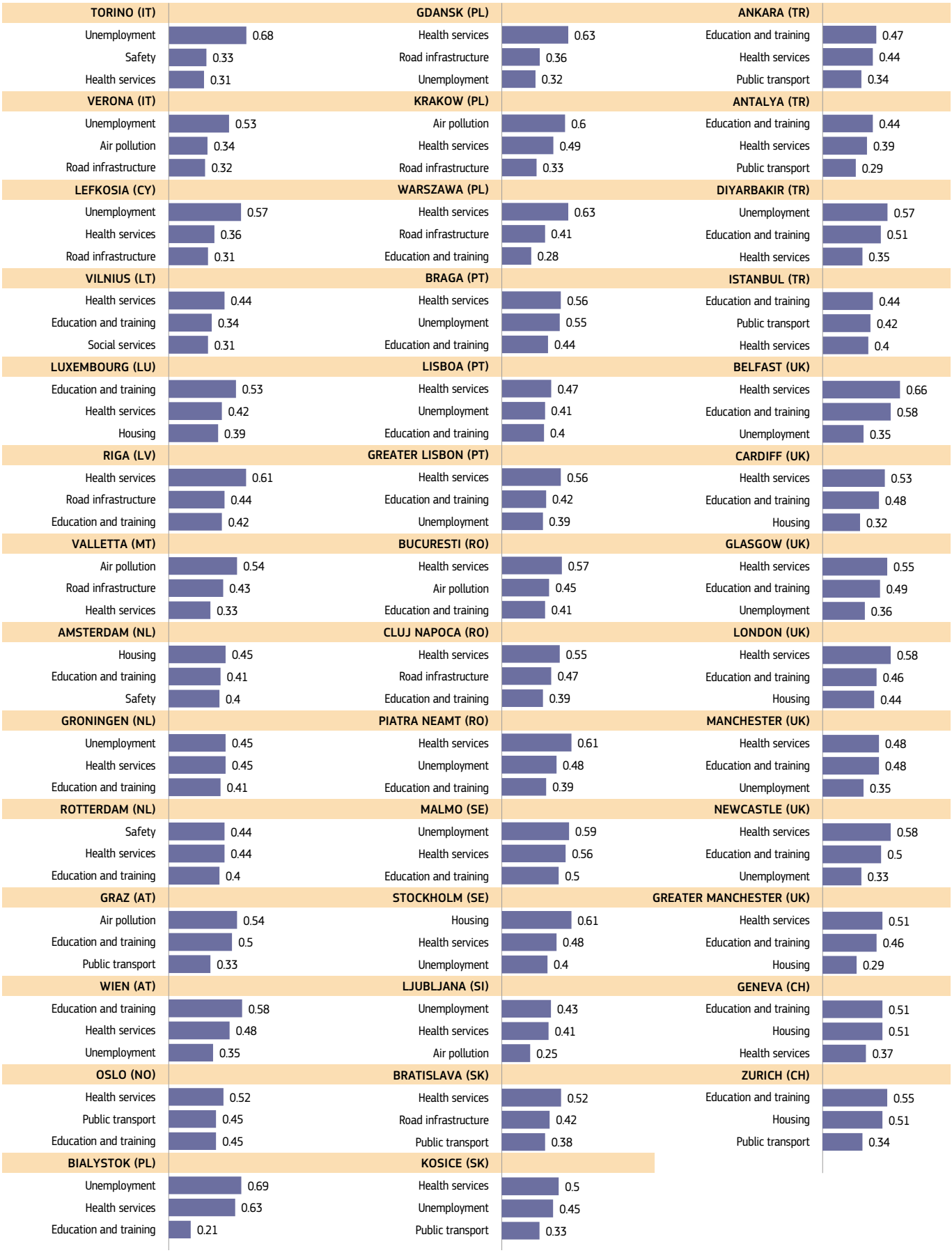
The 2015 publication and previous publications:
http://europa.eu/!wD39kk

All Flash Eurobarometers can be found at:
http://europa.eu/!jx34Jp

National reports of Flash Eurobarometer 419
http://europa.eu/!rV86pc

IN YOUR OPINION, WHICH ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR YOUR CITY




TORINO (IT)
Unemployment 0.68
Safety 0.33
Health services 0.31
VERONA (IT)
Unemployment 0.53
Air pollution 0.34
Road infrastructure 0.32
LEFKOSIA (CY)
Unemployment 0.57
Health services 0.36
Road infrastructure 0.31
VILNIUS (LT)
Health services 0.44
Education and training 0.34
Social services 0.31
LUXEMBOURG (LU)
Education and training 0.53
Health services 0.42
Housing 0.39
RIGA (LV)
Health services 0.61
Road infrastructure 0.44
Education and training 0.42
VALLETTA (MT)
Air pollution 0.54
Road infrastructure 0.43
Health services 0.33
AMSTERDAM (NL)
Housing 0.45
Education and training 0.41
Safety 0.4
GRONINGEN (NL)
Unemployment 0.45
Health services 0.45
Education and training 0.41
ROTTERDAM (NL)
Safety 0.44
Health services 0.44
Education and training 0.4
GRAZ (AT)
Air pollution 0.54
Education and training 0.5
Public transport 0.33
WIEN (AT)
Education and training 0.58
Health services 0.48
Unemployment 0.35
OSLO (NO)
Health services 0.52
Public transport 0.45
Education and training 0.45
BIALYSTOK (PL)
Unemployment 0.69
Health services 0.63
Education and training 0.21
GDANSK (PL)
Health services 0.63
Road infrastructure 0.36
Unemployment 0.32
KRAKOW (PL)
Air pollution 0.6
Health services 0.49
Road infrastructure 0.33
WARSZAWA (PL)
Health services 0.63
Road infrastructure 0.41
Education and training 0.28
BRAGA (PT)
Health services 0.56
Unemployment 0.55
Education and training 0.44
LISBOA (PT)
Health services 0.47
Unemployment 0.41
Education and training 0.4
GREATER LISBON (PT)
Health services 0.56
Education and training 0.42
Unemployment 0.39
BUCURESTI (RO)
Health services 0.57
Air pollution 0.45
Education and training 0.41
CLUJ NAPOCA (RO)
Health services 0.55
Road infrastructure 0.47
Education and training 0.39
PIATRA NEAMT (RO)
Health services 0.61
Unemployment 0.48
Education and training 0.39
MALMO (SE)
Unemployment 0.59
Health services 0.56
Education and training 0.5
STOCKHOLM (SE)
Housing 0.61
Health services 0.48
Unemployment 0.4
LJUBLJANA (SI)
Unemployment 0.43
Health services 0.41
Air pollution 0.25
BRATISLAVA (SK)
Health services 0.52
Road infrastructure 0.42
Public transport 0.38
KOSICE (SK)
Health services 0.5
Unemployment 0.45
Public transport 0.33
ANKARA (TR)
Education and training 0.47
Health services 0.44
Public transport 0.34
ANTALYA (TR)
Education and training 0.44
Health services 0.39
Public transport 0.29
DIYARBAKIR (TR)
Unemployment 0.57
Education and training 0.51
Health services 0.35
ISTANBUL (TR)
Education and training 0.44
Public transport 0.42
Health services 0.4
BELFAST (UK)
Health services 0.66
Education and training 0.58
Unemployment 0.35
CARDIFF (UK)
Health services 0.53
Education and training 0.48
Housing 0.32
GLASGOW (UK)
Health services 0.55
Education and training 0.49
Unemployment 0.36
LONDON (UK)
Health services 0.58
Education and training 0.46
Housing 0.44
MANCHESTER (UK)
Health services 0.48
Education and training 0.48
Unemployment 0.35
NEWCASTLE (UK)
Health services 0.58
Education and training 0.5
Unemployment 0.33
GREATER MANCHESTER (UK)
Health services 0.51
Education and training 0.46
Housing 0.29
GENEVA (CH)
Education and training 0.51
Housing 0.51
Health services 0.37
ZURICH (CH)
Education and training 0.55
Housing 0.51
Public transport 0.34

EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY IN SPAIN, A KEY FACTOR FOR SPAIN'S DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION IN EUROPE

Cohesion Policy will invest about EUR 28600 million in Spain in 2014-20, and will help to implement the structural reforms needed for sound, sustainable development in the medium and long term.

Three decades ago, on the signing of the Act of Accession of Spain to the then European Communities, few could imagine the major economic and social transformation the country would experience in the years to come. Economic growth in the second half of the 80s was mainly driven by intra-Community trade and structural reforms. However, this cycle of prosperity could hardly be explained without the investment and stabilising effect of European Cohesion Policy. Furthermore, the policy has fostered a relatively equitable distribution of growth among the Autonomous Communities (ACs), contributing to economic, social and territorial cohesion, as stated in the Treaty of Lisbon. Spain, a key driver of Cohesion Policy, has been and continues to be a main beneficiary and player.

Cohesion Policy accounts for about a third of the EU budget and is its main instrument for promoting investment in Member States and their regions. In 2014-20, more than EUR 350 000 million of EU funds will be allocated to this policy which, together with national co-financing, will raise over half a trillion euros.

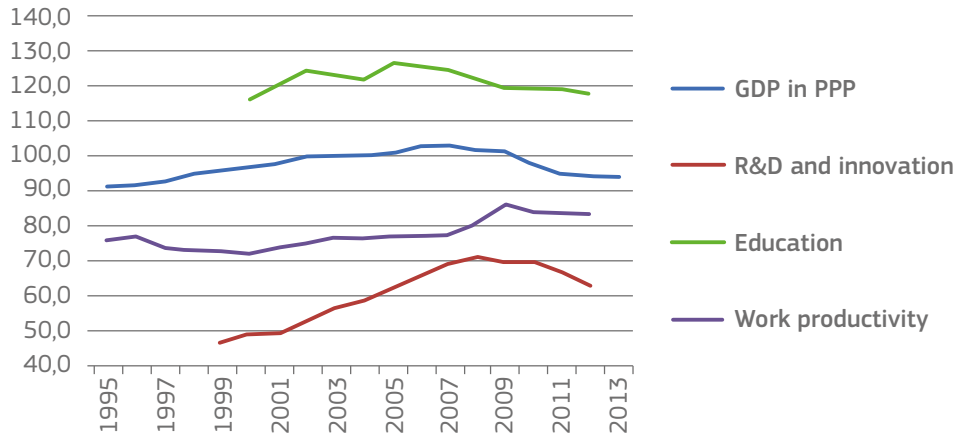
Spain has been the biggest recipient in absolute terms, set to receive almost EUR 200000 million between 1989 and 2020. In relative terms, the largest contributions were received between 1993 and 2003, when Cohesion Policy was over 1% of GDP per year and Spain received 25% of the total funds. As the third largest recipient, Spain currently receives 8% of the funds, with Cohesion Policy contributing around 0.3% of GDP annually.

Nevertheless, its impact on public investment is much greater. It not only supports investment in financial terms but also at the strategic level, with greater potential to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Its contribution in Spain was even more crucial during the recent economic crisis, rising from 9% of public investment in 2010 to almost 27% in 2013.

Bearing fruit

Both Spain and its ACs converged significantly with the European average from the mid-90s until 2007. The collapse of the real estate bubble and the resulting crisis revealed weaknesses in the Spanish growth model, anchored in low-added-value activities and stagnant productivity below the European average. As a result, the convergence process was

GDP PER CAPITA IN PPP (PURCHASING POWER PARITIES), R&D EXPENDITURE AS A % OF GDP, PEOPLE WITH HIGHER EDUCATION, LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY *(SOURCE: EUROSTAT)*



reversed not only in GDP per capita, but also at other levels (R&D, people with higher education qualifications, etc.). The relatively favourable trend in labour productivity early in the crisis is mainly explained by the move away from manual labour and less-productive activities.

Cohesion Policy was key to convergence in the growth years and limited damage during the crisis. The main macroeconomic models to simulate its impact estimate that Spanish GDP was 0.9% higher thanks to 2000-06 programmes and 0.5% higher as a result of funds received in 2007-13. In 2014-20, Cohesion Policy is expected to increase Spanish GDP by 0.4%, with greater impact in those ACs receiving more funds.

The policy has also proved timely in adapting investment to specific needs. The initial emphasis on major infrastructure has gradually shifted towards R&D and innovation, ICT, SME competitiveness and low-carbon energy. These areas receive more than 46% of the ERDF and ESF, while investments in employment, education and social inclusion represent almost a third of the total.

Co-financing priorities for 2014-20

The main priority is investing in human capital, with greater labour productivity and access to jobs, and improving education, training and social inclusion, particularly for youth and vulnerable groups. The educational and training system must be adapted to give young people proper support – implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative will help. With Cohesion Policy support, the employment rate is expected to rise from 59% in 2012 to 74% in 2020, the school drop-out rate should fall from 25% in 2012 to about 15% by 2020, and 1.5 million people could be rescued from social exclusion or the risk of poverty.

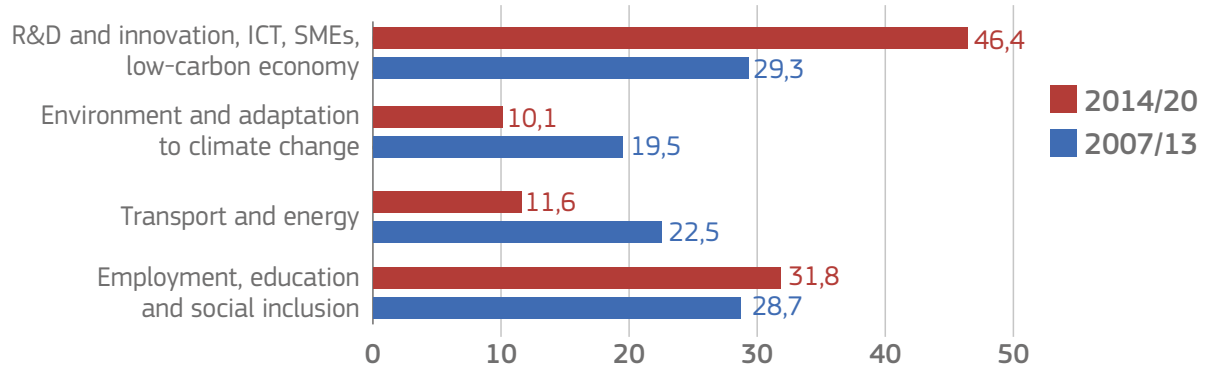
Secondly, the production system should evolve towards more added-value activities by stimulating SME competitiveness, encouraging entrepreneurship and start-ups, improving productivity levels, and grow their presence in international markets. Companies must have access to finance through guarantees, venture capital, repayable loans, etc. Spain will pioneer implementation of the SME Initiative. Cohesion Policy is expected to help the entire population access 30 Mbps internet speed in 2020, and the number of exporting companies will rise significantly. Selected transport investments are also foreseen when needed to overcome bottlenecks for economic activity.

A favourable business environment for innovation and smart specialisation (RIS3) will be encouraged and R&D strengthened. It is estimated that Cohesion Policy will help increase private participation in R&D activities from 45% in 2012 to 60% in 2020, and that 25% of firms with over 10 employees will incorporate technological innovation (13% in 2012).

Finally, a more sustainable use of natural resources will be encouraged, renewable energies supported and energy efficiency improved in public buildings, housing, SMEs, etc. Sustainable urban transport and biodiversity will also be promoted, and targeted environmental investments made in order to meet EU requirements.

▸FIND OUT MORE
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/information/maps/methodological_note_eu_spi.pdf
www.eif.org/what_we_do/guarantees/sme_initiative/index.htm

DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOTAL ALLOCATION FOR COHESION POLICY IN SPAIN BY THEMATIC OBJECTIVES IN% (2014-20 VS. 2007-13) *(SOURCE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG REGIO)*



FIGURING OUT SOCIAL PROGRESS

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE DRAFT EU REGIONAL SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

DG Regio has released a new draft regional Social Progress Index (SPI) for stakeholder feedback and public comments. It aims to measure the social progress level for 272 European regions as a complement to traditional measures of economic progress based on GDP, income and employment.

Measuring social progress can inform the development strategies of the EU regions. The index scores absolute performance on a scale of 0-100 for each of the 50 indicators included to measure the Index components.

The latest figures show that overall SPI is lowest in the Romanian and Bulgarian regions and highest in the Nordic and Dutch regions. Social progress levels are also high in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland and the UK. Belgium, France and Spain score well, although some of their regions score significantly lower than the rest of the country. In Greece and Southern Italy some regions have very low scores. In contrast, Estonia, several Czech regions and Eastern Slovenia scores are quite high despite their relatively low level of development.

Comparing SPI to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head, one measure of economic activity, shows a strong and positive link between the two which grows weaker at higher levels of GDP per head. This is particularly obvious in capital regions. For example, Bucharest, Bratislava, Prague, Brussels, Luxembourg and London all have a relatively low level of SPI relative to their GDP per head. Other regions score higher than their GDP per head would imply. This is the case for the Nordic regions and most Dutch regions, but also for Podlaskie in Poland and Cornwall and West Wales and the valleys in the UK.

The SPI was set up to help regions explore their strengths and weaknesses relative to regions of similar economic performance. These can be investigated in greater details using the regional scorecards which are available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/social_progress

HOW IT WORKS

THE INDEX IS BUILT UP FROM THREE DIMENSIONS:

1. BASIC HUMAN NEEDS
2. FOUNDATIONS OF WELL-BEING
3. OPPORTUNITY

Maps of the three dimensions can be viewed at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/mapapps/social_progress/spi.html

Each dimension has four thematic components. The resulting 12 components show significant variations both within and between EU Member States. They cover topics such as access to health care, the quality and affordability of housing, personal safety, access to higher education, and environmental pollution.

The index is the result of cooperation between the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, the Social Progress Imperative and Orkestra –Basque Institute of Competitiveness. It follows the overall framework of the global Social Progress Index, which has been customised for the EU. However, this index is not created for the purpose of allocating funding and does not bind the European Commission.

This draft index is being shared in order to collect feedback from stakeholders on the topics, the indicators included and the way these indicators are combined into a single final score for each region.

Please send comments and suggestions to:
REGIO-B1-PAPERS@ec.europa.eu

A revised version of the regional Social Progress Index will be released in October 2016.

FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!dg63bB

EU Social Progress Index

Index

< 30	60 - 70
30 - 40	70 - 80
40 - 50	80 - 90
50 - 60	>= 90

Source: DG REGIO

0 500 Km

THE WORLD CITIES PROJECT: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Urbanisation is a global challenge which must be managed sustainably and inclusively. Ronald Hall, Principal Advisor on International Cooperation in the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (Regio), looks at the contribution the World Cities project is making to urban development both inside and outside the EU.

According to the United Nations, in 2014, 54% of the world's population resided in urban areas compared to just 30% in 1950, a figure predicted to rise to 66% by 2050. The degree of urbanisation differs significantly across continents, with the most urbanised populations found in North America (82%), Latin America and the Caribbean (80%), and Europe (73%). In 2014, Africa (40%) and Asia (48%) were still relatively rural.

Over the coming years, the trend towards urbanisation is expected to be of even greater global significance, perhaps inevitably with Africa and Asia catching up, reaching urban population ratios of 56% and 64%, respectively, by 2050. For policy makers worldwide the challenge will be to ensure that this is managed in a sustainable and inclusive way, with emerging countries looking to develop a successful urban development model, while the more mature, industrial economies seek to address the errors of past urbanisation.

Two-pronged approach

Promoting sustainable regional and urban development is a major EU priority and a key element of EU regional and urban policy. As the Regio Director-General, Walter Deffaa, said recently in Mumbai, 'We have a two-pronged approach which, inside the EU, uses the regulatory and investment means at our disposal as well as developing knowledge networks between our cities and, outside the EU, seeks to enrich and strengthen our urban policy capability through cooperation with major cities in other countries.'

In responding to the challenges posed by rapid urbanisation, over the last 10 years Regio has been cooperating with counterparts outside the EU on regional and urban development

In January 2016, Walter Deffaa, Director-General of Regional and Urban Policy, addressed the World Cities conference in Mumbai, India

policy. The European Parliament has strongly supported this effort, voting resources across a wide range of regional and urban development policy issues. Since 2014, this support has taken the form of a Preparatory Action (PA), called 'World Cities: EU third countries cooperation on urban development', being implemented by Regio from 2014-2016 (now extended until 2017).

The centrepiece of the World Cities PA is a project, with the same name, that is helping the EU to promote its bottom-up, integrated urban development model in partner countries. It supports decentralised cooperation between regional and urban authorities and other stakeholders in EU and non-EU countries in a two-way interactive process.

World Cities builds on the emerging role of cooperation in urban development in the EU's diplomatic relations with the rest of the world. This is particularly evident in its relationship with China. In May 2012, leaders of the EU and China jointly launched the Partnership on Urbanisation, creating an open political platform for their respective stakeholders to cooperate and share experiences in addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges of urbanisation.

Working in pairs

The World Cities project is making good progress. On the one hand, it is promoting cooperation between a pre-selected group of regions and cities from EU Member States. On the other, it involves regions and cities in four non-EU partner countries which present diverse experience in urban development: Canada, China, India and Japan. In cooperation with the relevant national authorities, four or five cities in each partner country are working directly with European counterparts in city-to-city pairs.

The EU cities were selected for their value as demonstration areas and their readiness to identify and develop concrete actions or programmes with non-EU cities, including those opening up new market opportunities.

Themes for cooperation include 'green' city development, energy efficiency and sustainable mobility. They also address the business environment, covering the promotion of regional and urban innovation systems, the internationalisation of SMEs, and promoting start-ups, etc. World Cities involves non-traditional stakeholders from EU and non-EU countries, such as firms, technology transfer agencies, universities and research centres. It brings together city representatives in plenary conferences, bilateral meetings and city-to-city visits in the partner countries and Europe.

'Voyage of discovery'

The Portuguese city of Almada is paired with Saanich in Canada. Mark Boysen from Saanich says the relationship between the two cities, in the World Cities project, has been a 'voyage of discovery'. Saanich is particularly interested in finding out how Almada, winner of the European Mobility Week Award in 2010, has achieved a major reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport since 2001. A recent initiative in Almada is a sustainable mobility welcome kit given to new arrivals, which includes information on the city's transport systems, an integrated public transport map and free travel tickets. Almada has also invested in educational measures for all ages. Saanich is exchanging knowledge with Almada as it works to improve its modal split and sustainable mobility.

Shared interests

An important output is a collaborative, electronic online platform for exchanging information and good practices to provide technical assistance to urban policy-makers and experts on issues such as urban-rural linkages. It will help to foster dialogue between EU cities and non-EU countries, beyond those participating in the city pairings.

There has been genuine enthusiasm for the project and the exchanges between cities facing similar challenges, and for sharing information and best practices. In the case of EU-China, the city pairings have already signed memoranda of understanding to set out agreed priorities and to structure their cooperation.

The World Cities project will strengthen relations with the EU's key partners by developing joint tools and solutions to similar problems. Lessons learnt will be important for future EU external relations projects and programmes, notably those under the Union's Partnership Instrument. Through imaginative actions like World Cities, the EU is taking a lead role in creating a new international urban development agenda and bringing genuine added value to international diplomacy.

CITY PAIRINGS

CHINA-EU

WUHAN-BARCELONA (ES); CHENGDU-DUBLIN (IE); GUANGZHOU-LYON (FR); SHANTOU-ANDALUCÍA (ES); TIANJIN-WEST MIDLANDS (UK)

INDIA-EU

MUMBAI-COPENHAGEN (DK); NAVI MUMBAI-STUTTGART (DE); CHANDIGARH-LAZIO REGION (IT); PUNE-WARSAW (PL)

CANADA-EU

EDMONTON-VITORIA-GASTEIZ (ES); HALIFAX-TALLINN (EE); OTTAWA-HANNOVER (DE); SAANICH-ALMADA (PT)

JAPAN-EU

KITAKYUSHU-RIGA (LV); KUMAMOTO-LEIPZIG (DE); TOYAMA-BURGAS (BG); SHIMOKAWA-VÄXJÖ (SE)

▸FIND OUT MORE
http://world-cities.eu/
http://europa.eu/!Qk84KC

KEEPING TRACK OF RAIL PASSENGERS SERVICES

REGIONAL AND URBAN INDICATORS AID INVESTMENT IN RAILWAYS

During the 2014-2020 programming period, Cohesion Policy will allocate almost EUR 19 billion to rail investments, most of which are under way in less-developed regions. Comparable indicators on rail infrastructure and its use are important assets regarding the conception and implementation of this policy.

A recent working paper reveals a major step forward in analysing rail services across Europe. For the first time, it provides comprehensive and comparable information on the speed and frequency of passenger services, covering all of the EU and Switzerland.

Thanks to significant efforts in data collection and transformation, it is now possible to show the dramatic variations in rail services within Europe, and to indicate which countries, regions and cities are offering a particularly good or poor service.

The working paper analysed all rail passenger services operating on a specific weekday in 2014. From the data collected, average frequencies and speed estimates have been derived for all direct rail connections.

For example, the map of the average speed of the connections reveals the outstanding performance of dedicated high-speed connections or upgraded network links, as well as highlighting the issues of speeds below 60 km/h observed in most of the networks in Romania, Bulgaria and parts of Greece. If these networks operated at speeds of 80 km/h or more they might be able to play a more important role in passenger transport.

Tracking accessibility

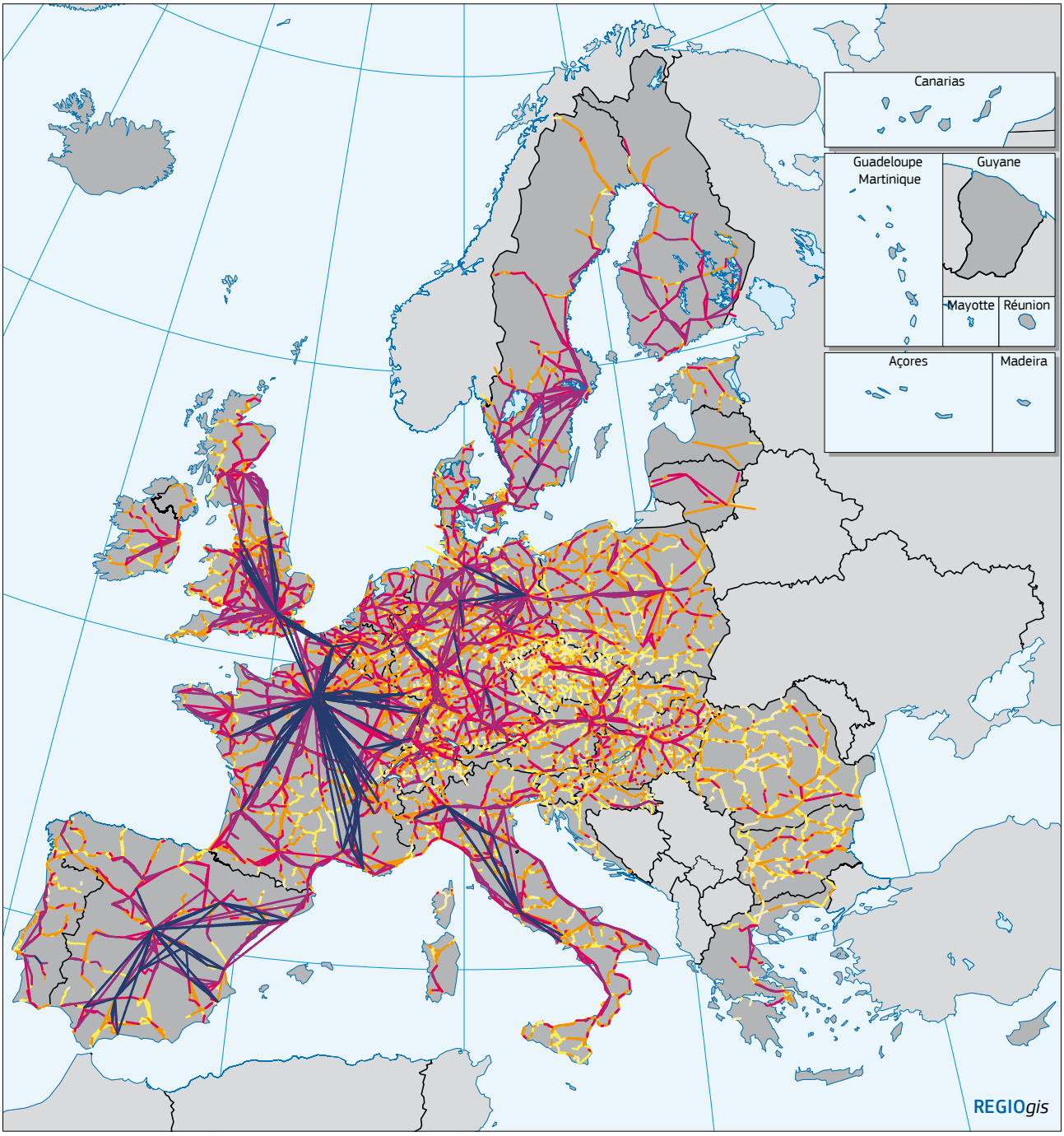
Furthermore, the working paper discussed aggregates of speed and frequency of services by country and by region, and proposed an indicator for passenger rail accessibility between cities. For each city, this indicator synthesises the total population of other cities that can be reached within three hours, taking into account the total travel time, including waiting times where required, but limiting the destinations to those that are relevant for a daytime trip.

Whilst accessibility has a definite link with high urbanisation, many of the highly urbanised areas in the eastern parts of the European Union and some in the south still suffer from relatively poor access to rail services.

Finally, the average speed of short trips between cities is compared with connections inside countries and cross-border connections. This analysis shows that cross-border city connections almost always operate at lower speeds than national connections. Border waiting times and a lack of coordination of service schedules might explain some of these differences in performance.

A more in-depth analysis of rail timetable information should be possible once a better integration of EU-wide rail data models becomes available.

FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!tV48bN



Average speed of direct rail connections, 2014

km/h

- <= 40.0
- 40.1 - 60.0
- 60.1 - 80.0
- 80.1 - 100.0
- 100.1 - 150.0
- > 150.0
- no data / incomplete data

Speed calculated along straight lines representing the connection between two subsequent stops. All direct train trips between geolocated stations, starting between 6:00 and 20:00 on 02/10/2014 (EE, IE: 2013; EL, Corsica, Northern Ireland: 2015).
Sources: UIC, www.peatus.ee, National Transport Authority Ireland, TrainOSE Greece,
Chemins de Fer de la Corse, Translink
Northern Ireland Railways, EuroGeographics, OpenStreetMap, TomTom, RRG, DG REGIO

0 500 Km

A WALK IN THE PARK

ACCESSING GREEN URBAN AREAS IN EUROPE'S CITIES

A methodology has been developed for using indicators to assess the presence, availability of and access to green urban areas for city populations across Europe.

Green areas in cities, like parks, public gardens and surrounding forests fulfil a variety of activities, ranging from ecological values to recreational functions. They also provide aesthetic value and play an important role in promoting public health and, generally speaking, contribute to a better quality of life for the residents.

It is quite straightforward to measure the actual presence and surface cover of green areas in cities by using existing statistical data sources. However, the mere existence of these areas does not guarantee that they can fulfil their functions for the majority of the urban population. Green areas might be concentrated in certain parts of the city, and access to them could be problematic, for example, for pedestrians.

For reasons such as these, a methodology has been developed which takes into account the spatial distribution of both population and green areas throughout each city's territory, and produces indicators on the proximity of the green areas to the urban population.

Gaining ground

In order to achieve comparable results, harmonised EU-wide data sources were used, such as the Copernicus Urban Atlas land-use data and census-based population figures at the highest spatial resolution possible. By combining these data with a complete street network, it is possible to compute the total surface of green areas an inhabitant can reach within 10 minutes' ond foot.

At the level of an entire city, the median value of this nearby green surface (shown on the map) highlights the difference in proximity of green areas to population. Among the larger capital cities, the median value of nearby green areas varies between less than 15 hectares in cities like Bucharest, Paris, Budapest, Rome or Sofia, to more than 50 hectares in Prague and Stockholm.

A working paper describes this methodology and the results in greater detail. It also shows that the new indicators provide additional information about the presence and distribution of green areas. As the production of the Urban Atlas data is still ongoing, this analysis will be extended to even more cities in the near future. Updated and completed data by city will be made available via the Inforegio website.

FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!rX73Dj
http://land.copernicus.eu/local/urban-atlas

Access to green urban areas in cities, 2012

Hectares	Urban centre population
< 10	< 100 000
10 - 15	100 000 - 250 000
15 - 20	250 000 - 500 000
20 - 25	500 000 - 1 000 000
25 - 30	1 000 000 - 5 000 000
>= 30	>= 5 000 000
No data	

Population-weighted median area of green urban areas and forests that can be reached within 10 minutes by foot.
Sources: Copernicus Urban Atlas, NSIs, TomTom, REGIO-GIS

0 500 Km

NEWS [IN BRIEF]

LEARNING **THROUGH PLAY**

Over the past few years, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy has developed a variety of fun and educational products for young people (from around 8 to 13 years old) and for teachers. The most recent and innovative of these is the 'Partners' web-doc, an investigation game combining a full complement of multimedia tools which takes the players to six European Union regions. The investigation illustrates regional policy activities which promote the development of, and the ties between, the EU regions and their citizens. This digital version, based on the Partners comic, delivers a fun but informative experience.

FIND OUT MORE
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/edu

WIDER FOCUS FOR REGIONAL PHOTO CONTEST

This year, the Europe in My Region photo competition has become part of a wider campaign to attract citizens to visit and learn more about EU-funded projects in their region. During May 2016, various projects across Europe will open their doors to the public as part of a wider awareness-raising campaign. Managing authorities have uploaded information regarding the planned events on an interactive map on the Inforegio website (see link below).

In addition, some of the projects will participate in a 'treasure hunt': clues are hidden at project locations and the public are encouraged to find them. Prizes will be awarded for the best photos and to participants who take part in the 'treasure hunt'. There will also be the traditional Facebook photo competition, as in previous years, but with an extended submission period from May to August. Full details can be found on Inforegio or the Europe in My Region Facebook page.

FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!WV98rM

CEMR

This year's Congress of the Council of European municipalities and Regions (CEMR) will take place in Nicosia (Cyprus) from 20 to 22 April. The event is an opportunity for mayors, councilors and presidents of regions to meet and discuss topics such as migration, climate change, local finances, territorial reforms, etc. Also in attendance will be a selection of EU leaders, UN representatives, experts, academics and the civil society. Those wishing to register for the event can do so at the link below.

FIND OUT MORE
www.cemr2016.eu

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PLAN

A new study published by the European Commission on administrative capacity in the field of European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds offers a unique and unprecedented overview of the existing capacities, structures, systems and practices across the EU to strengthen the quality of public procurement

In line with the initiative for an 'EU budget focused on results', the Commission is acting to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent efficiently and transparently to achieve better results. Nearly half of the ESI Fund allocations are channelled into the real economy through public procurement.

The study, which is based on desk research for all 28 Member States, field interviews in 15 Member States, case studies in the Czech Republic and Portugal, and an online survey of practitioners across the EU, assesses each system's strengths and weaknesses in 28 country profiles. It also identifies a list of 35 good practices that could be used by decision-makers to improve administrative capacity, especially in terms of human resources, systems and tools, and governance structures. In fact, based on a thorough analysis, the document provides specific recommendations for improving outcomes both at EU and Member-State level.

▸FIND OUT MORE
http://europa.eu/!vF38WH

OPEN DATA TO SUPPORT PERFORMANCE

1) WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE ESI FUNDS OPEN DATA PLATFORM?

The platform focuses mainly on the 2014-2020 funding period covering all five ESI funds and the Youth Employment Initiative. It provides visualisation of the financing and common indicators of the ESI Funds programmes. The data catalogue behind the platform also includes datasets linked to the results of Cohesion Policy funding 2007-2013 (Cohesion Fund, ERDF and ESF).

2) WHAT SERVICES DOES THE PLATFORM OFFER?

Through the online visualisations, it provides a clear picture of ESI Funds' investments and their expected achievements. Users can also access the raw datasets in the catalogue and create their own filters and views either to embed in their websites or to share via social media.

3) WHERE DOES THE INFORMATION COME FROM?

The data on the platform comes from the more than 530 national, regional or interregional programmes adopted under the ESI Funds by the Commission following discussions with the relevant national and regional authorities.

4) WHAT UPDATES ARE FORESEEN IN 2016?

Visualisations are currently available at country and thematic level, but by the end of 2016 the aim is to present them at programme level.

The progress made by the programmes towards their expected achievements will also be displayed.

The data catalogue will be enriched with other type of datasets linked to EU policies.

▸FIND OUT MORE
https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/
http://europa.eu/!tY69KR

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY IQ-NET!

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF EXCHANGING EXPERIENCE ON STRUCTURAL FUNDS

IQ-Net members get together to celebrate 20 years of networking

***Panorama* asks Professor John Bachtler, Director of the European Policies Research Centre (EPRC) at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland and Stefan Kah (IQ-Net Network Manager) to explain how IQ-Net works and the importance of its anniversary.**

Improving the Quality of Structural Fund Programme Management (IQ-Net) is one of the longest running European knowledge-exchange networks devoted to Cohesion Policy. Founded in February 1996, and managed by the EPRC, IQ-Net is celebrating its 20th anniversary, with a history of 40 conferences held over the past two decades on different aspects of programme management.

IQ-Net is well-known to many but can you briefly explain the purpose of the network

John Bachtler: The network's title 'Improving the Quality of Structural Funds Programme Management' sums up what IQ-Net is about. It aims to facilitate knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer learning on the common challenges facing programme managers. This learning is mainly focused on tasks in the programme management cycle – strategy development, programming, project generation, appraisal and selection, partner coordination, monitoring, evaluation, financial management, control and audit. It also encompasses some key thematic priorities, such as innovation, entrepreneurship, employment and sustainability, as well as regulatory concerns on compliance with state aid rules.

Who are the partners in IQ-Net?

Stefan Kah: The network brings together 18 programme management bodies from 16 Member States – Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom – collectively responsible for administering almost a third of EU Cohesion Policy funding. Most members are managing authorities, but we also have some national coordinating bodies and a few intermediate bodies. The main requirement is that they have experience in implementing Structural Funds and a commitment to open exchanges of experience. The European Commission (DG Regio and DG Empl) is also an active partner, while the EPRC provides the research and organisational support.

You mention exchange of experience – what does this mean in practice?

SK: At the heart of the knowledge-exchange process are the six-monthly IQ-Net conferences, each focusing on a specific management theme chosen by the partners. Before each event, EPRC examines how the theme (e.g. project selection or monitoring) operates in each partner country or region. The results are collated in briefing papers to give an overview of practice across the EU, identifying interesting or innovative case studies and lessons for programme management. So, when partners discuss an issue they have a good insight into commonalities and contrasts, and where their own programme management experience 'fits' with international practice. We also provide ad-hoc assistance to our partner organisations on specific implementation questions.

IQ-Net turns 20 this year – how did the network start?

JB: The idea of creating a network came from the Strathclyde European Partnership which managed the Western Scotland European Regional Development Fund programme. It was picked up enthusiastically by other 'Objective 2' (old-industrial) regions in the EU-15 as well as those in the 1995 accession countries. DG Regio (the former DGXVI) provided strong support with a pump-priming grant to get the network going. With its long experience in research and knowledge exchange in regional policy, EPRC was the obvious choice to manage the network.

There are many formats for exchange of experience in the EU, so what makes IQ-Net different?

SK: Effective peer-to-peer learning has to be orchestrated to facilitate open, mutual sharing of knowledge. We invest heavily in knowledge generation to provide a solid basis for exchange of experience. EPRC's multilingual research team undertakes in-depth research into the practical experiences of programme management issues across the EU, as well as drawing on evaluation and academic insights. IQ-Net meetings promote good interaction, e.g. via practice-oriented workshops. We publish papers capturing a huge amount of practical knowledge, and over time we have built up a repository of information on almost every aspect of programme management.

What evidence is there for the effectiveness of this type of IQ-Net knowledge exchange?

JB: Every three years, we evaluate how well IQ-Net is working. The most obvious benefit is that programme managers can benchmark themselves against others. There is also evidence of organisational learning: IQ-Net reports and debates have generated new ideas and solutions in areas such as project selection and monitoring systems. Partner programmes have introduced changes drawing on best practices within the network. IQ-Net also builds relationships between programmes and (importantly) facilitates informal dialogue with Commission services on programme management challenges.

What's next for IQ-Net?

JB: IQ-Net has constantly adapted over the past two decades and will continue to do so, in line with our partners' needs. There is growing demand for administrative capacity-building and we can see ourselves becoming more involved in training. We will be monitoring how the new reforms – new thematic priorities, the results-orientation and performance framework, financial instruments, integrated investment – are implemented during this programme period, and are already thinking about post-2020. With no shortage of issues for future exchange of experience, we are looking forward to IQ-Net helping to promote effective learning.

FIND OUT MORE
http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

SPAIN

GROWING AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH IN SPAIN

Total cost:
EUR 3 285 349
EU contribution:
EUR 2 628 279

A project based in western Spain has strengthened research and development in the agricultural sector while improving links between local businesses and the scientific community. Support provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) helped to deliver new facilities – and create jobs – at the Finca La Orden-Valdesquera Research Institute.

The institute – which is part of the Centre for Scientific and Technological Research of Extremadura (CICYTEX) – has used the funding to pay for the renovation and expansion of its scientific infrastructure, including the construction of a new biotechnology warehouse and essential improvements to irrigation equipment. In addition, the purchase of new materials for use in laboratories and experimental farms will enable scientists to pursue cutting-edge research.

As well as focusing on agriculture, Finca La Orden-Valdesquera conducts research into related issues such as forestry and the use of natural resources. Key current project areas include assessing and evaluating energy crops, finding ways to improve agricultural production and insights into livestock breeding.

Widening horizons

Farmers, other research organisations, local businesses and cooperatives all benefit from the institute's work through a variety of technology transfer initiatives. To date, project funding has supported information days, workshops, conferences and lectures. Training has also been provided for researchers, technicians and university students specialising in agriculture. In addition, partnerships have been set up with local companies and research centres as a way of facilitating exchange visits.

Thanks to its enhanced resource base, the institute is now able to raise awareness of its activities and project results among a much wider audience. This has been achieved mainly by developing promotional media tools, including a revamped website. In addition, new publications have been produced and circulated with aim of further improving technology transfer uptake in the agricultural community.

New jobs

Project investment has generated more than 400 new research, development and innovation projects, and around 70 cooperative initiatives with local companies. Moreover, these activities have helped to create 35 jobs.

According to Carmen González Ramos, Director General of CICYTEX, the support has brought advancements to the research and development of products leaving the Extremadura, to the benefit of both local businesses and farmers. The project has also helped to improve the socio-economic and environmental condition of Extremadura's countryside.

FIND OUT MORE
cicytex.gobex.es/es/centros/la-orden-valdesequera

UNITED KINGDOM

‘SOFTWARE CITY’ DRIVES INNOVATION

Thanks to backing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), IT businesses in north-east England have a space where they can focus on product development and growth. Sunderland’s Software Centre offers a state-of-the-art facility for work plus a range of business-support activities.

Sunderland City Council opened the centre in 2012, offering over 6 000 m² of letting space to 63 companies, along with the latest equipment and facilities. To encourage collaboration with local talent, the centre provides a ‘sand-pit space’ and innovation rooms where businesses can experiment with ideas and concepts. There is also a development and testing centre and a community engagement space for workshops.

Sunderland Software City (SSC) is a successful collaboration between Sunderland’s City Council, university, college and the North East Business and Innovation Centre. Set up in 2008, in partnership with the private sector, the initiative provides a single point of contact for SME software start-ups and more established companies. To date, it has helped over 260 software companies and played a part in creating around 335 jobs in the region, helping to grow the technology business base by almost 20 %.

SSC offers business consultancy services in areas such as market entry support, financial planning and deal brokerage, market research, and access to international investment services. In a bid to develop new customer and market leads, it also encourages firms from other sectors – like manufacturing, health care and renewable energy – to experience the benefits of digital technologies.

Targeting talent

SSC is constantly seeking to develop new relationships with public, private and educational organisations to maximise opportunities for local software businesses. For example, it has strong ties with the UK’s Digital Catapult Initiative, and in 2015 opened one of three regional Digital Catapult Centres. The DCC North East & Tees Valley is a collaboration between five local universities and two local enterprise partnerships led by SSC. It aims to help UK business share proprietary data safely and more efficiently, helping to unlock new value from organisational data and explore new commercial models.

SSC and local partners are also key in Tech City, the UK’s Tech Cluster Alliance, Cisco’s National Virtual Incubator and Sunderland’s Work Discovery initiative, raising awareness among young people of the training and career opportunities open to them.

By developing relationships and partnerships with other organisations, SSC has built on its achievements and established a long-term vision for the region’s software sector. The focus now is on developing key strengths, creating new opportunities and maximising international trade links while addressing barriers inhibiting the growth of innovative software businesses.

FIND OUT MORE
www.sunderlandsoftwarecity.com

Total cost:
EUR 17 440 107
EU contribution:
EUR 8 713 330

EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION: LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

TEAM EFFORT TO TACKLE ECOLOGICAL DISASTERS

Total cost:
EUR 1 150 511
EU contribution:
EUR 977 934

Latvia and Lithuania have established a cross-border rescue team and early-warning system to help cope with any potential ecological disasters around the Lielupe Basin. The area is considered high risk since large volumes of chemical and petrochemical products are transported through it by road, rail and pipeline.

The Lielupe ECO project, which received support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), has kitted out its rescue team with the latest equipment so that it can act quickly to prevent and eliminate pollution resulting from accidents. The team comprises specialists from the region's municipalities along with members of the fire and rescue services based in Jelgava, Latvia and the border counties of Šiauliai and Panevežys. All team members receive regular training enabling them to fine-tune their civil defence capabilities.

The project's early-warning system uses the internet and text messaging to get the team in place quickly and efficiently. The procedure, which was piloted in Jelgava, a city that often has to cope with high flood risks, has subsequently been rolled out in other towns across the region.

Emergency crews and municipalities from both sides of the border have benefited significantly from the project in terms of sharing knowledge, experience and expertise. In turn, this has helped the project partners improve their response to ecological disasters.

In addition, the cross-border region's risk management standards have been greatly enhanced, not least because the joint rescue team has been given access to more resources than when they acted independently.

Rapid reaction

During its two-year lifespan, the project held 75 seminars addressing a range of issues relating to ecological disasters and responding to the resulting emergencies. These events provided students and local residents with an opportunity to learn about the project and how best to react to a variety of disaster scenarios.

Overall, Lielupe ECO has improved the safety and quality of life of local residents by providing better public emergency services. Moving forward, this will help to promote a stronger and more integrated cross-border community.

Project manager, Liene Rulle, stresses that the project has enabled both regions to share information in ways which would not otherwise have been possible, or at least difficult to gather. Enhancing the quality and accessibility of the region's risk-management services will be a further key project legacy.

FIND OUT MORE
www.jelgava.lv/pasvaldiba/projekti/2014-gads/latvijas-–lietuvas-parrobezu-sadarbibas6/ekologisko-avariju-likvidesana-un-vides-7

EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION: SLOVENIA AND CROATIA

CROSS-BORDER VOLUNTEERING TACKLES SOCIAL EXCLUSION

An initiative to create opportunities in the volunteering sector has produced a win-win solution in the Slovenia-Croatia border area. As well as finding innovative ways to support local communities, the City Volunteers project prioritised helping deprived groups and minorities access voluntary work as a way of improving their quality of life and social inclusion.

The project, which received backing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), offered professional, harmonised support to enable people to find voluntary work which was suitable to their needs and ambitions. Efforts were also made to raise volunteers' educational standards, and there was a particular emphasis on providing help to people with special needs.

A key goal was to identify new ways to promote volunteering and its benefits in the Maribor city of Slovenia's Podravje region and the neighbouring city of Varaždin in the Varaždinska region, and in Čakovec in Croatia's Medžimurska region. The project team also wanted to create a network of voluntary organisations and back up all their work by developing a coherent structure for the sector.

Solid strategy

To realise its ambitions, City Volunteers examined volunteering at a number of levels. Research, strategic development, visibility, capacity-building and ways of delivering practical support for volunteering organisations were all covered by the project analysis.

Having conducted its detailed assessment, the project team moved on to prepare and implement a joint cross-border strategy for volunteer development. A network of regional information offices and libraries able to offer support to voluntary groups was also established as part of the capacity-building process. In addition, the project delivered training to improve the skills and competences of young volunteer leaders and produced a variety of training materials.

The team also developed new forms of volunteering, including corporate volunteering through which businesses and organisations are encouraged to participate in community initiatives. To ensure such activities were implemented in the right way, the project provided ICT tools, including a volunteering web portal. A number of events were organised to promote the benefits of volunteering to society and community cohesion.

Although the City Volunteers project ended in 2013, its legacy lives on as the regional offices, libraries and web portal continue to operate and promote opportunities for volunteers. Costs are covered by the local municipalities, and the project has also created two permanent jobs.

FIND OUT MORE
www.city-volunteers.si/

Total cost:
EUR 614 696
EU contribution:
EUR 522 492
(maximum approved)

GREECE

INVESTMENT HELPS IMPROVE PRODUCTION – AND INCREASE EXPORTS

Total cost:
EUR 294 183
EU contribution:
EUR 202 885

A Greek company which manufactures drinking straws has improved its production processes and boosted its exports thanks to an investment in equipment backed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Matrix Pack SA already had a leading position in its sector. It is the only company in Europe that produces all types of beverage straws and can claim to export between 70-75% of its goods worldwide. However, the low price of the end product, the need to deal with a variety of construction standards, as well as strict hygiene controls provide a challenging context for production and growth.

Cutting-edge machinery

The aim of 'Extroversion I' (in the Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship Operational Programme) was to increase the company's innovative capacity in straw manufacturing while improving export potential. The project paid for three new, specialised production machines which have modernised the way Matrix makes and markets its products:

- A high-speed corrugating machine – which gives a straw its tell-tale flex – has automated the final phase of the production process. Connecting this unit with the two other new machines provides Matrix with a 30% increase in productivity.
- An individual wrapping machine allows each straw to be packaged in either plastic film or paper. This equipment also makes it possible to print onto the wrapping material, which is an attractive option for some customers.
- A straw auto-bagging machine gives Matrix the option of packing in different sized containers – from 40 to 250 straws. Because this piece of equipment automates the entire packing process, the company benefits from an increase in productivity in this area of activity of between 15 and 120%, depending on the type of packaging required by customers.

The installation of an integrated information warehouse and traceability management system also formed part of the investment.

Customer benefits

In addition to modernising production at the factory, the investment has led to improvements in the overall quality of the final product. This is helping the company to break into new markets and sell to foreign customers with high standards, such as supermarket chains and wholesalers whose orders often come with special labelling requirements.

Since the machinery was installed, Matrix has expanded its export base. In 2011 the company served 14 foreign customers but by 2014, which marked the end of the investment programme, that figure had risen 63. In 2015, the company further improved its export performance by delivering goods to a total of 88 foreign customers in 25 countries.

FIND OUT MORE
http://www.matrixpack.gr

KN-LR-16-056-EN-C

AGENDA

12-13 MAY
_Dubrovnik (HR)

1st Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

1-2 JUNE
_Brussels (BE)

Smart Regions conference

16-17 JUNE
_Sofia (BG)

7th European Evaluation Conference

The Result Orientation: Cohesion Policy at Work

10-13 OCTOBER
_Brussels (BE)

European Week of Regions and Cities (incl. RegioStars Ceremony)

More information on these events can be found in the Agenda section of the Inforegio website: **http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/events/**

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